

# DRAMATURGICAL NOTES

The history of drag queens is an evolution from a common theater practice to an award-winning form of entertainment that has gained legitimacy both on a national and international stage. Drag as an art form has exploded largely thanks to the life and career of RuPaul Andre Charles — arguably the most famous drag queen in the world today. RuPaul's current claim-to-fame is his tenure as the host and face of the reality TV show RuPaul's Drag Race which has changed the history of drag.

Now, 10 years later, the show has a massive viewership (1,000,000+ viewers per episode) that spans beyond the LGBTQ+ community and its allies, a number of spinoffs including RuPaul's Drag Race Thailand and RuPaul's Drag Race UK, as well as a 2018 Emmy Award for Outstanding Reality-Competition Program. RuPaul even won the Emmy for best host in 2018 and has a hilarious and soulful podcast with Michelle Visage, What's the T?

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

With its mainstream success, some may be surprised to learn that the history of drag as a form of entertainment dates back to Shakespearean times and for more utilitarian purposes. Indeed, the history of drag seems to be one inextricably tied to the theater, and before the theater of Shakespeare's time, the stage was used for religious purposes. Drag, then, has a bit of history in the religious world.



# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

Few fans of the art form realize that the earliest forms of cross-dressing — simply the act of wearing clothes that are designated as belonging to the opposite sex — are actually rooted in religious rites. In his book *Drag Diaries*, Jonathan David focuses on two long-ago origin points: ancient ceremonies (Native American, indigenous South American, and Ancient Egyptian) and Japanese theater. David writes that "cross-dressing was widely documented among the Aztecs, Incas, and Egyptians, among other great civilizations of the past, and exists today in tribal ceremonies around the world." Imagine religious rites of initiation, invocations of the gods, calling down the rains, and warding off evil spirits as occasions that would call for drag in these cultures.



# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

"In Japanese theater," David writes, "drag divides the Kabuki and Noh dramas. Noh derives from Dengaku, a folk dance associated with rice planting and fertility, and in its ancient, self-enclosed spiritual world, 'female' actors wearing masks follow stylized routines in a complex and rarefied pattern of symbolic gestures." Kabuki, of course, is a form of Japanese theater that many more people are familiar with. David notes that it rose to popularity in the 17th century, and "is more popular and less ritualistic than Noh." In Kabuki theater, the female impersonators are "carefully made-up, speak in falsetto voices, and move to suggest the essence of femininity."

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

Another book that shed quite a bit of light on what we might call the "sacred" drag artist is titled *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts*, by Roger Baker. Baker also pulls a thread back to ancient civilizations, noting that drag "presided over the creation of drama in ancient Greece where masked actors played Hecuba and Clytemnestra." Meanwhile, in England, Baker writes that "formal drama came, literally, from the church. In an effort to help the illiterate and less educated members of the congregation better understand church worship, parts of the mass were dramatized in very simple ways."

In the 17th century when Shakespeare's plays were first performed at the Globe Theatre in London, only men were allowed to take part in the productions, as they were in religious rites. So when plays included female parts, the male actors would dress as women to fill the void. When it came to the presence of women in the theatrical space, it was unseemly or improper for a female to present herself on such full public display.

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

As a matter of fact, the first appearances of Shakespeare's most iconic female characters were all believed to first be portrayed by men. While this theatrical history provides an illustrious chronicle of men dressing as women, were the Elizabethan boy actors drag queens? Well, the term goes beyond them. In fact, the first true so-named drag queens didn't emerge until the 19th and 20th centuries.

It's in the theatre that the term "drag" is believed to have originated. When men played female parts, they would supposedly discuss how their costume dresses would "drag" across the floor.

Drag began to take on more of an individual form of entertainment (as opposed to being utilized as a part of an ensemble performance) when female impersonation was introduced into American culture via the genre known as "vaudeville." Vaudeville performance gained traction in the early 20th century in the United States, and it combines comedy, music, dance, and burlesque to create an offbeat type of live entertainment.

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

It was through vaudeville that the first official well-known drag artist came to exist, named Julian Eltinge. His popularity moved beyond vaudeville and his success earned him the title of being the highest paid actor in the world — surpassing even Charlie Chaplain at the time.

