



Presents



Divas  
& DRAG

Welcome to:

# Divas & DRAG

## *A Note from the Artistic Producer*

DIVAS & DRAG, a compelling fusion of opera and drag; brings together the humor, drama, elegance, absurdity and beauty of these two performance arts. Uplifting the queer community through all styles of gender bending drag while celebrating the grandeur of live opera singing, this production is such a joy. Audiences regale in recognizable opera selections with a twist of drag flamboyance, enabling both artistries to be accessible for all. By bringing this production to a theater, one of the roots of drag performance, it provides a space that is safe for those that may not be comfortable in a bar setting. Additionally the pay what you can and more casual environment helps opera break free of its history of elitism and to be more accessible.

When I was approached to do this show in its first iteration four years ago, I was excited and terrified. It was such an interesting concept but very much unlike anything I had done before. I have a music background, specifically with French horn, but didn't really know anything about opera! It was a big

challenge to learn music in another language and style, but with the support of the singers and producers, it ended up being one of the best shows I've ever been a part of. This round I am thrilled to be taking on a new role as artistic producer and utilized the position to select a beautiful diverse group of talented drag artists.

For me, drag has been a journey of gender discovery, helping me recognize my non-binary identity, and empower me to live my truth everyday. After twenty years in drag, I am grateful for what it has given me in terms of personal growth, making life long friends and challenging me to do things I couldn't imagine. I couldn't think of a better show to be my last.

*Emi Nijiya* ✨  
*they/them* ✨



## Community Partners

# RAINBOW HEALTH

Rainbow Health leads the work for equitable health care access and outcomes for people who experience injustice at the intersection of health status and identity. With 40 years of experience advocating for and serving the LGBTQ+ community, those living with HIV, and communities facing barriers to equitable healthcare, Rainbow Health offers comprehensive care that is harm reduction-based, trauma-informed, sex-positive, and meets people where they are. Since our formation in 2018 through the merger of the Minnesota AIDS Project and Rainbow Health Initiative—and later the acquisition of Training to Serve—we have expanded our capacity to assist throughout the Twin Cities and Duluth. For more information, visit [rainbowhealth.org](https://rainbowhealth.org).



# RECLAIM!

RECLAIM's mission is to increase access to mental health care for queer and trans youth so they may reclaim their lives from oppression in all its forms. We serve youth ages 12-25 and their families by providing individual, couples, family, and group therapy. We specialize in assisting youth with gender identity and sexual orientation exploration, in addition to treating other mental health concerns impacting youth and young adults such as anxiety, depression, and pervasive trauma. We're one of the only organizations in Minnesota that offers financially accessible, specialized mental health care to this population. Beyond our therapy work, RECLAIM engages in community events and offers training and consultation services to help our partners improve their ability to work with queer and trans folks. We have a number of ways that folks can get involved, including monetary support, volunteering, hosting a house party, or being on one of our board committees. you can learn more at [reclaim.org](https://reclaim.org).



## *Creative Team*



**ARTISTIC PRODUCER**  
Emi Nijiya

**HOUSE MANAGER**  
Queenie von Curves

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**  
Kelly M Turpin

**MADAME OF CEREMONIES**  
Nadine DuBois

**COLLABORATIVE PIANIST**  
Jared Miller

**STAGE MANAGER**  
Xavier

**STAGE DESIGNER**  
Emily Jaques

**LIGHTING DESIGNER**  
Claudia Errickson

**COSTUME DESIGNER**  
Samantha Haddow

**SPOTLIGHT OPERATORS**  
Sparkles du Jour  
Katie McLean

## *Performing Artists*



Andre 1000

Creatine Price

Damien D'Luxe

Dick Von Dyke

Dom Wooten Embretson

Justin Anthony Spenner

Jordan Weatherston Pitts

Kamaree Williams

Rustina Phoenix-Nuttz

Tracey Engleman

Victoria DeVille

Victoria Vargas





**Andre 1000**

Andre 1000 has been a staple drag king throughout the twin cities since 2003. He began his performance career with the drag troupe The

24 Karat Kings. He holds the title of Mr. Drag King Minnesota 2010. He currently is a cast member of Dragged Out at Black Hart St Paul and he is also a Co Show Producer of Hot Pink at the Saloon Minneapolis. He is sexy, he is smooth, his smolder is undeniable, and he has a smile that melts you!



