

NEW ENGLAND'S LGBTQ+ MAGAZINE

VOL. 18

NO. 3

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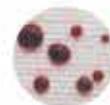
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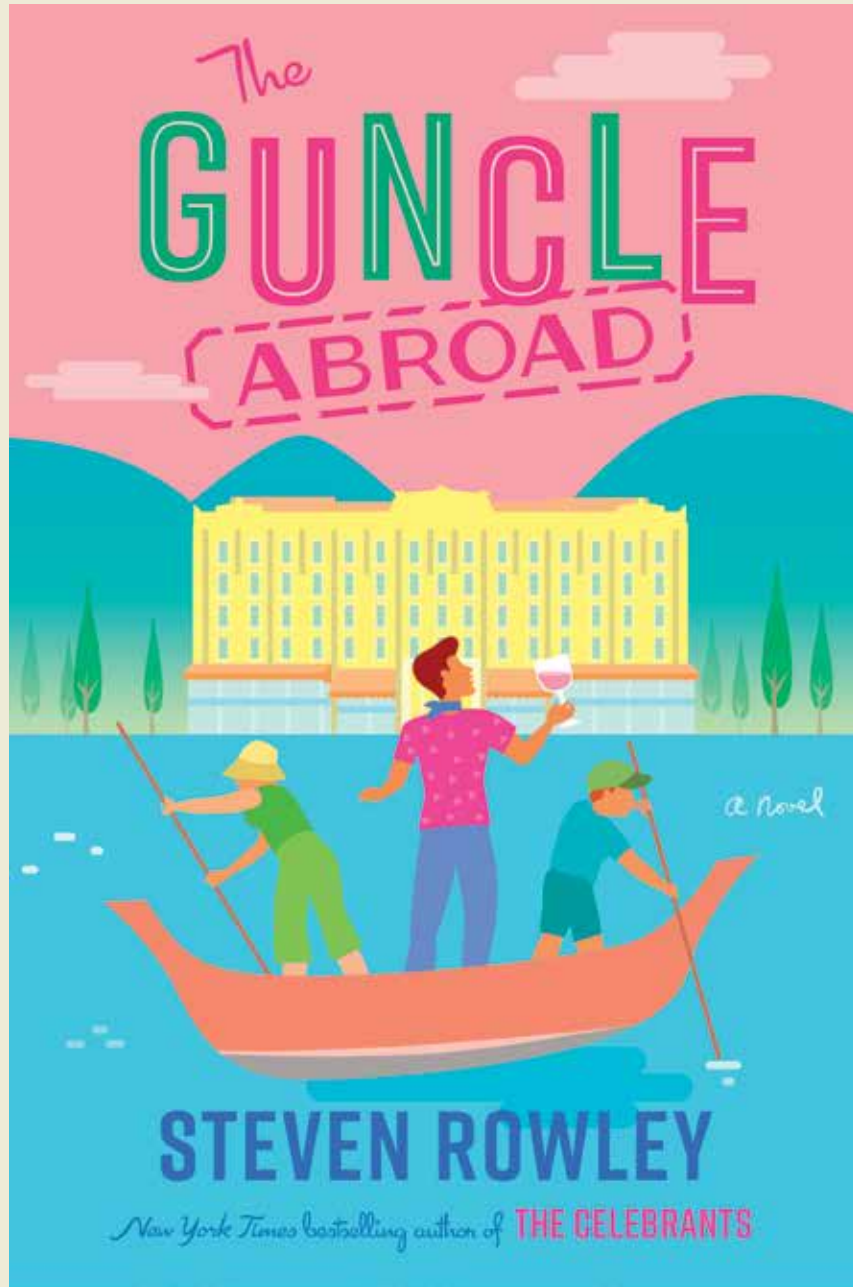
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Book Reviews by Terri Schlichenmeyer

“The Guncle Abroad” by Steven Rowley

c.2024, Putnam | 307 pages

The cake’s going to be magnificent. You must’ve tasted fifteen different samples and a dozen frostings, and considered five unique looks before settling on a showstopper. Next, you have to get invitations addressed and in the mail. You have to confirm the tuxes. You have to get flowers and centerpieces ordered. As in “The Guncle Abroad” by Steven Rowley, you have to get everyone on-board.

Patrick O’Hara couldn’t believe how his life had changed.

A few short years ago, he was living in Palm Springs, having “retired” from making films. He was in love, happy, and he had temporary custody of his niece, Maisie, and his nephew, Grant. Life was good.

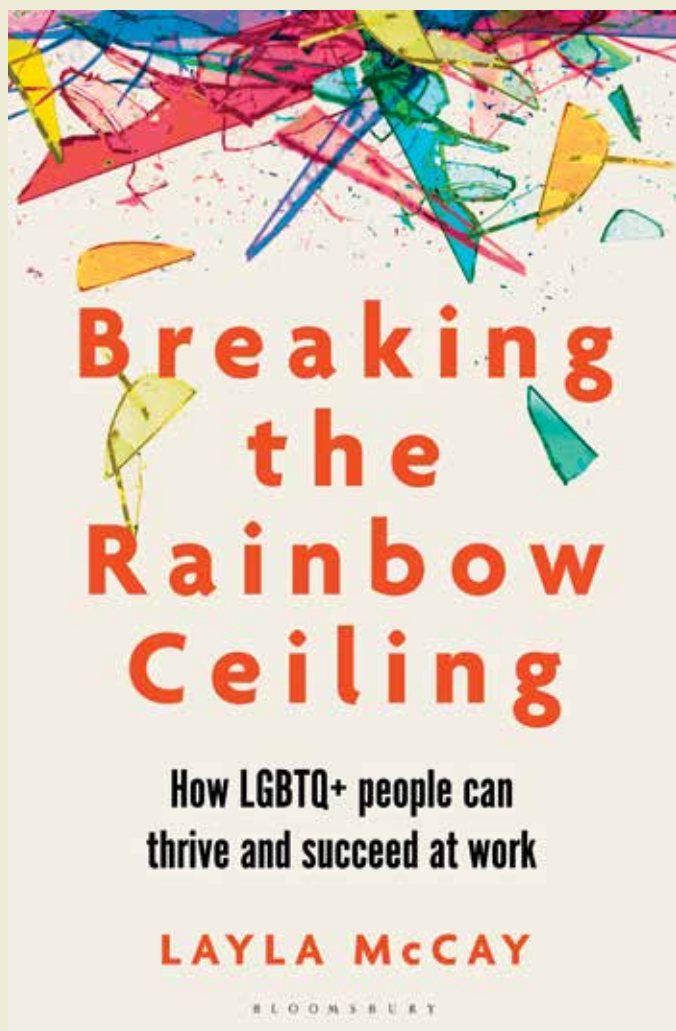
Now... oh boy. Patrick and Emory had split-ish (Emory was still living in Patrick’s California home), Patrick was living in Manhattan, making a movie in London, looking for another role soon, and the kids were four years older. Maisie was an attitudinal teen now,

Grant was nine and too wise for his age.

They weren't the cuddly kids Patrick once knew — especially since their dad, Patrick's brother, Greg, was getting married again and the kids didn't like Livia, their wealthy socialite stepmom-to-be. Patrick suspected it was because Grant and Maisie still missed their Mom. It hadn't been all that long since Sara died. Was a new marriage an insult to old memories?

Patrick didn't think so, and he'd prove it. While Greg and Livia were last-minute wedding-planning, he bought three Eurail passes, one for him and one each for the kids. He'd give them some culture and some new Guncle rules about love. Maybe — was it possible? — he'd even become their favorite GUP again. But Maisie and Grant had other ideas. They agreed to go on the stupid trip around Europe with their GUP, if Patrick agreed to talk to Greg about calling off the entire wedding. Something old (memories), something new (stepmother), something borrowed (trouble), and something blue (two kids) just had to be undone, and soon.

There's an old saying, to paraphrase, that if the wedding is perfectly smooth, the marriage won't be. With this in mind,



“The Guncle Abroad” is covered: add a snarky lesbian with an entourage, a tipsy sister on a manhunt, a Lothario who doesn't speak English, and lost love, all at a lakeside hotel, and yeah, we're good.

But here's the thing: author Steven Rowley doesn't just make readers laugh. We're covered on that part, too, because the whole pre-wedding scene in this book is pure chaos and LOL funny. Long before that, though, you'll be charmed by Rowley's main character and his desperation to stay relevant, to avoid-not-avoid love, and by his efforts to connect with his brother's kids. And after the not-so-storybook wedding, well, you know how those things are.

Bring tissues, that's all you need to know.

If you're in need of a rom-com, just bring the bubbly, pop a cork, and make it this one. Reading “The Guncle Abroad” is best for a bench, or back yard.

Loving it? Piece of cake.