Female impersonation and the history of drag is said to have entwined with gay culture around the 1930s. When the United States entered the Prohibition era, which abolished alcohol production and consumption from 1920 until 1933, gay men used the underground clubs and speakeasies as an opportunity to express and enjoy themselves. Out of the sight of the law, gay men felt free to be themselves in the underground Prohibition scene and felt free to dress as drag queens as well.

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

Meanwhile, broader culture continued to criminalize gay culture and police cracked down on those gay bars. In response, the drag scene moved in a sense underground. The gay community continued to flourish despite the fact that it was illegal for them to be served alcohol in bars, or even to dance together. The State Liquor Authority and the New York Police Department regularly raided bars that catered to gay patrons.

Oddly enough, it would be the New York mafia, and the Genovese family in particular, who would covertly give the drag queens and gay community an outlet. In 1966, a member of the Genovese crime family purchased the Stonewall in Manhattan's Greenwich Village which would then become a hub of gay culture and the epicenter of a series of riots in 1969 which resulted in galvanizing the gay community against their oppressors.

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

LGBTQ+ members of color simultaneously fostered their own havens in uptown Manhattan, in neighborhoods like Harlem and Washington Heights. It was here where the drag "ball" culture is believed to have originated in the early 1970s. It was then that drag culture seemed to slowly fold into mainstream society with such drag and gender-bending performances by actor Tim Curry in 1975's *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and the aesthetic stylings of musician David Bowie.

As true drag queens came out of the shadows, mainstream media continued to paint more portraits of female interpretation. But there was a notable shift. The drag queen wasn't quite as much of a punchline, or a garish creature to shine a spotlight on. New films, like *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1995), depicted drag queens in more flattering light. There were documentaries in this time, too, like *Paris is Burning* (1990). LGBTQ+ history was being documented in ways it had never been depicted before.

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

By the 1990s, the world was ready to make the drag queen more mainstream than ever before. Indeed, the drag queen at the helm of this acceptance was none other than RuPaul Charles who would change the history of drag in the modern age. RuPaul made a name for herself in the late 80s and early 90s in the New York City club scene. She became a local celebrity who laid the foundation for others to achieve nationwide success.



# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

There has been a lot of recent discussion about who gets to participate in drag and who doesn't. With consideration to its history, here is what Joe E. Jefferies, Professor of Theatre Studies at Tisch School of the Arts in NYC, has to say:

“Drag is everybody’s art form. Like, I am sitting here in a grey pinstripe suit. It is “executive realness.” I am wearing it with some sort of ironic distance, knowing that this costume translates to a person looking at me, and drag is an ironic wearing of clothing. There have always been male impersonators and there always have been female impersonators. What is being brought to the forefront now, and has been espoused in academic circles for years, is that gender is not a binary, it is a spectrum, or a wave. You are not either one or the other, and I think that is what now is what is becoming more culturally acceptable out there.

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

And so yes, anybody can do drag, because drag to me is the theatrical form: You put it on, you take it off — which is different from how you present yourself in every day life. ... There are women who are female impersonators, and there is also a smaller phenomenon that we don't see as much of, men who are male impersonators. Some of these guys who perhaps go out there and do Elvis — is that a male impersonation? Absolutely, because drag is an impersonation, so it means to some extent you are looking at the portrayal critically and adapting it. There is definitely a certain style of drag that RuPaul's Drag Race propagates. To some extent it is about makeup, right? Anybody can do that, anybody can put that on their face, anybody can impersonate their own gender. ... There is drag that is created by, for, and of the gay community and appeals directly to them, and this type of drag hasn't been visible to a wider audience up until recently. Mainstream drag relies on a different set of tropes, and has an audience that finds a man dressed as a woman to be inherently funny, which is not the same for drag in the gay community. ...

