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ABOUT THE COVER: In their inimitable, colorful style, **Mariella Mendoza** graces our *Loud + Proud: Utah LGBTQ+* cover with a vibrant character finding a welcoming home and spiritual ease within the SLC cityscape. Find more of their work on Instagram [@marim4cha](#).

BINX OLSEN

Contributor Limelight

Illustrator



Binx Olsen began illustrating for *SLUG* in October 2017, and we've loved their lively, cute style ever since! From anthropomorphized local-beer ingredients parading in our 2018 *Beer Issue* to their recent *SLUG Picnic* posters—especially the September 2020 raccoon illustration, a favorite of theirs—Olsen charms with their work. This month, Olsen offers up a colorful, interpretive piece for our feature about *Flourish Therapy* on pg. 22, to which they felt a timely and meaningful connection. To boot, we're lucky to have on Team *SLUG* someone whose art has appeared in three books, murals in two different countries and tattooed on people's skin! You can find more of Olsen's work [@binxolsen](#) on Instagram.

KAMRYN FEIGEL

Contributor Limelight

Contributing Writer



Having written for *SLUG Magazine* for eight years, Kamryn Feigel has mastered the voice for *SLUG's* coverage of LGBTQ+ stories such as in our monthly feature "Bold & Beautiful" and local LGBTQ+-related events. "I'm honored to have met and shared the stories of so many of our LGBTQIA+ sibs voices here in SLC for so long with 'Creature Feature' and now 'Bold & Beautiful'," she says. In her time outside of writing, she takes the role of a dog mom, outdoor enthusiast and attends local protests as a rooftop activist. Read her latest "Bold & Beautiful" featuring **Marlo Suzzane** on pg. 36.

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SLUG Mag stands with you in demanding equality and justice for all.

An Acronym for Salt Lake UnderGround, *SLUG Magazine's* mission is to amplify Salt Lake City's thriving alternative and underrepresented music, arts, lifestyle and events subcultures with thoughtful media coverage and exclusive event curation.

SLUG Mag recognizes the long history of racism and discrimination that continues to live in the independent arts and lifestyle communities we exist within and cover, not just here in Salt Lake but across the country. We're working internally to review our processes and practices to reevaluate whether we're truly accomplishing our core mission of diversity and inclusion across all the fields and disciplines we cover.

If you have any comments, questions or feedback for us, please reach out to our Executive Editor, Angela H. Brown, at: angela@slugmag.com.



Photo: John Barkiple

The Salt Lake City Pink Pistols

Building Public Defense Networks for Utah's LGBTQ+ Communities

With the *Salt Lake City Pink Pistols*, Ermiya Fanaeian works to protect Utah's queer community through firearm education and training.



By Aidan Croft • aidanpcroft@gmail.com

In June of 2020, **Iyanna Dior**, a Black transgender woman, was violently assaulted in a convenience store in Minneapolis. The video of the attack, which left her severely scarred and bruised, circulated on social media in a storm of outrage that erupted in the wake of the murders of **Tony McDade**, **Nina Pop** and so many other trans Americans. "When I watch that video, I think to myself, 'Well, the fact is [that] pepper spray and a taser would not have been able to protect her,'" says **Ermiya Fanaeian**, Director and Founder of the Utah chapter for the *Pink Pistols*, an organization dedicated to protecting queer communities. "We have to understand that those who are opposing us put pepper spray on their breakfast. The only thing that would have been powerful enough for her to fight back against that mob would have been a firearm."

The *Salt Lake City Pink Pistols* focuses on "arming, training and defending queer and trans communities here in Utah," says Fanaeian. Several times a month, the group hosts range days with a licensed trainer, allowing folks who have never touched a firearm to learn how to protect themselves in a safe environment. In addition to in-person training, the group frequently hosts educational events through their Instagram, where they answer questions from the community. "I meet so many people who had no idea that we—as queer and trans people—ever even had the need or the want to arm ourselves," says Fanaeian. "The fact is it's not just the Proud Boys, it's not just these extremist gun nuts ... This tool that we call a firearm is something that is able to empower and protect [our] communities [as well]."

In 2018, Fanaeian was working as a gun-violence prevention activist with *March for Our Lives*, whose Utah chapter she co-founded. "Spending time in

that movement, I realized that our community—the trans community especially—was experiencing this ever-growing violence against us," says Fanaeian. "It was important for me to start focusing my work on actually preventing that violence and defending ourselves against [it]." This is precisely what led Fanaeian to start the first Utah chapter for the *Pink Pistols*, a national organization created over 20 years ago that now has over 45 chapters across the country.

"The firearm community is still largely against queer and trans people and they're still largely right wing," says Fanaeian. "I stay weary of trying to include queer and trans people in movements that never were focused on us." Instead, she sees the work of the *Pink Pistols* as part of a larger initiative to reimagine the way our public safety networks are structured. By arming minority communities with firearms and self-defense strategies, Fanaeian foresees a symbiotic system of protection, one built upon the specific needs of a community. "We're trying to move away from this world where police are roaming our communities and the only way we can protect ourselves is by calling these cops who largely are harming us," says Fanaeian. "We can be safe and we can cultivate this communal defense for ourselves, but it has to start with decentralizing police."

In pursuit of this vision, the *Pink Pistols* are frequently involved in local issues that impact Utah's LGBTQ+ communities. "It is not just [about] engaging with the conversation of firearms but also engaging in the politics of the working class," says Fanaeian. Most recently, the group led a protest against *Encircle*—an organization that hosts safe houses for LGBTQ+ communities—which plastered the non-profit's headquarters in Salt Lake with signs

that spotlighted the housing project's vainglory. Calling the community to action in an Instagram post, the *Pink Pistols* addressed their issues with the plans saying:

"*Encircle* has raised \$4 million, with the goal to raise \$8 million, from multi-millionaires and billion dollar corporations. What do they plan to do with all of this money? They are going to buy eight new performative mansions around the state while queer and trans youth are still largely homeless and without food on the streets in our state. Bourgeois LGBTQ organizations like *Encircle* use the suffering of queer youth as a marketing tactic to achieve their upper class white goals."

Fanaeian speaks of the *Pink Pistols* with an urgent pragmatism, bringing what could appear as mere fantasies down to a street view of Salt Lake's queer communities of tomorrow. "We will continue to focus on initiatives for working class queer and trans people, and that largely includes supporting initiatives in favor of worker's rights, in favor of housing rights, in favor of employment and education rights and making all of that affordable for our collective wellbeing," she says.

As the public image of the *Salt Lake City Pink Pistols* has grown because of their activism, so has their membership. Urging people to understand the necessities of arming LGBTQ+ communities, Fanaeian encourages readers to join the *Pink Pistols* and engage with their mission. "Firearms are the only powerful tool that will equalize us," she says.

The *Salt Lake City Pink Pistols* is open for anyone to join. You can follow them on Instagram @pink-pistolsslcc to stay up to date with their future events.

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Understanding intersectionality will help you grasp the meaning behind this article. Intersectionality is a prism through which we understand how multiple forms of inequality or disadvantages sometimes combine themselves and create obstacles that are often not understood within conventional ways of thinking about anti-racism, LGBTQ+ rights, feminism, etc.

The words “there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives” from **Audre Lorde** ring so very true to me. I am a Black, Biracial, bisexual female, and with that comes a mixture of racial stereotypes and gender stereotypes for which I’ve faced racism, sexism, discrimination and harassment. Yet, there’s still more to me than that. I am also a mother to three sons, an educator, a yoga instructor and a freelance model—I’m multifaceted. I understand that I am Black before I am anything else due to how this country was established. I am Black first, and then I am seen as a woman, then as a queer person.

Although I came out as a teen, being queer is not something I openly announce to people. As I mentioned, I receive enough backlash and criticism for just being a Black woman. From what I’ve experienced, it’s easy for people to pigeonhole you into another group once they find out you’re queer. Assumptions based on stereotypes can sound like, “Oh, she’s into threesomes,” “She’s a freak.” Just as anyone else, I have my own preferences when it comes to sexuality and relationships. As a person who prefers to be monogamous, the assumption that I must be polyamorous because of my sexuality is another misconception that falls under the prejudice people such as myself face.

Until societal standards change, those three simple constructs—Black, bisexual, female—have isolated and secluded me most of my life. As a Black, bisexual female, I’ve never fit Utah’s “standard of beauty.” It has only been recently that as a model I have been able to work with beauticians who are trained in ethnic hair and beauty, not just individuals with fair skin and blonde hair. It takes “thick skin” and, especially, a lot of self-love to model in a state where 1.5% of the population is Black—an increase from when I was growing up.

Within Utah’s progress, content creators are branching out and trying to be more inclusive. However, it is apparent that

Intersectionality's Beauty in Utah

By Tiffany Rasmussen • rasmussentiffany@gmail.com

white content is still favored over BIPOC content. I understand that Utah is slowly but surely making progress in terms of representation, and I hope the intentions of diverse recruitment are pure and genuine. I LOVE to see the young LGBTQ+ and BIPOC community creating, modeling, getting into film, etc. Whether the Utah market is ready or not, it’s time to show everyone that the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities are the standard of beauty!

“Strength lies in differences, not similarities,” is a motto **Jesus Rodriguez**, a local photographer and my friend, stands by. Both Jesus and I want to make sure our work is in line with our purpose. So with social justice issues weighing heavy on both our shoulders,



(L-R) Top: Bronson Bravo, Tiffany Rasmussen, Alejandro Fuentes and Anthony Luquin.

Bottom: Tremayne Davis and Jenaya Cue.

we wanted to do something special for this year’s *Pride* month. We put together a shoot that was true and genuine to Utah’s LGBTQ+ and BIPOC community. From the makeup artist, models to the photographer, everyone involved is part of the community. Here we make a stance and collaborate and celebrate, expressing and embracing the beauty in our uniqueness, diversity and similarities. As we build kinship in a state where reportedly 67.70% are LDS, 90.6% White, 14.4% Hispanic or Latino and 1.5% of the population is Black, we are here! Honestly, what more is there to celebrate during *Pride* than the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC community in our state. Hopefully, other creatives in the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC community in general will feel inspired and empowered and we’ll start to see more inclusivity and representation.