“Breaking the Rainbow Ceiling:

How LGBTQ+ People Can Thrive and Succeed at Work”

by Layla McCay

c.2024, Bloomsbury | 240 pages

You can see the CEO's office from the outside of your workplace. You've actually been in that office, so you know what it looks like inside, too. Big, expansive desk. Cushy, expensive chair. Ankle-deep carpet. The CEO got there through regular means over the course of his career — something you'd like to do, too. But as you know, and as in the new book, “Breaking the Rainbow Ceiling” by Layla McCay, you'll have to take a different path.

Of all the thousands of board seats and C-suite occupiers in American businesses, only a very tiny number — less than one percent — are occupied by people who identify as LGBTQ+. In London, says McCay, no one on the Financial Times Stock Exchange identifies as such. Just six of the world's leaders, past or current, have come out as LGBTQ+.

The reasons for this are many, from discomfort to a sense of a lack of safety or just plain mistrust. Employees often don't talk about it and employers can't or don't ask, which can lead to a lot of issues that cis, heterosexual employees don't have to think about.

LGBTQ+ employees make less money than their straight co-workers. They experience discrimination ranging from sexual violence on one end, to microaggressions on the other. Discrimination can be found in educational settings, and networking events, in a lack of mentorship, and the feel-



ing that one needs to “code-switch.” Even an overseas job offer can be complicated by identifying as LGBTQ+.

And yet, says McCoy, there are benefits to coming out, including a sense of authenticity, and feeling as if a load has been removed from one’s shoulders.

If you are an employer, McCoy says, there are things you can do to help. Include LGBTQ+ people in your diversity programs at work. Insist on it for recruitment. Make sure your employees feel safe to be themselves. Make all policies inclusive, all the time., from the start. Doing so benefits your business. It helps your employees.

“It’s good for society.”

Pretty common sense stuff, no? Yeah, it is; most of what you’ll read inside “Breaking the Rainbow Ceiling” is, in fact, very commonsensical. Moreover, if you’re gay, lesbian, bi, trans, or queer, you won’t find one new or radical thing in this book.

And yet, inside all the nothing-new, readers will generally find things they’ll appreciate at least seeing underscored. The statistics, for instance, that author Layla McCay offers would be helpful to cite when asking for a raise. It’s beneficial, for instance, to be reminded why you may want to come out at work or not. The advice on being and finding a mentor is gold. These things are presented through interviews from business leaders around the world, and readers will find comfort and wisdom in that. You’ll just have to wade through a lot of things you already know to get it, that’s all.

Is it worth it? That depends on your situation. You may find nothing in “Breaking the Rainbow Ceiling,” or it may help you raise the roof.

“The Rainbow Age of Television:

An Opinionated History of Queer TV”

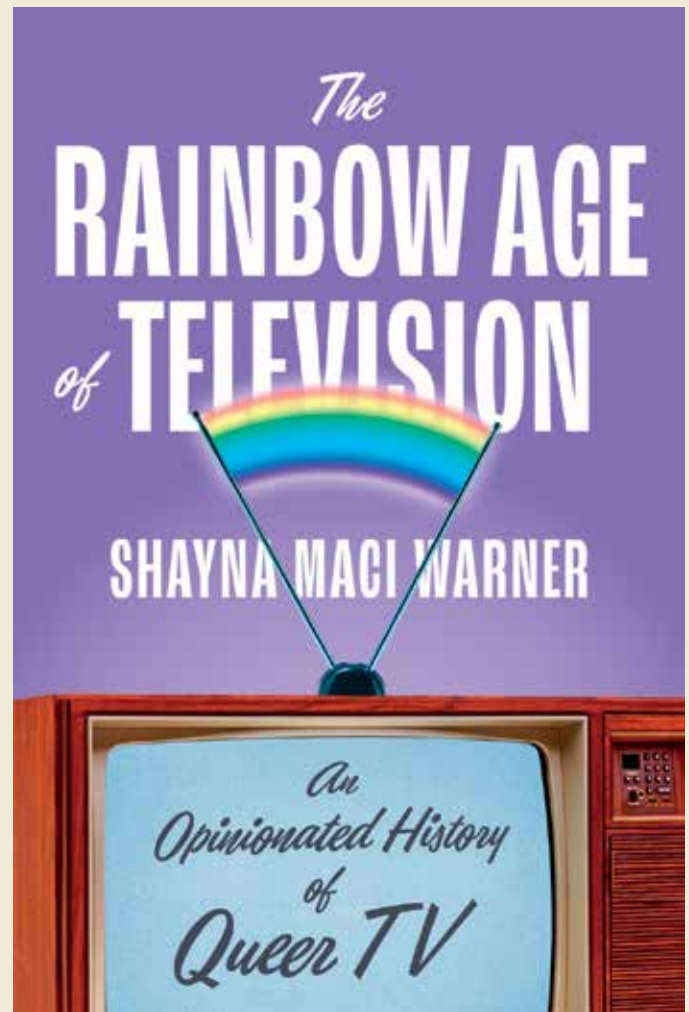
by Shayna Maci Warner

c.2024, Abrams Press | 304 pages

Wanna hand over the clicker?

You don’t want to miss the season premiere of that show you binge-watched over the summer. You’re invested, a fan who can’t wait to see what happens next. You heard that this may be the last season and you’ll be sad, if that’s so. Is it time to start looking for another, newer obsession or will you want to read “The Rainbow Age of Television” by Shayna Maci Warner, and find something old?

Like most kids of the ‘70s, ‘80s, and ‘90s, Shayna Maci Warner spent lots of time glued to a television screen, devouring programming before school, after school, and all summer long. For Warner, that programming eventually led to a revelation. They saw people that looked like them, for which they formed “a personal attach-



ment.”

It was “life-changing...”

It didn’t happen all at once, and some of TV’s “milestones” are forever lost, since broadcasts were live until the 1950s. Shortly after shows were taped and preserved, homosexuality became a “source of worry and blunt fascination” but certain performers carefully presented gently risqué characters and dialog that nudged and winked at viewers.

Some queer representation appeared in the 1960s, but it wasn’t until the 1970s when dramas began to feature more gay and lesbian characters, however subtly. It took awhile for “the ‘rest’ of the alphabet” to be represented in a meaningful way and – despite that *Star Trek* and its many versions included gender-diverse characters – it wasn’t until 1996 that an intersex infant was featured on a regular television drama.

Since Ellen DeGeneres came out practically on her namesake TV show and *Will & Grace* became a wild hit, queer representation on TV has ceased to be an unusual thing. And yet, programmers and writers know that caution is still warranted: sometimes, “there can still be hesitation around pushing the envelope and fear that a queer character who burns too brightly just won’t last.”

Quick: name three after-school TV shows that aired when you were in Fourth Grade. If you can't do it, one thing's for certain: you need "The Rainbow Age of Television."

But get ready for some argument. Author Shayna Maci Warner offers a rabid fan's look at the best and the worst queer representation had to offer, and you may beg to differ with what they say about various programs. That makes this book a critique, of sorts, but Warner offers plenty of wiggle-room for argument.

Tussling over the finer points of queer programming, though, is only half the fun of reading this book. Microwave a box of pizza snacks or mac-and-cheese, demand "your" sofa seat, and dive into the nostalgia of old TV shows, most of them from the later last century. Yep, your faves are here. It's like having an oldies channel on paper, and in your hand.

This is a must-have for former kids and current TV addicts who are happy to see themselves represented on TV. If that's you, who brought the chips? "The Rainbow Age of Television" will just click.

"Hollywood Pride:

A Celebration of LGBTQ+ Representation and Perseverance in Film by Alonso Duralde
c.2024, Running Press | 322 pages

You plan to buy lots of Jujubes.

They'll stick to your teeth, but whatever, you'll be too busy watching to care. You like the director, you know most of the actors as first-rate, and word is that the newcomer couldn't be more right for the role. Yep, you've done your homework. You read Rotten Tomatoes, you've looked up IMDb, and you bought your ticket online. Now all you need is "Hollywood Pride" by Alonso Duralde, and your movie night is complete.

William Kennedy Laurie Dickson likely had no idea that what he'd done was monumental.

Sometime in the very late 1800s, he set up a film camera and a wax cylinder to record a short dance between two men, hands around one another's waists, as Dickson played the violin. It "was one of the very first movies ever shot," and probably the first film to record men dancing rather intimately alone together.

Back then, and until well into the twentieth century, there were laws against most homosexual behavior and cross-dressing, and very rigid standards of activity between men and women. This led to many "intense relationships... between people of the same gender." Still, in World War I-era theaters and though LGBTQ+ representation "was somewhat slower to get rolling" then, audiences saw films that might include drag (often for comedy's sake), camp, covert affection, and "bad girls of the era."

