It’s getting HOT in here!

TBRU hosting a “Weekend of Bears and Hoses” in firefighter-themed event
by Tammye Nash, Page 8
Are you PrEPed for summer?

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Jay Alfie began transitioning more than a year ago, according to Isabella, but had chosen to delay having his name changed legally. She said that after going through the required therapy, at the end of the last school year, Jay had been given permission to go ahead with top surgery and testosterone therapy. At the start of the year, she added, he began the name-change process. But, Isabella said, she and her brother and parents are still citizens of Mexico, which means that since he is now 18, Jay will have to go to Mexico himself to have his name and gender markers on his birth certificate changed. — Tammye Nash

Joe Delane’s death now listed as homicide by M.E.

The April 16 death of Joe Delane, 51, has now been ruled a homicide, according to information on the Tarrant County Medical Examiner’s website. Fort Worth police’s PIO said Tuesday, May 29, that the case remains under investigation.

Delane died Monday evening, April 16, in the ICU at JFSP Hospital in Fort Worth, following an altercation the previous Friday evening with a bartender at the 515 Bar on South Jennings Street.

A police spokesman at the time told Dallas Voice that the bartender — whose name was not released — said that Delane had been drinking elsewhere when he went into the 515 Bar that night and that he was being disruptive. The bartender said Delane refused to leave when he was told to, and when the bartender tried to escort him out, Delane punched him. The bartender said he responded by pushing Delane away from him and that Delane stumbled and fell, striking his head.

But others who saw Delane earlier in the evening have said he was not drunk before he went into 515 Bar, and some who were at the bar have said that it was the bartender who hit Delane and not the other way around.

Since Delane’s death, the M.E.’s office has listed the cause and manner of death both as “pending.” At some point between Friday, May 25, and Tuesday morning, May 29, that information was changed.

The cause of death is now listed as “blunt force trauma of head,” and manner of death is listed as homicide.

We will update this story as more information becomes available.

—— Tammye Nash

ABC cancels hit ‘Roseanne’ reboot after Barr’s racist tweets; Barr’s agent drops her

It seemed as if the reboot of Roseanne was a risk that paid off. Ever since Will & Grace announced it was coming back to a “limited run” (only to be extended to two full seasons after high ratings), it has become standard for networks to tease a reboot of a show as “limited,” while holding out hope that ratings will be good enough to cement a full season order (it’s a way to bring back the stars without the humiliation of “canceling” the show if it flops).

And after Roseanne debuted in March to huge ratings — nearly 22 million viewers — ABC quickly announced it would come back in the fall.

It was risky to do that so early, though, because Roseanne Barr herself is such a divisive figure — supportive of LGBT rights, a putative hero of the working class… but also an unapologetic Trump supporter.

Well, now ABC really is canceling a show because of its star’s politics... at least in part. Roseanne tweeted what many have called an overtly racist statement, wherein she equat ed former Obama adviser Valerie Jarrett to the Muslim Brotherhood and a monkey. (Jarrett is African-American.)

“Muslim brotherhood & planet of the apes had a baby=vj.” Barr tweeted, with “vj” a reference to Jarrett. Wanda Sykes, who was consulting producer on the reboot, was the first to announce she would not return because of the comments. Co-star and executive producer Sara Gilbert (Darlene) also tweeted out her contempt for Barr. Gilbert is openly gay. And shortly after ABC officials announced they were canceling the series immediately, Barr’s talent agency — ICM — announced it would no longer represent her, and other networks have pulled all reruns of Roseanne.

Barr later apologized and deleted the tweet, announcing she was leaving Twitter. But the damage was done. And Barr quickly returned to Twitter with more rants.

Robbery victim shoots suspect

A robbery suspect was hospitalized early Saturday morning, May 26, after being shot twice by the man he tried to rob in the parking lot behind TMC: The Mining Company and S4, in the 3000 block of Cedar Springs Road.

Initial reports by local media indicated that the incident occurred at the intersection of Cedar Springs Road and Hawthorne Avenue, but Dallas Police Department’s LGBT Liaison Office Amber Roman has confirmed to Dallas Voice that there was only one attack and that it happened in the parking lot in the 3900 block of Cedar Springs.

Dallas Voice has video of the immediate aftermath of the attack and shooting posted at our website, DallasVoice.com.

According to information witness reports, a man was attacked from behind as he was getting into his vehicle in the parking lot, and was hit over the head with an unknown object. The victim was able to get into his car where he retrieved his own handgun, and then fired three shots at his assailant.

Police at the scene that night can be heard on the video saying that the attacker had been arrested at Parkland Hospital after going to the emergency room with gunshot wounds. “We got the bad guy,” the officer says in the video.

—— Tammye Nash

Allen HS trans teen wins fight not to be dead-named at graduation

Officials at Allen High School have agreed to call a transgender senior by the correct name when he walks across the stage to receive his diploma Friday night.

Although Jay Alfie had been told at the beginning of the school year that school officials had no problems using his correct name at graduation, when he checked again a couple of months ago, Jay was told that school officials would only use his legal name, which at this point is the female name he was given at birth.

With his parents and sister helping, Jay has been fighting to get school officials to change their minds, and now they have.

In a written statement released to the media, Allen ISD Supt. Scott Niven said: “The school district’s practice at Allen High School graduation is to read the student’s legal name at the ceremony. This allows for consistency as the names of our 1,556 graduates are read. The practice of reading a student’s legal name at graduation is not specific to transgender students. It also applies to nicknames and names that are commonly used in place of the student’s legal name during the school year. If a student’s name is legally changed, the school district will make those changes accordingly.”

The Alfie family has been in the process of obtaining a legal name change for several months. Due to circumstances beyond the family’s control, the legal process will not be completed before graduation on June 1. Therefore, since the family has filed legal papers to change the name, the request to change the name at graduation will be honored.”

The announcement came this week after the family went public with their battle, and Jay’s story was featured on several news media outlets, after his sister Isabella created a MoveOn.org petition that garnered more than 5,000 signatures and after Jay’s parents met with the school’s graduation coordinator on Tuesday.

Jay Alfie

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JUNE

• Through June 3: TBRU
  Host hotel is The Hyatt Regency. Events are held at various venues, starting with BearDance at S4 on Friday night, the Mr. TBRU contest and a performance by Lady Bunny Saturday at the hotel, a barbecue dinner and closing ceremony Sunday at The RoundUp and the AfterParty Sunday at Dallas Eagle. See Page 8 for a full schedule.

• June 1: Pride at City Hall
  Unfurling of the Pride flag in the lobby of Dallas City Hall at the opening of the exhibit The Impact of HIV/AIDS in Dallas at noon at Dallas City Hall, 1500 Marilla St. Everyone welcome.

• June 1: Hope Cottage’s 100th birthday
  Hope Cottage: Pregnancy Care and Adoption Service Center Dallas celebrates its 100th birthday at 6 p.m. at Lakewood Country Club, 6430 Gaston Ave., with dinner, dancing and sharing memories. For information visit hopecottage.org/hc.

• June-September: Pride at the Library
  From UNT’s LGBT Archive, the library will exhibit collections from UNT’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Archive, documenting the history and culture of the LGBT community in Dallas at the J. Eric Jonsson Central Library, Dallas History & Archives (7th floor), 1515 Young St.

• June 2: Bloomin Ball
  Benefits AIDS Interfaith Network from 6 p.m.-midnight at Renaissance Dallas Hotel, 2222 N. Stemmons Freeway.

• June 2: Two Charities in One Show
  Linze Serell raises money for North Texas Pride, GDMAF, Texas Red Ribbon Wish Network and Miss Gay Texas Pageant System at 8 p.m. at 5115 Bar, 515 S. Jennings Ave., Fort Worth.

• June 3: Miss Big Thickette
  The Turtle Creek Chorale’s raise money for LifeWalk with their annual fundraiser pageant from 7-10 p.m. at the Round-Up Saloon, 3912 Cedar Springs Road.

• June 4: Dallas Cakes watch party
  Watch party for an encore showing of the Food Network series Dallas Cakes episode filmed during Toast To Life from 6:30-8 p.m. at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road. RSVP at DallasCakesWatchParty.eventbrite.com.