# THE HISTORY/HERSTORY OF DRAG

Drag isn't just buying the markers. Drag is sincerely invested in it. Whatever the markers of gender are in a particular culture that we are looking at, then drag is not if the individual just puts on clothing without question. Drag is the questioning of all that: What is all this fuss about a bifurcated piece of fabric, at least in our American western culture? Because to some extent that is what it comes down to. Women fought to be able to wear pants, but it is still odd and unusual to see a man walking around in a non-bifurcated piece of material. ... Drag is for everybody. Do it! Look at the presentation around you and go, Really? Drag is an encrustation, so encrust yourself with whatever you feel like encrusting yourself with. Put it on. Take it off. That's what drag is. Everybody can play a character.

# DRAG AND GENDER IDENTITY

Drag is a type of entertainment where people dress up and perform, often in highly stylized ways. Today, many prominent drag artists are people who identify as men and present themselves in exaggeratedly feminine ways as part of their performance. While some drag queens live their lives as men outside of their drag personae, people of any gender can be drag queens.

As part of their performance, many drag queens have a separate drag persona in addition to the self they live as every day. This persona will of course look different but may also have a different name and ask to be referred to by different gender pronouns. This does not mean they are transgender. Just as actors do not keep being referred to by their characters' names after stepping offstage, drag performers do not necessarily keep the names or pronouns they use while performing. Drag performers are artists and entertainers, so being in drag is not an integral part of their identity in the same way that gender is.

# DRAG AND GENDER IDENTITY

On the other hand, when a transgender person comes out and asks people to use a different name and different gender pronouns to refer to them, it is not part of a performance. It is an important part of their identity and can be a critical part of affirming their gender identity.

Don't assume that someone in drag is transgender or vice versa.

Just as the vast majority of the general population does not do drag, most transgender people also are not drag performers.

It can be hurtful to refer to a transgender person's presentation as drag because it suggests that their deeply held identity is just a show they are putting on – which is untrue. Being respectful of a drag performer's gender is the same as being respectful of anyone else's gender. If you're not sure, for example, of which pronouns to use when referring to someone, just ask.

— Edited from “Understanding Drag,” National Center for Transgender Equality ([www.transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org)), April 28, 2017

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**Panama City Beach** — is a city located in Bay County, Florida, along the coast of the beautiful emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico in the Florida panhandle. Panama City Beach's population was estimated to be 12,741 permanent residents in 2017, but it increases to a peak daily population of more than 100,000 in July. More than 17 million people visit Panama City Beach each year.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Elvis Presley** — (January 8, 1935 – August 16, 1977) was an American singer and actor. Regarded as one of the most significant cultural icons of the 20th century, he is often referred to as the "King of Rock and Roll" or simply "the King." Born in Tupelo, Mississippi, and relocated to Memphis, Tennessee, with his family when he was 13. Presley was a pioneer of rockabilly, an uptempo, backbeat-driven fusion of country music and rhythm and blues. Years of prescription drug abuse severely compromised his health, and he died suddenly in 1977 at his Graceland estate at the age of 42. Presley is the best-selling solo artist in the history of recorded music. He was commercially successful in many genres, including pop, country, blues, and gospel. He won three competitive Grammys, received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award at age 36, and has been inducted into multiple music halls of fame.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**Elvis Impersonators** — An Elvis impersonator is someone who impersonates or copies the look and sound of musician Elvis Presley. Professional Elvis impersonators are more commonly known as Elvis Tribute Artists (ETAs). There are many different types of Elvis impersonators and levels of impersonation, which depends largely on who is doing the impersonation and for what purpose:

**Professional:** Full-time and part-time ETAs who perform for a living. Reenactments of a typical 70s Elvis concert is a preferred choice of most ETAs, however some may portray various phases of Elvis' career in a single show.

**Amateur:** Enthusiasts who impersonate Elvis in contests, as a hobby or at social gatherings and parties. Most have aspirations to perform as a professional ETA.

**Comedic:** Usually performed as part of a parody. There is even 10-member skydiving team called The Flying Elvi who were first featured in the movie Honeymoon in Vegas and perform at events around the world.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Edith Piaf** — (December 19, 1915 – October 10, 1963) was a French vocalist, songwriter, cabaret performer and film actress noted as France's national chanteuse and one of the country's most widely known international stars. Piaf's music was often autobiographical and she specialized in chanson and torch ballads about love, loss and sorrow. Her most widely known songs include "La Vie en rose" (1946), and "Padam, padam..." (1951). One of the most celebrated performers of the 20th century.