Actual change is sustainable. Photographers, modeling agencies and brands can not think that using Black models only while BLM is a hot topic will be significant. True change will pass the test of time, and that requires believing representation matters. To truly understand the beauty of representation, know that we are all complex humans that fit into multiple categories.

People need to stop pigeonholing other people into boxes and check their own biases. As a photographer, creative or stylist, question whether you’re hiring the same “type” of a model because they gain likes on social media. If so, you’re feeding into the overall systematic issue—challenge and question who is being represented in one’s work and who it is serving. Doing so might assist in us moving toward a future that not only looks more inclusive but is. As a Black, Biracial, queer woman who has faced racism, discrimination and harassment here in Utah, I can’t stress the importance of intersectionality through representation in fashion, modeling, the arts, our schools, etc. enough.

However, one cannot change outcomes without understanding how they come about. Identity isn’t a self-contained unit—it is a relationship between people in history, people in schools, people in communities, etc. Therefore, people need to be made aware that they are a part of someone’s identity. In seeing that interconnectedness, one can take ownership and they can, in turn, make that commitment to understanding and begin implementing diverse representation and offering opportunities to all peoples’ models, not just the ones that fit the social construct.



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“COLORFUL,
ANGRY,
HAPPY”



Left: When creating, Mariella Mendoza strives to find a happy medium between colorful imagery that still communicates the challenges they face in life.

Right: As an activist and artist, Mendoza contributes their work to organizations such as Uplift, Decarcerate Utah and Nopalera Art Collective.

Activist Mariella Mendoza uses art as a call-to-action

By Marina McTee • mdawnmctee@gmail.com || Photos by [@robtookthis](#)

Local activist and artist Mariella Mendoza describes their artistic style as “colorful and angry, but also very happy.” They grew up undocumented in northern Utah and say life didn’t become easier after the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals** (DACA) began, which aims to protect undocumented children from deportation. Mendoza channels the experiences of growing up undocumented and being a queer, nonbinary person into their art. Having a cartoonish style allows Mendoza to create bright, colorful pieces while also representing darker experiences. “I wanna draw the tender things that my younger self deserved, but I also wanna draw the angry things that adults need to see,” Mendoza says.

Working alongside numerous activist organizations, Mendoza has created murals, installations and more for various causes around the state. Among the many organizations Mendoza works with are **Decarcerate Utah**, which advocates for dismantling the prison-industrial complex; **Uplift**, which mobilizes youth for climate justice in the southwest; and **Nopalera Artist Collective**, which gathers local artists of color to create murals, installations and more. While Mendoza does create larger pieces for these movements, they also design documents such as flyers, infographics and press releases as part of their media strategies. Mendoza understands that one of the primary roles of art in social movements is as a media strategy: Everything must be clear and concise to be effective. “As visual artists, we are aware of the power of colors, shapes and contrast and how to use these tools to communicate our message,” says Mendoza.

Every piece Mendoza has created has been significant and holds the impact that media

strategy requires. There are a few moments, though, that stand out as particularly moving for Mendoza on a personal level. Last summer, they worked with a crew to paint the *Justicia Para Todos* mural along Park City’s historic Main Street, which features portraits of police brutality victims alongside the call for “justice for all” in Spanish. One crew member was the brother of **Cody Belgard**, who was shot in the back by police in 2018. When Belgard’s portrait was finished, his brother laid down by its side. “It was all so special and meaningful and so powerful, I will cherish it forever,” Mendoza says. This work is not without its dangers, however. The crew was harassed by people while they worked, but they just kept working and listening to music. Afterwards, nearby restaurant workers, who Mendoza says were mostly people of color, thanked them for playing music in Spanish, creating another beautiful moment in the harshness.

In addition to their art, Mendoza is also a prominent activist within the LGBTQ+ community and was the first undocumented person to speak at the *Utah Pride Festival*, a fact they didn’t find out until moments before they were to speak. “You know, sometimes I think about it and I just feel so lucky,” says Mendoza when reflecting back on that moment. Despite the significance of this moment, Mendoza thinks of themselves not as a leader but as someone working and being a part of something bigger than themselves. “The LGBTQIA+ community here is full of talented, passionate babes who are constantly teaching me to be better and to also like, speak for myself too, you know?” Mendoza says. To them, the community is a place where people are constantly learning and growing from one another.

Even with the importance of the representation Mendoza provided by being the first undocumented, queer and nonbinary person to speak at *Pride*, representation itself will never be

enough. In fact, if representation is the only goal, it can be damaging rather than helpful to the movement. “The thing about representation is that it’s not going to save us and can too often lead to this tokenizing idea of ‘everything is okay now because I am visible,’ when in reality, trans and queer folks continue to live on the streets, continue to struggle and continue to be displaced,” Mendoza says.

When it comes to activism, mutual aid and community work, Mendoza believes the work is done in just that way—as a community. “I don’t really believe in doing work ‘for the community.’ I think that the most valuable work happening right now is being done by everyone alongside each other,” says Mendoza. Some of the most important ways people can give their support to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, according to Mendoza, is to “encourage BIPOC [and] LGBTQIA+ folks to continue to create and to experience radical joy at their own pace.” Mendoza says art is a continual process that doesn’t stop just because the artist might not be working on a piece at that moment. Too often, people also lose their artistic desires because of the pressure to make money or conform to common beauty standards.

What this means for Mendoza is that people must support art that makes them uncomfortable and accept the art that artists want to make. “When I think of my queerness, particularly my gender, I get really excited over how beautifully ugly it is and how dark and angry it can get,” says Mendoza. “Support artists by loving them as they are, and support our communities by accepting the feeling of being uncomfortable.”

As for the work anyone can do, Mendoza says, “Make bold decisions, engage in conversations about reparations and LAND BACK!” Mendoza can be found on Instagram [@marim4cha](#) and on their website [mariellamendoza.com](#).

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Cheer to the Queers: The Iconic Club Try-Angles

By Avrey Evans
avreyevans21@gmail.com

For nearly 20 years, *Club Try-Angles* has held open arms for Utah's LGBTQ+ community.

Some know it as Salt Lake's colorful neighborhood bar, others call it "Cheers for queers," but most nightlife regulars will instantly recognize the iconic hub called *Club Try-Angles*. First opened in 2002, *Try-Angles* has become a symbol for queer counterculture and the ultimate safe space for anyone who seeks it. A welcoming watering hole by day and an electric nightclub by night (pre-pandemic, of course), a visit to *Try-Angles* promises an unforgettable experience for all.

Owner **Gene Gieber** came to Salt Lake City in 1980 from the self-described "hick town" of Wendover. Any small-town mentality was left in the arid desert lands as Gieber threw himself into Salt Lake's burgeoning queer community. He joined the *Royal Court of the Golden Spike Empire*, Utah's oldest LGBTQ+ nonprofit organization, and became a regular face at bars like *Studio 8* and *The Sun Tavern*. Cheering on talented drag performers and communing with fellow night owls, Gieber got a glimpse into his unbeknownst future.

It wasn't until 2002 that Gieber would fulfill a long-destined role in Salt Lake's vibrant bar scene. After 9/11 laid siege on the economy, Gieber was laid off from a computer software company and began looking into investment opportunities. He considered the prospect of a large nightclub, a prospect which his close circle adamantly advised against. In the end, Gieber decided against the flashy nightclub—a blessing since the establishment never opened. However, his

taste for twilight convocation was rekindled and Gieber set on opening his own bar.

It took everything to make the dream a reality. He refinanced his house and cashed in his IRA. "I jokingly told people I was going to name it 'Gene's 401K,'" Gieber says. Every sacrifice paid off, and when he finally happened upon an unsuspecting building, Gieber knew it was to become *Club Try-Angles*. He says, "I knew it would be perfect for a neighborhood-type bar, and I could control it to be a safe space for the LGBTQ community." Gieber outfitted the club with classic barstools, pool tables, club lights and neon signs, including my personal favorite, a rainbow Bud Light sign reading "Be Yourself." Finally, the bar opened its arms to Salt Lake for the first time in July of 2002.

For years, *Try-Angles* has sat at the helm of Salt Lake City's queer nightlife, offering its welcoming dancefloors as a hub for several organizations. The club's calendar is now filled with weekly event nights ranging from *Leather and Gear* nights on the second Friday of each month to *Underwear Night* on the third Saturday. Of course, the club is also a popular venue to catch an exquisite drag show, and *Try-Angles'* own drag troupe offers regular performances. Gieber recalls the conversation that sparked the idea for the group back in 2012. A casual workplace chat recalling his early days in the city turned nostalgic when he mentioned drag shows. So, "We started shows for new queens and queens that weren't performing anywhere else," he says. "It started with four, and then became more popular with each show." Now dubbed **Those Bitches at Try-Angles**, the troupe includes over 12 queens with regular guest stars. Seasoned queens like **Molly Mormon**, **Mona Diet**, **Luna Slipstream**, **Ava Zawhore**,

Getting Tipsy at Try-angles

A visit to *Club Try-angles* isn't complete without a boozy beverage in hand. Whether for their addicting taste or clever namesake, here are some of our favorite club cocktails:

- The Blood of Christ
- The Va-jay
- 5 Angry Bitches
- Mayhem Punch
- Top Pick: Gene's own boozy creation aptly named Big Fruity—coconut rum, banana rum, pineapple rum, triple sec, grenadine, fruit juices and Sierra Mist

Honorable Mention: \$1 draft beers every Tues., Fri. and Sun.

The Whore of '94 and several others have made the troupe a well-known presence in Salt Lake's drag community.

Of course, things have operated differently at the club during the past year. The pandemic has pushed weekly events and drag shows into a standstill, although Gieber has found other ways to give back to the community. "While we miss [the drag performers] greatly during the pandemic, we have been streaming the *8-Bitch Digital Drag Shows* on our big screen at the bar," he says. *Club Try-Angles* hopes to restart its events in June, but time will tell if the moment is right.