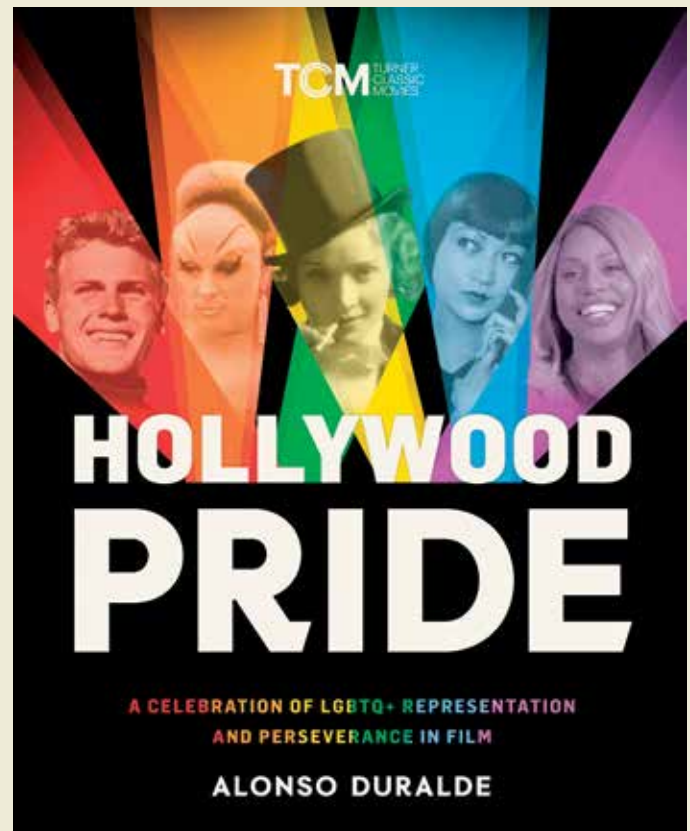
Thankfully, things changed because of people like Marlene Dietrich, Ramon Novarro, Claudette Colbert, George Cukor, Alfred

Hitchcock, and others through the years, people who ignored social mores and the Hays Code to give audiences what they wanted. Moviegoers could find LGBTQ+ actors and themes in most genres by the 1940s; despite politics and a "pink scare" in the 1950s, gay actors and drag (still for comedy's sake) still appeared on-screen; and by the 1960s, the Hays Code had been dismantled. And the Me Decade of the 1970s, says Duralde, "ended with the promise that something new and exciting was about to happen."

So have you run out of movies on your TBW list? If so, get ready... You never want to start a movie at the end, but it's okay if you do that with "Hollywood Pride." Flip to the end of the book, and look up your favorite stars or directors. Page to the end of each chapter, and you'll find "artists of note." Just before that: "films of note." Page anywhere, in fact, and you'll like what you see.

In his introduction, author Alonso Duralde apologizes if he didn't include your favorites but "Hollywood has been a magnet for LGBTQ+ people" for more than a century, making it hard to capture it completely. That said, movie-loving readers will still be content with what's inside this well-illustrated, well-curated, highly-readable historical overview of LGBTQ+ films, and of the people who made them.

Come to this book with a movie-lover's sensibility and stay for the wealth of photos and side-bars. If you're up for binge-reading, binge-watching, or Date Night, dig into "Hollywood Pride." Popcorn not necessary, but welcome. 🏳️‍🌈



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FX Netflix AMC Series +

English Teacher starring Brian Jordan Alvarez on the FX Network

by Mark Adams

Every year, the broadcasting industry offers up what must be at least hundreds of new series for our (hopefully) enjoyment. They don't always succeed (I just stumbled across "My Mother the Car" on YouTube, and it was just as good as you'd imagine), but some gems always slip through the cracks. And that's why I'm here.

One of the more recent offerings is titled "English Teacher." I've got to tell you, the title didn't just jump out at me and say, "You gotta watch this." First of all, it's on the FX network, which, many years ago, had a few good shows (think "The Americans" and "Fargo"). Because they were good, of course, they were canceled, and the network beefed up its programming with sports stuff. Not my thing. A charming neighbor still here in the once-gay South End suggested I give "English Teacher" a try. Well, Glory

Days has returned to FX. Filmed in glorious Atlanta and getting an audience rating of 97% on Rotten Tomatoes, it is warm, witty, and other such words that you don't hear cranky me say that often. Revolving around a high school teacher, it has a top-notch cast led by Brian Jordan Alvarez, who also directs and shares writing credits—never heard of him? Me neither...or so I thought till I saw episode one. Now, where have I seen him before? The husband said, "Oh look - it's" Estaban "from" Will and Grace "without the silly accent." Sure enough, it was him. Or he. Others in the cast include Enrico Colantoni, who is recognizable from "Veronica Mars." The reviews are mostly 3-4 stars, with the usual assortment of 1-star ratings from viewers who claim the gay agenda is being "shoved down their throats." I do agree that a show like this could never have been broadcast on network TV a few years ago. The salty language alone gets beeped out frequently on FX, but you can see it uncut (or is that "unbeeped...") on Hulu.

Having watched and enjoyed the first two seasons of “Interview With A Vampire” on AMC, or is it AMC+...who can keep track...and highly enjoyable, my search for similar items brought me to something called “First Kill” on Netflix. Huh? You know the way Netflix sometimes floods your screen with suggestions for similar-themed programs? Never once did they suggest this, nor had anyone else for that matter. Garnering a measly 59% favorable rating on Rotten Tomatoes, I had to check this out. It’s about a teenage lesbian couple in a world, albeit supernatural, of love. You see, one is a vampire, and the other is a vampire hunter—a perfect match. Described by one viewer as “a Juliet and Juliet storyline,” it is as sophomoric as you’d expect, with a cast of mostly unknowns. It’s on Netflix, and pop some corn for this date-night epic.



First Kill starring Imani Lewis and Sarah Catherine Hook



Noah Galvin played the gay son on the TV series *The Real O'Neals*

Finally, a salute of the Vidioview hat to the newly-wedded couple Ben Platt and Noah Galvin, two talented young performers who get on my nerves. Ben’s claim to fame was the lead on Broadway in “Dear Evan Hanson,” for which he was the youngest actor to win a Best Actor Tony award. He also appeared in the drama series “The Politician” on Netflix for a couple of seasons. Noah took over for Ben when he left the Broadway production and achieved some popularity in the TV series “The Real O’Neals” a few years ago, where he played the gay son in a conservative family. The mother played by Martha Plimpton, who I will watch in anything. Best wishes to the happy duo. 🏳️‍🌈

Mark Adams has been a popular contributor to LGBTQ+ media for many years, writing extensively on film and video of interest to the community. You can email him at vidioview@gmail.com with any of your favorites for a future scribbling.



- Advertising -

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Dick Fiorentino



Hobart Village Antique Mall is located in picturesque North Central Massachusetts. The name is derived from the historic Inn located on the property. The 1774 Inn was built on a land grant given to William Hobart. Prior to and during the revolution the tavern in the Inn was a gathering place. Famous people stayed there including General Stonewall Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, Henry Ward Beecher and Brigham Young.

by Chloe Belle with Dick Fiorentino

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What are some of the popular trends in recent years? The trend is away from brown furniture, and more toward painted and colored stains. The trend of the Millennials is more toward mid-century modern.

What's the antique market like currently? In today's marketplace it's hard to make a mistake in buying things, young people are not interested in antiques so the prices have dropped dramatically.

Do you have many LGBTQ+ customers? I have had many gay customers over the years.

How would you characterize these clients versus non LGBTQ+ community members? Gay guys love antiques, such as silver, high style figurines, doesn't have to be antique, just pretty and quality.

Do you have any LGBTQ+ staff? Yes I have a friend who comes in on Saturday mornings sits behind the counter and his job is talking to people. We have been friends for about 40 years, he loves antiques, and I guess you could say he is the only person here other than me who can speak about antiques.

What advice would you give someone who wants to purchase an antique? Buy what you like, if you liked it someone else will. 🏳️‍🌈



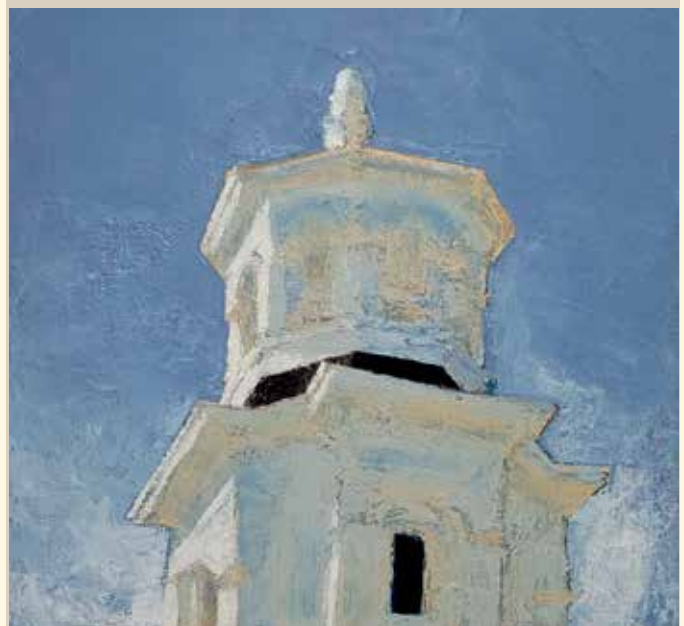
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May Sarton

by Jeff Parsons

May Sarton was the pen name of Eleanore Marie Sarton (May 3, 1912 – July 16, 1995), a Belgian-American novelist, poet, and memoirist. Her best work is strongly personalised with erotic female imagery, although she resisted the label of 'lesbian writer', preferring to convey the universality of human love. Her coming out came later in life with her novel *Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing*.