• June 5: Pride proclamation
  Dallas County Commissioners present a Pride proclamation at Commissioners Court meeting at 9 a.m. at Dallas County Commissioners Court, first floor, 411 Elm St. (former Texas School Book Depository). Everyone welcome.

• June 6: LifeWalk Pep Rally
  Kick off the 28th Dallas AIDS walk from 6:30-9 p.m. at 3015 at Trinity Groves, 3015 Gulden Lane.

• June 7: Brewing Up Business
  The North Texas GLBT Chamber of Commerce meets from 8:30-9:30 a.m. at Zephyr, 4001 Cedar Springs Road.

• June 8-10: Turtle Creek Chorale
  The Turtle Creek Chorale presents Outlaws, at 7:30 p.m. on Friday-Saturday and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday at City Performance Hall, 2520 Flora St. TurtleCreekChorale.com.

• June 8: Calcutta, Caddy and Team Auction

Obituary

Longtime Dallas LGBT activist Campbell Burgess Read died Wednesday, April 25, 2018, at the age of 87.

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland to Selwyn and Mary Read (nee MacMillan), Read was educated at Edinburgh Academy and Corpus Christi Cambridge. He was a respected mathematician and statistician and was a statistics professor at SMU for 40 years.

Read helped form the school’s first gay and lesbian student association, Gay and Lesbian Student Support Organization, in 1983. Read told Dallas Voice in 1988 that the organization placed an ad in the Daily Campus, and within a month, 60 students responded. The school newspaper wanted to send a reporter to the meetings, but Read refused because meetings were held at his home, and he wanted to give the students who attended privacy. He said it was the first time the administration had to look at the LGBT community, but regular attention and the GLSSO meetings was low, and the group folded by 1985.

By 1988, when he spoke to Dallas Voice, Read said the Texas sodomy law had a chilling effect on gays and lesbians on campus and that — at least for the then-near future, he didn’t expect any formal campus group to form.

When the Reagan administration wanted to do a community survey on the prevalence of HIV in the general population by taking a blood sample from people in randomly selected households, Dallas was to be the test city for the national project. Dallas County Commissioners Court, then Republican controlled, had qualms and appointed a 29-member advisory panel. Seven of those members were gay, including Read who opposed the survey. The Dallas survey failed and by 1989, the newly-elected Bush administration pulled its support from the project.

Read was also an environmentalist, and in the 1980’s, he became a member of the Trinity River Corridor Citizen’s Committee. He was an early activist against building a toll road in the Trinity flood plain, long before there were signature bridges or bond money set aside for parks in the flood plain.

He was a keen birdwatcher and environmentalist as well as a member of the local church community helping organize and teach others about birdlife. He was never happier than when walking the mountain trails around Santa Fe.

Read is survived by his sister, Diana, one niece and one nephew.

A memorial service will be held at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13, in the sanctuary of First Unitarian Church, 4015 Normandy Ave. in the Sanctuary followed by a reception in Channing Hall. Park on either side of the building or in a back lot accessible from St. Andrews Drive.
Fairway to Equality kickoff at 6:30 p.m. at Sue Ellen’s, 3014 Throckmorton St.

- **June 8: DFW Pride Happy Hour**
  At the former Monica’s Aca y Alla in Deep Ellum owned by longtime managers Jose and Angel from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Maracas Cocina Mexicana.

- **June 9: Tall Tales & High Heels**
  Dallas Public Library hosts its first LGBTQ-themed story hour featuring Cassie Nova, Your Highness and Jenna Skyy. Children will sing, dance, and interact with these fabulous ladies in a safe environment to learn about the LGBTQ community in Dallas from 2-3 p.m. at J. Erik Jonsson Central Library, Youth Discovery Center on the second floor, 1515 Young St.

- **June 9: Fairway to Equality**
  Tournament shot gun starts at 1:30 p.m. at Indian Creek Golf Club, 1650 W. Frankford Road, Carrollton.

- **June 9: Different Strokes Golf Association (DSGA)**
  DSGA, the LGBT golf organization, plays at 9 a.m., at Twin Creeks Golf Course, 501 Twin Creeks Drive, Allen. $60 includes golf, cart, range balls and prizes. Information at DSGADallas.org or email info@DSGADallas.org.

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Snow White is waiting for you at the SPCA of Texas’ Jan Rees-Jones Animal Care Center in Dallas, 2400 Lone Star Drive (near I-30 and Hampton Road). Hours are noon-6 p.m. Sun-Wed and noon-7 p.m. Thurs-Sat. Regular adoption fees are $100 for puppies and kittens aged 0-6 months, $50 for adult dogs and cats aged 6 months or older, $25 for senior dogs or cats aged 7 years and older and $25 for VIP dogs and cats (available for adoption for 30 days or more.) Fee includes spay/neuter surgery, age-appropriate vaccinations, a heartworm test for dogs six months and older and a FIV/FeLV test for cats 4 months and older, initial flea/tick preventative and heartworm preventative, a microchip, 30 days of PetHealth Insurance provided by PetPlan, a free 14-day wellness exam with VCA Animal Hospitals, a free year-long subscription to ActivePaws, a rabies tag and a free leash. Call 214-742-SPCA (7722) or visit today.

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At least 1,500 hirsute and hefty men are gathering in Dallas this weekend for Texas Bear Round-Up 23: Station 23, the annual event that raises fun and funds for “bears” and their friends and fans from around the world.

Organizer Wayne Davis said attendance is down a little this year, since the event has been moved a couple of months later in the year, due to scheduling conflicts at the hotel. This year’s date, he said, is in conflict with some Florida bear events, Gay Days at Disney and some early LGBT Pride events.

This is TBRU’s second year with the Hyatt as its host hotel. Last year, Davis explained that organizers were able to secure a four-year contract with the elite downtown hotel — giving the event a chance to have a single host hotel large enough to host all the non-nightclub events and house all the folks coming in from out of town.

But the scheduling conflicts last year and this year meant TBRU had to be moved to late May/early June. Next year, though, the event returns to its traditional time and is set for March 14-17. For those who like to plan way ahead, TBRU 25, in 2020, will be held March 12-15.

TBRU, organized each year by Dallas Bears, is one of the community’s largest fundraising weekends. This year’s beneficiaries will be the Greg Dollgener Memorial AIDS Fund, the Sharon St, Cyr Fund and AIDS Interfaith Network/AIN.

This year’s event is again centered around the host hotel, Hyatt Regency Downtown, and reaches out into the gayborhood for events at various LGBT bars. Events started earlier in the week — including the Official TBRU Early-Bear Party on Wednesday at The Round-Up Saloon and the Fireman’s Ball and Fireman/Rescue Costume Contest on Thursday at the hotel.

But the weekend gets underway in earnest tonight (Friday, June 1), with Bear-Dance: Inferno — in keeping with this year’s fireman theme — at S4, 3911 Cedar Springs Road. It will feature drag performer Varla Jean Merman and rapper Cazwell along with DJs Decoding Jesus, New Dad, John LePage and Ryan Tiffen. The fire starts at 8 p.m., and admission is $25.

Saturday’s big events include the TBRU Family Dinner and the Mr. TBRU Contest, starting at 5 p.m. in the Landmark Ballroom at the Hyatt. The dinner and contest shut down at 7:15 p.m. as does the Landmark so organizers can rearrange in time to re-open the Landmark Ballroom at 8 p.m. for “Transtester,” a show by the legendary Lady Bunny.

Tickets are still available, and the show is open to the public.

The show will be followed by a book-signing and photo-autographing session by Lady Bunny.

Saturday winds up with a TBRU Underwear Auction at midnight in the hotel’s Marsalis Hall B.

The weekend winds up on Sunday with the TBRU Big Texas Barbecue and Closing ceremony, starting at noon at the Round-Up. Then the Official TBRU After Party — Double Trash Disco, TBRU Edition, with DJs Blaine Soileau and Perry — runs from 5 p.m. to midnight at Dallas Eagle.