**Damien D'Luxe**

As a 16-year veteran in the industry, Minneapolis-based performer Damien D'Luxe has put in work to pave the way for drag kings locally

and nationally. He is a trans/non-binary, half-Japanese drag king that traveled throughout the state and nationwide to put his craft on stage. He is best known for his cosplay, impersonations, and makeup transformations. He does a lot of work both locally and through social media to provide inspiration and tutorials for others and to help drag kings be recognized and appreciated in our community. Since the pandemic, Damien has retired from performing to focus on his main career, tattooing. Outside of drag Damien (also known as Emi) runs and owns a tattoo shop in South Minneapolis called Jackalope Tattoo.

The shop is for all non-binary/trans and female-identifying artists and provides a safe space, especially for women, POC, and the LGBTQIA+ community. Emi/Damien works hard in all aspects of life to give back to their community and promote positive change in any way possible.



**Dick Von Dyke**

From the moment Dick first put on the 'stache, he knew he was a fox in the hen house. Dick first spread his seeds of love in St. Louis and

Kansas City before man-spreading his legs in Minnesota. An accomplished musician and emcee, Dick has competed at USofA MI, hosted several weekly shows, and dazzled audiences in over a dozen different cities across the country. Today you can catch Dick at Lush Lounge & Theatre, with Flip Phone Events, and otherwise waving all around the Cities, where he has fully grown into the Dick he is today.



**Dom Wooten Embretson**

Making his return to Minneapolis/St. Paul by way of Malmo Sweden, Tenor, Dominique Wooten Embretson

(DWETenor.com) is excited to sing with AOT again!!! Dom has sung with many theaters and opera companies in the states including Loft Recitals, Minnesota Opera, Theater Latte Da, and

Artistry. This summer he will be making his Malmo Opera debut as "Sandra Bullocks" in Everybody's Talking About Jamie (<https://www.malmoopera.se/jamie>). Dom is currently the owner and coach of Brave Fitness Malmo operating Brave Studio and Brave Outdoors ([bravefitnessmalmo.com](http://bravefitnessmalmo.com)).



**Justin Anthony Spenner**

Praised as a "Stand-out" with "boisterous comic energy" by the Star Tribune, Baritone Justin (he/him) is known

throughout the Twin Cities for his artistic honesty and engaging versatility. At home with Schubert, as he is with Stockhausen, Justin's appearances run the gamut from recital and oratorio staples with regional organizations to world premieres of experimental music. Recent stage credits include Schaunard (La Boheme) with Theater Latte Da, Father (The Golden Ass/World Premiere) with 113 Composers Collective, Joey (The Most Happy Fella), and Guglielmo (Cosi fan tutte) with Skylark Opera Theatre. In addition to performing, Justin keeps an active private studio, develops Opera Immersion classes, and works as a grant editor/consultant for various Twin Cities arts non-profits and individual artists.



**Jordan Weatherston Pitts/  
Creatine Price**

Tenor Jordan Weatherston Pitts has been recognized for his "heroic", "passionate" and "bewitching" performances both on the operatic stage, as well as in concert. He has been seen in The Wall Street Journal, The New York Classical Review, The Financial Times, Opera News, OperaWire, The Boston Globe, Early Music America Magazine, and The New York Times. He has made guest appearances on NPR, WQXR, New York 1, and ABC News as well as featured articles in The New Yorker Magazine and The London Times International.