Throughout its lifetime, *Club Try-Angles* has changed from one of several gay bars in the city to one of only two. Gieber notes the change isn't necessarily a negative thing: "Mainstream SLC has become so welcoming [that] gay bars are not necessary as they once were." While Salt Lake has embraced more progressive attitudes, the need for queer spaces remains. *Try-Angles* has held that space for almost 20 years now and will continue to uplift the community for decades to come. "We welcome all people, but still maintain to be a safe space for the LGBTQ community," says Gieber.

You can support *Club Try-Angles* by giving them a visit Monday through Sunday between 2 p.m. to 1 a.m. To find every event and drag show, head to their website, clubtryangles.com.

FIVE HUSBANDS VODKA

Our husbands for 2021

CJ Hamblen, Troy Williams, Johnny Hebda, Rob Moolman and Georgios Spiliopoulos.



All are great friends of Ogden's Own Distillery and members of Utah's LGBTQ+ community. Cheers to celebrating Pride all year long!



BAND TOGETHER

CREATING COMMUNITY FOR TRANS
PEOPLE WITH GENDERBANDS

By Alexis Perno | alexis.perno1@gmail.com

Photo: Kevin Edwards

With Genderbands, Ian Giles helps trans and gender-expansive individuals locally and nationally through financial and community-based support.

Genderbands began with Founder **Ian Giles** selling decorative wristbands to their community to pay for their top surgery. Now, the nonprofit, which helps transgender individuals pay for transition-related costs, services three countries, hosts the annual *Utah Trans Pride Festival* and has awarded \$91,500 in grants since March 2021. As Giles says, "That's a lot of growth in just six years!"

Next to political and social barriers, Giles says that financial complications are the biggest hurdle for people looking to medically transition—top surgery often starts around \$7,000, but Giles has seen it grow to \$12,000. To help with these costs, Genderbands offers grants for both top surgery and Hormone Replacement Therapy and provides free binders to the local trans community. "I've also spent a lot of time talking with people, walking them through the process of arranging surgery or name changes," Giles says. "It can be overwhelming, so I want to make it as smooth as possible for them. I want them to know they aren't alone in this."

With high unemployment rates in the trans community—especially for trans people of color—medical transitions can be completely inaccessible. Most of the people who apply for grants are between 18 and 25; most who apply for free binders are minors. Many applicants are unable to work or face unsupportive families. "When I first started Genderbands for my own surgery, I was in college and a single parent. I didn't have any money to spare. I know what it's like," Giles says. "I just want to give everyone a chance [and] give them that break they deserve. I've had grant recipients tell me that they had given up, [that] they only applied for our grants because their friend made them. And now, be-

cause of Genderbands, they are free."

This year, Genderbands is expanding its grants to include wardrobe purchases as well, but financial aid is just the beginning for the organization. Genderbands offers weekly support gatherings for transgender youth and adults, along with bimonthly support gatherings for parents and trans people over 40, providing a casual space to discuss shared issues and experiences. "Everyone has a chance to talk about what's on their mind and have people listen who get it," Giles says. "We have people in our lives who are empathetic to our struggles, but they can't truly understand [us] unless they are trans too. So by coming to our support gatherings, people can feel heard and understood."

Without acceptance and support for trans individuals, everyday life can feel alienating, especially in a highly polarized state such as Utah—community can be a lifesaving mental health resource. "I think it's very important to be visible in a conservative area. Because of where we are, many people are forced to stay in the closet," Giles says. "Loneliness is so hard. I'm visible so they don't have to be alone."

While COVID threw a wrench into most of Genderbands' 2020 and 2021 Pride events, that isn't slowing them down. Giles is taking what Genderbands has learned from last year's virtual festival and fine tuning it for the third annual *Utah Trans Pride Festival*, which will be hosted August 14 on YouTube and Twitch. True to the theme of "CELEBRATE," Giles hopes the attendees don't just feel seen. "Sometimes we focus too much on the hardships of being transgender," they say. "I want folks watching *Utah Trans Pride* to forget about those hardships, have a

good time and be inspired for the future. I want them to see all the support they've got."

Speaking of support, the grants Genderbands offer are entirely dependent on community donations. Right now, most grants can only pay for part of surgeries, but Giles aims to cover full costs—and expand to all kinds of gender-affirming surgeries. To donate, go to genderbands.org/donate or check out their pride merchandise at genderbands.org/store.

Since not every trans person wants to medically transition, Giles aims to eventually cover non-medical aspects of transition, such as name and gender marker changes. "We also hope to have a team of insurance experts who can help folks fight their insurance for coverage," Giles says. "Many times, even if the insurance covers surgery, they will still deny it. You have to fight for it. It can be a long, frustrating, and confusing process. We want to help with that."

There are two big obstacles facing Genderbands: money and hands. Volunteers and staff are always needed, and more information can be found at genderbands.org/volunteer. Some positions can be done outside Utah, and Genderbands is especially interested in those who can offer regular time commitments. Genderbands also accepts gently used binders. "I understand everyone is busy and you may not have extra funds to donate—that's okay! There's something very simple you can do to support Genderbands and it's totally free: Share our stuff!" Giles says. Connect with Genderbands on Instagram and Twitter @genderbands. For Utah-specific media, check out @genderbandsutah on Instagram.

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FAMILY PLANNING ELEVATED





THE SUNTRAPP

Harboring a Safe Space for Utah's
LGBTQ+ Community

By Brittne Gallegos
gallegosbrittne0319@gmail.com



(L-R) Riley Richter and husband Micheal Repp inherited *The Sun Trapp* from the previous owner Rob Goulding and have done everything in their power to keep Goulding's vision of the bar going.

inclusivity the bar has given him—the opportunity to develop and mature within himself.

Over its 20-plus-year tenure, *The Sun Trapp* has become an icon for the LGBTQ+ community in Salt Lake, a true haven. Though, all-inclusiveness was not achieved overnight: For some time, there was a reputation that this was a “gay man’s” bar, rather than a more broad, “LGBTQ+” bar. The scene slowly transitioned to an all-encompassing environment through Repp and Richter’s welcoming efforts toward all who step into the bar. Repp is proud of *The Sun Trapp*, but he’s also ecstatic about the expansive support the straight and LGBTQ+ communities alike have shown toward the bar.

Supplementing *The Sun Trapp*’s rich history and inclusive atmosphere is the bar’s dedication to give back to the community that enlivens their dance floor every night. Repp exudes gratitude for the donations that they collect for nonprofit organiza-

tions across the board, one of the biggest being the **PrEP** program. PrEP stands for “Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis,” and it’s a way for people who are at high risk of getting HIV to prevent infection by taking a pill everyday. Repp says, “The younger generation is targeted for being really frivolous, and it’s important that they have not only the education but the decision to get on medication to prevent a horrific disease.”

It’s easy for new owners of a business to lose the vision of their precursors, but Repp expresses the importance of *The Sun Trapp*’s rich history to him and Richter, actively choosing to embrace and expand upon it. Repp looks back fondly at that history and is thankful for how far the bar has come.

As the light is starting to shine for each of us after the residual darkness of last year, *The Sun Trapp* is feeling the same effects. Bar service, dancing and drag shows were all stopped but are coming back in full force. An even bigger event is on *The Sun Trapp*’s radar—Pride. *The Sun Trapp*’s Pride festivities are going to be bigger than ever this year during the weekend of June 4–6. **DJ Naomi** and **DJ Eddy V**, who have been a part of *The Sun Trapp*’s culture for years, will be mixing top 40 hits most weekend nights. *The Sun Trapp* will also present drag shows during *Pride*—but also every night—at the bar. On Sunday, June 6, *The Sun Trapp* will raise funds for the *Utah Gay Rodeo Association* through the benefit of a laidback BBQ. *The Sun Trapp* has even managed to shut down 100 South in downtown Salt Lake City in order to increase the bar’s capacity for the *Pride* weekend, proving that there is no limit to the love that *The Sun Trapp* has for its community and the hoops they are willing to jump through in order to show it.

Find more information at thesuntrapp.com and keep up with their Instagram [@the_suntrapp](https://www.instagram.com/the_suntrapp).

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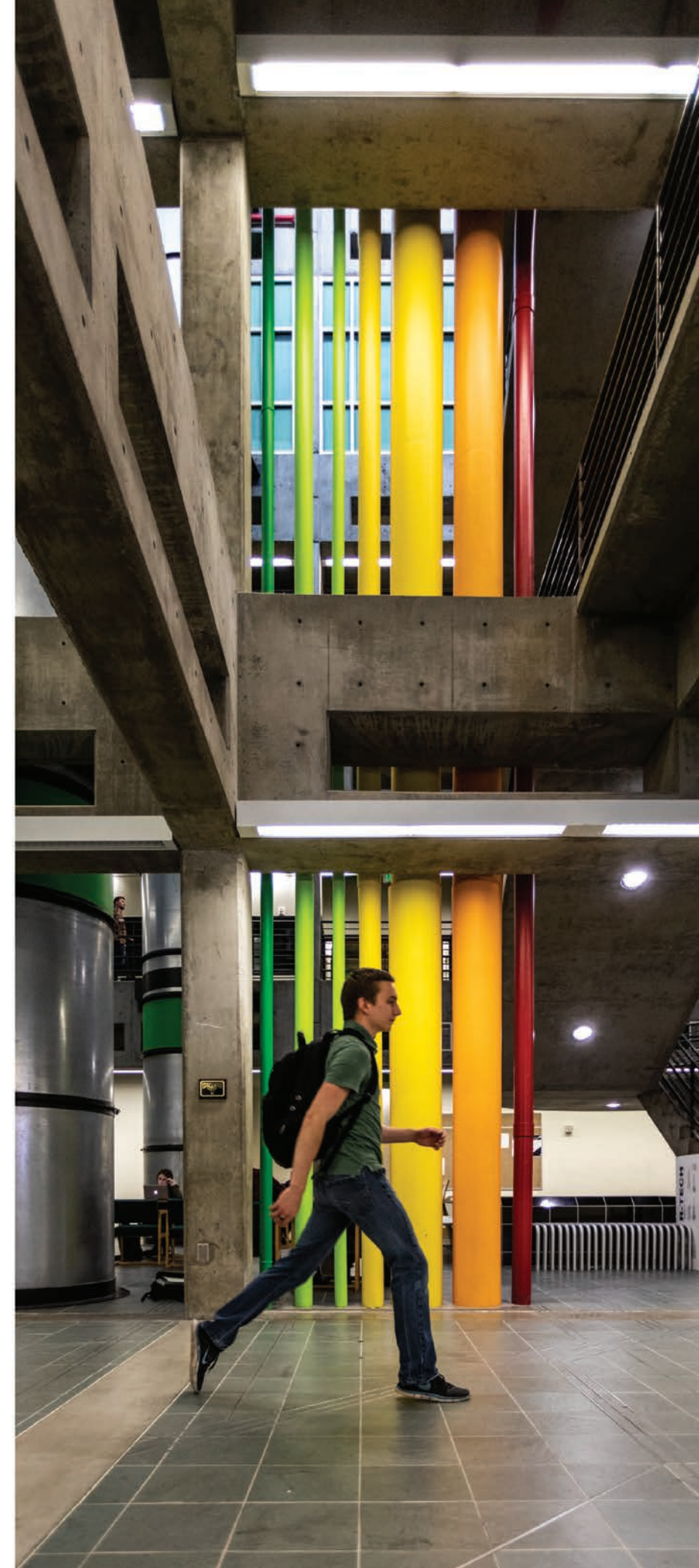
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SLUG PICNIC Peachy Fingernail