Throughout the weekend, the Chill Lounge — offering board games and conversation in an alcohol lounge — and the Video Game Room will be open in Cumberland K and Cumberland L at the hotel, and there will be meet-and-greets, socials, happy hours and more scheduled at the hotel and bars around the gayborhood, including Round-Up Saloon, S4, Dallas Eagle and Hidden Door.

And Davis stressed that while TBRU is designed with bears in mind, “it’s not just for bears. We have all kinds of people and their admirers that come for the weekend. They come because it is fun, and because it’s for a good cause. ... It’s a family reunion for bears all over the country.”

Other notes to remember over the weekend:
• TBRU provides evening shuttle service to the gayborhood and sponsor bars, beginning at 7 p.m. Fruday, 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 11:30 a.m. Sunday. Last bus leaves BearDance/S4 at 3 a.m. Friday night/Saturday morning, and the last bus leaves the bars at 2:30 a.m. Saturday night/Sunday morning. Sunday night, the last bus leaves the Dallas Eagle at midnight.

Look for the “Trinity Crossing” signs for the outdoor patio area that leads you to the bus staging area just outside the main lobby of the hotel. Shuttles will stop at Round-Up Saloon/S4/TMC, Dallas Eagle, the Hidden Door and the Hyatt.
• Attendees are reminded to always wear proper attire in the hotel public areas.
• Those interested in adding an Excision to their itinerary at the last minute can check the leading bus for additional space. Unclaimed seats will be made available to those waiting on standby at 10 minutes before the posted departure time, and no refunds are given to those who arrive late or miss the bus.

For a complete schedule of the weekend, visit TBRU.org. For a digital copy of the schedule, more information, details and announcements use the TBRU Digital App, available at http://my.yapp.us/TBRU23.
FROM STAFF REPORTS

At noon on June 12, bells will toll 49 times, in unison, around the world as a tribute to the 49 victims of the 2016 mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.

The Rev. Neil Cazares-Thomas, senior pastor at Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ, announced this week that his church will be participating in memorial to Pulse victims, and he joined parents of the victims in calling on churches, temples, synagogues, mosques and businesses around the country to participate by tolling their bells and sharing messages of love and kindness on their public signs.

The tolling of the bells is part of Acts of Love and Kindness, a One Orlando Alliance movement “grown out of the spirit of giving and good deeds witnessed in the aftermath of the tragedy at Pulse nightclub,” Cazares-Thomas explained.

He said Acts of Love and Kindness has set a “lofty goal” of getting at least 449 entities to participate this year in the tolling of the bells.

“Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ first rang its bells 49 times to honor the lives of those lost on June 13, 2016, and broadcast this live via Facebook,” the pastor said. “It was an important act of solidarity with the LGBTQ community, and the grief that we felt then continues to be felt today.

“We are honored to have done so and will be honored to join this growing movement of tolling our bells,” he continued.

“Bells are sacred; we toll them for death, and we ring them for celebration, ensuring that none of these lives are forgotten.”

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The chorale finishes out its season with a 3-night concert, a sendoff performance, a regional tour and more

DAVID TAFFET  |  Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

The Turtle Creek Chorale begins one of the busiest months in its history with its main stage summer concert, Outlaws, followed by its regional Friendship tour.

**OUTLAWS**

The chorale finishes out its concert season with Outlaws, its homage to country music with some Tammy Wynette, Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton and more, on June 8-10.

Artistic Director Sean Baugh never considered himself a country fan but said he always loved Dolly. Somehow, he said, he just never thought of her as country.

But as he spent the last year listening to country music, taking suggestions from chorale members and studying the genre, he put together a concert that he called “entertaining, light and fun” with lots of dancing and something for everyone.

In addition, he developed an appreciation for country music.

“The messaging is very inspirational and uplifting,” he said, despite all the songs about heartbreak and “my dog left me, my woman left me.”

Chorale members helped convince him this was a great idea for a concert.

“We’re in Texas,” he said. “We have to pay homage. Turns out, it’s very singable.”

He said he’s gotten more suggestions for this concert than he has for any other.

“So many members are avid country fans,” he said. “Every member has a favorite song.”

He got caught up in the Johnny Cash debate — is he country or rock and roll? Baugh decided Cash had to be included.

There’s classic country — Wynette and Patsy Cline — and new — Carrie Underwood and Dixie Chicks.

What surprised Baugh as he listened to lyrics was how much of country music is revolutionary music with a message, and he can’t ignore a message in his music. So the Judds’ “Love Can Build a Bridge,” Underwood’s “So Deep” and the Dixie Chicks infamous “Not Ready to Make Nice” are all part of Outlaws.

**DMA**

The following weekend is equally busy for the chorale.

On Friday, June 15, soloists from the chorale will participate in the Dallas Museum of Art’s monthly Late Night. This month’s Late Night is part of an Arts District Pride celebration.

Chorale members will perform at 6 p.m. to open Late Night in the atrium under the Chihuly glass. They’ll repeat their performance several times through the evening.

**TEMPLE SHALOM**

The chorale kicks off its Friendship Tour with a performance at Temple Shalom, in Far North Dallas on Hillcrest at Alpha Road, in a June 16 performance that’s co-sponsored by Temple Shalom LGBTQ Pride, the synagogue’s own LGBT group, and Congregation Beth El Binah, Dallas’ predominantly LGBT synagogue.

He called the evening a hometown send-off on a red state tour.

“It’s two hours of some of the most beautiful, uplifting Turtle Creek Chorale music you’ve ever heard,” Baugh said.

**FRIENDSHIP TOUR**

The Friendship Tour from June 21-24 begins in Tulsa, moves to Little Rock — including a stop at the Clinton Presidential Center, — continues in Shreveport and wraps up in Tyler.

Performances will be in churches rather than concert venues. Baugh said performance halls automatically create a wall between performer and attendee. Churches don’t have those barriers. He wants people coming to the concerts to find common ground and hopes to build bridges.

The idea for a friendship tour came after the election.

“The idea came from a place of necessity,” Baugh said.

Two other choruses have done similar tours. The San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus, conducted by former Turtle Creek Chorale Artistic Director Tim Seelig, recently did a friendship tour through the Deep South. The Washington Gay Men’s Chorus did a similar tour through cities to its southwest.

Baugh decided he wanted to visit nearby cities with which he and other chorale members had connections. Tulsa is Baugh’s hometown. And about eight years ago, the chorale performed at First Presbyterian Church in Tyler. He said he wanted to renew that friendship.

What surprised him when he visited churches in the other three cities was the warm reception he received.

“One church took us into a room to pray we would perform there,” he said.

He hopes the audiences are filled with two types of people — those in the LGBT community who don’t have the benefit of community support and those “who are curious about us but don’t find themselves in alignment with what we believe.”

Voices of Hope, Cathedral of Hope’s choir, will join the chorale on its tour, Baugh said, to give the out-of-town performances a more gospel flair that the audiences in the churches will find familiar. In Tulsa, the Council Oak Men’s Chorus, that city’s 40-voice, gay men’s chorus, will join the chorale for its performance.

The River City Men’s Chorus, a men’s chorus, but not a gay-identified choir, will join the chorale for its second-night performance. Turtle Creek Chorale’s Director of Operations Jeremy Wayne grew up in Little Rock and helped make that connection.

Baugh said 175 chorale members will go on tour and, other than time off from work, they won’t have to pay their own expenses. Fundraising through the year will cover expenses.

Although the out-of-town concerts are free, reservations are suggested, especially for the Tyler concert that’s filling up quickly. Tickets are available at TurtleCreekChorale.com.

Tickets for Outlaws at City Performance Hall and the concert at Temple Shalom are available to purchase online or at the door.
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www.UptownDocs.com
LGBT grief support group for people who have lost a same-sex partner from 6:45-8 p.m. at Oak Lawn Library, 4100 Cedar Springs Road.

**June 13: City proclamation and awards**

Pride at City Hall month includes the mayor’s proclamation, awards and cake at noon in the sixth floor Flag Room, Dallas City Hall, 1500 Marilla St.

**June 14: PFLAG Dallas**

PFLAG meets the second Thursday of every month from 7-9 p.m. at Northaven United Methodist Church, 11211 Preston Road. 972-849-0383. PFLAGDallas@outlook.com.