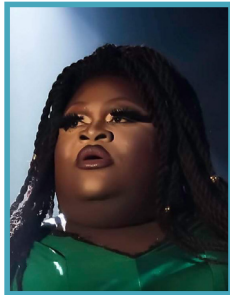
Jordan made his principal artist debut to critical acclaim as the drag queen Renata in Iain Bell and Mark Campbell's world premiere of Stonewall with New York City Opera and continues an active performance schedule of romantic and lyric repertoire. His most recent roles include the cover of Romeo in Gounod's Romeo et Juliette with the Hawaii Opera Theatre, a cover of The Magician (Nika Magadoff) in Menotti's The Consul with Opera Saratoga, Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni, Achille in La Belle Helene, Rinuccio in Gianni Schicchi, Alfredo in La Traviata, Younger Thompson (Cover) in Tom Cipullo's Glory Denied, Goro in Madama Butterfly, and MacDuff in Verdi's Macbeth. In 2018 Jordan was both a Studio Artist with Opera Saratoga's Young Artist Program as well as an Orvis Studio Artist with the Hawaii Opera Theatre.



### **Kamaree Williams**

Kamaree Williams is a Minneapolis-based drag entertainer who started performing in 2013. Identifying as a transgender woman and using

she/her pronouns, Kamaree has held multiple bar and state titles throughout her career but her greatest accomplishment so far in drag is winning the national title of All-American Goddess 2022. When she is not performing she loves spending time with her partner, fur babies, and raising her son.



### **Rustina Phoenix-Nuttz**

Rustina Phoenix Nuttz is known as the Salty but always sweet Auntie of the Midwest! Rustina has been performing for

four years in many states including Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, and even in Canada! Whether it's jamming to an R&B classic to performing soulful spoken word meant to educate and uplift the community, Rustina continues to entertain, educate and engage audiences with their performances. She is currently Miss Gay Iowa USofA Newcomer 2022. She recently competed at Miss Gay USofA Newcomer and received the highest talent score in preliminaries, placing 8th overall as well as winning Miss Congeniality and Best Solo Talent. Former Title includes Miss Drag Idol 2020 and Das Haus Monarch 2020.



### **Tracey Engleman**

A recipient of the prestigious McKnight Artist Fellowship for Musicians, Ms. Engleman has performed operatic roles with the Minnesota

Opera, Minnesota Concert Opera, Skylark Opera, Arbeit Opera, Music by the Lake, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. A particularly gifted performer of 20th-century and contemporary music, Ms. Engleman has performed chamber music with Zeitgeist, the Chicago Chamber Musicians, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Boston Symphony and frequently premieres works by living composers. Her CD Lift Me into Heaven Slowly featuring song cycles by Libby Larsen was released by Innova Records in 2017. Concert engagements include solo performances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Bel Canto Chorus, the Valley Chamber Chorale, and the Rochester Symphony Orchestra, and as a frequent recitalist, she has performed at Orchestra Hall, Hope College, at the National Association of Teachers of Singing National Convention, Source Song Festival, and as part of the Schubert Club Courtroom Concert Series. Alumni of the Tanglewood Music Center and the Art Song Festival of Cleveland, Ms. Engleman's awards include Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Competition, 1st Place winner in the Austin Lyric Opera Young Artist Competition, Finalist in the Sun Valley Opera Competition, recipient of the Minnesota NATS Artist Award, and winner of the Milwaukee Bel Canto Chorus Regional Artist Competition. Equally passionate about teaching voice, Ms. Engleman is an Associate Professor of Music at St. Olaf



College where she teaches voice and vocal pedagogy.



### **Victoria DeVille**

"The Twin Cities' Dirty Little Secret", Mistress Victoria DeVille began her drag journey at the Gay 90s in the fall of 2002 in the weekly

amateur contest. The Bold, Bald Badass's drag show credits include Show Director and Creator of "Suck It: Gag on the Drag" at The Townhouse Bar and "#DragRevolution" at LUSH from 2015-2020 as well as competing in Entertainer of the Year and Miss Gay USofA. Victoria has a deep love for the art of burlesque and feels fortunate to have worked in that world since 2009 including being the voice of Black Hearts Burlesque since 2011, multiple years hosting the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas, and emceeding The Atomic Bombshells in Provincetown, MA.



