



# *The Art of Drag*

**November 3rd, 2023**

7-10pm



This is an Art to Change the World project

# About the Project

The Art of Drag is an Art to Change the World intern project designed by Frances Bates.

Drag shows are about entertaining you of course, but this show will have a twist to it. We also want to teach people about how deep social justice runs in the history of the art of drag. From outfits to dance moves to makeup they all have a story to tell. Inclusivity is top priority so you will get to see a diverse group of drag performers. Our show will be wheelchair accessible and have interpreters.

Hosted by Larry Gaga and Rustina Phoenix-Nuttz with performances by Sher DeWealth, Pippin Panic, Blackberry, Esteé Rhettie, Alexandro Rox, Primordial Chaos, and Miss Honesty Jackson.

Special guest vendor TIGERRS or the Transgender, Intersex, Gender-Expansive Revolutionary Resources & Services.  
<https://tigerrs.org/>

Check out our supporters the Metro Regional Arts Council, Awesome Foundation, and LUSH Lounge and Theater.  
<https://mrac.org/>  
<https://www.awesomefoundation.org/en>  
<https://awesomewithoutborders.org/>  
<https://lushmpls.com/>

Want to know more? Visit our website or contact our organization at the links below.

<https://www.arttochangetheworld.org>  
ACW: [info@arttochangetheworld.org](mailto:info@arttochangetheworld.org)  
Project Manager: [francesbates22@gmail.com](mailto:francesbates22@gmail.com)

# Show Hosts



**LARRY GAGA**  
**King of Dance**  
(He/Him)

@kingofdance\_larrygaga



**RUSTINA PHOENIX-NUTTZ**  
**Miss Minnesota SnowQueen at Large**  
(She/They/Auntie)

@RustinaPNuttz

# Performers

Want to know more about our hosts and performers? Check out the project page for bios and a direct links to their Instagram.

<https://www.arttochangetheworld.org/the-art-of-drag/>



## SHER DEWEALTH

**The Fortune Femme**

(She/They)

@sherdewealth



## PIPPIN PANIC

**The Cartoon Character of the  
Twin Cities**

(He/It)

@princewelcomematt



## BLACKBERRY

**The Human Who Sings  
to Your Soul**

(He/She)

@lovekikijoy



## ESTEE RHETTIE

**The Mischievous Garden Fairy  
of the Twin Cities**

(She/Her)

@estee.rhettie



## ALEXANDRO ROX

**The Duke of Duality**

(He/Him)

@alexandrorox



## PRIMORDIAL CHAOS

**The Face with a Few Too Many Eyes**

(They/It)

@primordial.chaos.drag



## MISS HONESTY JACKSON

**Words Here**

(She/Her)

@misshonestyjackson

# History of Drag

## Important Figures



**Annie Hindle (1840s-1904):** “The first popular male impersonator, began performing in 1867.”



**Barbette (1890s-1973):** “Long before the queens of RuPaul’s Drag Race embraced wig reveals, a high-wire performer from small-town Texas made a career of removing her curls.”



**Crystal LaBeija (1930s-1982):** Founder and mother of the first known drag house, House of LaBeija.



**Divine (1945-1988):** Actor, drag queen, and cult icon, best known for roles in Pink Flamingos and Hairspray as well as being the inspiration for Ursula.



**Freddie Mercury (1946-1991):** The secretly queer lead singer of the rock band Queen. One of their songs called I Want to Break Free had the band in drag for the music video.



**Gladys Bentley (1907-1960):** An openly lesbian performer at Harry Hansberry’s Clam House, a popular gay speakeasy in Harlem. Went by the name Bobbie Minton and wore a tuxedo.



**Gowongo Mohawk (1860-1924):** “One of the first Native American actors to perform on the American stage and the first known Native American male impersonator.”



**José Julio Sarria/Absolute Empress I (1922-2013):** A World War II Veteran, politician, and female impersonator who founded the International Court System (ICS).



**Marlene Dietrich (1901-1992):** A bisexual, cross-dressing actress and singer known for her role in Morocco. In the film she kissed a woman while wearing a tuxedo and top hat.