**June 14: Tall Tales & High Heels**

Dallas Public Library hosts its first LGBTQ-themed adult story hour. Sit, stand, or shimmy, but be dazzled by these lovely ladies as they read you classic tales we all know and love. This program is intended for adults only at 11 p.m. at JR.’s Bar & Grill, 3932 Cedar Springs Road.
Are you there God? It’s me, Donald

What would happen if, one day, God decided to speak directly to Donald Trump, just to set him straight on a thing or two? Here’s my idea of how that might look:

President Donald J. Trump took off on Air Force One today, headed to the American Heartland to give a speech before an audience of several thousand paid attendees wearing red “Make America Great” T-shirts and hats. As his motorcade arrived, they chanted on cue the scripted dialog they had memorized: “We love you, Donald!”

But just as he took the stage and started to speak, the president began to hear a ringing in his ears, signaling that he would be channeling another divine communication. The audience, of course could hear only his side of the conversation.

“Hold on folks, I’ve got a call coming in. Yep, it’s God. Hi, I was just about to tell all of these good, hard-working sheep how you’re in my corner, and how we’re going to make this the best year ever for Christianity and the Trump brand. What a team. We’re going to be so great!

“Oh, you don’t take sides and form collaborations, huh? Well, I guess you have to say that, but we both know you rigged the election, right? How else could I have won? It was nothing short of a miracle. Old Hillary really got shafted on election night. From Russia with love, and all. But my buddy Vladimir could only do so much. I owe you big.

“But enough about my spectacular political success. I bet you want to congratulate me on my fantastic popularity with Christians, right? It’s just fantastic. You know Pastor Robert Jeffress at First Baptist Dallas says I’m paving the way for you to make a big comeback on earth, don’t you?

“What? You don’t know him? He claims he talks with you daily. You know — he’s that little twerp that built the huge new temple to you in downtown Dallas and is obsessed with gay sex. The one that jumps in front of a TV camera every chance he gets; the one with all the face makeup. He wears it constantly to be ready for the cameras. He looks a little kinky, but hey, different strokes for different folks, right?

“What?! You mean that little fucker isn’t really speaking for you?! You haven’t received any of the money he’s been collecting in your name? He just told everyone you had raised tithes to 15 percent because of inflation. Well, you just can’t trust anyone anymore. I can’t believe I’ve wasted so much time on that goofball. And I was about to give him a condo.

“What do you mean I shouldn’t be so mean-spirited and disloyal? I’m the most truthful, best-looking and likeable guy you’ll ever come across! My personality is absolutely magnetic! My skin glows with a healthy, deep, totally natural orange tan, and the sun beams off my golden hair!

“Everybody loves me! And everybody loves to read my tweets! Twitter plans to replace the bird logo with my face — if we can reach the right deal on it. It’s close.

“Huh? Who do you think you are to judge me and call me delusional?! I’m also the sanest, smartest person on the planet, and I’m ready to challenge you to a mental competency test. I guarantee you that my brain is bigger and better than yours!

“Oh yeah? Well the next time you want some air time don’t be calling me during one of my speeches! My speeches draw the largest crowds ever in the history of politics, you know. Call Sean Hannity at Fox News; he’ll set you straight!

“What? You don’t know who he is either? You watch CNN instead? How in the hell did you get the blocked number to my cell phone? Those damned leakers are going to really regret crossing me!

“And I’ll tell you another thing, I’m going to build my own church and start my own religion! It’s going to be the biggest, most beautiful church you’ve ever seen. And what’s more, you’re going to pay for it! Because all of my followers who have been contributing money to you are going to start giving it to me instead.

“And to think, I was about to give you a condo, too! I’ve had several open up since I had to quit cheating on Melania after the election. You can’t sneak anything past that woman. She’s got ears like satellite dishes these days.

“What? No, my hair is not on fire, and it’s not in any danger of catching on fire. Not my pants either. Why don’t you go burn a bush or something? I don’t care who you are. No one is more important than me, and I’ve got a speech to give.

“What the hell?! Where did everybody go?! I paid them good money to be here supporting me for the video we’re going to release to the media, and they took off early!

“I should’ve gone golfing. I think I’m going to fire someone over this. You’re fired! You’re all fired. I can do it all myself. I’m ready to go back to Trump Tower. I can run the country from there. The White House is a dump. I miss my gold commodes.”
Sometimes when I try to write, I find it hard to breathe. No, it’s not my asthma or a panic attack, but rather a lack of air caused by the news media breathlessly awaiting the next outrage from the man sitting in the White House.

His random tweetstorms and his complete inability to focus on anything other than himself has sucked all the air out of the country. From late-night comedians to news commentators to columnists like myself, the target-rich environment engulfing Washington makes discussion of anything else next to impossible.

The result is a fatigue that makes each new outrage seem just that much more “business as usual.” It has numbed our country into accepting what is going on as almost normal. At times like these I have to step away, find some fresh air and breath in deep. As I exhale, I find myself shouting, “This is not normal! None of this is normal!”

Take a breath and say it with me: “THIS IS NOT NORMAL! NONE OF THIS IS NORMAL!”

The danger in not doing this little exercise is that, come November, when we actually have a chance to raise our voices at the polls, will we already have been lulled into complacency and thus neglect that last defense against this creeping insanity?

This administration, headed by a world-class conman, is doing its best to flood the media with so much madness that we will just throw up our hands and surrender. Sto-
ries of MAGA drones starting a civil war, should Trump be impeached, are put out there to scare us into complacency. Tropes like, “All politicians are the same,” and “All of them are crooked” play into the plan to stifle our votes and our outrage.

We must not let this happen.

Do not fall prey to analyses claiming that low turnout for the runoff elections shows how little power the much-talked-about “blue wave” actually has. No — the sad turnout was the result of lackluster campaigning and an uninspired electorate.

Texans have bought the story that Greg Abbott has too much money to defeat. That attitude doesn’t help anything. And though Beto O’Rourke has gained an impressive following, that will do no good unless Texans vote a straight ticket in November.

And in case you didn’t know, this is your last chance to do so, at least until we change the Legislature.

We as progressives, cannot look for a savior to fix this mess — not in our state or in our country.

What we can do is to remove every candidate who supports the fascist-leaning politics coming from Pennsylvania Avenue.

We can discard the illusion that “voting for a third party sends a message.” That is one of the ways of thinking that put us in our present sad state.

We can also discard the idea that we can only vote for an ideologically pure candidate, one who aligns completely with our values. Here is a reality check: That candidate doesn’t exist!

We as progressives can also get involved. Go to organizational meetings; join fellow LGBTQ progressives; find campaigns you can work for, and open your pocketbooks to support progressive candidates with as much money as you can.

“Oh my Gawd!” you say. “He is asking me to get into politics!”

Yes he is.

It is going to be a wild voyage to November, and you can either watch from the shore and do nothing as our country careens toward totalitarianism, or you can climb onboard and try to help steer this Ship of State back toward the country it can be. You know, that “home of the free”?

To do that, it’s going to take a lot of wind in the sails, and that means we all need to catch our breath so we can stir up that wind.

So take a break from the Trump circus, store up some of your outrage and get your lungs full so that in November we can actually blow that Blue Wave through the Texas State House and all the way to Washington.

We can’t afford to fail during this mid-term. Don’t listen to the pundits and analysts; do listen to your inner voice. If it’s anything like mine, it’s sick and tired of the hot air coming out of the Oval Office, and it knows the only way to stop it is with a breath of fresh air.

Be part of that breeze, and it can become a mighty wind that will wash the Blue Wave into existence.

Hardy Haberman is a longtime local LGBT activist and a board member of the Woodhall Freedom Alliance. His blog is at DungeonDiary.blogspot.com.
During the inaugural LoveBold Festival in August 2017 on the campus of Utah Valley University in Orem, roughly 40 miles outside Salt Lake City, 17,000 people fell into the embrace of Dan Reynolds. Amid performances of his band’s towering anthems, like “Monster” and “Radioactive,” Reynolds’ message rang loud and clear: love yourself, and love the young queer people who need it most, unconditionally. Hugs for LGBTQ youth from the Imagine Dragons frontman, recipient of The Trevor Project’s 2017 Hero Award, don’t get much bigger than they did that day. Except they will. Soon.