### **Victoria Vargas**

Mezzo-soprano Victoria Vargas has sung over twenty-five roles for the Minnesota Opera and has performed with the Opera

Theater of Saint Louis, Chautauqua Opera, Sarasota Opera, Ash Lawn Highland Festival, and others. Her concert credits include performing with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (NY), Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (MN), Chautauqua Symphony, the Western New York Chamber Orchestra, South Dakota Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, La Jolla Symphony, Billings Symphony, Bach Society of Minnesota

and Minnesota Orchestra. She has placed seven times at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions at both the district and regional levels. She was a finalist at the Irene Dalis competition through Opera San Jose, placed at the Schubert Club Competition, and was a recent Music in Action grant recipient for the Wagner Society of the Midwest. This season she performed the role of Julia Child in Lee Hoiby's *Bon Appétit!*, and premiered two new works; *Salpicon de Res*, an art song scene for Opera-Oriented Project Sponsorships (OOPS MN), and created the role of Nelly in the world premiere of *Edward Tulane* for Minnesota Opera. This spring she will produce a workshop of a new work by composer Jorge Sosa titled *Generación Perdida* at Opera America. Ms. Vargas is currently an Assistant Professor of Voice at the University of Minnesota. More can be found at [victoriavargasmezzo.com](http://victoriavargasmezzo.com).



### **Nadine DuBois**

Internationally acclaimed Mistress of Ceremonies and singer Nadine DuBois has traveled the world, crooning and caressing burlesque, drag, fashion, music, and theatre audiences. A fierce triple-threat and legendary (notorious) cabaret performer, she has charmed crowds from First Avenue in Minneapolis to The Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas, the USA, and Australia and New Zealand. Also known as a prolific producer and artistic director, DuBois has created and starred in countless cabarets, theatrical productions, festivals, and Pride events. Over two decades of performing, she has only strengthened her dedication to uplifting audiences and performers - always



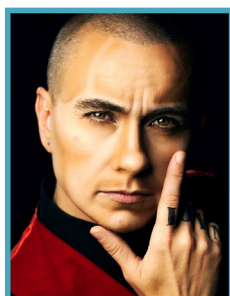
aiming for transformative spaces and a loving community.



### **Jared Miller**

Born in San Diego, California, Jared Miller discovered his passion for Collaboration while participating in his high school choirs. He

graduated from St. Olaf College with a B.A. in Music and an Asian Studies concentration studying with Dr. Ananda-Owens and finished a Master's Degree in Collaborative Piano and Coaching at the University of Minnesota with Dr. Lovelace. As a freelance pianist and coach in the Twin Cities, Jared has worked with BorderCrosSing, Heritage Choir, Schubert Club, Mississippi Valley Orchestra, Minnesota Opera, Mill City Opera, Skylark Opera Theatre, AOT, and Journey North Opera Company. He is also a teaching artist at MN Opera, as well as a core faculty member for the Ordway's new musical theater training fellowship program, GreenRoom. One of Jared's musical passions is in studying and performing the music of Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula.

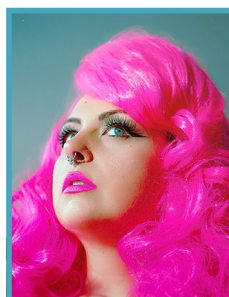


### **Xavier**

Known for his penchant for penguin tail tuxes, outlandish humor, and penetrating smolder, Xavier has been performing drag

throughout the Twin Cities and nationally since 2002, including fundraisers for various queer organizations and individuals. He is the hunky half of the duo Nadi X and the producer of *Dragged Out*, one of the longest-

running drag kings show in the Midwest. Becoming quite the force even when not performing, Xavier has stage-managed many shows, burlesque festivals, and even assisted at the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas. Whether tickling your funny bone or tackling political themes, Xavier lives up to his tagline of being your Commander-in-Heat!



### **Queenie von Curves**

Known as the Rubenesque Royale of Burlesque, Queenie von Curves is the producer of Bare Book Club Minneap-

olis, director of Dr. Sketchy's Minneapolis, dance instructor/creator of Dance for EVERY Body, body impression painter under The Curvy Canvas, and cast member of Black Hearts Burlesque. A lifelong Queer artist through dance, theater performance, burlesque, costume design, and theater/event management, she's so excited to be working with An Opera Theatre!



