

dallas voice

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'Strut' does Dallas

Deryck Todd brings New York style
with a touch of Southern charm
to Virgin Hotels Dallas for Pride

By Tammye Nash, page 8



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ON THE COVER: Macarena (Photo by Hannah Schmidt)

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WHAT'S THE TEA: DallasVoice.com



George Santos

George Santos announces his Only Fans page

In a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, gay former U.S. Rep. George Santos announced his new Only Fans page. This isn't the first time Santos has turned to the web to make money. After leaving Congress, he joined Cameo, making personalized videos and earning hundreds of dollars for each one recorded.

"The moment you've all been waiting for. Only on #OnlyFans will you get the full behind the scenes access to everything I'm working on. See ya all there!" he wrote.

Access to his page is just \$29.99 per month with a 10 percent discount when you sign up for three months.

And he promises no porn even though Only Fans is mostly adult content.

"You do know it's a content platform not just pron [sic]? Lol," he wrote on X in response to a disparaging comment.

Santos is currently awaiting trial on 23 federal counts related to his election including wire fraud, identity theft and more and he has pleaded not guilty. Last year, Santos became only the sixth member of the U.S. House of Representatives to ever be expelled from Congress.

— David Taffet

SGM Alliance announces call to action to address representation issues in clinical studies

In commemoration of Pride Month, the non-profit SGM Alliance announced a collaboration for companies in the healthcare industry to "work together on best practices to promote equal representation for sexual and gender minorities."

According to an SGM Alliance press release announcing the effort, several of the world's largest healthcare companies — including Eli Lilly and Company, Gilead Sciences Inc., and Pfizer Inc. — have joined the collaboration.

"SGM populations include, but are not limited to, individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or intersex," the press release explained.

"These communities face significant disparities in healthcare access and outcomes, and historically, SGM populations have rarely been represented in clinical studies," the press release continued. "As a result, even while some states have adopted anti-discrimination legislation and demonstrated progress regarding LGBTQIA+ representation in clinical studies in recent decades, many of the disparities in healthcare go largely unaddressed."

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A number of companies in the healthcare industry signed onto a statement supporting efforts to “establish best practices and mobilize strategy,” that was included with the SGM Alliance:

Those companies signing the statement were Abbvie, AstraZeneca, Bristol Myers Squibb, Daiichi-Sankyo, Lilly, Gilead, Genentech, Pfizer, StudyKik, Syneos Health and Takeda. Companies in other industries interested in joining or supporting this collaboration and exploring allyship opportunities with SGM Alliance can contact Allyship@SGMAlliance.org.

— Tammye Nash

Farmers Branch issued a Pride proclamation on June 18 in council chambers at Farmers Branch City Hall.

Information was circulated through private social media networks, but was not released publicly to prevent protesters from disrupting the ceremony.

People who attended were encouraged to wear rainbow colors and equality t-shirts. They were warned not to engage with any protesters who might appear.

“Do not give potential instigators the satisfaction of viral clips and the opportunity to weap-

onize your words and actions, no matter how well-intended, against our LGBTQIA+ community,” Pride Frisco wrote in its social media invitation to the event.

This is the second year that Farmers Branch issued a Pride proclamation.

— David Taffet

Volunteers needed for Black Tie Dinner

Black Tie Dinner is looking for volunteers in a variety of areas leading up to and including the dinner itself on Saturday, Nov. 16, with special needs for volunteers with experience in event

setup, data entry and quality assurance, welcome and registration, floral placement and table setup, guest experience and concierge and silent auction merchandising.

The 43rd Annual Black Tie Dinner will be held at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel.

Volunteers are needed for ongoing support of Black Tie committees, ongoing tabling at community events, for the sponsor appreciation party at a still-to-be-determined date, dinner weekend set-up and at the dinner itself.

For more information and to register, visit BlackTie.org.

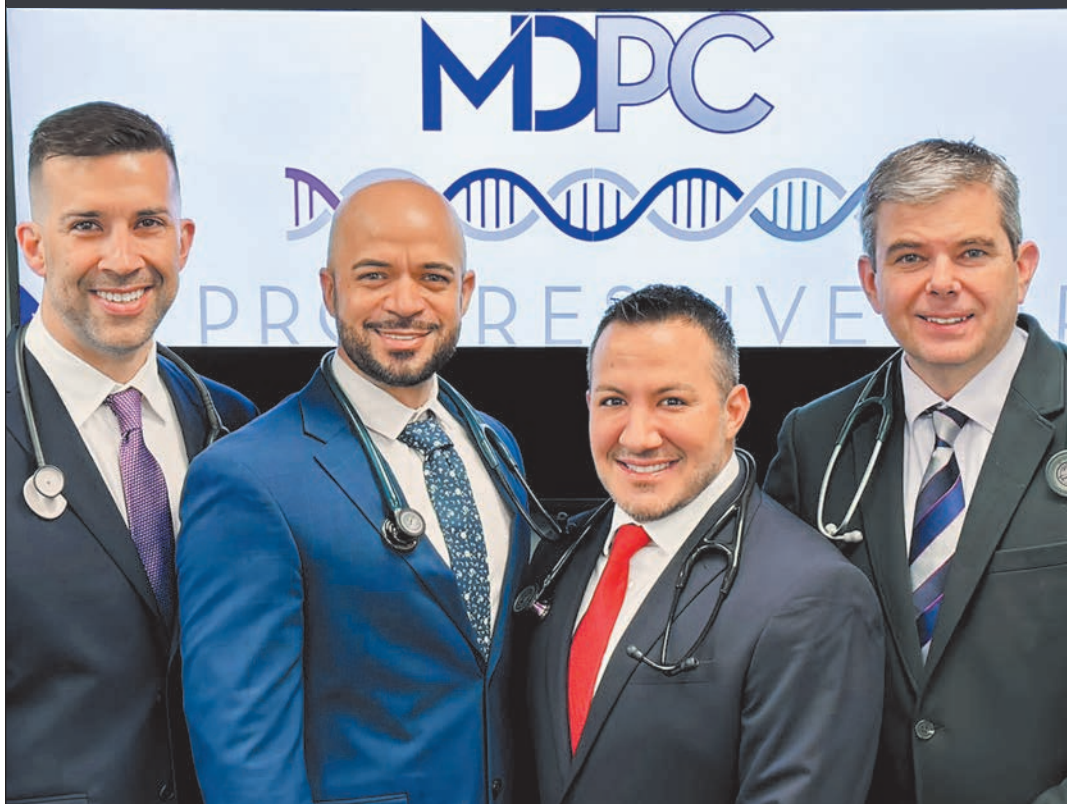
— Tammye Nash

■ Adoptable / ECLIPSE



Meet **Eclipse**, a domestic shorthair mix about two years old, weighing in at 9 pounds with a friendly and outgoing nature, although he can be a bit shy at first. He adores treats and will eagerly respond to the sound of a crinkling bag. There's nothing Eclipse loves more than basking in the sunshine, finding a cozy bed to stretch out in and soaking up the warmth. Eclipse thrives on attention and enjoys being the center of his human's world, so he needs to be the only cat in the home. He's also open to meeting children, making a meet and greet essential to ensure everyone gets along perfectly.

Like all pets from the SPCA of Texas, Eclipse has been neutered and microchipped and is up to date on all his necessary vaccinations. He is housed at the Dallas Animal Care Center, 2400 Lone Star Drive, 75212, so come by any day between Noon and 6 p.m. to meet him. Animals are available for adoption at both the SPCA Dallas Animal Care Center and the Ellis County Animal Care Center at 2570 FM Road 878 in Waxahachie. During June at the SPCA of Texas, all adult cat and dog adoptions are free and puppy adoptions are half price. This adoption special is available at both the Dallas and Ellis County Animal Care Centers.