**Oxys (Oxycodone)** — an opioid medication used for treatment of moderate to severe pain. It is usually taken by mouth, and is available in immediate release and controlled release formulations. It is a common drug of abuse. In 2011, it was the leading cause of drug-related deaths in the United States.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**Zima** — a clear, lightly carbonated alcoholic beverage made and distributed by the Coors Brewing Company. Introduced in 1993, it was marketed as an alternative to beer, an example of what is now often referred to as a cooler, with 4.7–5.4% alcohol by volume. Zima means "winter" in Slavic languages. In describing "The Long, Slow, Torturous Death of Zima," writer Brendan Koerner cited Zima's perceived reputation as a "girly-man" beverage and its persistent parodying by late-night TV host David Letterman.

**"Skate toward the light Carol Ann"** — Tracy's take on a famous line from the 1982 film *Poltergeist*: "Run to the light, Carol Anne. Run as fast as you can! Mommy is in the light! Mommy is waiting for you in the light!" The film is about a Southern California family whose home is haunted by a host of ghosts. Directed by Tobe Hooper. Written by Steven Spielberg.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Janet Reno** — Janet Reno is the first woman to serve as U.S. Attorney General.

**You're a pretty girl, mama** — a slight variation on a line from the script of *Gypsy*, a 1959 musical with music by Jule Styne, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, and a book by Arthur Laurents. *Gypsy* is loosely based on the 1957 memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee, the famous striptease artist, and focuses on her mother, Rose, whose name has become synonymous with "the ultimate show business mother." *Gypsy* has been referred to as the greatest American musical by numerous critics and writers. This line comes from the moment in the show where Louise sees herself in the mirror for the first time, costumed and ready to take the stage for her first performance as a stripper.

**Killing Me Softly** — In 1973, this song became a number-one hit in the U.S. and Canada for Roberta Flack, and it also reached number six on the U.K. singles chart. A classic.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**Padam, Padam** — A song that was written for Édith Piaf by Henri Contet (lyrics) and Norbert Glanzberg (music) and originally released in 1951. The lyrics are about experiencing a memory of a song that cannot be forgotten and describing how a certain melody evokes memories of a former lover.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

An excerpt in French with English translation:

Cet air qui m'obsède jour et nuit  
This tune which haunts me day and night  
Cet air n'est pas né d'aujourd'hui  
This tune wasn't written today  
Il vient d'aussi loin que je viens  
It comes from as far away as I come  
Traîné par cent mille musiciens  
Trawled around by a hundred thousand musicians  
Un jour cet air me rendra folle  
One day this tune will drive me mad  
Cent fois j'ai voulu dire pourquoi  
A hundred times I've wanted to say why  
Mais il m'a coupé la parole  
But it's interrupted me  
Il parle toujours avant moi  
It always speaks before i do  
Et sa voix couvre ma voix  
And its voice drowns out my voice  
Padam ... padam ... padam ...  
Padam ... padam ... padam  
Il arrive en courant derrière moi  
It comes running up behind me  
Padam ... padam ... padam ...  
Padam ... padam ... padam  
Il me fait le coup du souviens-toi  
It plays me the trick of: do you remember

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat** — A 1970 musical by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice that is often revived and was turned into a film. The play is loosely based on the biblical story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. One number, “The Song of the King (Seven Fat Cows),” portrays Pharaoh as an Elvis type who tells Joseph about a dream that involves fat and gaunt cows.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Sweeney Todd** — Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is a 1979 musical thriller with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and book by Hugh Wheeler. It won the Tony Award for Best Musical (plus many more) and Olivier Award for Best New Musical. It has since had numerous revivals as well as a film adaptation. Sweeney Todd, an unjustly exiled barber, returns to nineteenth century London, seeking vengeance against the lecherous judge who framed him and ravaged his young wife. The road to revenge leads Todd to Mrs. Lovett, a resourceful proprietress of a failing pie shop, above which, he opens a new barber practice. Mrs. Lovett's luck sharply shifts when Todd's thirst for blood inspires the integration of an ingredient into her meat pies that has the people of London lining up... and eating, well, Sweeney's victims.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**At last my arm is complete again!** — From Sweeney Todd.