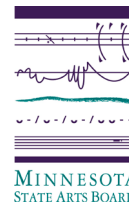
# Presenting Sponsors

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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council and Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.



Keys 4/4 Kids generously provided the grand piano for AOT's DIVAS & DRAG performances! Keys 4/4 Kids accepts used pianos as donations and places them back in the community through their retail store, their placement program, and the Pianos on Parade program. Check out their meaningful work at [keys44kids.net](http://keys44kids.net)



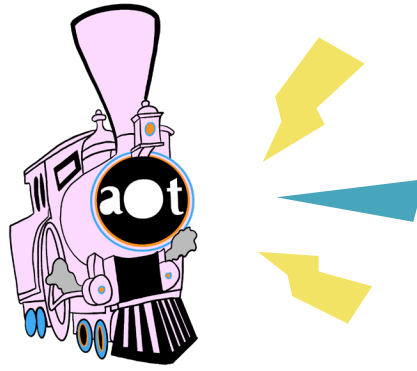
Thank you to J's Kombucha for sponsoring our sober space performance on June 18! J's Kombucha is an international award-winning Minnesota kombuchery dedicated to crafting approachable, refreshing, mellow kombucha. Located in Saint Paul's Creative Enterprise Zone, J's Kombucha offers classic kombucha flavors crafted with fresh, cold-pressed juice from organic fruits and herbs – available in cans, kegs, & growlers. Enjoy a J's Kombucha at CHS Field while watching a Saint Paul Saints game, or as a NA option at one of Minnesota's many breweries like Indeed, Surly, and Bad Weather to name a few.

# A HUGE Thank you !

We extend our deepest gratitude to these generous individuals who believe in our work as much as we do and share in our vision of Art to Action. Your support means everything to us. Thank you!

## *This list reflects donations made June 1, 2022 - June 2, 2023:*

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We truly cannot keep AOT chugging along without the support of individuals. If you enjoyed this performance and want to be a vital part of supporting our mission of Art to Action, creating opportunities for local artists, and providing all Pay As Able tickets, make a donation to keep our work possible. Every amount makes a difference!

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An Opera Theatre is a 501c3 non-profit organization. All donations are fully taxdeductible to the extent provided by law.

Questions about making a donation?  
Contact us at [info@anoperatheatre.org](mailto:info@anoperatheatre.org)



# *We are grateful to have you join us in the AOT community!*

AOT was founded in 2018 with the vision of creating a company that inspires community engagement by utilizing local MN artists of the highest caliber and presenting opera theatre works focused on social justice and community action. The two main beliefs of AOT are that art should break down societal, financial, and cultural barriers, and that art should always be of the people and for the people.

With the help of an Artist Initiative Grant from the MN State Arts Board, founder Kelly M Turpin and a group of dedicated donors made this vision a reality in 2018 with AOT's inaugural production, *The Consul*, which focused on themes of immigration with Community Partner *The Advocates for Human Rights*. Since then, AOT has gone on to become a staple of the Twin Cities arts scene with productions such as *WE OUT: Voicing Our Truth* (July 2020), new commissions *The Sky Where You Are* (October 2020) which was inducted into the Library of Congress in February 2021, *In the Midst of Things: In Medias Res* which premiered to 1,002 high school students in May 2021, and most recently, AOT's newest commission *Mináǵi kin dowáŋ* ("My spirit sings" in Dakota) an opera film about the life and continued legacy of Zitkála-Šá which premiered in October 2022 and is currently on a regional screening tour.

AOT actively engages communities both inside and outside the venue. At our productions, audiences can take part in post-show roundtable discussions with local organizations. Outside the venue, AOT hosts Voice Lab, a free monthly-facilitated peer-to-peer workshop for all singers, regardless of genre and ability. Our education immersion program at LEAP International High School, South High School, and Lionsgate Academy replaces the standard historical focus of opera education programs with a focus on storytelling, authentic expression, movement, and sharing.



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Sign up for our newsletter at [anoperatheatre.org](https://anoperatheatre.org) to stay up to date with the latest AOT happenings and behind-the-scenes scoop!