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Navigating the intimacy of gay-straight friendships

True intimacy isn't only sexual

I walked through the crowd at DC's Capital Pride on June 8 as groups were lining up to set off on the Pride parade. Walking down a crowded side street, I saw one of the loveliest men in town, a straight ally. He greeted me warmly, hugged me, and kissed me on the cheek. I thought happily, how times have changed!

Despite the risk we now face of legal setbacks from a right-wing Supreme Court, the greater social and cultural acceptance LGBTQ people have won is largely beyond the reach of politicians and judges. Changed expectations are hard to erase.

Generational change is not the same everywhere. Cities attract people who take diversity more in stride. Urban/rural divides open us to wedge politics. We have more work to do to help people see that differences are not a threat.

Something I have experienced more frequently in recent years is straight men who enjoy the company of gay men, and even flirt with them. They are not interested sexually, but neither are they threatened in any way. I find it refreshing.

I have had straight neighbors like that. He is the kind of person who lights up any room he is in. Normally in the morning he darted down the back stairs but if I was leaving for work at the same time, he rode down the elevator with me, because he found me amusing. Once he said he had a sore shoulder from a sports injury, and I said I gave a very soothing massage. He laughed in a way that melted me into the floor, but that was as far as it went. One winter evening he and his girlfriend joined me on our building's roof to observe a lunar eclipse.

After he moved to Virginia to live with his girlfriend, I encountered them at the annual high heel race on 17th Street in Washington the week before Halloween, which draws large and diverse crowds.

There is a prominent Washingto-



Richard J. Rosendall
Contributing Writer

nian with whom I feel a close friendship, as distinct from a professional one. He is straight and happily married, but then I myself am in a committed relationship. The public figure and I have a lot in common on policy matters, but we are also simpatico on a personal level. As time passes, I increasingly meet him more as a friend and confidante than an advocate.

Every conversation with an attractive, friendly person doesn't involve thoughts of sexual conquest. The mix of affection and desire varies from case to case. Re-

spect that grows with understanding increases the comfort level, as does a sense of humor.

I have a dear friend with whom I lost touch decades ago when he moved to another city. We reconnected a few years back via LinkedIn. He and I were very close in our late 20s. We felt a natural connection. There was love between us, but I also desired him, which he could not reciprocate. Our mutual bond proved stronger than our differences.

Once over lunch he told me that his fiancée did not want children, though he very much did. After joking that he might as well marry me in that case, I told him he needed to find a woman who wanted children. Which he did. It is good to be in touch again. His auburn hair has gone white, but our feelings remain.

As the social space grows in which we can navigate our differences, safety increases. In private encounters we don't think of an entire community looking over our shoulders; yet to some extent,

each of us carries an invisible crowd with us.

With certain close straight friends, it almost feels as if we had a torrid sexual affair and then became friends.

The 1930 song "Georgia On My Mind," by Hoagy Carmichael and Stuart Gorell, has these lines:

"Other arms reach out to me,
Other eyes smile tenderly,
Still in peaceful dreams I see
The road leads back to you."

Those lyrics come to mind as I think of my partner overseas. Loneliness can make fools of us. But having given my heart to someone, I am less beset by the restlessness that preoccupied me in my youth. Thinking of the man who has proven his love for me in countless moments of grace, I realize I am already home. How blessed I am when a sweet straight friend, with a chaste kiss, shows he gets that.

Richard J. Rosendall is a writer and activist at rosendall@me.com.

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'Strut' your Stuff

PRIDE 2024

Promoter Deryck Todd brings his NYC party — and Brooke Lynn Hytes — to Virgin Hotels Dallas to celebrate Pride

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
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1969. We all know — or at least, we all SHOULD know — that the spirit of freedom and the determination to demand equality that fueled the Stonewall riots is just as needed today as it was 55 years ago. In fact, as the forces of the right-wing continue to attack the LGBTQ community on every front, we need that determination now more than ever.

But we also cannot forget that Pride must also be a celebration — of who we are as individuals and as a community. We need parades and parties as much as we need protests and political activism.

That's where event promoter Deryck Todd comes in. And this week Todd is bringing his iconic NYC party, Strut, to Dallas and the Virgins Hotels Dallas, starring RuPaul's Drag Race star Brooke Lynn Hytes and a cast of local queens. Dallas Voice recently had the chance to talk with Todd, with Brooke Lynn Hytes and with Virgin Hotels Dallas General Manager Michael Bridges about Pride, Strut and more.

Deryck Todd

Dallas Voice: Tell me about yourself.

What is your background, and how did you get into the business of presenting events like this? Tell me a little bit about the team you have created to bring all this together. Deryck Todd: Well, I'm the mastermind behind Strut. With a background in event production and creative direction, I basically have a PhD in sleep loss. I stumbled into this business *grumble grumble* years ago out of a love for the community. Coco Brown came up to me in a basement club called Lotus and said "Do you want to host this party?" I didn't know what that

meant at the time, but the rest is history. My team is like the Avengers of event planning — each one bringing a unique superpower in design, marketing, logistics and, of course, making everything look effortlessly chic (including sleep loss).

Tell me about Strut. She is your baby, yes? Tell me how you "birthed" her and what sets Strut apart from similar shows/events. Oh, Strut is definitely my baby. I "birthed" her with a lot of love, glitter and caffeine. She started at Acme in the Nolita area of New York City. We used to be a Tuesday weekly for six years before we took this on the road. She's a platform that marries fashion, performance art, and inclusivity. I wanted to create a party for everyone: We've had club kid moms, 7-year-old

rappers perform and Miley Cyrus attend. We don't just throw events; we create experiences that celebrate individuality and creativity, with a dash of ass, and a whole lot of heart.

Strut is a New York girl, yes? Obviously, Strut is still Strut, whether she's at home in NYC or on the road in Miami, Tampa, Portland, or Nashville — and now in Dallas. Do you accessorize



Strut up a little differently for the different cities, or do you just bring the New York girl to town to stun when you are on the road? And how will you access-

zorize her to appeal specifically to a Dallas audience as opposed to the other cities? Strut is a true New York girl, but she's got a passport and knows how to blend in anywhere. We tweak her accessories depending on the city. For Dallas, she'll be rocking a mix of bold New York fashion with a slap of Southern charm. We incorporate local talent heavily, such as Mulan Alexander, Rocky Tacoma, Waylon Tate and Blue Valentine, and we nod to Dallas's cultural flair while keeping that unmistakable edge. It's all about creating a unique vibe that makes each city feel like the star of the show. We also have a charity auction benefiting Texas Latino Pride and Legacy Cares!

What made you decide to bring Strut to Dallas? How did the collab with Virgin come about? Bringing Strut to Dallas was like a natural progression in our journey. I went on a road trip during the pandemic and made it to Nashville, birthing a collab with Virgin Hotels Nashville, and then Dallas was a logical next step. It was serendipity. I cold-called their Nashville locale one day and connected through mutual admiration for creating community and authentic experience. Virgin Hotels' ethos of innovation and inclusivity aligns perfectly with Strut's mission, making this partnership as smooth as a well-shaken cosmo.

What else do you and Strut want people to know that I have not asked about? Strut isn't just an event; it's a lifestyle, a movement, a reason to get out of bed and put on your most uncomfortable heels. I had no friends in high school and ate alone in the library every day, and my goal is to make sure no one feels that way again, not under my roof. We're all about creating spaces where everyone feels celebrated and inspired. Pushing boundaries, so slay tuned (gosh golly, I love a pun), because we've got a lot more surprises up our sleeves. Keep an eye out for our next act!