Reynolds, 30, takes his ally platform seriously, so this year’s second annual LoveBold Festival — set for July 28 — will be held at Rice Eccles Stadium in Salt Lake City. Capacity: 46,000.

Comedian, actor and writer Cameron Esposito, an out lesbian, will perform and emcee, with performances from Imagine Dragons (duh), Zedd, Linkin Park’s Mike Shinoda, Grace VanderWaal, Neon Trees’ Tyler Glenn, and Vagabon and A.Q. Proceeds will benefit local and national LGBTQ charities, including Encircle, Trevor Project, Tegan and Sara Foundation, and more. Reynolds’s foundation serving the LGBTQ community, also named LoveBold, was launched in 2017 to “bring communities and families together to help ignite the vital conversation about what it means to unconditionally love our LGBTQ youth.”

We spoke with Reynolds while he was touring to get his reflections on reconciling his LGBTQ support with Mormonism and reconnecting with young gay friends he couldn’t wholeheartedly support because of his past religious beliefs. He also talked about his doc Believer, which chronicles his journey from deep Mormon faith to passionate LGBTQ activist, and the undercurrent of queerness running through Imagine Dragons’ latest album, Evolve.

— Chris Azzopardi

Photo courtesy Eliot Lee Hazel.

Dragon slayer

Imagine Dragons frontman Dan Reynolds is on a new mission — to be the proud Mormon ally leading acceptance and outreach to the queer community.
Dallas Voice: LoveLoud started with a phone call between you and Tyler Glenn, right? Dan Reynolds: Yeah. We knew each other from a distance before, because we both served the same Mormon mission, in Omaha. When we got home, even before I started Imagine Dragons, I went to a Neon Trees show and they were playing little clubs in Utah. We both came up at the same time, and there's not a whole lot of Mormons in the music industry, so you just kind of know each other through that. But eventually, I called him, and when he put out his solo record *Excommunication*, I connected with him in a lot of ways.

How open to the queer community were you when you first met him? We were both trying desperately to be textbook Mormons, but I think both of us were finding we weren't fitting into that box for different reasons. I got kicked out of BYU, and that really shook me up and threw me down a road of feeling needless shame and guilt. For Tyler, it was a whole other level for him of having to live a compartmentalized life and trying to find happiness within the guidelines of an incorrect teaching. It was just debilitating for him. There was always such a heaviness around him.

I remember when we played a show, he was onstage wearing a sequined shirt and a very glamorous outfit, and somebody in the crowd heckled him. This was before he came out, and I remember him saying something from the stage to the extent of, "You don't know me and I'm struggling with things right now and fuck you," and he flicked off the crowd.

Watching him, what was going through your mind? I felt what I've always felt since probably seventh grade when one of my best friends was gay and Mormon and I watched him never want to talk about it because it was so heavy. There were no answers to be had at that young of an age when you're raised in a really religious family. It's hard to find any resolution other than leave your home or get kicked out of the house, so I had seen that from a young age in middle school and felt super conflicted as a religious person thinking, I'm supposed to believe all these things, but with it comes this teaching that doesn't sit right in my heart at all. Even as a 13-year-old, I saw my friends be conflicted with their sexuality and religion and I was thinking, "OK, something's wrong here."

At the time, were you the support system for them you wanted to be? We just didn't really talk about it. They were my friends, so I didn't stop being their friend, but I think we just didn't talk about it because neither of us had an answer. It was this heavy thing that was lingering over their heads, and I didn't have any answers as a 14-year-old kid who was going to church every Sunday and being told what to say.

I look back: I'm a strong believer in the whole "You should live life with no regrets." But you know, I can't tell you, honestly, that I don't have regrets in this specific way. I wish as a 14-year-old boy I could've had the words to say, "Hey, this is not great, and if there is a God and it's this loving God that we're taught about, how could we rationally believe that that God would make you have this sense of love that you don't get to act upon?" Which is supposedly the most beautiful part of existence and human nature — to love. How could any of that make sense? I wish that I had the mental and spiritual capabilities to see that as a kid, but I didn't.

I was just dealing with my own guilt complex and feeling bad about being a 14-year-old boy dealing with my own sexuality. Even as a heterosexual and as a kid in the Mormon church, you immediately feel guilt and shame about masturbation and sex before marriage. Certainly, on my mission I would've hoped to be a 19-year-old kid who had, again, the mental capabilities or life experience to get out of an incorrect teaching, but I didn't. For two years you're given a white handbook that tells you the answer to everything, so when someone asks you a question, you're supposed to be this 19-year-old kid who has the answer.

So yeah, I really do regret that for those two years I turned to a white handbook rather than my heart and my mind, which already knew the answers, ever since I was a little kid.

My little girl — she's been raised to believe what she believes in her heart, and so as a little kid who's raised that way, this is such an easy concept for her. She's 5 years old and I can say, "What does it mean to be gay?" and "How does that feel?" and to her I didn't even have to teach her that concept. It's like, of course people should love who they want and you should never bully, and she understands all those concepts that a child would naturally know. But when you have religion on top of that, it gets muddled.

After becoming this mega-ally rock star, have you been in touch with these gay childhood friends? Yes, that's been really one of the most fulfilling, beautiful parts of this process, just connecting with them and them knowing that they have a friend that fully accepts them and loves them and has known them for years through this whole process. Because you have to be a Mormon on some level to understand how heavy Mormonism is.

But yes, we've connected, with two in particular, and we've talked about how they've both left the church because there's really no safe space for LGBTQ youth within the Mormon church right now. There's just not. There's
no healthy option for any LGBTQ youth [in the church], and that’s the sad thing. I wish I could be giving some options to any Orthodox religious LGBTQ kids.

And you are, with LoveLoud. How would you describe the feeling of being at last year’s premiere LoveLoud Festival? I would say, to date, LoveLoud last year was genuinely my favorite day of my life thus far. So many people would look in on this and say, “Dan, you should be preaching with your platform: LGBTQ kids who are raised in Orthodox faith, leave. Get out of the religion.” And that is actually a very uninformed and uneducated and unsafe thing to be saying to these kids because a lot of them don’t have a choice. Basically, you’re saying, “Get kicked out of your house, potentially, and put yourself in a more at-risk situation.” So the only thing that you can do is say, “I love you. I support you 100 percent. And look at all these people who are also religious who also accept and love you.” Let us do everything we can do to make a safe space for you, and that’s what LoveLoud is about.

It was really rad to see a lot of people who came from very conservative backgrounds of faith, mainly Mormonism, come out, because it was in the heartland of Utah. Some of them came to the festival already having their minds made up of what it meant to fully love and accept LGBTQ youth, but I think a lot of them didn’t, which is really rad. There were a lot of people who were on the fence. Uncles and aunts and parents who didn’t know how to deal with the situation of having their child be gay, or their niece or nephew. I know their eyes were opened because I got tons of emails and messages from people saying, “My uncle who had never accepted me at all came to this and walked away and gave me a big hug and said, ‘I understand and I love you and I accept you.’”

How does it feel to hear a story like that? It makes it all worth it, because this is a really difficult line to walk. You’re never gonna be progressive enough for the progressives, and you’re never gonna be conservative enough for the conservatives. I’ve literally had people tell me, “You’ve made so many more kids gay, and this is your judgment day to deal with that.” I read those things, and of course it’s sad. But also I know my path. I know my mission, and I know what I’m doing, so it’s OK, ‘cause I know there’s just misunderstanding. But yeah, those letters mean a lot and they fire me up to just say, “OK, let’s go next year to a stadium and let’s make it bigger.”

What are you most looking forward to about this year’s festival? That it’s much, much bigger is exciting. It’ll be at least double the size of what it was before. We did 20,000 last year and this year we’re doing a stadium, so it’s like 40,000. The artists are bigger. And just watching how it spread very organically within the religious community, because it sparked so much dialogue within the Mormon church. Mormon after Mormon hit me up and would be like, “I was at church and someone gave a talk about LoveLoud and there was this big argument about whether it’s OK to have your child go to it or not,” and I’m like, “Awesome.”