By Audrey Lockie | audrey@slugmag.com

Photo: Bonneville Jones

As Peachy Fingernail, Polly Llewellyn embraces expression and impulsivity in her music and recordings.

As the Utah summer arcs back around, *SLUG* is delighted to bring back our outdoor concert series, *SLUG Picnic*. The first 2021 showcase features Peachy Fingernail, **PK Opal** and **The Mercy Seat**, each using their unique sonics as as springboard for a host of feelings at once weird, wonderful and cathartic. *SLUG Picnic* takes place on Saturday, June 26 in front of *SLUG*'s offices (230 S. 500 W. Ste. 125 in Salt Lake City); gates open at 5:30 p.m. and music is from 6–9 p.m. Tickets for *SLUG Picnic* (sponsored by **Churn Baby**, **Dented Brick Distillery**, **Gem City Fine Foods** and **Pulp Lifestyle Kitchen**) are available at SLUGMag.com. Make sure to bring your own picnic blankets and chairs!

Polly Llewellyn's music under the name Peachy Fingernail comes from the guttural realm of impulse and the subconscious. "I feel really manic on albums—I change a lot," she says. "I make songs by just hitting record before I know what I'm gonna do ... I just like to make pretty things!" In the final product, this sense of mania and a lack of premeditation provide fertile ground for songs that ebb and flow with an organic sense of naturalism. The most recent Peachy Fingernail release, *i'm nothing if not a silly girl*, showcases the affective result of such a musical outlook, where an embrace of beauty gives way to the gritty realism at the heart of a human.

This submission to in-the-moment urges and an artistic playfulness guides Llewellyn's music-making. Particularly, she finds that her unbounded approach allows for an expansive palette of sonic textures. "I get very expressive when I'm recording music," she says. "I just like to be expressive and [if I] feel an impulse to do something, I'll just do it and record it. I like textured stuff, and I trust the impulse that makes me do something like that." The outputs range from the plastic clacking that guides "3/4 wash cycle" (sourced from a desk trinket) to the sound of ripping paper used during the sessions for Llewellyn's Peachy Fingernail debut, *Radishes*; from the lo-fi alt-rock of "i'm ocean foam, let me die" to the mocking squawk that opens "quilt pearls of cum."

Especially on *i'm nothing if not a silly girl*, the lyrical focus turns toward a similar sense of innate-

ness—what we see, hear and know without thinking. "In every person's life, the things that define them feel like self-mythologies," Llewellyn says. "I wanted to do that on one hand and also try really hard to speak more plainly in places. I wanted to have both as contrasts to each other—a combination of [the] every day and your late-night, 4 a.m., 'omg what is my life' kind of feelings." Though her vocals often fight for air under layers of washed-out instrumental collages, this mixture of the real and surreal rings true: "My voice is like a wax car / It melts as it drives along / Bounced between Angles and throat / It dies out and cools on a silver plate," runs the closing verse on "Don't Inhale the Barnyard" under paper-thin guitar passages.

No matter what, though, Llewellyn's music works to escape easy definitions and identifications. Specifically, she cites her previous efforts at poetry as the genesis for her love of obscuring effects and processes: "I could never write directly about the things that I wanted to talk about or else it felt wrong to me in some indefinable way," she says. "I would start writing around it. I would make really long poems that were all writing around something." The same process now informs her songwriting, where the blurred musical effects compound the multifaceted, textual evasiveness at the core of these songs.

The benefit of this artistic shroud lies in allowing Llewellyn vulnerability without sacrificing comfort or privacy. "I get to pour ... my direct and honest feelings into the song, but then when producing

it I can encode it into the music itself," she says. "And I like that. It helps me feel like there's distance between the things I'm thinking about and the person hearing it. Maybe it gives the person hearing it some leeway to interpret it in a way they like for themselves." On "'praise song' clothe me in images, daddy, keep me here forever," Llewellyn hints at romantic loss while only allowing listeners a fragment of an *in media res* vantage point: "I don't know what I want to say / The ground has now all burned away / She never loved me anyway / A dying star collapsed in her shape."

This idea of creating a self-driven story that evades distinct representation finds an analog in *i'm nothing if not a silly girl*'s stirring cover. Using a double exposure effect to combine two, grayscale nude photographs, the image reflects Llewellyn's desired balance between radical openness and misdirection. "I really liked that as the kind of expression of the album—seeming to be vulnerable in a lot of ways ... but you're not sure what it is exactly what you're looking at." Llewellyn's body, folding over itself and protruding across the frame in contortionist poses, acts as a metaphor for our own mythologies: "[It's] something no one else will ever understand the full meaning of, except for ourselves. So we're kind of artifacts for ourselves," Llewellyn says. Find more of Peachy Fingernail's music on Bandcamp at peachyfingernail.bandcamp.com.



SLUG PICNIC PK Opal

By Audrey Lockie | audrey@slugmag.com

PK Opal (Cecil Smith) strives to create music that breaks the spell of the mundane routines of everyday life.

For **Cecil Smith**, music always meant more than sound. "I tend to visualize just about everything," they say. "My earliest memories with music have been really intense, visceral experiences I had where I almost had visions. I go into a fugue state or some shit." Drawing on their work as both a visual artist and a poet, Smith's PK Opal project discards musical stringency and instead uses intuition and exploration to craft songs that skirt normalcy and float along their own, vaporous paths.

After stints in a few local bands, PK Opal took form as Smith began to encounter and engage with more adventurous musicians in the Utah community. Never one to benefit from proscribed learning environments, Smith took issue with the clear-cut mindset of much formal music training in America. "I do think there is a threshold where if you keep adding that level of rigidity and shit that people have done over and over and over again, you're just going to keep getting more and more boring music," they say. In contrast, they saw a loose and open approach in their artistic peers' work that offered a sense of freedom: "I don't have to be safe—I can be weird."

This meant thinking of music in non-musical ways. "What I like in a lot of the music I'm drawn to is interesting sound textures," Smith says. "I think textures almost evoke more imagery for me than just a straight-up, simple, undoctored instrument would." On their excellent debut, 2019's *Glittering Serpent*, the ingredients remain simple—voice, guitar, some stray keyboards and drum machines—but Smith never lets a sound escape without a full face of makeup. The guitar lines on "Girls Before Swine" shimmer and bounce with creeping momentum akin to a gourd shaker, while "Lotus Machine" bitcrushes its drum pattern into distorted crumbs and lets its snake-like guitars slither in and out of focus.

Particularly when it comes to Smith's vocals, they harness a range of inflections and effects to expand their own singing into a *Where's Waldo*-esque collection of voices. Reverb-drenched choirs, text-to-speech spoken word, plaintive balladry and more mark their music, each one augmenting the colorful characters of the instrumentals. "Usually, the goal with alternating my voice in some way—whether I'm pitching it up or down, adding weird distortion on it—is to intensify what I'm saying with a sonic texture," says Smith, citing the vocal acrobatics of 2000s singers such as **Karen O** and **My Chemical Romance's Gerard Way** as the genesis of their love for chameleonic singing. "Sometimes I end up sounding kind of scary, which I guess is what I wanted."

If Smith's vocal stylings explode convention and look for expressivity in unlikely corners, their lyrical approach engages in a more direct and conscious (though no less subversive) tête-à-tête with the laws and norms of the English language. "Obviously, a lot of [my music] is couched in metaphor [and] symbolism is a huge thing for me," they say. "So much of symbolism ... is super universal, which is why you listen to a lot of top 40 music over the past five decades and people are saying the same shit. We have a very particular set of symbols to communicate [with], especially in the Western world."