**Marsha P. Johnson (1944-1992):** The activist who instigated the Stonewall Riots that was well-known among the drag queens and trans women in New York.



**Murray Hill (1971-Present):** An essential figure in New York's late-night cabaret scene, hosting shows at legendary Manhattan venues like Joe's Pub.



**Nicole Murray Ramirez/Queen Mother I of the Americas (1945-Present):** An LGBT activist who is the Titular Head of the International Imperial Court System and the current San Diego City Commissioner.



**Rudolph "Dorchen" (Little Dora) Richter (1892-Unknown):** "One of the first identifiable recipients of gender confirmation surgery in 1922."



**Russ King/Miss Richfield 1981 (1962-Present):** "AIDS activist and creator of drag character Miss Richfield in Minneapolis in the mid-1990s."



**Stormé Delarverie (1920-2014):** "American singer, drag king, and possible instigator of the Stonewall Riots. Comfortable in her stage clothes, she took to wearing masculine clothing in the streets."



**Vesta Tilley (1864-1952):** "One of the highest-paid performers in the British music halls during the Victorian and Edwardian eras and is 'indisputably the most famous male impersonator of all time,' according to the site Drag King History."



**William Dorsey "The Queen" Swann (1860-1925):** Pioneer of modern ballroom culture and self-named Queen of Drag.



**Willi Ninja (1961-2006):** "American dancer, choreographer, model, and pioneer of voguing."

## **Ball Culture**

“Drag balls were long-term pillars of New York LGBTQ culture. They provided a unique place of refuge for many queer individuals who at the time were shunned by society. Participants took part in competitions, danced, and played around with ideas about gender. In 1869, the first known example was organized in Harlem’s Hamilton Lodge No. 710, as a masquerade charity gala.”

“By the 1960s Black and Latinx drag performers splintered off from the existing ball culture, creating their own events in the process. Drag houses started to emerge, which served as a surrogate family for young queer people of color who were estranged from their families, struggling to get by or living on the streets.” A version of this continues to this day to show who you are connected to in the drag world.

## **Imperial Court System**

“Anti-LGBTQ+ hostility persisted throughout the ‘60s and as it intensified in 1965, the Imperial Court System was founded — a grassroots network of organizations that worked to build a community between drag queens that ultimately proved to be an imperative resource within the broader LGBTQ+ community. Today it’s known as one of the oldest and largest LGBTQ+ organizations in the world.”

## **Stonewall Uprising**

“In the 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s, New York City was rife with laws that criminalized gay life. Members of the same sex were banned from dancing with one another. If people wore fewer than three items of clothing of their supposed gender, they were subject to arrest and incarceration on charges of sexual deviancy.”

“The Stonewall Riots helped turn the tide against these arrests. It began in the early hours of June 28th, 1969, when the police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club located in Greenwich Village in New York City. The raid sparked a riot among bar patrons and neighborhood residents as police roughly hauled employees and patrons out of the bar, leading to six days of protests and violent clashes with law enforcement outside the bar on Christopher Street, in neighboring streets and in nearby Christopher Park.”

## **The Age of Drag Race**

RuPaul first came around in 1989 as a backup dancer for the B-52’s in their music video for the song Love Shack. Later putting out his own song Supermodel (You Better Work) in 1993. Then in 2009 came along the creation of RuPaul’s Drag Race. “It is a competition-style reality series where drag queens compete for the title of America’s next drag superstar. Since the show’s premiere in the U.S., it has inspired spin off shows such as RuPaul’s Drag U and RuPaul’s Drag Race: All Stars as well as international incarnations including the UK, Australia, Canada, and other non-English-speaking countries around the world.”

## **Media and Music**

There are many important movies, shows, and songs that have changed the way people see drag. Drag has always pushed the boundaries of what society is comfortable with but the drag community continues on.

Film examples: Morocco, Pink Flamingos, Hairspray, Rocky Horror Picture Show, Paris is Burning, RuPaul’s Drag Race, Hurricane Bianca, Pose, and Drag Me to Dinner.