That dialogue is way more important even in that one day because the dialogue that’s taking place at home about LoveLoud is what needs to be happening rather than [the stagnation] that has been going on for years within the Mormon church of, “Let’s keep moving forward and the kids keep taking their lives and the suicide rates keep going up in Utah.” LGBTQ youth are eight times more likely to take their lives when they’re not accepted in their homes or community, and that statistic alone is just devastating.
Do you write songs with the queer community in mind? Definitely on Evolve. At least three of the songs were produced with [gay producer-songwriter] Justin Tranter [see story Page 20], who’s just one of the biggest activists in the queer community. Just having him in there around me and the spirit that comes with Justin was certainly inspiring to me, and so there’s no doubt that as we were writing songs, there was a need to make sure that these lyrics were going to reach the underdog, were going to reach these queer youth. That they would know, “Hey, this is for me.”

I think Evolve has it speckled all through it, whether it’s just the album artwork — the rainbow on the front — or the lyrics. A lot of things are so subconscious in the writing process. But we were talking about politics a lot at the time and how he felt like his future was so unsettled, and it was gonna be less safe for him. And he was scared. So, we had a lot of deep, beautiful conversations that I’m sure impacted Evolve in ways that I couldn’t even know.

There’s a pretty iconic photo of you holding a rainbow flag at Lollapalooza Brazil Festival in March. Tell me about that moment. Brazil is an interesting place because it has a lot of people who want change. I believe their Pride parade is more populated than anywhere in the world, but it’s still a very unsafe place for LGBTQ youth. So, I committed this tour to do everything I can to bring as much color and pride to the stage that a straight man possibly can.

Based on some headlines after that gig, the gay community also didn’t seem to mind the shirtlessness. [Laughs] Hey, I love it. For me this whole process has also been my process of coming into my own self and embracing sexuality, period. And celebrating life, and celebrating love. So, it’s been a real changing couple of years for me, and all I’ve been trying to do through the process is be true to myself and follow my heart. But that was a really beautiful moment. I’ll always remember that show. It was one of my favorite shows we’ve ever played.

What do your parents, who declined to be in your documentary, Believer, think of the film? I sent the movie to all my family because I just wanted to take that step and not have it be an awkward thing in the family. My mom and dad came to the premiere. That’s huge.

It was huge. I know that for the most part we all see a little different on this, but with that said, they’ve all been really loving and supportive of what I’m doing. But, yeah, there have been rough moments, definitely, during the beginning of it, when I was just getting into it. Arguments here and there within the family.

That’s huge. It was huge. I know that for the most part we all see a little different on this, but with that said, they’ve all been really loving and supportive of what I’m doing. And my uncle, who’s my dad brother, he’s gay and Mormon and moved out of the United States years ago because he just felt like there was no place for him. He had to get that far away to be able to feel like he could be himself. I got to talk to him and I haven’t seen him since I was 8 years old, and that was the only uncle I didn’t ever get to know — my gay uncle — because he felt so unwelcome and like he couldn’t live his true life without moving a country away. My dad went recently and visited him, and that was a really beautiful thing.

I don’t know. It’s baby steps for me. I know that everybody has their own way of coming around to certain things and it takes time, but the question is, how long will it take? And how many lives will be lost or saved along the way?
True, walking away with a shiny, golden statue has its own perks, but for songwriter-to-the-stars Justin Tranter, just being nominated for a Grammy and a Golden Globe this year was a triumph. Now, too, he can officially add “sat in the same church as Oprah” to his prolific résumé (OK, whatever, the Beverly Hilton in L.A.) while the queen shook the world with her epic Globes speech in early January.

“I lost and I survived, and had a fucking blast, and got to watch Oprah’s speech live in person after I lost,” says Tranter, 37. “I could’ve swerved out, but I was having the time of my life.”

Lately, life’s been good to Tranter. Aside from picking up a Song of the Year nod at the Grammys for “Issues,” performed by Julia Michaels, and Best Original Song at the Globes for the Nick Jonas-sung “Home” from the animated fantasy Ferdinand, the former Semi Precious Weapons frontman has amassed four pop radio Top 10s (including Maroon 5’s “Cold” and Halsey’s “Bad at Love”), co-wrote all the original songs on Gwen Stefani’s 2017 Christmas album and was named BMI Pop Songwriter of the Year 2016.

The wordsmith behind pop behemoths by Kelly Clarkson, Britney Spears, Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez and Kesha — and producer on queer-ally Dan Reynolds latest album with his band Imagine Dragon, Evolve (see story Page 16) — recently discussed the “delusion” involved in becoming a pop songwriter, how his queerness helps to nurture his bonds with the female artists he writes for and his mission to give marginalized artists a voice.

— Chris Azzopardi

Dallas Voice: When I spoke to Gwen Stefani in 2016 about her This Is What the Truth Feels Like album, she said about you, “He was so supportive of me and so confident in me, and I had lost a lot of my confidence, so he really brought that out of me.” Do you hear this from other artists you work with? Justin Tranter: I do...
hated, and it makes me feel amazing — and it makes me feel even better to know that someone like Gwen is saying that to other people, too. It’s such an awesome thing to do. After 10 years of my band getting to wear and sing and say and be exactly who I was and do exactly what I wanted to do — my band members were among the first women writers, women songwriters, women comedians — they’re all I ever cared about. I never really related to the traditional point of view. The experience of being queer helps me relate to marginalized people, but also, I’m just a fan. I just love what women have to say and how they look at the world.

So, no Semi Precious Weapons anymore? Correct.

Do you see yourself being in a band again?
No, I don’t see myself being in a band again. I don’t see myself releasing my own music anymore. I’m just having so much fun, and it’s just so cool to help other people tell their stories and focus their visions into something great. I’m loving it. And if I ever do perform again, I’ll come up with some weird way to do it, like write myself a rock opera.

When has that bond with an artist been especially strong in the studio? With Julia [Michaels] and Gwen. And Halsey and I — we worked together very quickly. We only wrote one day together, and, luckily, we wrote “Bad at Love,” which turned out to be a great success for both of us. But that song felt really easy. There was the New York bond, and we’re both part of the LGBTQ community. So, when she was working on the lyrics for the first verse using male pronouns, and then in the second verse using female pronouns, of course she knew I wasn’t going to flinch and that I was only going to celebrate that. Julia and Gwen are the ones I’ve written the closest with and spent the most time with writing. And Britney — she knows that I’m a fan, and I think that brings a confidence to the writing and recording sessions. I respect Selena in such a huge away and she knows that.

How would you describe your connection with Britney and how do you think that influenced the upcoming music you’ve written for her? The connection is just fun and it’s sweet and it’s safe, and me and Julia did the best that we could do. With Britney, I was always there with Julia, so I think you have the younger, smart, strong women and you have me and Britney, who are around the same age. So, we just did the best we could to make everybody not just make her feel safe, she made us feel safe! We’re in the room with a fucking icon! She’s the icon. We’re just fucking studio geeks.

Kesha’s another great one. Kesha was so funny, because that’s the first time I’d ever written with someone who I’d been friends with for a really long fucking time before we worked together. Kesha and I have been friends since 2010 and we wrote together in 2017, so there’s seven years of friendship, which was kind of really cool. We toured together, so we’ve watched each other perform hundreds of times; but we’d never seen how the other one works in a writing session, so that was really amazing.

The day we wrote was two days after I rescued my dog, and we left the session twice to come check on my dog, just to make sure he was OK. I was a new dog mom and Kesha, of course, is a huge animal lover and animal rights activist.

Do you explain to the artists you work with what inspires the songs you write? If the artist wasn’t there during the writing process — if they’re just cutting the song — you kind of have to feel it out because you want the artist to make it their own.