To escape this cultural hivemind, Smith looks toward an element of surprise and the ability of language to feel both familiar and alien, both tangible and surreal. On "Cure2," references to chalk-covered hands, blood, breath, burning skin and more provide a startling visceral quality against the track's feather-light electronic backing. "Chewed Gum," from last year's outtakes and demos collection *Torn Cocoon*, tracks in smirking irony: "Hell could be a warm release

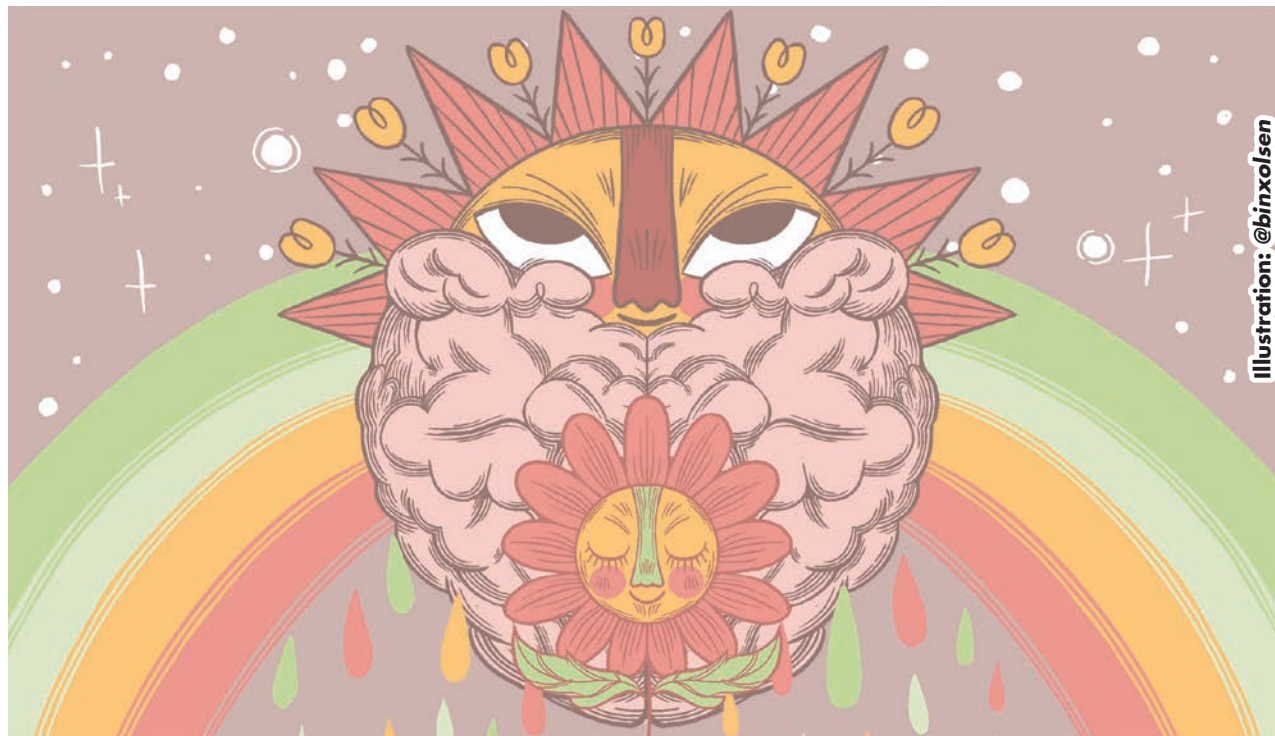
/ For all I know a summer's breeze." Of their prose, Smith says, "I would like to use ... symbols in new combinations of ways, maybe try to compare things that you don't hear being compared a whole lot or try to come up with a sentence that breaks the spell of mundanity."

Furthering the lyrics' embrace of abstraction, the PK Opal songs themselves contort and retract into bite-sized, wayward structures. "I came from a background of writing a lot of poetry," Smith says. "I personally think some of the best poetry is just freeform poetry, and I write songs like I write poetry: If it makes sense to repeat something I will, if it doesn't I'm not going to." The 90-second "Commodifying My Mental Illness" grooves along *Peter Gunn*-style sinisterness before the track abruptly collapses into text-to-speech recitation of new age holisms, while *Glittering Serpent*'s closing track, "The Crane Who Sings Death," lolls through stilted vocal hymns, the melodic arc rising and falling between keys with a decided lack of care for the mismatch it forms with the underlying harmonies.

Ultimately, PK Opal acts as a vehicle for Smith to scratch the itch of experimentation and discovery. "Especially with how automated so much of our lives are now, it feels like a big long routine," they say. "What I care about with art-making—and this is with any art form—is coming up with an idea or a concept that sort of breaks that spell and ... feels magical or arcane in and of itself. It's almost like it wakes you up from something." Find more of PK Opal's music on Bandcamp at pk-opal.bandcamp.com, including their long-awaited sophomore record, tentatively due out late this year.

FLOURISH THERAPY

The Powerful Experience of Being Heard



By Sam D'Antuono • sam.dantuono@gmail.com

Located in Orem, Utah, *Flourish Therapy* was established in February of 2017 with the noble and necessary goal to provide care and therapy for those in the LGBTQ+ community who may not be able to find care elsewhere. **Lisa Tensmeyer Hansen**, PhD, LMFT, is one of the founding members of *Flourish*, which also includes **Phil Scoville**, M.S., LMFT, and **Triston Morgan**, PhD, LMFT. Tensmeyer Hansen, the CEO of *Flourish Therapy*, continually strives to meet the organization's goal, which begins with their name. "The word 'flourish' describes how something grows when it's allowed to become what it is meant to be," Tensmeyer Hansen says.

Regarding *Flourish Therapy's* LGBTQ+ focus, Tensmeyer Hansen says, "Services that assume a spectrum of valid identities can help clients feel safe in addressing their issues in therapy." Feeling isolated can be common when someone doesn't conform to traditional gender identity, sexuality and/or orientation. Additionally, the act of having to explain and/or justify one's experience to a therapist in what is purportedly a safe space can be detrimental to a client's well-being. At *Flourish Therapy*, clients don't have to go through the enervating task of explaining their LGBTQ+ experience, as *Flourish* therapists already empathize.

"Finding a therapist who understands your identity may be as simple as finding a therapist who shares your identity," Tensmeyer Hansen says. Where other therapeutic institutions may only list two or three gender identities on their intake forms, *Flourish Therapy* gives clients the freedom to express themselves in any way that suits them, rather than checking a box.

Kelly Page, M.A., ACMHC, is a member of the LGBTQ+ community and a therapist at *Flourish Therapy*. "Having a trauma-informed lens I think is critical first and foremost," Page says. Without

this lens, providers can't give their clients the tools they need to view their traumas in a different light in order to better themselves. Trauma can refer to a negative self-worth, familial rejection, internalized homophobia or chronic shame, for example. Knowing the real impact and extent of these traumas is what allows providers at *Flourish Therapy* to aid their clients to survive, grow and thrive.

Kimberly Anderson, MFA, M.A., AMFT, is one of the many experienced therapists providing care at *Flourish Therapy*. Anderson is a transgender woman and was raised in an orthodox Mormon home, living as a boy on a horse-farm in rural Northern Utah. "When my clients see me, they know who I am and my particular path through life," she says. "Because I am an openly queer and transgender woman, there is an immediate environment of safety, trust and commonality of experience when I meet with my trans and nonbinary clients. They know they don't have to explain [or justify] anything ... They know my experience is very similar to theirs, and connections are made nearly immediately."

Although *Flourish Therapy* doesn't offer direct access to gender-affirming medical treatments such as hormone treatment or surgery, they crucially help patients be affirmed in their identity. For instance, they write letters of recommendation for gender-affirming surgeries. No client is ever pushed to accept one identity or another, and therapists aid clients in deciding for themselves which unique path is best for an individual in order to live authentically as their true selves. This is to say that all identities and genders are viewed as central at *Flourish*.

Flourish Therapy partners with Utah institutions and care providers that help them in their efforts. Partners include *The OUT Foundation* (comprising LGBTQ+ BYU alumni) to provide free therapy to

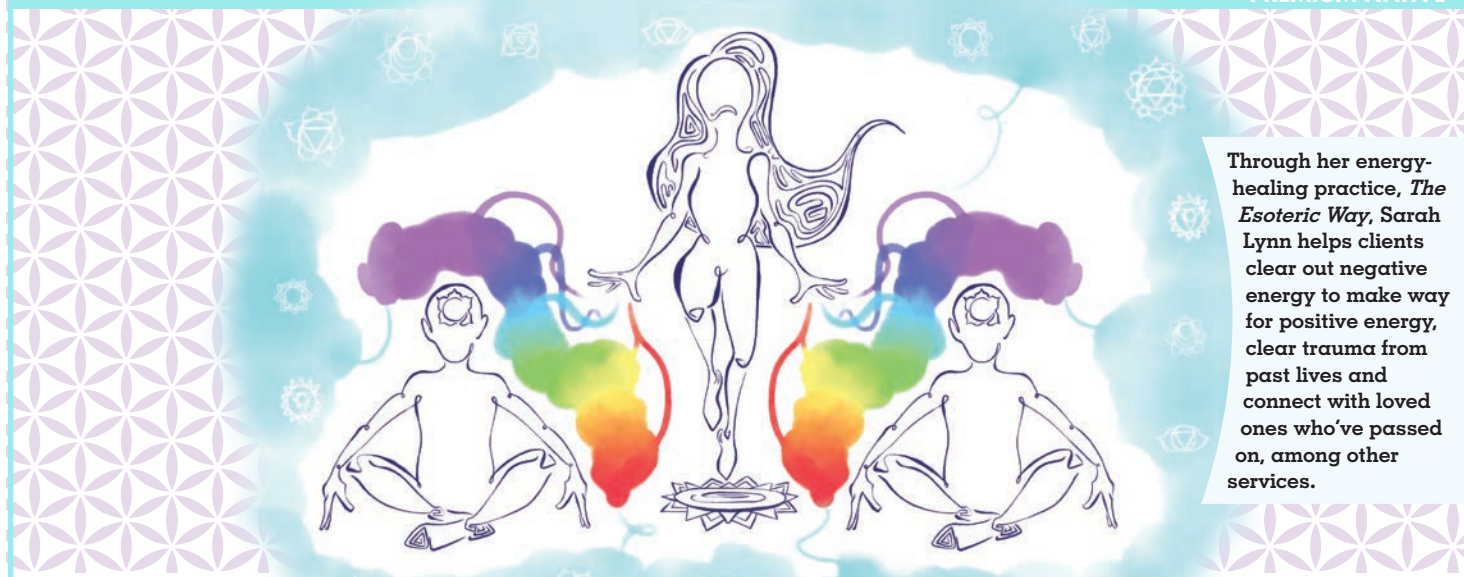
LGBTQ+ *BYU* students. They also receive support through the *Bastian Foundation*, which is located in Orem and provides funding and grants to LGBTQ+ institutions.