Sarton was born in Wondelgem, Belgium (today a part of the city of Ghent) the only child of historian of science George Sarton and his wife, English artist Mabel Eleanor Elwes. When German troops invaded Belgium after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, her family fled to Ipswich, England, where Sarton's maternal grandmother lived.

One year later, they moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her father started working at Harvard University. She attended the progressive Shady Hill School and later Cambridge Latin and High, graduating in 1929. Turning down a scholarship to Vassar, Sarton became an apprentice to Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre until 1933 when



Judith Matlack 1918, Photographer unknown



May Sarton, Portrait by Polly Thayer (Starr), Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum

she formed her own Associated Actors Theatre which failed in 1935. Subsequently Sarton turned to writing full time. However, Sarton continued to write poetry. When she was seventeen, she published a series of sonnets in December 1930, some of which were featured in her first published volume, *Encounter* in April (1937). When she was nineteen, Sarton traveled to Europe, living in Paris for a year. In this time, she met such literary and cultural figures as Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Julian Huxley and Juliette Huxley, Lugné-Poe, Basil de Sélincourt, and S. S. Koteliensky. Sarton had affairs with both of the Huxleys. It was within this environment and community that she published her first novel, *The Single Hound* in 1938.

In 1945 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, she met Judith "Judy" Matlack (September 9, 1898 – December 22, 1982), who became her partner for the next thirteen years. Sarton was thirty-three when she met Judith Matlack, twelve years her senior. May and Judy fell in love — a love consecrated in Sarton's almost unbearably beautiful poetry collection *Honey in the Hive*. When they separated thirteen years later, they remained not only friends but nothing less than family to each other. Judy was not yet seventy when dementia began fraying



May Sarton later in life working, at her Maine House. Courtesy of The Maine Historical Society


her mind. Uncoupled and childless, she moved into a nursing home. Sarton visited regularly. Once she settled into her house by the sea in Maine, she often had Judy stay with her for several days at a time — visits beautiful and bittersweet, for the familiar warmth between them was haunted by Judy's fading mind. Sarton writes:

"It makes me feel abandoned and desperately lonely, lonely partly because I believe no one can quite understand who has not experienced it what it is to lose through senility the person closest to you."

During one of these visits, with Judy particularly disoriented, unable to hold a conversation, wandering into the neighbors' yards, Sarton offers a passage of tender consolation:

"Death comes by installments but sometimes the first installments can be very steep, perhaps much more painful to those around them than to the person. I do cherish her so; can one maintain the image of love when so much has gone?" I guess the answer to that question is, yes, because when one has lived with someone for years, as I did with Judy, something quite intangible is there, as though in the bloodstream, that no change in her changes."

In 1956, Sarton moved to Nelson, New Hampshire. At Seventy, Sarton reflected on Judy's importance in her life and her (Sarton's) Unitarian Universalist upbringing. She was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1958. Sarton later moved to York, Maine. By the 1990s May Sarton admitted to feeling like a *"stranger in the land of old age."* With serious health issues her physical abilities became increasingly diminished, yet her desire to write and stay engaged in the world around her continued. Unable to type or write she dictated three more journals over the ensuing five years. After a long absence, poetry returned as well, albeit a radically different style resulting in poems written in terse free verse. Many of these poems appeared in her last volume of poetry *Coming Into Eighty* (1994). Having previously received Poetry magazine's Levinson Prize for several of these poems, Sarton's life had come full circle. From the early sonnets published in Poetry Magazine at the age of eighteen to the poems published in this magazine in 1993, it was a life which began and ended with poetry.

May Sarton died July 16, 1995 and is buried in the cemetery on the hill above Nelson, New Hampshire. 

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Mayor Denise

by D. Bullen

When Cambridge Mayor Denise Simmons was planning her career, she went to school for sociology and psychotherapy, thinking that she would become a psychotherapist or a teacher, and perhaps even a minister.

As she works through her third nonconsecutive term as the first Black Lesbian Mayor of Cambridge, she has rolled these three careers into one: healing, educating, and ministering to her community, all with the additional authority of the head of the city's legislative body, working with the non-elected city manager, the city's chief executive officer, to make and enforce the policies and laws that affect every community in the city.

Asked about the early influences who put her on this career track, Mayor Simmons speaks about her grandmother, who served as the head of the household for a large farm in Georgia after her veteran husband was injured. She put her children through college, radiating strength and self-reliance that echo in Simmons' recollections of her.

After finishing at Tuskegee University, Simmons' mother moved north in the 1940s to escape from limitations in the South, where she could not get the jobs her degrees opened for her. She arrived in Massachusetts and started a family, telling Simmons to do her best, not to let anyone back her down, and to believe in herself when others would not—advice Simmons describes as armor to go into the world.

Growing up in the 1960s, Simmons' pride and self-reliance were set against a background of Jim Crow discrimination. The family was not political, in Simmons' recollection, although their circle included an aide to Senator Edward Brooke, the first African American elected to the U.S. Senate. She recalls a trip she took around age twelve to visit her grandmother in Tuskegee, Alabama. They piled into the car to drive to Georgia for a funeral, passing through towns with 30-foot tall signs advertising that they were in Klan country.

When they stopped at a rest station, Simmons asked for the key to the restroom, and the attendant told her that the colored restroom was out back. When she saw the foul, open-air toilet, she says that she came back into the gas station to give the attendant a talking to, but her grandmother got her out of there and told her, with fear in her eyes, that she would get them killed if she was not careful.

Simmons took America's promises of equal opportunity and equal protection seriously and developed a passion for ensuring that she



Denise @ Cambridge City Hall



E. Denise Simmons

Photo Courtesy Stephen Malcone

Mayor Denise

and others received the equal treatment America was always talking about, as well as access to the services and dignity they deserved from their government.

When Simmons finished her degree in Sociology at the University of Massachusetts Boston and her Master's in Psychotherapy from Antioch College, her first job was in the Third District Court in Middlesex County, helping to run a restitution program after probation.

This led to a role as Executive Director of the Cambridge Civic Unity Committee, which had been formed to address racial discrimination faced by returning World War II veterans. As a city-funded organizer, she worked on racial equity, organizing people around housing and jobs, learning the mechanisms by which the city delivered services. She worked with black parents to help them navigate the school system and conducted a landlords' study to document and gain insights into the neighborhoods where landlords would not rent to blacks.

School Committee

Simmons' next move was to cross from the activist role to a policy position, addressing the city's issues

from the inside. She ran for School Committee twice before being elected, joining public service luminaries like Henrietta Attles, who served as the first black woman on the Cambridge School Committee, and the Executive Director of the Henry Buckner School in Cambridge for 21 years, as well as Fran Cooper, who had followed Attles.

Simmons says that she focused on three tasks on the School Committee: policies, family engagement, and including the LGBTQ+ community. During her tenure, the School Committee oversaw the appointment of the full-time affirmative action officer, in addition to appointing Emmy Howe as the Cambridge Public Schools' first Family Liaison to the LGBT Community, helping LGBTQ+ families navigate schools and normalize their experience to show that LGBTQ+ community were normal, just like everyone else, and to bolster the lesson that love makes a family.

City Council

Following in the footsteps of the first openly lesbian city councilor, Katherine Triantafillou, elected in 1993, Simmons won a seat on the City Council. She says that she was not 'out out' at the time, though she was not in the closet either until a reporter out-

Denise speaks at the A Better Cambridge candidate forum. Photo By Julian J. Giordano, Courtesy of The Harvard Crimson



ed her. Simmons says that when she came out, her mother remained true to form and simply told her to be the best lesbian she could be.

Simmons says she was determined to ensure that the city provided services regardless of race or gender. “When a person comes to look for housing,” she says, “they don’t care about my color or gender. They want to know if I can help them navigate the system.” She points out that “no one’s ever asked for the black gay version of a service.”

On the City Council, Simmons’ radical approach was to talk to people instead of talking about them. Simmons describes herself as always troubling other city leaders, asking which constituents did not have access and why the city did not provide needed services. She ran the first LGBTQ+ town hall meeting, which led to the ever-expanding LGBTQIA commission, focusing on ensuring housing equity.