What’s the most personal song you’ve written about your life that somebody else ended up singing? Wow, I don’t think I’ve ever been asked that question before. Early on, “Nostalgic” by Kelly Clarkson was very much about me and an ex-boyfriend. That was super-duper personal and a crazy moment. I sang the demo on that one, and so I was listening to my demo of that for a year, and then I went to the RCA offices in New York to hear Kelly’s version. I was very new in my pop songwriter career and I started crying. It was just so cool because her voice is so good. I got to sit next to her at the Golden Globes, so that was a really cool full circle moment.

To read more of our interview with Justin Tranter, visit DallasVoice.com.

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When Dallas audiences first met John Michael, in one of his first of (now) seven one-man shows, he was a messy, suburban North Texas kid barely old enough to drink, who talked about his relationship with his parents, how he didn’t want his boyfriend (if he ever had one) to see his plays, how he coped with an STI from a one-night stand.

What a difference some years — and a lot of living — can make.

He’s now pushing 30, his mother passed away unexpectedly, he’s relocated to Chicago and now has a gender-non-conforming partner (also an actor) who has definitely seen his shows.

He’s still messy, though.

“I am summoning at this moment [my late mother] from the dead right outside Trump Tower,” he says over the phone from a stretch of land on the banks of the Chicago River. “There are like 10 storefronts [here] — all vacant. It’s the quietest place to hold an interview.”

He relishes the economic stagnation in the shadow of our Commander-in-Creep’s storied stories. Who knows? It — and this entire conversation — may make it into one of his plays eventually. Or some variation of it.

That’s because his solo shows — in-

### DALLAS SOLO FEST

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Meatball therapy

To make a solo show about his late mom, performance artist John Michael learned he has to break a few eggs… then add beef and breadcrumbs.
including *Meatball Séance*, which opens at the Dallas Solo Fest at Dallas Children Theatre’s home, The Rosewood Center for Family Arts, on June 7 — are drawn from the intimate details of his own life. And while it usually takes John Michael (he eschews a separate surname on the stage) an hour to perform them, even though the scripts are rarely more than 10 pages in length.

“My shows are like lily pads — I know the pads I need to jump to, and I will land on them, but I might need to do them out of order because of what happens onstage.”

That’s certainly the case with *Meatball Séance*, which John Michael debuted in Dallas back on Christmas 2016 for a one-night-only performance and which, he now estimates, has only about 20 percent of its original content remaining.

“There’s a lot of audience participation, and I’m only onstage for 10 minutes alone. The play changes because the audience is different each time, so depending on what the audience members give me, I [jump around]. Like, while we’re cutting vegetables — there are a lot of things I can do to help them have fun. One of the joys of the show is that, because of the structure, it forces me to listen.”

I suggest it sounds like a cooking segment from the *Today* show about his dead mother.

“Exactly,” he smiles back.

If it sounds morbid, John Michael sees it, rather, as intensely human.

“When Mom died and then [his mentor and friend] Matt [Tomlanovich] died, I ran away to Chicago to start a new life. When I was first here, though, people would ask me why I moved and I told them. And it made it all the more awful to hear this person who I barely knew to say, ‘I’m sorry.’ Those words bring the mood of the moment down. But what else can you say? The boldest thing you can say [in that context is], ‘I don’t know what to say.’ So for the longest time I stopped talking about my favorite person in the world, my mom. It was almost like a second death. I realized I was dealing with people’s own insecurities about mortality.”

*Meatball Séance* — in which, yes, he enlists some attendees to join him onstage and actually cook his mother’s recipe to conjure her spirit, so that he can introduce her to his boyfriend — is more than theater, more than standup. It is, for John Michael, an active way of dealing with, and normalizing, the grieving process.

“When you touch a memory, you have to mix your meat with the eggs with the breadcrumbs with the parsley and garlic and let them meld [to create a meatball].”

It’s not a dour show, though, but an affirming, interactive, community-building experience.

“It’s about setting up the audience for success and learning how to have fun. They can do whatever the fuck they want onstage as long as they come at it with an open heart. It works on so many levels. I have found more ways for the audience to have a blast and challenge this negative association with the phrase ‘audience participation.’ The fun the audience members are having onstage is to make them feel the way my mother made me feel. My grieving is active.”

John Michael has matured as well in his approach since the early days; he has massaged simple word choices, like asking “Are you comfortable with a knife?” instead of, “Here, dice this garlic,” to make the interactions for engaging.

“When you make your audience do more work, they have more of a buy-in,” he says. “But it’s always been in my aesthetic to embrace not being super polished. Matt [Tomlanovich] used to say, ‘If something’s too smooth, you can’t grab onto it.’”

And when John Michael is at work, expect to hold on tight. *Meatball Séance* is performed June 7, 9 and 10.
SONGS OF THE SUMMER

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Pride Month kicks off at the Bath House Cultural Center with the local premiere production of ‘Lilies.’

**ARTSWEEK**

**THEATER**

**20th Annual New Works Festival.** Kitchen Dog Theater celebrates its landmark 20th season of this festival with an expanded schedule of nine staged readings, several by local playwrights (Blake Hackler, Jenny Ledel) and several by returning favorites (Zayd Dohrn, Steve Yockey). Trinity River Arts Center, 2600 N. Stemmons Freeway. June 1–17. Get full schedule at KitchenDogTheater.org.


**Lilies.** In 1952, a Quebec bishop visits a prison to hear the confession of a dying inmate, only to learn he was brought there to relive his childhood secrets via a play staged by the inmate. The North Texas premiere of a play, which is also an acclaimed film of gay cinema. The production kicks of National Pride Month at the Bath House Cultural Center, 521 E. Lawther Drive. Through June 9. LiliesPlay.com


**Portrait of a Man,** a new play by Mark-Brian Sonna, based on a true story about how a popular 19th century painter scandalized English royalty. Studio Theatre at Addison Theatre Centre, 15650 Addison Road. June 1–17. MBSProductions.net.

**Self-Injurious Behavior.** Local actress Jessica Cavanaugh wrote and stars in this autobiographical play about dealing with parenting a child on the autism spectrum. Directed by Marianne Galloway. Theatre Too, 2900 Routh St. inside the Quadrangle. Through June 10. Theatre3Dallas.com.


**BALLET**

**Swan Lake.** Tchaikovsky’s masterpiece, as choreographed by Sir Ben Stevenson, moves from Fort Worth to Dallas’ Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. June 1–3. TexasBalletTheater.org.

**FINE ART**

**Sign and Symbols: Mobile Tagging Art by Pedro Morales.** The gay artist’s modernist work continues at the Uptown museum. The Museum of Geometric and MADI Art, 3109 Carlisle St. Through July 15. GeometricMADI.org.

**Laura Owens.** The controversial, eclectic artist is featured at a show at the Dallas Museum of Art 1717 Harwood St. Through July 29. DMA.org.


**FRIDAY 06.01**

**COMMUNITY**

**TBRU: Station 23.** Fireman-themed weekend of bears. See coverage starting Page 8. For full listing of events, visit TBRU.org.

**BearDance: Inferno.** DJ John LePage spins...
FRIDAY 06.08
CONCERTS

THURSDAY 06.07
CABARET
Glitterbomb Denton. Weekly queer variety show with a new lineup every Thursday, now at a new locale and new time. Andy’s Bar, 122 N. Locust St., Denton. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 06.06
COMEDY
The Second City Summer Blockbuster. The famed sketch comedy troupe performs.

TUESDAY 06.05
FILM
Doctor Zhivago. David Lean’s magnificent epic, set against the Russian Revolution. Screens as part of the Tuesday Big Movie New Classic Series at Landmark’s Magnolia Theatre in the West Village, 3699 McKinney Ave. Screens at 7:30 p.m. ONLY

WEDNESDAY 06.06
COMEDY
The Second City Summer Blockbuster. The famed sketch comedy troupe performs.

saturday 06.02
COMMUNITY
FrontRunners. Gay jogging/walking group meets weekly at 9 a.m. in Oak Lawn Park at Hall Street and Turtle Creek Boulevard for a run along the Katy Trail.