**Mister Man** — may refer to a Culture Club song by that title, or a porn website, or a whose name is unknown.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Frances Gumm** — Judy Garland's given name at birth. Actress Judy Garland (1922–1969) is widely considered a gay icon. The Advocate has called Garland "The Elvis of homosexuals." The reasons frequently given for her standing as an icon among gay men are admiration of her ability as a performer, the way her personal struggles seemed to mirror those of gay men in America during the height of her fame, and her value as a camp figure. Garland's role as Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz* is particularly noted for contributing to this status. The connections between Garland and LGBTQ people include the slang term "Friend of Dorothy," which likely derives from Garland's portrayal of Dorothy Gale and became a code phrase gay people used to identify each other. Dorothy's journey from Kansas to Oz "mirrored many gay men's desires to escape the black-and-white limitations of small town life ... for big, colorful cities filled with quirky, gender-bending characters who would welcome them."

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**Gender nonconformist** — behavior or gender expression by an individual that does not match masculine or feminine gender norms. People who exhibit gender variance may be called gender variant, gender non-conforming, gender diverse, gender atypical or genderqueer, and may be transgender or otherwise variant in their gender identity. In the case of transgender people, they may be perceived, or perceive themselves as, gender nonconforming before transitioning, but might not be perceived as such after transitioning. Some intersex people may also exhibit gender variance.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**The Crying Game** — a 1992 British thriller film written and directed by Neil Jordan. The film explores themes of race, gender, nationality, and sexuality against the backdrop of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. It was memorable in its time for the reveal that the character of “Dil” was transgender, and the straight cis-male character Fergus was in love with her, despite his initial feelings of revulsion.

**Lord of the Flies** — When Remy says “It’s like Lord of the Flies out there and I’m the pig,” she’s referring to William Golding’s first novel published in 1954. At one point in the story, the boys, who have been stranded on an uninhabited island, hunt and graphically murder a female pig nursing her babies.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**Hedda Lettuce** — Hedda Lettuce is an American drag queen, comedian and singer who lives and works in New York City. The New York actor Steven Polito debuted his persona Hedda Lettuce in 1991. She is one of the few drag queens who actually sings live using her voice instead of lip syncing. Lettuce's appearances include MTV, Comedy Central, The People's Court and a cameo on Sex and the City as Samantha's ex-beau turned Bingo Drag impersonator. Lettuce's film appearances include To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Lypsinka, Divine, Barbette** — Also known as Harris Glenn Milstead, **Divine** was an American actor, singer and drag queen. A character actor who often performed female roles in both cinema and theater, Divine also adopted a female drag persona in his musical performances, leading People magazine to describe him as the “Drag Queen of the Century.” He was often associated with independent filmmaker John Waters and starred in ten of Waters’ films. Born as Vander Clyde in Texas in 1945, **Barbette** won substantial acclaim as one of Europe’s most famous drag queens, and she was an aerialist. John Epperson is an American drag artist, actor, pianist, vocalist and writer who is mainly known for creating his stage character **Lypsinka**. As Lypsinka he lip-synchs to meticulously edited, show-length soundtracks culled from snippets of outrageous 20th-century female performances in movies and song. A frequent performer at Wigstock.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**Stonewall** — The Stonewall riots (also referred to as the Stonewall uprising or the Stonewall rebellion) were a series of spontaneous, violent demonstrations by members of the LGBTQ community against a police raid that took place in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City. They are widely considered to constitute the most important event leading to the gay liberation movement and the modern fight for LGBTQ rights in the United States.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

The Stonewall Inn, located at 51 and 53 Christopher Street, along with several other establishments in the city, was owned by the Genovese crime family. In 1966, three members of the Mafia invested \$3,500 to turn the Stonewall Inn into a gay bar, after it had been a restaurant and a nightclub for heterosexuals. Once a week a police officer would collect envelopes of cash as a payoff, as the Stonewall Inn had no liquor license. It had no running water behind the bar—used glasses were run through tubs of water and immediately reused. There were no fire exits, and the toilets overran consistently. Though the bar was not used for prostitution, drug sales and other "cash transactions" took place. It was the only bar for gay men in New York City where dancing was allowed.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