Brooke Lynn Hytes

Dallas Voice: Let's start off with some "old news" just in case there's someone out there who's been living under a rock the last five years and doesn't know who Brooke Lynn Hytes is: What pulled you away from the professional ballet stage and into the world of drag?

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Pride on the river

TRAVEL

These gems can add to a trip down to San Antonio Pride

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
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San Antonio will celebrate Pride on June 29 with its official celebration Pride Bigger Than Texas. To bookend the month, the city kicked off the month with a Pride River Parade by Visit San Antonio that

featured *Drag Race* favorite Jorgeous and performances at the La Villita's Arneson River Theatre. A precursor to the main event next week, you might need to figure out how to fill your time in between the parade, the bars and showering from the Texas heat.

Pride San Antonio (PrideSanAntonio.org) will host the day-long festival and parade. The festival will feature live, entertainment, PRIDE wedding, a health fair and local LGBTQ and ally small businesses and vendors from 11 a.m.-7 p.m. in Crockett Park.

At 9 p.m. begins the largest LGBTQ night parade. Load up with coolers, ice chests, food and drinks which are all permitted along the parade route.

If you're making a weekend of it, try these stops for some added diversions.

Foods

Los Barrios Mexican Restaurant,
4223 Blanco Road.
LosBarriosRestaurant.com.

This staple has been around since 1979 and is known for its puffy tacos, but the chimichurri sauce is metaphorically gold (it's actually green). Tip: pour it over everything. Founded by a single mother and her business partner, her children and grandchildren now run the place and have expanded with three other restaurant brands.

Elsewhere Garden Bar and Kitchen,
103 E. Jones Ave. ElsewhereTexas.com.

The day before Pride month, this in-



Elsewhere Garden Bar and Kitchen



The Esquire Tavern

cluding outdoor eatery was decked in Pride flags and colors everywhere. This gem felt immediately inclusive and welcoming where the crowd was filled with all orientations and ages enjoying the live DJ and randomly, fire dancers and aerial artists. The signature cocktail comes in a pouch, but an extensive bar menu and food menu offer an endless array of pairings while you hang out in this friendly spot.

Paramour at the Phipps,
102 9th St. Floor 4. ParamourBar.com.

The drag brunch here is a mixed bag. The buffet could have used more food options and coffee options don't really exist unless you have a server who can improvise an iced coffee. But the drag performers serve attitude, glamour and laughs on a high level. Have the singles handy for a lot of deserved tips.



Hopscotch San Antonio

Drinks

The Esquire Tavern,
155 E. Commerce St.
EsquireTavern-SA.com.

The Strip on Main is San Antonio's central hub of LGBTQ bars and clubs for all tastes. And there's the iconic three-level Bonham Exchange club. For a more chill drink, head to the longest wooden bar top in Texas for some old school vibes and a comfy speakeasy underneath.

Experiences

Hopscotch San Antonio,
711 Navarro St., Suite 100.
LetsHopscotch.com.

Residing in an office building, this place could easily be missed, but the immersive artscape experience is worth finding. An impressive bar and lobby already kicks off the colorful vibes,



The McNay



Paramour at the Phipps

but descend into rooms that surround guests with distinct artistic experiences from optical illusions to digital graffiti and even an installation by the Human Rights Campaign. You'll be taking selfies for days.

The McNay, 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave. McNayArt.org.

This art museum set in a 1920s mansion is a gorgeous expanse of modern and contemporary art. Diego Rivera, Jackson Pollock, queer artist Juan Escobedo and more are part of the collection, but don't miss the *de la Torre Brothers: Upward Mobility* exhibition on display through Sept. 15. A vibrant display of blown glass sculpture, lenticular prints, video, installation and more that surprises over and over again with dramatic reveals. ■

Know your status

HEALTH

Abounding Prosperity and Resource Center mark National HIV Testing Day

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Abounding Prosperity and Resource Center have joined forces to recognize National HIV Testing Day on June 25.

“Gilead is doing installations around the country,” said Abounding Prosperity’s Chris Walker.

The installation in Dallas will be at Resource Center on Cedar Springs Road.

“Gilead Sciences is proud to sponsor this important National HIV Testing

Day event with Abounding Prosperity and Resource Center Community Center,” said Deborah Wafer, senior director, public affairs, U.S. virology community engagement and advocacy at Gilead Sciences. “HIV testing is a critical tool in helping to end the HIV epidemic for everyone, everywhere — which we are constantly working toward together with the HIV community. We are deeply committed to improving health equity and reducing stigma associated with HIV through our robust support of community organizations serving those most impacted by HIV.”


Abounding Prosperity will have its mobile testing unit at Resource Center offering on-the-spot testing with results given in minutes.


Walker added that there will be entertainment from the local ballroom




Chris Walker

STATUS, Page 20





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In the moment

MUSIC

Queer singer Lauren Sanderson finds freedom in returning to her indie roots

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Musician Lauren Sanderson is coming to Dallas to celebrate Pride. She's been on tour this month after releasing her newest single "Freak/Pinterest" and will perform later this year at The Dinah in September. Originally from Indiana, the singer moved to Los Angeles after releasing her first two EPs and signing

a record deal. Since then, her online following has continued to grow,

She will perform this Sunday, June 23, at Sue Ellen's at 8 p.m.

During a break in her tour, Sanderson took some days off at home with her girlfriend and dog and took some time to talk with Dallas Voice before getting back on the road.

Dallas Voice: How has this tour been going for you? Lauren Sanderson: It's been really good! This is the first one I've gone into just wanting to have fun, not taking it too seriously. My shows have always been a fun and safe space, but this time I'm really going in with the intention of being in the moment and enjoying it.

What is your favorite part of performing live? The best part is seeing the emotional reactions of people. Being an artist can be hard because you put out music and get reactions online through comments



Lauren Sanderson

and messages, but it's not until tour that you get to see people react. It becomes real when you see them crying and laughing.

How has this tour been different from previous ones? The shows have been feeling more alive. They've always been

pretty lively, so I don't think the change is so much in my fans but in me. In the past, performing live was too surreal, it wasn't hitting me. Now I'm in a place to really receive the love they give me. I can look around at these shows selling out, and

MOMENT, Next Page



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MOMENT, From Previous Page

let that soak in. It means I've been more energetic and more connected with the music and the audience.

Recently, you've gone back to being an independent artist to take a more hands on approach to your career. How has that been going? It's been such a relief for me. It's the best way for me to have this kind of freedom and control over what I'm doing. I might get to a point where I need the support of a label, but right now it feels like the best thing I can do is just keep going on this path. I feel a moment of growth and change coming, almost like a rebirth in my music. I want to see how big things can get with just me and my fans. It feels like I'm in a very monumental part of my career.

There are types of people that like to really take their time and craft the perfect story to tell, who work best with a label. That doesn't work for me because I want to tell the story as it's happening. I want to be very present, to do it in real time.

Is music the way you process everything that happens to you? I think it is a part of how I process things. I just feel so in-the-moment. I make a song as I'm feeling that thing and then want to put it out as I'm still feeling it. Being in a label was pretty hard because I can't fake enthusiasm, I want to roll with what I'm feeling right now. I have some friends who are signed with a major label who made a song five years ago that didn't come out until now. That just doesn't work for me. I'm a Capricorn, so I'm very entrepreneurial, I want to figure it out as it happens. Once I write something I want to put it out and then get to sing it live. When I perform live it feels like the audience and I are connecting with the same emotions in the present moment. It makes me feel understood.

How do you continue to stay inspired and motivated? I'm still trying to figure that out. That might be the hardest part for me. I'm an only child so I'm used to having a big imagination and being creative. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, I couldn't connect as much with my fans. I couldn't see them and remember what it was like performing with an audience. Now that I'm back to touring it's gotten a lot better. At shows and online with things like Instagram lives I can gauge what people want and see their reactions.