Flourish Therapy is a nonprofit organization, and as such, the center relies heavily on donations. The average cost of one session is about \$52, and most of the sessions cost less than \$50 with over 100 free sessions of therapy given out each month to those who cannot afford it. Every donation goes toward helping to care for and save the life of one of *Flourish Therapy's* many clients. With the demand for more therapy growing, at over 70 patient applications received a month, so, too, does the need for therapists as the pandemic lingers. "We need more therapists who identify as queer and genderqueer to offer evidence-based mental health services to these young people," Tensmeyer Hansen says.

Throughout the pandemic, *Flourish Therapy* has been providing HIPAA-compliant teletherapy for all its patients, many of whom have found comfort and support in the safe, virtual-therapy space. Additionally, after renovating during the pandemic, *Flourish Therapy* will be adding eight new therapy rooms at the Orem location and several more in the Salt Lake Valley to help meet the demand for more in-person sessions.

Saving and improving lives is *Flourish Therapy's* mission. Each time a person can receive the care they need, the mission is fulfilled. Should anyone think they may need what *Flourish* has to provide or wish to make a donation, go to flourishtherapy.org. Page says, "I often say that this is the craziest job in the world because the lows are so low, but the highs are so high, and it's true. There is no better feeling than the feeling that you are making some kind of positive impact with your day—no matter how small."





— PREMIUM NATIVE —

Through her energy-healing practice, *The Esoteric Way*, Sarah Lynn helps clients clear out negative energy to make way for positive energy, clear trauma from past lives and connect with loved ones who've passed on, among other services.

A Way to Heal Sarah Lynn of The Esoteric Way

By Ali Shimkus • alishimkus@gmail.com

Illustration: [@jordankpeterson_](https://www.instagram.com/jordankpeterson_)



Even from a young age, Sarah Lynn of *The Esoteric Way* has been in tune with the emotions and energies of other people. Growing up, Sarah had no idea that her keen intuition was a gift that not everyone had. "I thought it was normal," she says. It wasn't until she was a young, single mother dealing with a bout of bad luck and negative energy that she sought out energy healing. Sarah's session with the healer empowered her in her personal life, and when the healer suggested that she seek out this esoteric knowledge for herself, Sarah immersed herself in it. Now, through her energy-healing practice, *The Esoteric Way*, Sarah has come to help people heal from emotional pain through her services.

The core of Sarah's sessions concern cleansing her clients' chakras. She also heals anything that she intuitively notices may be troubling the client by clearing out "lower-vibrational" or generally negative energy. Even though Sarah can perform her healings remotely, they are like a "deep tissue massage" for spiritual energy, as she describes it. She often advises that her clients drink plenty of water and really feel whatever emotions may come up. Sarah's services vary from helping people find peace after the passing of a loved one to healing pain and trauma lingering from past lives to helping ghosts pass on to become higher beings.

Though the goal may be pointed at the start of a session, Sarah often uses her intuition to address anything unacknowledged that may be troubling her clients. For Sarah, learning as many methods of intuitive and empathic healing as she could was crucial to her ability to heal many types of emotional ailments. Because Sarah started her healing journey as someone who was seeking healing for herself, she shares a commonality with the clients who seek her out. For Sarah, helping her clients face and overcome a wide

variety of emotional pain and spiritual ailments has sharpened her intuition to help more people in the future. As far as what Sarah has learned about herself through her journey as a healer, she says, "Every year, I can look back and feel like a different person then the previous year."

In cases where Sarah helps her clients connect with their deceased loved ones, Sarah's goal is to facilitate the connection, like pulling down a string of the loved one's existence from another spiritual plane and letting her clients walk away while holding the string. She often feels the essence of the spirits that she is asked to connect with. Her aim in these types of sessions is to have her clients feel the essence of their loved ones as well. "I want them to reconnect with a loved one and feel their presence versus telling them what they're saying," she says.

For Sarah, the goal in learning these energy-healing techniques was to improve her own life and help close friends and family. "I originally entered energy healing to heal myself and only myself," she says. After performing these healing sessions on her friends and family, her sister suggested that she try to make this a business and help clients as well. The experience of open-

ing up services to clients has also helped Sarah learn more about herself. "I've had clients who have inspired me," she says. "I've had clients whose healings have made me realize I need to work on that same thing within myself. It's because of clients I developed my own techniques. If I'd kept my abilities to myself, I wouldn't be who I am today."

Sarah welcomes those who are skeptical yet open-minded about her processes. "I love skeptics," she says. "I'm skeptical by nature and always ask questions. Some of my biggest skeptics have been my biggest supporters." For her, the goal is not to prove anything is real but rather to connect her clients to a higher vibrational energy or, generally, more positive aspects of their life in order to heal them. One method Sarah uses is a process she describes as creating a spiritual "blueprint" of this better energy and "copying" the essence of that energy for her clients to feel more at peace. Because Sarah uses a wide array of techniques to help tap into another person's emotions and heal what is bothering them, she is often sought out by people of all backgrounds and levels of trauma, making her unique as an energy healer around Salt Lake.

Sarah offers transformative services for those suffering from long-term emotional trauma or even just a basic feeling of negativity and spiritual imbalance. *The Esoteric Way* is a safe space for anyone and inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community with opportunities to meditate through Sarah's healing and become more aligned with a happier, more balanced version of themselves. Through *The Esoteric Way*, Sarah seeks to help her clients find a sense of spiritual peace in their lives. For more information, or to book a healing session, check out *The Esoteric Way* online at the-esoteric-way.com on Instagram [@the_esoteric_way](https://www.instagram.com/the_esoteric_way).

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In middle school, I had a friend with a purse made entirely from sewn-together, used Capri Suns. Another friend had a wallet made entirely out of duct tape. Another had a bracelet from gum wrappers. I remember feeling genuinely delighted at the sight of these objects, asking, "Is that real?" of each—a question that didn't really make sense. Of course they were real. Questions I meant to ask might have been, "Did you make that? Does it actually work? Who said you could do that?" Artistic materials were not pre-ordained, and for a brief, adolescent moment, I truly understood that. As an adult I've mostly forgotten. The work of Bea Hurd, a sculpture artist and recent graduate from the *University of Utah*, makes this revelation stick.

Hurd's work revolves around a fascination with materials. For instance, "Deflation of the Flesh," a robe stitched from deflated balloon rubber, casts normally playful rubber in a grotesque light. Hurd says, "I found that while balloons, as just a material, remind people of birthdays, parties and childhood. When they are hand stitched into a garment they become gross and uncomfortably erotic in nature. I find there is something extremely satisfying in making gross or even slightly ugly a process which is associated with being pretty and cute."

That satisfaction is accessible to the viewer, too. Our days are shaped by materials at every moment, and to see them warped into something new invigorates awareness of that relationship. "Balloons are no longer party decorations but patches of rubber. And red thread is taken from the hand of your mother and into that of a surgeon. This unease reveals aspects of materials we often overlook or ignore," Hurd says.

Hurd came into college as a painter focused on portraits, on realizing a vision. Then, during freshman year, a sculpture



Left: "Strip, Sear, and Suckle," 2020, Candy and Latex.

Right: "Kitchen Set," 2020, Wood Sculpture.

MATERIAL CONDITIONS: The Sculpture of Bea Hurd

By Parker Mortensen @_coldbloom

class upended her approach: "[I] was completely blown away at the realization of my love for working with materials and for object-making," Hurd says. Materiality became the language in which Hurd would find her most powerful expressions. The need to meticulously plan her work started to fall away as she fell in love with experimentation—process as art itself. All of her pieces begin with a material she feels compelled to work with and go from there. "I have become an artist much more concerned in the process than in the final product," she says. "I feel much less compelled to create a beautiful piece these days and way more interested in making art that takes me through a process of discovery."

The extreme reappropriation of materials mesmerizes, making most of Hurd's portfolio engaging on a gut level. Your familiarity of the material plays you, but only because it has first played Hurd. "I was [working] with embedding food in brush on latex," she says. "I found that Fruit by the Foot, between two layers of brush on latex, looks exactly like bacon. And upon everyone in my sculpture department asking me of the materials my bacon was made from, I knew I had found my next love." The finished piece, "Strip, Sear, and Suckle," is a wearable bodysuit made from the bacon-like gummy and fluffy, egg-yolk sacs.

A turning point for this kind of material investigation was "Ticky Tacky," a set of bras and panties lined inside with AstroTurf. Imagine that synthetic turf rubbing against your bits. "[Ticky Tacky] brought viewers to the relationship between the female body and the home-home ownership and bodily autonomy—and of a synthetic understanding of the two," says Hurd. "I knew at that moment that what felt most satisfying to me was art that relied on

material for meaning. I become extremely conscious of every material I use and how I use it in all my work."

It's no coincidence that "Ticky Tacky" and "Strip, Sear, Suckle" ended up being fashioned in such a way that they relate to the human body, and, in the case of "Suckle," the biology of Hurd's womanhood. "When I came into sculpture and the literal representation of my face was taken away, I was pushed into finding more creative ways of alluding to my experience," she says. Food and consumable materials captivated Hurd. "I have become consumed in analyzing how my relationship to consumption has influenced my understanding of my body and sexuality. If I am constantly working with materials that go into or are used in relation to the body, it seems almost inevitable that the body would become my place of focus."

Those questions I asked in middle school of Capri Sun totes became better questions in front of Hurd's intense body of work—what do these materials say about us when they inspire us to create?—but one old question still persists: "Who said you could do this?" This one says more about me than it does Hurd or anybody else. Who said we couldn't? The material conditions of our lives belong to us. They are ours to play with and improve and change until we understand that basic relationship.

Hurd has two upcoming solo exhibitions: one at *Nox Contemporary* (open by appointment) beginning April 16 and ending early June. The second is at *Finch Lane Gallery* beginning April 30 and ending June 11. You can also browse more of her portfolio at beahurd.com.

LOCAL MUSIC SINGLES ROUNDUP

Happy Gemini season! While we wait for everyone to get those twinning doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, pop on some local tunes to rock out and welcome these brighter days! From the noisy punk of **Savage Daughters**

to **Marqueza's** ethereal dream-pop, our June *Local Music Single Roundup* has got you covered for celebrating the coming of summer.