Simmons had served as a Justice of the Peace performing commitment ceremonies for LGBTQ+ couples before Cambridge became the first municipality, in 2004, to issue same-sex marriage licenses with the full authority of law. On May 17, 2004, the first day of marriage equality in Massachusetts, she and her partner Mattie Hayes were the first same-sex couple to marry at St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church, one of the oldest African American churches in Cambridge, with a long and rich history of social activism. Simmons describes marriage equality as an LGBTQ+ Emancipation Proclamation that freed people to marry people of their choice.

Mayor

When Simmons won her election to be the first Black Lesbian Mayor in Massachusetts in 2008, she continued expanding the range of voices in city government. She held town hall meetings at hairdressers and barber shops. She would bring city council members and administrators but would not let them talk, telling them their job was to be there and listen. Now, in her third nonconsecutive term, Simmons is a black senior lesbian and has introduced a senior



Denise at the Honk Festival; Celebrating with the Street Band Movement, Photo courtesy of Honk

advisory group. These ambassadors meet monthly at Senior Citizens Buildings to say what they need from the city.

Simmons also started a mayor’s parlor, a nod to the time when women, particularly black women, were excluded from government, conducting their business in private parlors. She rearranged the layout in city hall, removed her desk from the mayor’s large office into a smaller room used for meetings, and turned the office into a community room for meetings and weddings. Simmons says it was always important to make people understand that she cared and that the building and the government belonged to them. She continued to trouble the city leadership to add diversity of races, classes, genders, sexual orientations, and ages to its ranks.

Simmons says that she and Mattie Hayes made a choice to keep Hayes private as they raised the three little girls—three, seven, and eight years old—from Simmons’ previous heterosexual marriage.





When Simmons started to receive threatening letters at the house during the incident when Harvard luminary Henry Louis Gates was arrested in his own home by Cambridge police in the summer of 2009. Mattie came from New York where she was working at the time, and stayed till the troubles were over. Simmons won praise for calming the community during the Gates incident, working behind the scenes to avoid divisive statements, and keeping her community from being polarized. Cambridge has always been America's classroom, Simmons says, and it is vital to resolve differences in ways that show what is possible. In her current term, Mayor Simmons has been challenged by protests over the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and again, she has worked to manage discussions so that people can stay whole, arguing and

disagreeing while remembering each other's humanity. One of her signature projects this term is to complete the work of a former mayor, bringing women into Cambridge City Hall and naming a room after the first woman mayor, Barbara Ackermann, who embodied the term "social justice warrior."

A history lover, Simmons has also started a moving museum using the Square as the exhibit, with pictures in shop windows depicting LGBTQ+ history from 1600 to the present. More recent projects have included celebrating 20 years of marriage equality, lifting up African American, Hispanic, and Native-American cultures, and introducing those cultures to people who live in Cambridge so they can see through the eyes of people whose histories are intertwined with the city.

Simmons is proud of her lifelong family support. Her mother supported her till she passed. When her daughter was dying of leukemia, her daughter participated in trials. She launched an organization, Justice Swab, to get more Black and Latino people into clinical trials and stem cell banks. Simmons recalls a recent event at which her granddaughter read a poignant speech about marriage equality, saying that when she was born, marriage equality was not the order of the day; now it is, and, with 18-year-old righteousness, added, why shouldn't it be?

Simmons says that she is black, lesbian, and women all the time, and now a senior citizen. "Where I enter, she says, "my whole race enters with me." Breaking down barriers and opening doors, Simmons takes everyone in her community with her. 🏳️‍🌈



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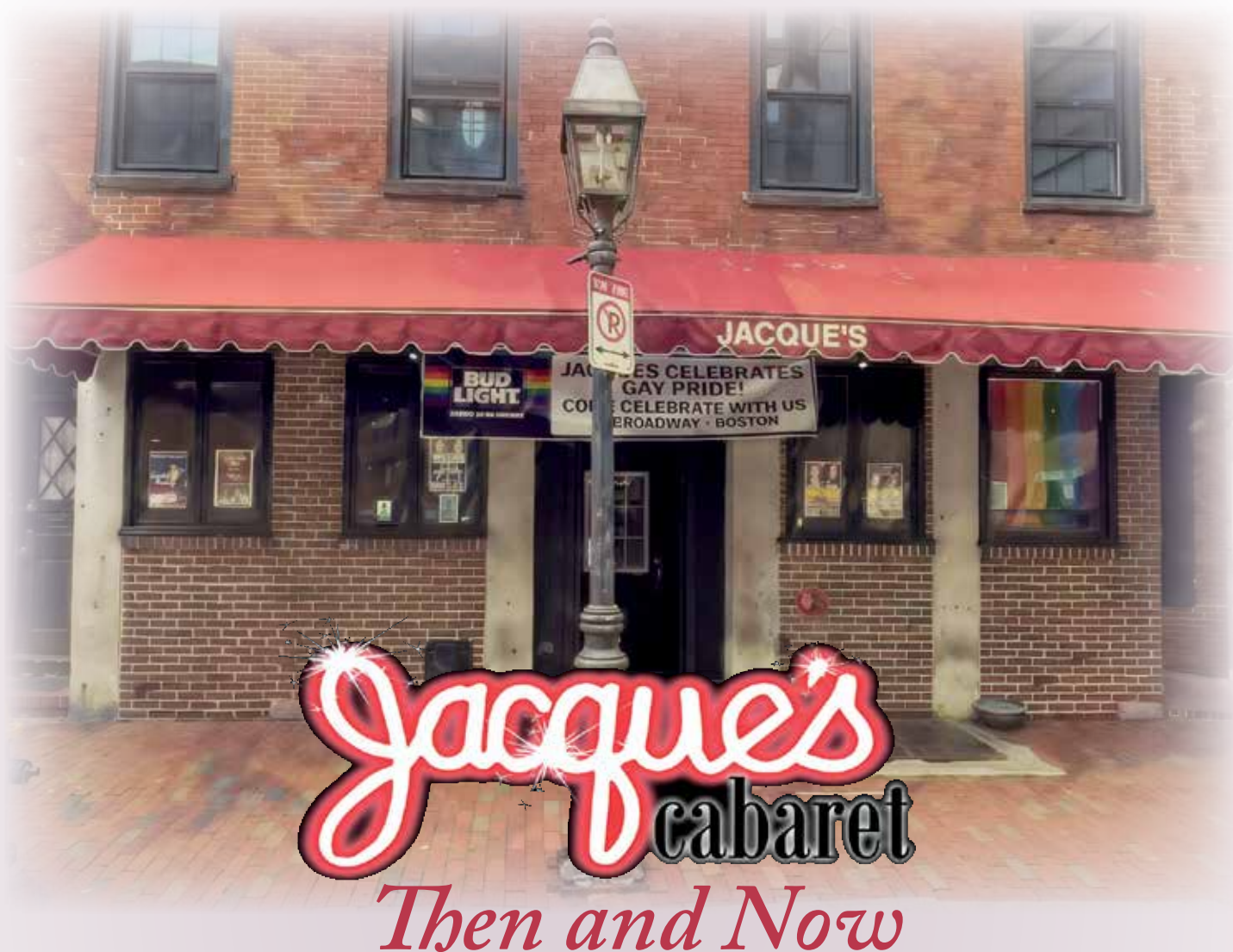
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by Bo Rodriguez

The peaceful little Back Bay neighborhood of Bay Village may be known for its charming, lamp-lit streets and modest brick townhouses, but it's also home to the wildest drag shows in town. Jacques is one of the oldest continuously operating LGBTQ+ bars in Boston. Jacques' Cabaret was founded in 1938 by Henry Vara—who owned Studio 54 in NY and numerous bars in Boston and around the country. The Vara family still owns it and continues to host nightly drag shows, comedy nights, open stages, cabaret events, and karaoke.

Drag has been an art form in the United States for centuries and is an essential part of LGBTQ+ culture and history. Drag queens have entertained and inspired audiences of all ages, genders, and sexual orientations and play a vital role in promoting acceptance and tolerance of the LGBTQ+ community. However, drag has also been the target of conservative lawmakers since at least the 19th century, and in 2022, some states introduced legislation that would restrict where and when drag can be performed. These efforts have fueled harmful rhetoric around drag performers and the art form itself and have led to armed protests, threats, and violent actions from right-wing hate groups. Some public venues have also stopped renting spaces to drag performers to avoid controversy.

In the 1960s, city council members tried to shut the bar down, and the Boston Licensing Board ruled in 1975 that the bar would need to relocate or lose its liquor licenses. However, that decision was overturned by the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC). Fortunately, Massachusetts has not succeeded in cultivating an atmosphere where conservative discrimination could thrive, and Jacques' Cabaret's performers have thrived in recent years, going from minority entertainment to attracting a wide audience.

Patron Sid Moretown recalls, “Many years ago when I ventured to Jacques with friends, drag shows were less attended or accepted by non-gays than they are now.”