Do you feel like social media has impacted your career? Yes, it facilitates connecting with fans. When I started this tour, I went in with the intention of having fun and seeing what songs connect the most and what emotions they evoke. After seeing reactions in person and online I

actually changed what song I am going to release next. I love party music so much, but decided to switch directions because what's needed right now is a feeling of comfort and warmth. Fans can get excited for the vulnerable Lauren to come back out. That's the beauty of being independent, I can make whatever decisions I want. And right now, the best thing I can do is let my fans lead the way.

What do you think makes your shows so unique? My shows are very interactive. I have segments where fans yell stuff out and it starts conversation. There's one part of the show I call teatime, where I ask for people to share any queer gossip. We give them the mic to let them share, and with the queer community there's always drama.

At one of my shows a girl shared that she broke no contact with a situation from five years ago. The clip actually went viral on Instagram. I think we like to share the drama because when you're growing up queer you miss out on that. Either we're not able to express it or don't even know we're queer yet. Music is a place where many people find themselves. I didn't have many queer musician role models growing up. That's why I want people to feel like they can come as they are to my shows. It's a place to celebrate pride and have fun.

As someone in the entertainment industry, do you feel a lot of pressure to label yourself and your identity? I have felt a lot of pressure. I think it's important to check in with yourself and make sure you're not letting what other people think affect you. Personally, I feel like people think I'm way more masc than I am. Growing up in a small town, it never felt like people understood me, and that happens as a celebrity as well. It adds an extra level of perception. People are very vocal with what they call artists and often think they know more about me than they do. I know that's a big reason celebrities get in their heads; they hear so much feedback about who they are. I'm still trying to make sense of who I am, it's just a little harder with so many voices.

What message do you have for younger fans figuring out their identities? If a label makes you feel better, find the one that feels right for you. But you can also just be who you are. You don't have to feel pressure to find a label or to fit into a certain category. You just have to be present and honest with yourself. If it feels like a lot of pressure to find the terminology that matches you the most, you can free yourself from that and just be you. ■

Visit PartyAtTheBlock.com for tickets.



STRUT

, From Page 8

Brooke Lynn Hytes: It was actually ballet that got me into drag in the first place. Before I was a full time drag queen, I was a company dancer with Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, which is an all-male drag ballet troupe that parodies the conventions of romantic and classical ballet. After that I had the bug and, well, here we are today!

Glamorous as it looks, drag is your career, and people can get burned out on a career.

What is it about drag that keeps you engaged? Since drag is your job now, how has your approach to it changed? The creative outlet is something that always has and always will excite me. Piecing together the looks and performances for stage, television, just keeps my mind moving and stimulated! I also love being my own boss, I'm not sure I could handle someone telling me what to do!

Drag has always been a political statement. But these days, with the right-wingnuts attacking the art and the queens themselves from all sides, drag is in the spotlight and, at least in some cases, comes with some very serious issues to consider. How is this burning spotlight changing the world of drag overall, and how is it changing you personally in your career? I mean, drag has always been political. Our community has fought for decades for the rights we have, and now its our turn to continue that. I know for myself, things definitely changed when I was blessed with such a large platform. I absolutely feel a responsibility to defend my community and do my best to highlight everything I can to support it, especially initiatives to encourage voting!

On a less serious note, what's on your calendar right now? Are you working on any special projects? What's coming up



for you? And how did you get involved with Strut in Dallas? Well, LOTS of things that I can't quite talk about just yet, but trust that you will continue to see me touring the world and on your TV screens. I love Texas, and I am honored that Strut asked me to be part of their event!

Virgin Hotels Dallas General Manager Michael Bridges
Dallas Voice: When did Virgin open the hotel here in Dallas? Tell me about the

hotel itself — what amenities does it offer? I know, for example, that the pool and poolside bar are really outstanding. What else are the draws not just for folks coming in from out of town, but for the locals, too? Virgin Hotels Dallas General Manager Michael Bridges: Virgin Hotels Dallas, which opened in December 2019, prides itself on heartfelt service and a personalized hotel experience. The property offers three dining and drinking outlets, including the flagship restaurant,

bar and lounge, Commons Club, a fourth-floor rooftop bar and pool, The Pool Club, and the Funny Library Coffee Shop. Each space intermixes a passion for food and beverage, with music and programming, fusing with the local landscape and providing a vibrant, inclusive environment for travelers and locals alike. We envision our hotel as a hub for locals, whether they're checking in for a staycation, popping in for

STRUT, Page 21

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On the homefront

STAGE

Two queer Dallas actors find home on different stages

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

Francine Gonzalez gender bends in *Twelfth Night*

Francine Gonzalez has been preparing to serve some drag king realness. As Shakespeare Dallas opens its second repertory show *Twelfth Night*, the lesbian actor will take on the lead as Viola where she will do double duty on-stage: as man and woman. No stranger to Shakespeare, Gonzalez is ready to tap into her manhood.

"It's interesting because you have to navigate through this world as a man especially when she's in love with a man," Gonzalez said.

In *Twelfth Night*, Viola and her twin brother Sebastian are shipwrecked and figure the other has been killed. To survive, Viola dresses as a man, Cesario, and ends up as servant for Orsino, whom she falls for. Meanwhile, Orsino is in love with Olivia who has become enchanted with Viola.

And throuples weren't a thing at the time.

While she didn't overly explore the queer undertones of her role, it wasn't lost on Gonzalez either. There are the notions of presenting as masculine and boundaries between the genders. But she said it was also kind of easy.

"I don't necessarily associate clothes

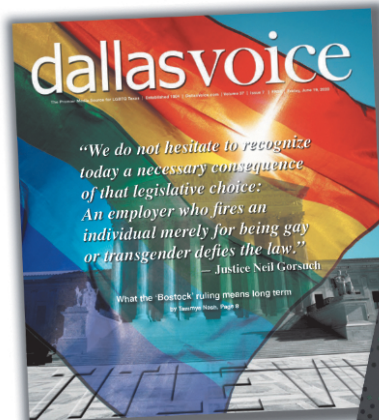


Francine Gonzalez

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with gender. It's been easier to settle into the masculine side of her, and I identify more as femme. But there's this strength within her that helps embody her and even Cesario," she said.

Gonzalez has worked among several theaters in the Dallas area, but Shakespeare Dallas has become a special place for her. Her resume is loaded with roles in the Bard's plays. For the 27 year-old, Shakespeare is just so vers.

"The characters are so rich with layers and malleable. Every time I do a Shakespeare play, I find something new, and he wrote in a way that we can always adjust it to fit into any time period," she said. "Shakespeare Dallas really has become a home for me."

Twelfth Night runs through July 21. For tickets, visit ShakespeareDallas.org.

Hairspray tour finishes as a homecoming for James Vinson

When James Douglas Vinson discov-

ered his first national tour would be concluding in Dallas, he said he was over the moon. Raised in Red Oak, Vinson has been back home since *Hairspray* opened Tuesday by Broadway Dallas at the Music Hall at Fair Park. Being back in Dallas is one thing, but being onstage at that venue is a full-circle moment for Vinson.

"I grew up watching shows there with my grandmother," he said. "I remember seeing the actors perform and thinking that I need to be doing that. So performing there will be surreal. I'm so excited."

Vinson plays Fender in *Hairspray* and understudies both Link Larkin and Corny Collins characters. He started the show last August as a result of his New York City audition where he's now based. Making his tour debut was a dream, but also, he had to put the sweat into it.