Icky Rogers

"Birth Chart"
Self-Released
Street: 04.21
Icky Rogers = Mos Def + People Under The Stairs

Retro futuristic in its delivery, Icky Rogers' newest single, "Birth Chart," combines a funky, dance-inducing beat with a vocal flow similar to the likes of **People Under The Stairs** and **Souls of Mischief**. The beat and its simplistic looping creates the heartbeat, but Rogers still allows this track to be airy and danceable. The wavy synths and spacey beeps and boops lingering in the beat add that extra element, setting the stage for the astrology-inspired lyrics to come alive. Icky Rogers created a real accessible "summer night"-type track with this one—you don't have to be a daily horoscope reader to want to take "Birth Chart" on your next space cruise. —Connor Brady



Leetham

"New Life"
Self-Released
Street: 01.29
Leetham = Demi Lovato + Bad Suns + Troye Sivan

"New Life" is **Luke Leetham's** first original single, and it hits with the kind of party energy we're all craving. It has all the elements of the most interesting pop songs you hear—engaging and syncopated synth lines, vocoder-esque backing vocals, production tricks and intricate breaks. It's exactly what you want to dance to with a big group of strangers, the perfect hype song for 2021. The lyrics adopt rose-colored glasses and romantically describe ditching life as we know it for something more extravagant. Leetham lyricises driving with a lover, taking a hard left, riding away into the sunset singing "we'll find a new life." It's a fairytale we've all once wanted, set to music. —Mary Culbertson



Marqueza & Adam Fuller

"Kurione"
Self-Released
Street: 03.17
Marqueza = Bea Miller + Mr Twin Sister

"Kurione" is just as magical as its title—the Japanese translation for "clonidae," commonly known as "sea angels," a nod to to Marqueza's own Japanese and Venezuelan heritage. The four-minute electronic dream opens with a breathy reassurance of "I'm ok, I'm ok, I'm ok." The track unravels like a clonidae moving its tiny wings, prompting the feeling of radical freeness—with its focus on Marqueza's hypnotizing vocals, listeners do exactly that. "I just want to dance alone and heal for a while" sets the tone for the relaxed, beautifully produced track. It's thoughtful and carefree all at once—I imagine, much like the clonidae—as Marqueza "learns to breathe underwater." —Palak Jayswal



Savage Daughters

"CBB"
Self-Released
Street: 01.15
Savage Daughters = Protomartyr + Magazine

Following the sidwinding "420 to SLC," Savage Daughters' latest turns in the structural segmentation of that experimental number for pure, brittle fury. "CBB" operates in a strict, verse-chorus-verse format, with the splashes and crashes of **Summer Sigritz'** drumming propelling the stripped-back verses into a series of explosive exhalations. In each successive chorus, the screamed refrain of "Where are you now?" scratches harder at the limits of the singer's vocal chords. In the last half-minute, the track's oscillating guitar riff speeds into tremolo picking, the drums reach for post-human levels of rapidity and the whole thing bursts apart into thick vapor; a collapse of joyous exhaustion. —Audrey Lockie

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A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LGBTQ+ SPORTS LEAGUE

By McCall Mash | mccallmash@gmail.com

For **Jacob Buck**, playing sports means more than just staying active. He says many LGBTQ+ youth are excluded from sports and consequently lose out on an opportunity to exercise and develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills. So when he joined the Chicago chapter of Stonewall Sports as an adult, Buck says the nonprofit LGBTQ+ sports league became a safe space where he could be active, have fun and meet new people.

"As a queer person, growing up, you are kind of told you aren't allowed to play sports," he says. "I have heard people say, 'I don't want to play kickball because I don't know the rules or I'm not good.' And it's like, 'Well, it's okay because we have all been there. We have all felt that way. You may have been picked last. Well, I have [also] been picked last. You know, let's play together and just enjoy each other's company.'"

After Buck moved to Salt Lake City almost three years ago, he began to look for something like Stonewall Sports. But when he couldn't find anything, he gathered **Bryce Jackson** and **Matt Boudrero** to form the Salt Lake chapter in 2018. Programming officially started with kickball in April 2019, and the chapter has since grown to around 850 participants in total. Buck says the Salt Lake chapter works with more than 20 other locations nationwide to provide a low-cost and inclusive sports league in each city, alongside fostering a wider LGBTQ+ and ally community through national tournaments.

However, playing sports is only one element of the organization—Buck says it's also about developing community connections, creating visibility and giving back. "It was started nationally to just allow a space for the queer community [and] the LGBTQIA+ community to have a place where they could be active and inclusive [and] have fun," he says. "Another thing about [both] nationally and our chapter is



Photos courtesy of Stonewall Sports

Stonewall Sports provides a fun, safe meeting place for Utah's LGBTQ+ community to get together and get active.

that we try to be philanthropic, so being able to ... support our community and the larger queer community [through donations] and having fundraising events." As the pandemic hopefully begins to slow, he says Stonewall Sports will begin its philanthropic work again and is already discussing the possibility of youth-and wellness-focused programs.

Additionally, Buck says being a part of a larger national organization like Stonewall Sports is also about having the existing structure to ensure sustainability. However, he noted that volunteers are the organization's driving force—from his position as commissioner to board members and everything in between—and more people need to join in this capacity in order for the Salt Lake chapter to grow.

"My biggest hope is that it stays ... that it doesn't fizzle and die," says Buck, who comes from a community development background. "I think ... the structuring and ... it being a national organization will help, but people really just need to step up and volunteer and be part of their community, because the only way it is going to continue is if they get involved and they want to see good things come from it," he says.

The "good things" Buck talks about refer to not only creating a safe place to make friends and be active but also positively impacting people's lives. He says, "I have had people come up to me after the season was over and see me at a bar and

thank me like, 'Stonewall really changed my life. I was in a really low place, and I just needed to be around friends and to meet people.' We got them out of a really dark place in their life, and I have just heard that several times from several people, so I know that we are reaching people [and] that we really need just some type of community."

In the end, Buck stresses that the goal is to provide anyone 21+ with an inclusive and fun space to play sports—including both the LGBTQ+ community and allies, experienced or inexperienced players and even those who just want to watch and have a good time. "I would say I love it because you don't have to have any experience, and really, we are just there to have fun at the end of the day," he says. "It doesn't matter if you can't catch, it doesn't matter if you can't throw, it doesn't matter if you can't run—we just want our community to have visibility and a space to enjoy each other."

If you're interested in joining Stonewall Sports, you must first register and pay a small fee that goes toward events and uniforms. Stonewall Sports tentatively plans to offer kickball for summer 2021, indoor sand volleyball and bowling for fall 2021 and darts/billiards, dodgeball and basketball for winter 2021. Buck ensured that every event will follow the health department's COVID-19 guidelines by requiring social distancing, face masks or snoods, as well as regular use of hand sanitizer and disinfected equipment. Please visit stonewallsportslc.org for more information about how to sign up for a league or volunteer opportunities.

During the summer months, Stonewall Sports hosts an array of outdoor events, such as their intramural kickball league.



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PROJECT RAINBOW

By Brooke Hannel • brookehannel8@gmail.com Photos by Bonneville Jones

Bringing Unity to Utah



Dallas Rivas, a vital force behind Project Rainbow's work.

Project Rainbow



Project Rainbow creates community and fosters connections by bringing queer visibility to Utah.



Lucas Horns, Founder of Project Rainbow, felt like the only queer person in Provo until his neighbor placed a Pride flag in their yard.

As you walk down the street, you can't help but notice an array of colors catching your eye, billowing in the wind. Upon closer inspection, you come to realize that it's not a random occurrence but a beautiful Pride flag placed in the grass—a wonderful reminder of support and love for Utah's LGBTQ+ community in flag form. Project Rainbow, an organization set out to bring community to Utah, is responsible for rainbows springing up in Utah.

Lucas Horns, Founder of Project Rainbow, got the idea for the organization during *Pride Week* a few years ago. "I had seen one street that had three or four rainbow flags in a row. You know, *Pride* always falls after Memorial Day, when the boy scouts put out the American flags, and it just kind of clicked in my mind, 'Oh. That would be a kind of cute, gay version of the Boy Scouts to celebrate *Pride Week*,'" says Horns. "That following year, I just sat down with a friend, who at the time was on the board of the *Pride Center*, and was like, 'I think we should do this as a fundraiser,' and so we did."

From this cheeky idea came Project Rainbow, an organization that stakes *Pride* flags around Utah neighborhoods each summer. You can sign up through their official website and donate 15 dollars. In return, donors get a rainbow flag placed in front of their home on June 5 to celebrate the start of *Pride* month.

Not only are these donations helping celebrate *Pride*, they also contribute to a community fund. "For the first two years, we would raise funds for specific organizations depending on where we were sticking the flags. For example, the rainbow flags we staked in Salt Lake in June would go to *Utah Pride Center*, the rainbow flags we staked for

Southern Utah *Pride* would go to *Pride of Southern Utah*. We did Trans flags for *Trans Day Remembrance*, and those went to *Transgender Education Advocates*," says Horns. "But you know, we were starting to raise more and more money and we realized, we kind of have this unique opportunity to be a fundraising source for organizations that are definitely doing good work but don't have a way to fundraise."

Horns realized that *Utah Pride Center* was receiving funds from the yearly *Pride Festival*—which in June 2019 raised around \$1,000,000—and wanted to focus on smaller groups and organizations that needed funding. "With the money we raised last year we started the *Project Rainbow Community Fund*, so anyone in the community can apply for a grant ranging from \$100 to \$7000, and it just has to be for a project or an event that promotes LGBTQ visibility ... anywhere in Utah," says Horns, "So, we rewarded 21 different groups and organizations ... \$55,000 in grants."

Groups who received grants ranged from a leader in a GSA group wanting to buy the kids books by queer authors to one woman who wanted queer literature in her little free library outside of her home and for the library box to be painted with rainbows—just a few examples of the impact the grants have had in the community. Nonetheless, not only are the grants causing a positive impact, so are the flags.