Jane O’Leary, another patron, recalls, “Thirty years ago, Jacques was a once-in-a-year or so outing for our group of lesbians looking for an evening of fun. Then, Jacques was the place to go for drag entertainment in the Boston area. It was a place that I would guess John Waters would love, the perfect recruitment grounds for an upcoming film. Going to the ladies or men’s room was not a solo undertaking, and keeping your cash close was necessary. The entertainment was excellent, with well-choreographed shows that were fun, rude, and vulgar at times, with great music, dancing, and, let us not forget, comedy. The last time I was there, sometime in the late 1980s, one of the entertainers got off stage and rubbed her/his foam breasts in my face. It wasn’t the worst thing that ever happened to me, and I couldn’t stop laughing. As always, everyone had a wild, fun time.”

Drag performer Katya Zamolodchikova lived upstairs from Jacques and began hosting the drag burlesque show *Perestroika* in 2006. Jacques continues to foster Boston’s established and up-and-coming drag talent to this day. The bar’s alternative drag show, #NoFilter, was listed as a 2018 Boston’s Best winner by *The Improper Bostonian*. In 2006, the bar became the center of the “Bay Village Drag Bar War,” in which residents—many of them gay men—pushed the city to regulate, if not shut down, the

bar, making accusations of open prostitution and drug use. The battle pitted gays against gays and neighbors against the neighborhood institution described as a “cherished oddity that sticks out in largely segregated Boston — a place where gay, straight, black, Asian, white, old, lesbian, transgendered, Hispanic, transsexual, and anyone and everyone who denies or defies a label can come together for a drink.”

In a war rife with contradictions, a gay lawyer advocating for regulations to get the bar to follow the rules also performed pro bono legal work to help protect transgendered people from workplace discrimination. “If there’s any discrimination,” he says, “it’s the attitude of the licensing board that the whores have to be somewhere, and it might as well be the fags that have to deal with it. That’s the reality I perceive.”

In the end, the Bay Village Drag War did not close the bar, but the prolonged period of scrutiny did change the culture, as the bar owner got more strict with patrons, and the scene shifted, so the bar remained open, with nightly drag shows, in a culture that continues to mix all sorts.

The bar also benefitted from the groundswell of acceptance that led to the 2015 Supreme Court’s *Obergefell* decision, which legalized marriage equality, as the LGBTQ+ community won a long-running campaign for equal rights, campaigning under the slogans ‘love is love’ and ‘love makes a family.’ As an extension of this campaign, queer author and activist Michelle Tea started

Jacques Performers: Destiny, Chanel The Angel, Candace Peruvian, Teasha Boo, Photo Courtesy of Jacques



Drag Queen Story Hour in San Francisco in 2015 after finding that her local library's programming was "welcoming but heteronormative."

In the words of the head of the New York chapter, Drag Queen Story Hour "captures the imagination and play of gender fluidity of childhood and gives kids glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models." These reading hours have elicited predictable 'gay panic' responses from so-called conservatives, but they have also grown in popularity, with 35 chapters

in the US and five international chapters, as more and more people join and recognize the LGBTQ+ community as a vibrant and essential part of every community.

In the meantime, Jacques's Cabaret is still going strong.

Yelp lists Jacques in the top ten places to have a bachelorette party. Unheard of a few decades ago.

One yelp reviewer said, "This was our finale for a bachelorette party, and it was a great choice. It's a small bar, with some large, and in charge, entertainment. (It's a drag club, so extra flare.) The ladies performing all had their own style, and it was a lot of fun! One of the women did songs that you knew, but with a dirty dirty twist, and



Jacques Performers: Regina Jackson & Dottie Ave, Courtesy of Jacques

she was hilarious to watch perform! My favorite had some serious 'tude in a great way! She gave grief (in a fun way) to those being cheap and only offering a dollar tip, have some sassy side eye, and other things like it. She also had my favorite performances, too. She had some serious moves, too. They pulled all those celebrating birthdays up, and then, they got up all those celebrating engagements. I like that they gave all of the people a second to really shine and celebrate their big event." Another

online review of Jacques describes the bar: "Seven days a week at Jacques Cabaret, you can see the most glamorous showgirls from New England and beyond. Watch as they entice, charm, and, if necessary, blackmail dollars from the audience with virtuosic displays of glamour, talent, and double-sided tape. You'll find the crowd equally compelling: On a recent night, attendees included a group of Harvard grad students, off-duty strippers, rowdy suburban bachelorettes, and a drunk couple from Lowell who passed out at the bar. It's an insider's legend and a helluva good time. Just remember to get there early because this neighborhood bar closes promptly at midnight." 🏳️‍🌈

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Ken Borochoy was born in Jerusalem, Israel, and moved to Los Angeles at 12, then studied at FIT in New York City. After continuing his studies at Ecole de la Chambre Syndicale in Paris—majoring in fashion design in both schools—he moved back to New York at 26, working in wholesale and retail sales for luxury brands like Christian Dior, Celine, Chloe, and Lanvin, in addition to styling.

Borochoy's first product was a necklace of ostrich



Mordekai's Director and Designer Ken Borochoy

feathers strewn through a link chain, which grew into two collections named after his father, Mordechai, a contractor in Israel, who influenced his style with “bold, architectural and in-your-face designs.” Borochoy also says that he draws inspiration from his architect brother in his sense



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As a stylist by trade, Borochoy says that he started Mordekai “to enter the celebrity and popstar space, to create jewelry and headpieces that once worn by these legends would make any moment when they wore Mordekai pieces, whether in jeans, a T-shirt, or a ball gown...and would become a memorable and iconic point in their careers for their fans.” These pieces included skeletal features, ghetto capitalizations, helmets with feathers, pearls, and flowers – pieces that scream luxury, drawing inspiration from performers and artists like Liberace, Andy Warhol, Elvis, and Michael Jackson, as well as from the harrowing aspects of black culture, royalty, power, and extravagance, making loud protruding statements in the form of luscious gold and aircraft-grade aluminum, with designs that incorporate customization, heavy made chains, and skimpy outfits, epitomizing the automation of the human form.



Ken Borochoy | Crystal Heart Hoop Oversized Earrings, 2021



Ken Borochoy | Pearl Rose Headband (2021)

mizing the automation of the human form.

Borochoy climbed the ranks in high fashion, starting when Kanye West bought a Spike headpiece. After that, he worked with Nicki Minaj, who had also started her career.

Borochoy’s career really took off when he created pieces for Lady Gaga, starting with the crown she wore for her Guggenheim NY Fame perfume launch and performance. The crown was 24 kt plated and made in NYC in the diamond district.

He built on this success when he made another crown and a pair of bracelets for her Paris launch of FAME fragrance. Lady Gaga “wore armor rings encrusted with gold roses, bees, thorns, and chains” and “two custom ordered 24-karat-gold-plated cuffs designed and inspired by the ingredients in premier fragrance.” When she used the bracelets and a set of armor nails for her for the Harrod’s launch in London, the piece became known as the Claw.

The third design for Lady Gaga was for her performance with The Rolling Stones, where she wore an S&M-style cage on the way to the concert with a complete Saint Laurent look. She was wheeled in a wheelchair, inspired by a queen’s throne,



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Ken Borochoy | Claw, Designed for Lady Gaga

dashian to Lizzo, Brooke Candy, and Erykah Badu, and so many others.

He currently lives in Miami Beach, where he completes two collections: one for high fashion jewelry and headpieces and the second for fine jewelry, which will also have a headpiece for the first time. 

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Your Complete Guide to **WEDDING CRUISES**

Celebrity Cruises' Edge Series Ship, Photo and Graphic; Courtesy of Celebrity Cruises

By Chloe Belle

In 2018, Francisco Vargas and Benjamin Gray became the first same-sex couple to legally marry at sea on a major cruise line, in the presence of their immediate families, in an intimate ceremony presided over by Captain Dimitrios Manetas. They exchanged vows against the signature backdrop of the rose wall in Blu Restaurant, the location befitting the most memorable of moments.

"There are only so many firsts in life, and we are thrilled to be the first-ever LGBTQ+ couple to marry at sea," said Gray. "We are humbled to follow the trailblazers in the LGBTQ+ community who paved the way for us."

Vargas, who works for one of Celebrity's top Travel Partners, Cruise Planners, said: "Traveling is in my blood – and when we heard Celebrity Cruises was celebrating equality and embracing our community, we wanted to be a part of it. We are grateful for the outpouring of our Cruise Planners family's support and hope our story strengthens others in the LGBTQ+ community to confidently love whoever they choose."

Celebrity has been followed by numerous cruise lines adopting marriage equality, offering LGBTQ+ couples the opportunity to get legally or symbolically married on cruise

ships that launch them on their new life together.

From the Mediterranean Sea and Polynesian Islands to European adventures and exotic locales, cruises can let you celebrate on almost any river, ocean, or sea, from Bora Bora to the Caribbean, many cruise lines have been investing in LGBTQ+ friendly cruises and weddings since they found that the LGBTQ+ community sets sail at a slightly higher rate than hetero couples.