"It's been a lot of tough, hard work, but it pays off. I tour with people who are now new friends. I've seen cities I had never been to."



James Douglas Vinson

A graduate from Red Oak High School, Vinson pursued his studies at Rider University in New Jersey with New York quite literally in his sights. A train ride away, he landed a couple of contracts while also getting his degree.

He gained his confidence in theater which also helped the actor come out.

"Definitely growing up around the arts helped me become who I am. That helped me be more comfortable, but college propelled me to fully embrace it," he said. My coming out story is a bit tumultuous, but for sure, the arts have helped me define who I am as a gay man," he said.

Being in *Hairspray* probably helps a whole lot.

"I mean it's so queer-friendly and so camp. I definitely would love to do more shows like that," the 25 year-old said. I will say, coming out did open my eyes to a ton of roles and plays that I know I can do with a certain authenticity." ■

Hairspray runs through June 30. For tickets, visit BroadwayDallas.org.

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For more information see
our Facebook Group:
Cedar Creek Lake LGBTQ

Pure 'Synergy'

DANCE



Members of the Pegasus Contemporary Ballet company (Photography by Pegasus Season)

Choreographer Thang Dao brings his personal story in dance to 'Synergy'

RICH LOPEZ | Staff writer
rich@dallasvoice.com

Choreographer Thang Dao will premiere his new piece "7 Percussive Thoughts in a Melody" this week which was commissioned

by Pegasus Contemporary Ballet. The piece is part of PCB's second annual *Synergy* which happens June 21 and 22 at Moody Performance Hall. But that Dao's piece will also premiere during Pride month is a bonus for the New York-based gay choreographer.

At *Synergy*, he will present his new piece "7 Percussive Thoughts in a Melody."

"It's an exploration of rhythm identity and in a way a metaphor," he said by phone from Barcelona. "This is a deeply personal piece as it reflects myself as a gay, Asian choreographer. The title speaks to merging distinct elements that work with one another so it's different

facets of my own experience.”

With the piece, he hopes to evoke a visceral response from the audience.

That he also gets to present it during Pride is a bonus.



Thang Dao

“That’s so rewarding to have this in Dallas. To work with this young company is already hopeful, but I think that for it to happen during Pride where it is celebrated in the open is a testament to how far we have come and still going,” he said.

Dao works as a freelance choreographer and educator. He received his formal dance education from the Juilliard School and Boston Conservatory. Among the companies he’s choreographed for includes Ballet Austin, Ailey II, BalletX, Philadanco, Taiwan National University of the Arts, Jacob’s Pillow, Missouri Contemporary Ballet and the Boston Conservatory.

Pegasus Contemporary Ballet is Dallas’ only contemporary ballet company that also performs with live music accompaniment.

For *Synergy*, Dao has collaborated with percussionist and producer, Christopher ‘Chill’ Hill. After Dao had connected with PCB founder and artistic director Diana Crowder for this show, she

offered him a list of Dallas musicians to work with. When he heard Hill’s piece “Knock Knock,” Dao simply knew.

“I thought that this composer had such an interesting blend of sounds,” he said. “He has this mix of jazz, hip-hop and electronica that created this perfect auditory landscape. I’m so thrilled to be collaborating with an exceptionally talented musician.”

Hill had to write the music while Dao’s ideas percolated for the piece. For Dao, the combination of the music and the dancers and his own craft all came together rather smoothly.

“This energy that’s happened has been so important. Chill [Hill’s nickname] has made this beautiful soundscape for the dancers to play in, and I find them really open and inspirational. They’ve been helping me extract movements and ideas for this. The first time we met, we finished one section and that’s quite a feat for

me,” he said.

This marks the second year for PCB’s *Synergy* where three pieces feature collaborations between choreographer and musician. The other musicians performing include Grammy Award-winning jazz violinist Scott Tixier and techno composer and producer Declan James. Guest choreographer artists include Dallas Black Dance Theatre’s Daniel Palladino and freelance artist Michelle Thompson.

“*Synergy* achieved tremendous success last season, we knew this was something that had to be brought back,” Crowder said in a press release. “We hope the audience takes away an appreciation for the creativity and collaboration that occurs as a result of artistic partnerships. *Synergy* exists to expose audiences to new art forms and genres through an accessible, engaging performance that highlights the vibrancy achieved when different artistic mediums collide in a new way.”

For tickets, visit PegasusBallet.org.

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STATUS From Page 10

community with an exhibition ball “to spread ballroom joy among the larger Dallas community.”

He also mentioned that there will be information available to educate the community about the importance of taking this first step toward knowing their HIV status and what steps to take to access prevention including PrEP availability and safer sex options. For those testing positive, treatment information will be offered.

While AIDS activists have said for years that it’s important to know your HIV status, Walker goes a step further and said, “It’s important to talk about knowing your HIV status.”

That’s because current estimates are that 13 percent of people living with HIV are unaware they are HIV-positive. And the more people will talk about knowing their HIV status, the more will get tested.

HIV-statistics have always been slow to be released. Usually the latest available stats are two years old. But Walker said it’s been even slower in recent years.



“We’re still getting data from the pandemic,” he said.

But of the 1.2 million people living with HIV, 13 percent includes a lot of people who could be in treatment and become less likely to spread the virus.

How do we arrive at that 13 percent figure of people who don’t know? Where does that estimate come from? Walker said from contact tracing. When someone tests positive for HIV, it’s reported to the county along with information on anyone that person may have had sexual

contact with.

The county’s goal is to get anyone who tests positive to get into treatment. Most people on HIV medications will achieve low or undetectable viral loads. Those who are undetectable don’t pass the virus to others.

Recently released statistics for Dallas County indicate 20,268 people were living with HIV in 2021. That includes 1,000 newly diagnosed cases.

Across the U.S., gay and bi men have been disproportionately impacted by

HIV, making up more than half of all new cases. In Dallas, the numbers are worse for gay and bi men, who make up about 77 percent of all new cases.

Walker said the higher incidence of HIV among gay and bi men in Dallas may be a result of a number of factors. Among them is stigma.

“People are uncomfortable talking about sex,” he said. “And people think they’re invincible.”

Public policy is another factor. Walker pointed to a bill introduced in the last session of the Legislature by state Rep. Venton Jones that would automatically include HIV testing as part of any panel of STD tests. Under current Texas law, you have to opt in, or ask for an HIV test to get one.

The goal by health professionals is to stop the spread of HIV by getting everyone infected with the virus into treatment.

“The only way to stop HIV is together,” Walker said.

National HIV Testing Day will be marked in Dallas at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road from 4-8 p.m. on Tuesday, June 25. Free.



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STRUT, From Page 13

a quick bite or coffee at one of our restaurants, or enjoying themselves in the array of events we host. From yoga sessions to entertaining dive-in movies, and the ever-popular drag brunch featuring Drag Star Diva and Jenni P, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Virgin Hotels Dallas is, technically, in the Design District. But we all know that the Design District is part of the Gayborhood. And I know Virgin has been reaching out to the LGBTQ community here since the start. So tell me about the hotel's events and outreach to the rainbow North Texans. Since 2020, the hotel has partnered with Drag Star Diva and Jenni P to host a series of high-energy drag brunches featuring a rotating cast of local queens. These brunches have become a highlight for both hotel guests and locals, and further emphasizes Virgin's ethos of diversity and inclusion. Although we do many activations and philanthropic events with community partners, the hotel's commitment to diversity goes beyond external partnerships. In an effort to be the one of the most inclusive employers in the hotel industry, Virgin Hotels launched the J.E.D.I program, which stands for

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. And the diversity across our employees reflects this program too.