Horns recounts experiences where people felt like they were the only queer person in Provo until a neighbor placed a *Pride* flag in their yard, which has led to newly formed friendships. "The coolest part of this project for me is that it's really fostering a sense of community among people in places I think that community didn't really ex-

ist before," says Horns. "There are just a lot of queer people in Utah, but you really don't know where anyone is until they stick a big rainbow flag in their front yard."

A lot of people in Utah know exactly what Horns means, which explains why the organization has had a significant amount of growth and impact. "Project Rainbow has definitely grown. For the June [2018] campaign we staked out 500 flags, and I think we were working with maybe 20 volunteers. Last year we staked about 3000 flags, and had over 100 volunteers staking those," says Horns, "In three years it grew pretty significantly. This year we are aiming to have 5,000 flags and we are right on track for that—we are going to have to cut off registration early because we are going to reach that soon, and we have about 400 volunteers now in our database."

Even with flags on his mind, Project Rainbow has other future projects in the works. "Each year we put on a free clothing boutique called *Fashion Fluid*," says Horns. "The first time it was just an incredible experience because the *Gateway* donated a space and [it] really felt like a retail store for people who don't have the means to shop in a traditional store. Or, for a lot of queer people, going into a normal clothing store is kind of intimidating because there are gendered sections of the store ... we have a very gender fluid environment and so it's really cool, but our long term goal is to have that as a permanent store opened year round."

Check out Project Rainbow at their website, projectrainbowutah.org and follow them on Instagram [@projectrainbowutah](https://www.instagram.com/projectrainbowutah).

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PLAN-B THEATRE: LOCAL COLOR ONSTAGE

By Arcadio Rodriguez | arcadio.rodriguez93@gmail.com

Over the pandemic, *Plan-B Theatre* has continued to workshop plays by using video-conferencing tools. Their new production, *Local Color*, is the first result of these endeavors to present what a theater production in our current environment might look like. This particular production will highlight four plays by local playwrights and was the yield of the *Theatre Artists of Color Writing Workshop (TACWW)*, a *Plan-B*-hosted workshop among local playwrights of color. Amid social distancing, these will be streamed online—from June 3 through June 13—as an audio-only experience with a pay-what-you-can price tag.

Plan-B Theatre has been around since 1991 and is currently led by Artistic Director **Jerry Rapier**. As a son of Japanese immigrants and a gay man, Rapier has been an ardent champion of both BIPOC and LGBTQ+ works for decades. He moved to Salt Lake City in 1994 and found that both his ethnic and queer identities were difficult to traverse here at that time. Fast-forward six years, and Rapier had become *Plan-B*'s Artistic Director. "It quickly became a huge part of my identity, and I quickly became a huge part of its identity," he says. "The intersection of queerness and art in myself was made manifest in the company." Over the course of eight more years, he was able "to fold in my perspective as a person of color" and create avenues of expression for BIPOC groups through his efforts in the theater community.

The plays cultivated through the TACWW will broadcast during the upcoming *Local Color* production. It will premiere four short plays by four different playwrights of color, two of which also include themes of queerness and ethnicity/race. In his play *Organic*, **Tito Livas** juxtaposes a healthy relationship between two gay men and a gay man still struggling with his sexuality and suffering because of it. **Dee-Dee Darby-Duffin** offers a comedy about two girls connecting over an awkward

situation in her play *DoLs*—which stands for "daughters of lesbians." **Chris Curlett** tackles themes of male vulnerability and Black tokenization in *Guise*, and **Tatiana Christian** explores mental health and dead-end jobs in *Suicide Box*.

The plays by Livas and Darby-Duffin offer intersectional vantage points through stories that deal with queerness and race/ethnicity in tandem. When speaking with them, they both very much feel that this was not intentional, per se; this is simply them reflecting the world through their lenses. Both plays contain varying degrees of autobiography and have resulted in something important to them: the ability for them to tell the stories that they want to tell.

"The organic nature of how we wrote these plays goes right along with the organic nature of our intersectionality," Darby-Duffin says. She is not so much interested in writing a queer-plus-Black anthem as she is interested in writing about her quotidian existence, which just so happens to be inextricably linked to her queerness and her Blackness. *DoLs* is based on an experience she had when she was younger that she found funny, where she met a girl at the park who was a part of the group "DoLs," and Darby-Duffin herself ended up being a part of that group as well. "We need to stop with the trauma porn," says Darby-Duffin, "and we need to write about our regular everyday lives."

Livas adds that he's interested in portraying gay men of color in a way that's grounded in reality and does away with some of the more cartoonish depictions of gay men often found in mainstream content. His play *Organic* takes the audience on an emotional ride where the antagonist elicits a bit of empathy and the protagonist must re-evaluate his own biases and his reactions to them, loading an otherwise mundane situation with ideas to unpack.

Plan-B Theatre's Local Color production features four short plays by local playwrights of color from the *Theatre Artists of Color Writing Workshop*, which fosters organic stories in a supportive and connective environment.

Illustration: donnellyisme.com

Beyond intersectional content, the plays from Curlett and Christian also tackle important themes that can often go missing from our everyday conversations. Curlett, in his play *Guise*, presents a locker-room encounter between two men in which one of them is struggling with issues of depression and anxiety and the other is struggling with how to best help support his friend. In *Suicide Box*, Christian offers a view into a Black woman who is struggling with self-harm, suicidal risk and trying to keep it together at her call-center job.

TACWW showcases the value in having a room full of people with similar experiences that led to *Local Color*'s works. "Plan-B was the first and only place, I felt, that was not just talk—they followed through with aiding BIPOC artists to tell their stories," Curlett says. "And now, I am taking all my influences, passions and knowledge [from] over the years and putting them into my plays." Christian adds that "white supremacy undercuts a lot of art spaces so seeing a space that pushes back on that is wonderful."

My conversation with these playwrights felt almost therapeutic, which seemed like a glimpse into what the TACWW in session might be like for people seeking much-needed opportunities for and among those like them without creating a genre out of their identity. Affirming this continual intention, Livas asserts, "I want color onstage."

Don't miss the opportunity to hear contemporary, locally grown theater by queer and BIPOC playwrights via a safe, virtual medium. *Local Color* premieres online at 8 p.m. on June 3 and will be available to stream until midnight June 13. Tickets are "pay what you can." More information, including how to purchase tickets and how to stream the production, can be found at planbtheatre.org/product/localcolor.

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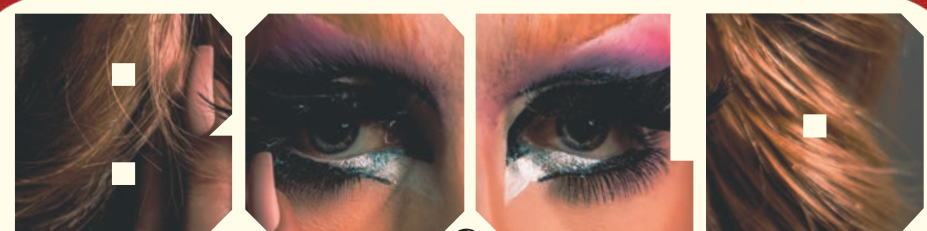
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BOLD & BEAUTIFUL

SLUG LGBTQ+: Marrlo Suzzanne || By Kamryn Feigel • cfeigel1@gmail.com || Photos: Bonneville Jones

Marrlo Suzzanne is a wonderfully creative artist, bearded queen and an incredible musician. Rock n' roll through and through, Marrlo's the lead singer of **Marrlo Suzzanne & The Galaxy Band**, and he exuberates personality and individuality within Salt Lake City's music and drag scene. Be sure to check out his upcoming performance on June 4 at the *Utah Pride Center's 2021 Pride Week Celebration*, at the *Loud + Queer Pride Spectacular* with headliner **Todrick Hall** (after getting your vaccine—duh—and bring your mask)! You can find Marrlo online on Instagram @marrlosuzzanne and Facebook @Marrlo.Suzzanne. To read the full "Bold & Beautiful" Q&A with Marrlo Suzzanne, head to SLUGMag.com.



"I first became interested in drag when I delved into the world of *Drag Race* in the summer of 2014. I then tried a Halloween costume in drag Halloween of 2016, and the real drag life started in 2018."

"[My beard] reminds me that I am a man. ... The drag world has made me embrace my femininity and ... [made me] proud of being called a woman. Interestingly enough, it has also caused me to embrace my masculinity."



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21+

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6/3: GENDERFUQ (OUTDOOR) • 6/4: JAIDA ESSENCE HALL PRIDE PARTY • 6/5: JOEY JAY PRIDE PARTY
6/10: LAPDOG (OUTSIDE) • 6/11: LORD VOX (OUTSIDE) • 6/11: VILLAIN (INSIDE)
6/12: MAJOR TOM CONCERT CRUISE AFTER PARTY (OUTSIDE) • 6/12: THE DITCH & THE DELTA (INSIDE)
6/17: FIRED PILOTS (OUTSIDE) • 6/18: THE MEDICINE COMPANY (OUTSIDE)
6/18: INDIGO PLATEAU AS INTERPOL (INSIDE) • 6/19: TALIA KEYS & THE LOVE (OUTSIDE)
6/19: TEENAGE RELICS (INSIDE) • 6/21: CASH'D OUT (INSIDE) • 6/24: VERONICA BLUE (OUTSIDE)
6/25: LED ZEPPELIN & THE WHO TRIBUTE WITH THE DISCOGRAPHERS (OUTSIDE)
6/25: WORLD'S WORST ALBUM RELEASE (INSIDE) • 6/26: KING NIKO (OUTSIDE)
6/26: JILL WHIT ALBUM RELEASE (INSIDE)

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6/4: VIVA LA DIVA • 6/5: VIVA LA DIVA • 6/11: VIVA LA DIVA • 6/12: VIVA LA DIVA
6/17: THE BAWDILY FUNCTION COMEDY SHOW • 6/18: DIRT CHEAP & MACHINE GUNS N ROSES
6/19: ARCANGELO IL DEMONI • 6/24: SCENIC BYWAY • 6/25: MOONTEETH • 6/26: SEEKING TRAGEDY

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