The Stonewall Rebellion was crucial because it sounded the rally for the gay rights movement. It became an emblem of gay and lesbian power. By calling on the dramatic tactic of violent protest that was being used by other oppressed groups, the events at the Stonewall implied that homosexuals had as much reason to be disaffected as they. Within two years of the Stonewall riots there were gay rights groups in every major American city, as well as Canada, Australia, and Western Europe. The legacy of the Stonewall Riot continues today.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Mattachine Society** — one of the earliest American gay movement (or homophile) organizations. Formed by Harry Hay, a leading gay activist and former Communist member, along with seven other gay men, the name refers to the Société Mattachine, a French medieval masque group who allegedly traveled from village to village using ballads and dramas to point out social injustice. The name was meant to symbolize the fact that “gays were a masked people, unknown and anonymous.” The Mattachine Society began sponsoring discussion groups in 1951, providing lesbians and gay men an opportunity to share openly, often for the first time, their feelings and experiences. The Society also became active in protesting police entrapment of gay men and other oppressive tactics and policies. Some of Mattachine’s more political actions, as well as the Communist leanings of several of its founders, put the organization under considerable pressure and public scrutiny during the country’s anti-Communist era of McCarthyism in the early 1950s.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**ACT UP** — The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power is an international organization that was founded in the U.S. in 1987 to bring attention to the AIDS epidemic. As the first group of its kind, ACT UP has dozens of chapters nationally and globally whose purpose is to find a cure for AIDS while simultaneously providing accurate information, help and awareness through education and radical, nonviolent protest.

**Montrose Mining Company** — A gay bar in the Montrose neighborhood of Houston, Texas, that opened in March 1978. When it closed in September 2016, it was known as the oldest gay bar in Houston.

**Maggie and Brick** — *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is a play by Tennessee Williams. One of Williams's more famous works and his personal favorite, the play won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1955. The play focuses on a seemingly dysfunctional relationship between the two main characters Brick and Maggie.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**Brooklyn Drag** — The lineage of the drag created in Brooklyn perhaps reflects the history of other New York sub-cultures more so than the gender-bending more commonly seen in TV. The Brooklyn drag world's makeup is inclusive and diverse – the spirit of the club kids lives on in Brooklyn's rebellious deconstruction of beauty. That means that Brooklyn drag is probably best defined in opposition to its foil, Manhattan drag: Manhattan drag is thought to be influenced by Broadway, so lots of big crowd-pleasing high energy numbers. Meanwhile Brooklyn is considered more influenced by the performance artist community, so shows there tend to be more provocative, deeper emotions.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

**God grant me the serenity...** — “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.” This prayer was written by American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) and was a staple in Niebuhr’s sermons and church groups in the 1930s and 1940s. It was later adopted and popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step programs.

**Keep comin’ back, baby** — Keep Coming Back is a mantra used by Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs. After a member “shares” their thoughts, the other members say “keep coming back.” It is also used to close out meetings.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN THE SHOW

**We're Angry at the Russians Right Now** — A line Tracy says in the play after requesting Grey Goose, a French brand of vodka, which refers to the federal law unanimously passed by the Russian State Duma “for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values,” also referred to in western media as the “gay propaganda law.” It was signed into law by President Vladimir Putin on June 30, 2013. The law placed severe restrictions on the free expression rights of LGBTQ+ people and gave a tacit nod of encouragement to those seek to persecute them. anti-gay laws.

# CULTURAL CONTEXT/THINGS YOU WILL HEAR IN SHOW

The law makes the vaguely-worded “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among minors” a criminal offence. Under the legislation, any event or act regarded by the authorities as an attempt to promote homosexuality to minors is illegal and punishable by a fine. The law has been used to stop gay pride marches and detain gay rights activists. Shortly after the law was enacted, a movement began to boycott Russian vodka. Gay bars around the world joined the #dumpstoli campaign, a movement created by Dan Savage in July 2017 that asked gay and straight bars across the country to boycott Russian vodka to protest the country’s aggressive,