Visibly supporting the LGBTQ has really put a target on some corporate backs over the last couple of years, causing some companies to pull back to some degree (Target and Bud Lite, for example). Has Virgin Hotels been getting any pressure like that? And if so, how is the company responding?

We remain fully committed in our support for our friends in the LGBTQ community and haven't faced any negative feedback in this regard. When Senate Bill 12 was under consideration in the Texas Legislature last year, we remained steadfast in our commitment to hosting drag brunches in a private area of the hotel. Now known as "Dancing Kweens," our drag brunch is in huge demand from both our guests and performers, and it takes place in one of our ballrooms, providing ample space for guests, a dedicated stage, enhanced lighting and better sound quality.

What have I not asked you about that you want to mention? What's coming up for Virgin Hotels Dallas that our community should be planning for? Throughout the



month of June, guests have been able to enjoy Pride-themed brunches, and the last one happens June 30. Expect delectable brunch stations, glitter-adorned performances and much more, creating a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere for all attendees. And of course, to wrap up the month-long celebration, Virgin Hotels Dallas is partnering with event producer Deryck Todd to bring the iconic NYC party, STRUT, to the Dallas Design District on Saturday, June 22. The event will feature an appearance and special performance from beloved *RuPaul's Drag Race* and *Canada's Drag Race* star Brooke Lynn Hytes. Attendees can also enjoy drag performances by a lineup of talented artists, ensuring an electrifying evening of entertainment.

Guests will have the opportunity to shop at pop-up shops set up by two well-loved Dallas boutique stores, Space Cowboy Home and Czech Garcons. Additionally, there will be a silent auction benefiting the TX Latino Pride and Legacy Cares, offering guests the chance to support important causes while enjoying the festivities.

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Dallas Arts District hosts its seventh annual PRIDE Block Party Friday (June 28), from 6 p.m. to midnight. See listings for details.

■ **Every Wednesday: THRIVE**

Resource Center's THRIVE Wednesday Support Group for LGBTQ adults 50 and older meets from 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. at Resource Center Community Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road, and is led by interns from the SMU counseling program. For more information on the support group and how to join, send an email to THRIVE@myresourcecenter.org.

JUNE

■ **June 21: Dallas Arts District Pride Block Party**

Dallas Arts District celebrates the 7th annual PRIDE Block Party from 6 p.m.-midnight in the heart of the city's arts district. For more information visit DallasArtsDistrict.org.

■ **June 21: CinéWilde screens Marlon Riggs films**

As part of the Arts District Pride Block Party, CinéWilde screens two films by Marlon Riggs, a Black gay filmmaker from Fort Worth, followed by a Q&A with The Dallas Black Queer Collective. 8:30-9:30 p.m. at the Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 N. Harwood St. Visit DMA.org for information.

■ **June 21: HRC DFW June Social**

HRC DFW holds this monthly social event at The Fleischer Courtyard on the main level of the Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 N. Harwood St., from 6-8 p.m. Register at DallasArtsDistrict.org.

■ **June 21-23: 'Badge of Pride: From Silence to Celebration'**

The Irving Archives & Museum,

801 W. Irving Blvd., presents a special Pride Month pop-up exhibit, *Badge of Pride: From Silence to Celebration!* featuring more than a century of artifacts from LGBTQ history. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m.-4 p.m.. Saturday and Sunday. Visit IrvingArchivesandMuseum.com.

■ **June 22: Legacy's Pride Variety Show**

Legacy Care celebrates Pride at 6:30 p.m. in The Rose Room inside S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Visit LegacyCares.org for tickets and information.

■ **June 22: Strut Dallas Pride**

Virgin Hotels, 1445 Turtle Creek Blvd., hosts this Pride month extravaganza featuring Brooke Lynn Hytes of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and Canada's *Drag Race* from 8 p.m.-2 a.m. Visit the event page on Eventbrite.com for more information and tickets.

■ **June 22: Pride Bar Crawl**

Pride Crawl presents the 7th annual Pride Bar Crawl on Cedar Springs Road and Throckmorton St. Tickets start at \$10 and include two drink vouchers, free cover to the Pride Crawl drag show, a stadium party cup for the first 400 check-ins, drink specials and more. Check in time is 4 p.m. Visit Facebook.com/PrideBarCrawl for information.

■ **June 22: Pride VIP Market**

The Art Park at Trinity Groves, 3011 Gulden Lane, hosgts a Pride VIP Market from 4-10 p.m. featuring local vendors, music and drinks. Visit AllEvents.in/Dallas.

■ **June 22: LGBT Pride Pole Showcase**

Mesode presents the LGBT Pride Pole Showcase at Twisted Grip Fitness, 430 N. Coit Road, Ste. 300, featuring pole dancers showcasing their skills and creativity, 8-10 p.m.

■ **June 22: Smash Bros Video Game Tournament**

DFW Gaymers present the Smash Bros Tournament at JR.'s Bar & Grill, 3923 Cedar Springs Road. 6-9 p.m. Free to attend. Entry fee is \$10 in advance at Bit.ly.DFWSmash-Gays; \$13 at the event. Rounds are best of three with finals best of five. Cash prizes for first and second place.

■ **June 22: Rose City Pride**

Pride event takes place from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at W.T. Brookshire Convention Center, 2000 W. Front St. in Tyler. Visit TylerAreaGays.com for more information.

■ **June 22-30: 'Entre Paginas'**

Teatro Dallas presents the U.S. premiere of *Entre Paginas*, a musical written by Jorge Co-gollo for children, Saturdays and Sundays at 3 p.m. through June 30 at the Latino Cultural Center, 2600 Live Oak St. Tickets are \$25, available online at TeatroDallas.org.

■ **June 25: Hopeful Spaces: Support Group for Allies of LGBTQIA+ Youth**

Dallas Hope Charities Hopeful Discussions virtual support group designed to give parents, caretakers and allies space, seek advice and share experiences. Moderated by Meagan Skidmore Coaching. 6-7 p.m. DallasHopeCharities.org

■ **June 25: 'The Variety Show' with The Lost Boy Presents**

The Lost Boy Presents hosts *The Variety Show*, a creative playground from the mind of Brian Harden, at Arts Mission Oak Cliff, 410 S. Windomere Ave. 7-9:30 p.m.

■ **June 25: Artist Talk**

Join Meow Wolf, 300 Grapevine Mills Parkway in Grapevine, for an artist talk celebrating Pride from 7-8 p.m. Free for all ages with an exhibition ticket. Visit MeowWolf.com for more information.

■ **June 25: National HIV Testing Day**

Abounding Prosperity and Resource Center join forces to offer free testing, entertainment and information from 4-8 p.m. at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road.

■ **June 26: Same-Sex Partner Grief Group**

Meet's the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month on Zoom and in person. Contact Richard DeKnock for details at tastefullyrichard@gmail.com.

■ **June 26: Inclusion Business Mixer**

Join WBCS and the North Texas LGBT Chamber for happy hour at The Rayleigh Underground, 316 W. Las Colinas Blvd., Suite 100, Irving, from 4- 6 p.m. Register at Na.Eventscloud.com.

■ **June 27-28: 'I, Too, Sing America'**

Turtle Creek Chorale presents *I, Too, Sing America*, a patriotic performance accompanied by a brass chorus and featuring the Meyerson Lay Family Organ, at the Meyerson Symphony Center, 2301 Flora St., 7:30-9:30 p.m.

■ **June 28: Sweet Taste of Pride 2024**

DEI Community Project hosts this family friendly event from 6-9 p.m. at 4001 Main St. in Rowlett. Visit the event page on Eventny.com for more information.

■ **June 28: Splash Kickoff Party**

Pride at Cedar Creek Lake kicks off at 5:30 p.m. at Vernons Lakeside, 2101 E. Cedar Creek Parkway in Seven Points. Visit the event page on Facebook for more information.