Wherever you tie the knot, it's sure to have a wow factor when you choose a cruise!

Celebrity Cruises

Celebrity Cruises' first legally recognized same-sex marriage at sea in 2018 followed a decision in Malta, where most of the Celebrity fleet is registered. In a 66-1 vote, Malta's parliament opened the door for Celebrity to legally recognize same-sex marriages performed on board, and have the fleet's captains officiate the ceremonies.

Because of this policy, Celebrity Cruises is an industry leader and a dedicated queer ally in the water tourism world. They have gone to great lengths to partner with LGBTQ+ impact groups and promote inclusivity in the workplace. The luxury line was awarded LGBTQ+ Friendly



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WEDDING CRUISES

Travel Company of the year in 2016 and won the title of Best Large Ship Cruise Line for LGBTQ+ Passengers four years in a row from the Cruizie Awards.

Royal Caribbean

Royal Caribbean was the first line deemed Gay Travel Approved by GayTravel.com. They have won awards for LGBTQ+ friendly cruises on their 26 huge cruise ships fleet. Because of their ongoing commitment to celebrating diversity and inclusivity onboard, Royal Caribbean is often chartered for exclusive LGBTQ+ sailings. Pride 365 recognizes the cruise line as an organization publicly committed to actively supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

The company made waves using “Gabriel and Blair” to advertise their weddings, although legal same-sex weddings cannot be performed at sea, as Royal Caribbean ships are registered in the Bahamas. Royal Caribbean can provide legal same-sex weddings ashore, in U.S. ports, and in ports abroad, where legally permissible.

Vacaya

Founded by avid travelers Randle Roper, Patrick Gunn, and John Finen, Vacaya is the first all-LGBTQ+ travel company in the travel industry’s full-ship charter/resort buyout sector to launch in over 25 years.

Vacaya’s Happily Ever After program can provide enchanting delights, joyous celebrations, and picturesque views with spectacular backdrops. Their Vacation Planners can help you partner with cruise line and resort wedding coordinators to plan your wedding on one of their spectacular ships in port, at sea, or on the shores of all-inclusive Vacaya Oasis resorts. Their packages offer an array of inspiring destinations and a host of options onboard and ashore that will make your magical day exceptional, blending wedding, reception, and honeymoon vacation in a truly unforgettable event, with ports in the Caribbean, the Galápagos, Europe, Antarctica and more. But no kids: Vacaya cruises are for adults only.



Benjamin Gray and Francisco Vargas, the first same-sex couple to legally marry at sea on a major cruise line. Photo of Courtesy of Celebrity Cruises



Photo and Graphic; Courtesy of Celebrity Cruises

Olivia

Olivia is the industry's reigning champion for LGBTQ+ women. The company hosts a plethora of river and open-water cruises all across the globe, with lesbian and queer woman-focused excursions to unique destinations, including a five-star voyage around the Aegean Sea and even Antarctica, on ships with spas, wine bars, and specialty shops.

Olivia has partnered with Honeymoon Wishes to create an easy and seamless way to register for your honeymoon. Browse through sample registries for suggestions on all the fantastic items your friends and family can give you as a wedding gift. Create a stunning honeymoon registry and wedding website, and you'll be on your way to the honeymoon of your dreams with Olivia, where you can kiss her, hold her hand, and celebrate your love.

Carnival Cruise Line

Carnival Cruise Line offers LGBTQ+ wedding ceremonies in ports where same-sex marriage is recognized and symbolic ceremonies ashore and at sea, meaning you can still

commemorate your marriage on your cruise holiday.

A cruise holiday with Carnival Cruise Line is a real hit with those who love adventure and excitement. It has a vast range of entertainment and activities, from Family Feud to views from the impressive SkyRide or slides at the WaterWorks! The Red Frog Tiki Bar is also great for celebrating your wedding.

Disney Cruise Line

For almost two decades, Disney has welcomed same-sex weddings in their resort parks and aboard their cruise holidays. Disney is synonymous with magic. You can have your wedding attended by Disney cast members and characters, participating in various activities, and soaking in the sun while on the seas.

Azamara Cruises

With its fleet of smaller ships equipped with luxury facilities, Azamara Cruises is an incredibly inclusive and LGBTQ+-friendly cruise line that hosts your dream cruise wedding.



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Martha Salem-Leasca

What's the history of the Salem Cross Inn, and How did you get involved?

The Salem Cross Inn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has a very interesting history. The original farmhouse and barn date back to the early to mid 1700's and sits on 600 acres of magnificent New England countryside, complete with rolling hills, stone walls, and grazing cattle. It was owned by the same family for 6 generations, passed from father to son, until the late 1950's when it was purchased by Henry Salem. By this time, the farm was a rundown mess. Henry and his brothers and their families spent years historically restoring this beautiful colonial home and opened the doors in 1961. It has been a family business since that time and is now run by Henry's daughter, Nancy Salem. Salem Cross Inn is furnished throughout with antiques, has original wide pine floors, gorgeous wood paneling, many fireplaces, one so large that you can actually walk into it, and the smell and feel of a place filled with goodness.

What does The Salem Cross Inn offer?

Salem Cross Inn is known for its delicious prime rib cooked in the fireplace using an antique device dating back to 1700 called a roasting jack. It is the only known operating one in the whole country. We rub our prime rib with a secret blend of herbs, spices and oil and then slowly roast it in front of a fire made with hard woods and fruit woods. We are also known for our gardens where we grow much of what we use for vegetables and herbs in the dining room, and, in season, we supplement with what is grown on local farms and orchards.

What are some of the unique offerings that set the Salem Cross Inn apart?

Those who choose to hold a gathering, a celebration, a wedding, or enjoy a meal in our dining room always comment on the uniqueness of Salem Cross Inn. Our food is all made from scratch, the setting is absolutely unforgettable, inside and out, we can even offer horsedrawn wagon or sleigh rides, weather permitting. If you're looking for true New England, this is the place!

What are some of your favorite LGBTQ+ weddings and why?

Honestly, what stands out to me in most every LGBTQ+ wedding that we've had here, at Salem Cross Inn, is the level of commitment that our couples have for one another. Their vows are always the most thoughtful and touching, full of truths, promises and hopes for a beautiful future together. Afterall, they've had to fight hard to come to this point.


Have you had many LGBTQ+ clients?

Yes, we have had many LGBTQ+ clients, and happy ones, if I may say so! At Salem Cross Inn, we treat all of our wedding couples with the same level of respect and try to guide them through the process of having a wedding day that will be filled with cherished memories, lots of fun, a beautiful setting and great food!

What advice/tips would you give to an LGBTQ+ couple considering using your service?

When planning a wedding, it is important to remember what the day is truly about. Try not to get too caught up in the latest trends and "must-haves." Remember, it is a day to confirm your love for one another and the beginning of a future together. Other than that, have an idea of what you are looking for and don't be afraid to ask questions and share your ideas of your wedding vision with your venue planner. We are always willing to do what we can to make your dream a reality!

What makes you proud of your company?

We have a wonderful group of people working here who only want the best for all who come to Salem Cross Inn. We offer a unique, one-of-a-kind experience and we are proud of that. We have been a family owned and operated business since 1961 and are truly interested in making your time here a highlight of your memories. Come once, then visit often! 

WEDDING CRUISES

Azamara won “Best Small Ship Cruise Line for LGBTQ+ Passenger” and was voted by LGBTQ+ cruisers as “Best Small Ship Cruise Line” for seven consecutive years, with Broadway-style entertainment and vibrant Pride-themed activities.

Same-sex weddings may not be allowed at some ports, and it may be worth getting in contact with Azamara Cruises themselves with specific questions if you’re looking forward to celebrating your wedding on the water.

Crystal Cruises

Crystal Cruises offers tailor-made packages with award-winning planning and amenities onboard and ashore and adult cruises that balance luxury and adventure.

Crystal Cruises has recently established itself as an inclusive cruise line with a fleet of smaller vessels, and world-class personalized service in lavish accommodations with equally lavish amenities.

Crystal sailings coincide with major LGBTQ+ events worldwide, making it a fantastic cruise line to celebrate Pride. Double-check to ensure that the laws of your intended destination permit a same-sex wedding, or check with Crystal Cruises themselves to see what is possible.

Virgin Voyages

While the Virgin brand has long been known for its celebration of the LGBTQ+ community, Virgin Voyages is not currently offering wedding packages, only honeymoon cruises or celebratory cruises with friends and family after the ceremony.

These adult-only cruises provide unique experiences: you can get matching tattoos in their onboard tattoo parlors or choose from more than 20 eateries and menus created by Michelin star chefs while enjoying onboard shows with resident female impersonators.