Music examples: Madonna, Queen, Lady Gaga, Beyonce, Lil Nas X, and Lizzo. Plus, the many songs from RuPaul and other Drag Race queens like Alaska Thunderfuck, Monét X Change, and Trixie Mattel.

## **All Types of Royalty**

There is a lot more to drag than just drag queens. Drag has always been about exaggeration of gender. It’s an entertaining performance, a show, with incredible outfits, unique choreography, and fantastic makeup. Anyone can do drag whether you want to be a queen, king, or just an entertainer.

Drag is often a way for people to explore their identity. Majority of performers are or discover that they are part of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. With this exploration a person may choose to get gender affirming surgeries. Today that area of medicine has expanded and there are many options one can take to help them feel like they fit in their body.

## Minnesota

“Drag was a popular act in Minnesota theater from the 1880s through the 1920s, reflecting the heyday of vaudeville nationally. As vaudeville declined after the 1920s, drag moved to standalone performances in bars and nightclubs, intertwining with Minnesota’s increasingly public queer scene.”

We hosted the first national gathering in 1970 and two years later the first local march. These happened near Loring Park in downtown Minneapolis, which is where Twin Cities Pride is still held today. In 1991 the Imperial Court of Minnesota was founded by Shannon Domonique, Thomas S. Hansen, Michael Spivak, and Craig & Nancy Maehling. They host a variety of drag events including the yearly Ice Castle Pageant.

“Dykes Do Drag was a performance art drag cabaret that regularly sold out the Bryant Lake Bowl Cabaret Theater in Minneapolis starting in 1999. They were queers of all genders and orientations that anyone could fall for, celebrating an expanding continuum of gender expression and performance. It was the longest running show of its kind featuring drag, burlesque, boi-lesque, live music, modern dance, video and visual art and lip synching in enticing and exciting hilarity.” In 2020 the diverse group had its last show and celebrated 21 years of amazing performances.

As of June 2023, during Pride month, the “Minneapolis City Council passed a resolution protecting drag performance and drag culture as free speech.”

Today we have a variety of drag performances going on, some in spaces that have been around for years. Places like the Gay 90s, Saloon, Black Hart, and LUSH host nightly shows. The expansion of the Nicollet Diner gave Roxy’s Cabaret space to have even bigger events. Drag brunches happening at Union Rooftop, CRAVE, and others. Flip Phone Events hosting drag shows at many different venues. GRRRL Scout queer dance events at The Hook and Ladder including drag performers. In Duluth the spot to go is The Flame Nightclub. We also have a drag story hour for performers to read to people. And of course, Twin Cities Pride puts on drag events during Pride month.

## Resources

Information in quotes is directly from some of these sources. For more information check out the resource section of the project page. <https://www.arttochangetheworld.org/the-art-of-drag/>

### Books

*A Restricted Country* by Joan Nestle

*Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts* by Roger Baker

*Drag: The Complete Story* by Simon Doonan

*Gender Rebels: 50 Influential Cross-Dressers, Impersonators, Name-Changers, and Game-Changers* by Anneka Harry

*Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* by Esther Newton

*The Art of Drag* by Jake Hall

*The Drag King Book* by Del LaGrace Volcano & Jack Halberstam

### Websites

#### General

- <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/04/08/drag-history-theatre-art-movies-tv-pop-culture-ban-lgbtq/>
- <https://www.them.us/story/inqueery-drag>
- <https://www.glbthistory.org/primary-source-set-drag>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/comedy/the-history-of-drag-on-screen-strutting-from-ancient-times-to-cbc-s-queens-1.5699542>
- <https://www.historyhit.com/culture/the-history-of-drag-balls/>
- <https://deschamps-braly.com/facial-feminization-surgery/history-ffs/#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20first%20identifiable,by%20Magnus%20Hirschfeld%20in%20Berlin>
- <https://medium.com/gbc-college-english-lemonade/how-mainstream-media-has-damaged-the-drag-community-f93468d85c1a>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbkkmkn>
- <https://seethequeens.com/guidetodragterminology/>