■ **June 28: Rowlett Pride**

This event will feature a free, family-friendly celebration with festive fare by local vendors with children's activities and music. Guests can also win door prizes and one vendor is rumored to offer free cobbler. Rowlett's Sweet Taste of Pride 2024 is from 6-9 p.m. on the Downtown Rowlett Green at 4001 Main St.

■ **June 29: Splash Party on the Lake**

Enjoy some daytime fun on Cedar Creek Lake at 2 p.m. This event will take place on the Southeast side of the Cedar Creek Lake Dam on the right side of the ramp.

■ **June 29: Pride Houston**

The Official Houston Pride Festival and Houston Pride Parade, "You won't break our Pride," will occur in Downtown Houston. For info visit PrideHouston365.org.

■ **June 29: Sweet Soirée Pride Celebration**

Join Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road, for an unforgettable Pride celebration from 1-4 p.m. Visit MyResourceCenter.org for more information.

■ **June 29: Grayson County Pride**

Grayson County holds its annual Pride festival from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Sherman Municipal Ballroom, 405 N. Rusk St. in Sherman. Visit GraysonCountyPride.org for more information.

■ **June 29: Never Ending Pride Party**

Join AT&T Discovery District, 308 S. Akard St., for this colorful night filled with fun, drinks and endless joy and Pride from 7-10 p.m.

■ **June 30: Splash Drag Brunch**

This splash drag brunch takes place from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Triple Ranch Winery, 5220 Key Ranch Road, Trinidad. \$40 per ticket with \$15 going to the LGBTQ Scholarship Fund for a Cedar Creek Lake area student.

■ **June 30: Anna Pride**

The city of Anna hosts this Pride event from 1-5 p.m. at Pack Spirit, 118 W. 2nd St., in Anna.

■ **June 30: The Last Sunday in June**

Join The Dallas Way as they celebrate National Gay Pride Day at 2 p.m. at the Irving Archives & Museum, 801 W. Irving Blvd. in Irving.

JULY

■ **July 2: Classic Chassis Car Club**

Classic Chassis Car Club meets 6-8 p.m. at Ojeda's, 4617 Maple Ave.

■ **July 7: DMA First Free Sundays**

Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 N. Harwood St., offers FREE admission on the first Sunday of each month from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Visit DMA.org for more information.

■ **July 10: Same-Sex Partner Grief Group**

Meet's the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month on Zoom and in person. Contact Richard DeKnock for details at tastefullyrichard@gmail.com

■ **July 13: East Texas Rainbow Market**

Join Tyler Area Gays the second Saturday of every month for the Rainbow Market from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Bergfeld Park, 1501 S. Broadway Ave., in Tyler. For more information visit TylerAreaGays.com.

■ **July 12-28: 'The Prom'**

Uptown Players presents *The Prom* at Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. For information and to reserve or purchase tickets, visit UptownPlayers.org.

■ **Through-July 14: 'Walk This Way'**

The Dallas Holocaust Museum, 300 N. Houston St., presents this exhibit of footwear designed by iconic shoe designer Stuart Weitzman. Tickets and information are available at DHHRM.org.

■ **July 16: Up & Out: LGBTQ Caregiver Support Group**

Up & Out is a welcoming supportive group for LGBTQ caregivers who are currently caring for anyone 50 and up. This is a virtual event from 6-7:30 p.m. RSVP at CSP@TheSeniorSource.org.

■ **July 20: Gaybingo**

The Resource Center hosts this event each month from 6-9 p.m. at S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. Tickets go on sale at 3 p.m. the Wednesday following each Gaybingo event at MyResourceCenter.org.



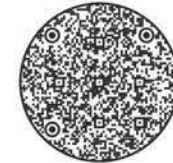
Celebrate Pride with Legacy Cares at the Pride Variety Show, starring Gloria Devine and an all-star cast, at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, June 22, in the Rose Room at S4. See listings for details.

PRIDE BLOCK PARTY

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Friday, June 21

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Ask Howard

HOW TO DO THE WRONG THING RIGHT

The down low on the high rise

Now, how 'bout that summer solstice, everybody! Exactly 14 hours, 18 minutes and 46 seconds of yawning daylength bridging sunrise to sunset, followed by a full moon to boot! Why, one could practically spend 24 hours solid reading Dr. Seuss along the shoals of Turtle Creek and not even need a jar of fireflies! Let's just get creek-running in the good old summertime right to it, shall we?

Dear Howard: The world, overnight, has gone totally batshit. My husband and I have been leasing for more than six years now, but the summer of our renters' discontent has finally arrived: Cars in our apartment complex are continuously broken into; at least one or two elevators are constantly down; management never changes out anyone's air filters, and the pool is repeatedly being closed, always with no explanation other than, quote, "maintenance" work.

Then there's the weekends! Like firecrackers on the Fourth of July, popping gunfire from the clubs lining McKinney Avenue keeps us on edge, midnight to dawn.

We can't take it any longer. Both of us have been reduced to just a mass of jangling nerves. Our time is NOW for that leap into the great unknown: homeownership!

Chrysanthos and I both agree we'd prefer high-rise living over suburbia's proverbial picket-fence. But what's the vibe nowadays for, like, living vertically? For people like us, I mean?

And not that it should matter, but Chrys is Latvian; I'm black, we're both gay. Tell us the truth, Howard, will you? The real truth. We can handle it. This will hardly be the first, nor the last time, that our dreams collide with reality. How prevalent, or low-burn insidious (being more to the point) has homophobia-creep recently gotten in Uptown's beautiful bubble? — **Go Joe Dawg Go**

Dear Dawgonnit: The real truth, you say, eh? Well, firstly, let's just clear the elephant out of the room: These Donald Trump election years are always hell on minorities — gay, Black, Jewish, Latino, the physically handicapped, you name

it. Unless you're Caucasian, corpulent and can carp at your golf caddy, "Snap it up, Goombah!" whilst swallowing a Big Mac whole, glassy-eyed as a Gaboon viper, then you're already at a disadvantage.

Chrys, Joe — permit me go out on a limb here and take a wild guess that your current residence has the name 'Post' attached to it in some form or another? Uh huh, well, I can totally sympathize with your renter's disgust, believe me. My husband and I, plus our two luckless cats, bunked at one of those cheap

Post horrors for fully two years during a recent remodel of our own place. Hellhole Gardens, I called said rental — charitably.

But listen: The leap from apartment renters to home owners is always a nerve-racking experience under even the best circumstances. Bottom line, guys: As an interracial couple — a gay interracial couple — it's a tough row ahead, I'm not going to lie to you.

Of course, we all know discrimination is against the law, just as we all know there's no better real estate agent than a former hooker. (And they're all former hookers. But whichever one still bleaches her hair the flinty blondest, that's who you pick: more splintery than mesquite wood, just pay her the rate she tells you it's gonna take, and whichever high rise you choose, consider yourselves in!)

Highland Park's high-rise corridor parallels Turtle Creek for about a solid mile: Lush, verdant, luxuriant and spar-

bling, it bears no more resemblance to natural Texas topography than Neptune.

As with all residential edifices, a building's vintage usually plays a key role into luring signatures onto a real estate sales contract. Would you prefer a newer building or an older building? Each comes with their pros and cons.

For example, in Dallas, a key divisional gauge separating what's considered old versus new, is whether the building under consideration was built before or after battery-powered, electronic cement floor levelers first hit mainstream, high-rise construction in the mid-1980s.

They were a game-changer.