Vacation Planners

In addition to cruise lines, luxury travel agents such as Out of Office will orchestrate personalized luxury travel for lesbian and gay weddings in many countries around the globe. Out of Office offers packages for LGBTQ couples and families in spectacular destinations, from adventure-packed South Africa to romantic Santorini. They can guide you

through the legal aspects of gay weddings, civil unions, symbolic ceremonies, and the best gay and lesbian wedding packages in your chosen destination, from a beach wedding in Mexico’s Riviera Maya to a traditional Polynesian wedding in Bora Bora.

Out Of Office proudly boasts the first same-sex symbolic weddings in the Maldives, Malta, Japan, Hawaii, and Thailand.

You can also find lots of information on dozens of Facebook pages and online forums, such as the Cruise Critics’ Gay and Lesbian Cruisers board, where gay and lesbian cruise passengers readily share information about their cruise line experiences.

Wherever you end up, take your love with you and spread the word that love is love! 🏳️

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Successful Auto Makers *find LGBTQ+ friendly is good policy and good business*

by John Axelrod

It wasn't long ago that automakers in the U.S. had a reputation for macho disdain for women and the LGBTQ+ community, as cars were seen as the province of hetero men, and discrimination was commonplace in automakers, factories, and dealerships.

But today's world is too connected for that, and corporate car-makers have started to realize that support for the LGBTQ+ community – including their own employees – is not just the right thing to do, it's good for their business. For one thing, LGBTQ+ consumers buy a lot of cars. When Gaywheels.com and Sorgenfrei surveyed 3,685 respondents, they found that 67 percent of gay male and lesbian car buyers consider it “very or somewhat important” for car companies to offer domestic partner benefits to employees. This, combined with a fast-growing support of same-sex marriage, which led to the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013 and the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015, has made car companies more thoughtful about their relations with the LGBTQ+ community.

The needle has also moved because of concerted efforts by advocacy groups like Gaywheels – whose founder, Joe LaMuraglia serves as head of LGBT communications at GM – who have shined a spotlight on LGBTQ+ relations, bringing visibility to car makers who have added LGBTQ+ friendly policy to their corporate culture. At this point, Ford, General Motors, Fiat Chrysler, Toyota, Nissan, Hyundai, Tesla, Volkswagen and Subaru all regularly earn perfect scores on the yearly Corporate Equality Index, a benchmark analysis of corporate policies and practices related to LGBTQ+ workplace equality, administered annually by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

In fact, more than 60% of the 1,000 employers surveyed achieved 100% scores, and the designation of being a “Best Place to Work for LGBTQ+ employees.” In the words of Beck Bailey, deputy director of the organization's Workplace Equality Program, “employers know that innovation is spurred by a diverse and inclusive workforce.”

The United Auto Workers have been an active partner in the push for LGBTQ+ friendly policies, stating that “Equality in the workplace has been a policy and negotiating priority for the UAW for decades beginning with some of the earliest domestic partner benefits provisions in our negotiated contracts. We are proud of the diversity of our members.”



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Here are some car companies that have been recognized for their support of LGBTQ+ employees.

GENERAL MOTORS

General Motors has been a strong supporter of LGBTQ+ equality in the auto industry, earning them the #1 rank in the Top 50 U.S. companies for LGBTQ+ equality. GM was the first automaker to run an LGBTQ+ specific ad and the first and only automaker to sign both the Equality Act and amicus brief supporting the prevention of LGBTQ+ discrimination. GM's qualifications for leadership in LGBTQ+ equality include: Leader for LGBTQ+ human capital practices and outcomes, per DiversityInc; 10/10 rating for commitment to gender pay equity, per Just Capital; and participation in two international human rights groups, per Ethos.

Joe LaMuraglia, founder of Gaywheels.com and LGBT communications manager GM, has helped advertise the Chevy Volt in gay publications and hold lifestyle events with t-shirts emblazoned with the hashtag #OutWithChevy and two-daddy or two-mommy family stickers for back windows, in addition to running a famous "coming out" ad for the Volt, which proclaimed, "Mom, Dad, I'm Electric." Since 1993, the company's employee resource group, now called GM PLUS (People Like Us), has advo-

cated for equal treatment for LGBTQ+ workers. GM was the first automaker to join the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. GM prides itself on its corporate sponsorships. Its facilities in the U.S. and Canada fly rainbow flags during Pride month.

SUBARU

A 2009 Gaywheels poll placed Subaru as the #1 LGBTQ+ friendly car brand, followed by VW and Ford. Subaru earned their stripes by featuring out tennis player Martina Navratilova in a 2001 ad campaign, and they have sponsored TV shows like "The L Word," in addition to being an initial sponsor of the Logo network. So it was perfectly on brand when Saturday Night Live had a Billie Jean King character say she would celebrate her Olympics visit to Russia by "driving my Subaru Outback into Red Square, doing doughnuts and blasting Melissa Etheridge." Subaru reports that lesbians are "four times as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to own a Subaru."

"We are definitely perceived as gay friendly," says Dominick Infante, a Subaru spokesman. "We believe in fairness for our employees, and we were the first car company to offer benefits to same-sex partners. We have also used Martina Navratilova as a spokesman in commercials, and advertised in the Advocate and Out."



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TOYOTA

Toyota was among the first auto companies to provide comprehensive domestic partnership benefits back in 2002, and continues to demonstrate its support of LGBTQ+ team members by expanding tax benefits, adoption support, and transgender health benefits.

Toyota has received a perfect score of 100 on the Corporate Equality index for an impressive 13 years in a row and ranked #19 in the Top 50 companies for LGBTQ+ equality listing by Ethos. The Human Rights Campaign has recognized Toyota as a “best place to work” for LGBTQ+ employees.

Spectrum, the company’s LGBTQ+ business partnering group, helps members advance in their careers, strengthen business partnerships, and improve business results. The group also supports local LGBTQ+ organizations through donations and volunteerism.

FIAT CHRYSLER

Kelly Tolbert, head of diversity at Fiat Chrysler, says that, “our consistent record of providing an inclusive work culture and benefit parity for our LGBTQ+ employees represents our core belief in the talents and potential of our people.”

Fiat Chrysler has achieved a 100% rating 11 times. The company has a Gay and Lesbian Alliance that promotes issues within the company and ensures products and services are tailored to diverse customers. It provided a Fiat Spider to lead Detroit’s Motor City Pride Parade in June.

PORSCHE

In 2004, Ford was the first automaker to receive a perfect score on the Corporate Equality Index and maintained a 100% rating ever since. Meeta Huggins, chief diversity officer, says that “Ford remains committed to supporting an environment of diversity and inclusion because we believe it makes our company stronger.”

Ford also highlighted its recent perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s assessment of work-

places across Mexico. “Ford is the only automaker on the list of 32 major employers that earned top ratings in the inaugural 2018 Equidad Mexico Report.”

The Ford Foundation has recently doubled investment for trans organizations, makes sweeping commitments to support LGBTQ+ communities.

DAIMLER

Daimler, one of the world’s largest producers of premium cars and commercial vehicles, has a strong commitment to supporting their LGBTQ+ employees and the community at large, with U.N. campaigns like Free & Equal. LGBTQ+ employee resource groups (ERGs), include GL@D (Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender at Daimler), Spectrum, and Equal. In 2019, the Daimler Pride Tour sent employees around the world to 15 Pride parades and events.

PORSCHE

Porsche sponsors an LGBTQ+ Business Resource Group (BRG) that creates an inclusive, innovative, and equitable work community, promoting the awareness, development, and business contributions of LGBTQ+ people within the company.

HYUNDAI

Back in 2011, Hyundai was not on the LGBT-friendly list, but by 2022, Hyundai Motor America received a perfect score on the Corporate Equality Index for the sixth year in a row, and has been called an “inclusive workplace,” in addition to receiving perfect scores in Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s ranking of the best places for LGBTQ+ people to work.

Hyundai has backed a film series in 2019 that featured Shangela – a breakout star of the reality show RuPaul’s Drag Race – and sponsoring the Outfest Fusion QTBI-POC Film Festival for queer artists of color, in addition to running a 60-second commercial, Chosen Family, made by a gay-owned production company with a cast including drag queens and a male couple expecting a



baby with a pregnant woman.

Unfortunately, progress is not the entire story, here, because corporate image does not always extend all the way through automakers' businesses, and some Asian carmakers who get top scores for equality – in the U.S. – have been criticized for failing to extend their policies within their domestic markets. Toyota and GM have also been criticized for sponsoring Pride while also sponsoring anti-LGBTQ+ campaigns. A report from Data for Progress' Corporate Accountability Project raises thorny questions about how local or regional distributors like Gulf States Toyota can use the corporate logo to establish PACS to support candidates like Texas Governor Greg Abbot, who promote anti-LGBTQ+ measures.

All in all, though, the progress is real, and it is expanding, as automakers, the LGBTQ+ employees, and the broader LGBTQ+ community work together, get to know each other, and continue to find ways to support each other's goals. 🏳️‍🌈

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