#### Imperial Court System

- <https://internationalcourtsystem.org/>
- <https://impcourtmn.org/>

## Websites Continued

### Historical Figures

- <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/slavery-voguing-house-of-swann>
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-first-self-proclaimed-drag-queen-was-a-formerly-enslaved-man-180982311/>
- [https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/pride-month-2023-drag-performers-who-made-herstory/index.html#:~:text=William%20Dorsey%20Swann%20\(1860%2D1925,according%20to%20historian%20Channing%20Joseph.](https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/pride-month-2023-drag-performers-who-made-herstory/index.html#:~:text=William%20Dorsey%20Swann%20(1860%2D1925,according%20to%20historian%20Channing%20Joseph.)
- <https://www.queerportraits.com/>

### Drag Kings

- <https://awomensthring.org/blog/drag-king-lee-valone-velour-johnny-cash#:~:text=Drag%20Kings%20and%20New%20York's%20Queer%20Community,-Drag%20kings%20have&text=But%20their%20roots%20in%20the,ready%20to%20reclaim%20their%20space.>
- [https://dragkinghistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Kingdom1\\_2020.pdf](https://dragkinghistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Kingdom1_2020.pdf)
- <https://dragkinghistory.com/>

### Stonewall Riots

- <https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/the-stonewall-riots>
- <https://www.history.com/news/stonewall-riots-lgbtq-drag-three-article-rule>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/stuck-in-stonewall>

### Film

- <https://queerintheworld.com/best-drag-queen-movies/>
- <https://screenrant.com/iconic-movies-about-the-art-of-drag/#an-actor-s-revenge-1963>
- <https://gcn.ie/drag-documentaries/>
- <https://www.gaytimes.co.uk/culture/films-you-need-to-watch-if-you-love-rupauls-drag-race/>
- <https://www.them.us/story/11-drag-documentaries-pride>

### Music

- <https://popcrush.com/pop-music-videos-featuring-drag-queens/>
- <https://www.billboard.com/photos/drag-queens-music-videos-8023117/>
- <https://pitchfork.com/features/lists-and-guides/the-15-best-songs-by-todays-drag-performers/>

### Minnesota

- <https://www.minnesotamonthly.com/lifestyle/dragged-up-memories-a-history-of-twin-cities-drag>
- <https://www.mnhs.org/lgbtqia>
- <https://mndaily.com/278307/arts-entertainment/a-brief-history-of-drag-in-minneapolis/>
- <https://first-avenue.com/performer/dykes-do-drag/>
- [https://studybreaks.com/culture/drag-scene-minnesota/#google\\_vignette](https://studybreaks.com/culture/drag-scene-minnesota/#google_vignette)
- <https://www.minneapolis.org/meetings-events/minneapolis-lgbtq-community/lgbtq-history-in-minneapolis/>
- <https://lavendermagazine.com/our-scene/clubs-music/one-persons-diner-another-persons-cabaret/>
- <https://www.vivalapepa.org/drag-story-hour>
- <https://mmpmag.com/arts-and-culture/the-pride-behind-pride/>
- <https://missrichfield.com/>
- <https://www.mnopedia.org/drag-performance-minnesota-1880-1950>

## TONIGHTS SCHEDULE

### Welcome and Show Etiquette

Drag ASL by Alexandro Rox

Sher DeWealth

Larry Gaga

Blackberry

Pippin Panic

Rustina Phoenix-Nutz

Primordial Chaos

Miss Honesty Jackson

Estée Rhetie

Larry Gaga

Blackberry

### History of Drag with Prizes

Pippin Panic

Rustina Phoenix-Nutz

Alexandro Rox

Estée Rhetie

Sher DeWealth

Rustina Phoenix-Nutz

Alexandro Rox

Miss Honesty Jackson

Primordial Chaos

Larry Gaga

### All Performers/Photos



Thanks for supporting this project!



metro  
regional  
arts  
council

LUSH

LOUNGE



THEATER