As any resident can testify who lives in a high rise built prior to, say, when unfaithful Sue Ellen Ewing slurred at her husband, "Cheer up, J.R. Chances are, it's your baby," such luxuries as level flooring did not yet exist. Even today, set a ball down on these floors — any floor, any room, any ball — and watch it begin rolling. The Grand Canyon is more level than the floors of old high-rises.

On the other hand, it's only the older buildings that come with abundant floor space, colossal rooms, high ceilings, real balconies and the best views of downtown Dallas.

Dear readers, take my hand, close your eyes, and let's travel backwards, slowly, slowly to where all the tattered grandeur, the faded magnificence glitters new again. At the box office, Julie Andrews and Julie Christie compete for No. 1; the future Katy Trail roars of train tracks' locomotive engines, and local phone calls don't even require area codes. An ebul-

lient Joan Crawford and husband, Alfred Steele, president of PepsiCo, wave from one of the spacious, wraparound penthouse balconies.

Ahh, the Turtle Creek High-Rise Corridor — swimmin' pools, football stars ... POP!

The bubble bursts. Reality is back. Our future's now.

Not a single Turtle Creek high rise is equipped to handle a full garage of EVs. "Electric vehicles?" sniggeringly scoffs Central Texas's blasé, fossil-reliant boards. "Honey, that day will never come here!" Indeed, rose may be the eyewear color of choice most preferred by Texans through which to view their world; albeit, denial little alters the fact that the very first target listed on the Xi/Putin American Annihilation Pact is Houston's oil refineries.

Yeah, but aside from that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?

Guys, if it's the old Grande Dame high rises that tickle your fancy most, simply spend some Sunday afternoon on walk-about of your chosen favorite's lobby, grounds, pool, etc. Better yet, find someone on the inside to help you in evaluating your choice — a friend, or a friend of a friend or even a frenemy of a frenemy — who lives in the building and is privy to its most salacious secrets.

Grand Dame high-rises are notoriously difficult to run, say nothing of running well. And one should always first assess just how openly hands-on, and effective its HOA board is. Your inside source will know whether a board "coup d'etat" has taken place in the past few years and should equally be able to inform you whether the new board majority delivered on its promises — to fix the former regime's previous failings via implementing "financial-best" practices (to be interpreted however one so desires, as they mean absolutely nothing, whatsoever). Things like policy transparency, key staff retention, managerial excellence, candid concern and rightful respect for all homeowners, yadda, yadda, yadda.

More often than one could give a damn, incoming board majorities frequently rush to hire a new management company, solely to relieve them of the frightening responsibility of actually



having to perform the job they were elected to do. Subsequently, to the cleaners get taken not only the new HOA board, but all the homeowners, equally. What a shocker.

Hence, an older building — with its often astronomical HOA fees and its complex maintenance needs combined with its reputation for being “difficult” — is pure manna from Heaven for a management company!

Invariably, by plan, the board majority too often then becomes convinced that the only salvation between it and utter catastrophe is the loving arms of the management company; thus, over time, the board majority grows ever more unlikely to challenge the decisions of its shining knight in white armor, convincing even well-meaning board members to turn a blind eye toward any further continuation of practices that they specifically sought election to change. And when challenged by homeowners, they wind up defending the indefensible, until that dread day finally comes requiring an emergency special assessment be made just to rescue the building.

At last, Chrys and Joe, we come to perhaps the most consequential issue affecting your daily enjoyment of high-rise living: the character, competence and conduct of your building’s general manager.

Back in the golden era of Dallas high-rise life, one could expect the general manager to possess at least a modicum of courtesy, competency, transparency, responsiveness and respect for the homeowners he or she served. Well, kiss those days long gone!

Nowadays, when it comes to general managers, we’ve been reduced to nothing but blind luck of the draw. Some are pleasant enough, albeit, incapable of running even a lemonade stand. And others are but wolves in sheep’s clothing, blessed with the anti-managerial gifts of rudeness, obfuscation and concealment.

But back to your question of homophobia, Joe: The wolves are unlikely to have any qualms whatsoever using the “F-word” against you once your back is turned: “Bougie fa**ot!”

Hopefully, your inside source will already well know what’s going on inside your favored choice of residence. And should there be a high level of dissent among the homeowners about the HOA board’s performance, the management

company, and its general manager, beware!

As for the building I call home, its grounds and surrounding area are nothing short of gorgeous. The residents here (with but a few, rare exceptions) are kind, wonderfully accomplished people. Our building is the very nuclei of Uptown graciousness. Every tenant one meets here has the same aim: to live in the most desirous high-rise on Turtle Creek. We are all so very fortunate.

And for anyone requiring a reality check before turning molehills into mountains, I suggest taking a pleasant vacay this summer to one of those exotic wonders of reality-dose tranquility spots: Gaza, Ukraine, Nigeria, Russia, China, Israel or perhaps the tropical paradise of Haiti.

Be sure to send me a postcard!

Now, guys, back to your hunt for the perfect high-rise space: Trust your instincts. If your initial concern regarding a building’s general manager is, “Hmm, I dunno; something about him just doesn’t feel quite ... right,” then remember the immortally-prescient words of Oscar Wilde: “Only a fool doesn’t judge by first impressions.”

— Howard Lewis Russell

July’s ready and panting, men! Whatever questions your heat delirium can conjure up, scooch your burning thighs over here ‘neath my ceiling fan and share some iced tea, on me at AskHoward@dallasvoice.com.

this week’s solution

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Solution on Page 25

Across

- 1 Lip service?
- 5 Muslim faith
- 10 Neil Simon's Brighton ___ Memoirs
- 15 Cut
- 16 Black to Bonheur
- 17 Open-mouthed fivesome
- 18 Barcelona boy
- 19 ___ once (like simultaneous orgasm)
- 20 *The Brady Bunch* episode
- 21 Start of a quote from Judy Shepard, who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom
- 24 It may come at the end of a love letter
- 25 Where to find your first mate
- 26 *All I Ever Need* ___ (Sonny & Cher hit)
- 27 Sex Pistols singer Vicious
- 28 ___ angle (not straight)
- 30 Bernstein manuscripts, e.g.
- 33 More of the quote
- 39 Caesar and Antony
- 40 Chemical suffix
- 41 The bottom line
- 42 Sophie B. Hawkins' *As ___ Me Down*
- 43 More like Nelly?
- 45 Sked info

Down

- 46 Chaz to Cher
- 47 More of the quote
- 51 Hightail it
- 52 Muss, as a lover's hair
- 56 Woman of La Mancha
- 59 Like luggage that might be stolen
- 62 End of the quote
- 64 Greek architectural style
- 65 Oscar nominee, perhaps
- 66 Sinead O'Connor's country
- 67 Trim and graceful
- 68 Bangkok natives
- 69 Chelsea Pines and Lands End
- 22 Try a Rick Rodgers cookbook, e.g.
- 23 Red-brown
- 27 Gay nightlife district of London
- 29 Part of Q and A (abbr.)
- 31 Simple sack
- 32 Ward of *Once and Again*
- 33 *Charlie's Angels* role
- 34 Publisher of same-sex couples' legal guide
- 35 Middle Eastern sultanate
- 36 Edward II to Edward I
- 37 ___ *Upon a Mattress*
- 38 Football Hall-of-Famer Ewbank
- 43 Testacle, in slang
- 44 Turns around
- 47 Shakespearean jester
- 48 Pearl Buck character
- 49 Magazine section
- 50 Cores, to Atom Egoyan?
- 51 Singer David
- 53 Like a clipped sheep
- 54 *Rosemary's Baby* author
- 55 Ideal spots
- 56 Biathlete's slats
- 57 Carbon compound
- 58 Zip
- 59 Ejaculation of concern
- 60 Blazing star
- 61 Conflict of *Saving Ryan's Privates*
- 63 Time std.

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