TUESDAY 06.05
FILM
Doctor Zhivago. David Lean’s magnificent epic, set against the Russian Revolution. Screens as part of the Tuesday Big Movie New Classic Series at Landmark’s Magnolia Theatre in the West Village, 3699 McKinney Ave. Screens at 7:30 p.m. ONLY

this week’s solution
TOUCH OF PINK SPY

VM 6.01.18
Ask Howard
How to do the wrong thing right

How in tarnation is June here already, with another stultifying Summer of Trump viru-
lently upon us? Barely is Memorial Day in our rearview mirror, yet my synapses are so
sizzle-fried it’s near but impossible to recall what a Trump-free summer actually felt like.
Surely a century’s worth of Junes have now come and gone since Our Orange Oracle first
descended that gaudy escalator to paid actors’
death applause, with Melania wearing her im-
pecable zombie perma-grin, the only message
extracted from the whole Grand Guignol farce
being, “Damn, but that trophy wife’s sure on
some wicked sweet meds.” I vaguely recall
June as once being a month of sunshine-seek-
ing pleasures: baseball games, bridal cere-
monies, cocaine-white sand on the beach,
boating, bicycling and blackberry cobblers…
you remember, kisses-on-rainbows stuff, rather
boating, bicycling and blackberry cobblers…

— Howard Lewis Russell

L+S scoop

Dear Howard:
I’ve been seeing an “inter-
resting” girl about once a week for almost six
weeks. She’s what one would politely call “out
there” but in a kooky, fun way. She lives in a
quirky treehouse she constructed herself—
stained glass windows, dreamcatchers, quartz
geodes. You know the kind — everyone’s seen
this crystal-gazer/soothsayer chick one time
or another. Initially, I met her on, basically, a
“straight” site, but after a couple days texting
back and forth she sent me a lavender smiley
face, acknowledging she could be convinced
to possibly hang in the lady-pond, and we
had our first date that very night at a romantic
Italian place. Truthfully, we hit it off great. But
every date since has been a repeat of exactly
the same — just hugs and a goodnight kiss
afterwards. There’s no — how should I phrase
it? — progression. What’s going on here,
man? Is she just breadcrumbing me; or, maybe
she really is straight, and just needs a good
trustworthy friend? — Dee Cassy Haine

Dear Daisy Chain: Allow me to nudge you
a good way out on Howard’s trustful limb of
mercenary enlightenment: I’m not even going
to ask who paid for those six pasta dinners on
your dates with Lady Sibyl of Delphi, ‘cause we
both know Sibyl doesn’t do Dutch — not when
it’s a fellow Cassandra winking to her across
the table playing footsies with her intuitive
dreamcatcher. You’re an intelligent woman,
Dee, so I just give you this “stumper” to awl
all on your own. Any heterosexual tree-hugger
advertising herself as possibly capable of being
“convinced” to hang about the lady-pond only
beggars Howard’s clearcutting question: What
exactly seals your “fun kook’s’” convincing?
Seven spaghetti dinners, a six-pack of Schlitz
shared atop sleeping bags in Big Bend Nation-
al Park or you tapping stacks of “solids” across

— Howard Lewis Russell

Do you have a question — about etiquette,
love, life or work — that needs a special spin
from Howard? Send your problem to AskHow-
ard@DallasVoice.com and he may answer it.

— Dee Cassy Haine

So I’ll just give you this “stumper” to awl
all on your own. Any heterosexual tree-hugger
advertising herself as possibly capable of being
“convinced” to hang about the lady-pond only
beggars Howard’s clearcutting question: What
exactly seals your “fun kook’s” convincing?
Seven spaghetti dinners, a six-pack of Schlitz
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al Park or you tapping stacks of “solids” across

— Howard Lewis Russell

Do you have a question — about etiquette,
love, life or work — that needs a special spin
from Howard? Send your problem to AskHow-
ard@DallasVoice.com and he may answer it.
Making the SCENE the week of June 1–7:

- **Alexandre’s**: Terry Loftis on Friday, Mi Diva Loca on Saturday, Wayne Smith on Sunday, K-Marie on Tuesday, Anna Fredericka Popova on Wednesday, Chris Chism on Thursday.
- **Cedar Springs Tap House**: Drag on Tap at 9:30 p.m. on Monday.
- **Club Changes**: Imperial Court show at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Wall of Food Show at 9 p.m. on Thursday.
- **Club Reflection**: Closed on Sunday for a private event.
- **Dallas Eagle**: TBRU Supafly Trash Disco from 5 p.m.-2 a.m. on Sunday.
- **Hidden Door**: “Church” at the Hidden door with DJ Rueben Martinez starts at noon on Sunday.
- **JR.’s Bar & Grill**: Asia O’Hara hosts a watch party for this week’s episode of RuPaul’s Drag Race Season 10 on Thursday.
- **Marty’s Live**: Furball fetish gear party from 9 p.m.-2 a.m. on Saturday. $10 before 10 p.m. $15 after.
- **Round-Up Saloon**: Jock strap sports happy hour at 6 p.m. on Friday.
- **S4**: Bear Dance Inferno with Cazwell and Varla Jean Merman from 8 p.m.-4 a.m. on Friday.
- **Sue Ellen’s**: Miss Silver Star State and State-at-Large at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday $5.
- **The 515 Bar**: Linze Serell presents 2.2 Show at 8 p.m. on Saturday.
- **TMC: The Mining Company**: Bear Dance on Friday.
- **Woody’s Sports & Video Bar**: Showtunes at 9 p.m. on Tuesday.
- **Zippers**: DJ Rudeboy from 9 p.m. at Monday Madness.

Scene Photographers: Kat Haygood and Chad Mantooth
Lost Souls Rugby Pie-in-the-Face sendoff party at The Round-Up

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Movies with happy endings

Solution on Page 27

Across
1 Game played astride stallions
5 Wistful word
9 One of Sheehan’s irons
14 Arc on a Samuel Barber score
15 Pitchfork part
16 “___ told by an idiot”
17 Ward of Once and Again
18 Close by
19 Macbeth’s taunt to Macduff
20 2004 movie about coming out to a Muslim mom
23 Prefix for “gate” for the Homophobe-in-Chief
24 Set fire to
25 Stephanie’s actor-dad
27 Deniers in the Divine Miss M?
31 Moisten’s (one’s shorts)
35 Went down on
36 Treasured violin
38 Mosque leader
39 Jonah Markowitz movie of 2007
41 1987 drama based on an E.M. Forster novel
44 Leaning erection site
45 Resell, as tickets
47 Bobby Orr’s org.
48 Snippets from a Cukor film
51 Pretended to be openly gay?
53 MacGyver actor Dana
55 Disney doe
56 Arcing shot from Mauresmo
59 1996 comedy about Armand and Albert
64 Word in ‘60s club names
66 Boys on the ___
67 Tinted
68 More in need of a lube
69 10 C-notes
70 Hathaway of Bride Wars
71 Kind of question
72 Coin for Kahlo
73 WWII weapon

Down
1 “Hey, over here!”
2 Bars for gay chefs
3 Humdinger
4 Figure in a Michelangelo fresco
5 When homophobia is okay
6 Willingly
7 Foot with three parts
8 Curlieue on a Q
9 Karen of Will & Grace
10 Hellenic vowel
11 Latter ___ (2003 film with a Mormon homophobe)
12 Bowl contents in Oliver!
13 Start of a rhyme about a tiger
21 Billy Bean did this to balls
22 Atomic energy org.
26 Golda from the land of the cut
27 Door attachments
28 Protestant work ___
29 Legally Blonde Witherspoon
30 Mercury and Saturn but not Uranus
32 Acid type
33 Peru’s ___ Picchu
34 Enjoyed a cologne queen
37 Apple that isn’t a fruit
40 Nathan of Modern Family
41 Bruce Wayne, for Batman
42 2014 Dutch coming-of-age drama
43 Flip over
46 A rifleman may shoot off with it
49 Southwest California city
50 U. of San Francisco, e.g.
52 Country houses, to Nureyev
54 Didactic story author
56 Noble title for Chablis
57 Shrek, for one
58 2014 Dutch coming-of-age drama
60 Fateful day
61 Em, e.g.
62 Dancer Kelly
63 East of ___
64 Word in ‘60s club names
65 Mil. title of Stonewall Jackson

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