

Making Queer First Night Choices

A Brief, Selected Guide

By BOB WOLFF

If you're going to First Night in Montpelier this year – and there's good reason to go, with at least five LGBT performers holding forth – you might want to know a little more about who some of these folks are. Janice Perry, a.k.a. Gal, will present selections from "Holy Sh*t," her most recent show (see the July 2002 issue of *OITM* for a review). She doesn't need an introduction here. Likewise *Round Barn* author Suzi Wizowati (*OITM* September 2002), reading from a work in progress.

But the other three might evoke a raised eyebrow of curiosity.

Jason P. Lorber (and he has on occasion insisted on the "P.") has an MBA from Stanford – and he's a stand-up comedian. He'll present "Howard Dean, a Moose and a Gay Rabbi Walk into a Bar..." at First Night 2004 in Montpelier. He has performed stand-up since he was a grad student. Having acted in high school and college, Lorber needed a performance outlet while he studied for his business degree.

His first stand-up gig was in San Francisco at Josie's Cabaret & Juice Joint, which has since closed. Jason continued with an appearance at Piaf's, also in San Francisco. Piaf's closed. Then Jason was profiled as "One of the Up-and-Coming Comics" by *San Francisco Frontiers*, a now-defunct magazine. He's gently self-mocking as he reveals the pattern. But since moving to Vermont, he has had better fortune.

Venues such as Burlington's Flynn Space, Moxie Production's "Thursdays @ 8" in Waterbury, and Montpelier's Lost Nation Theater have continued operations, despite Lorber's appearances there. A former member of the San Francisco Improv Troupe, he performs sporadically with Vermont's Kamikaze Comedy Improv Troupe.

Lorber is also a frequent stand-up performer for various community charities, including for Safe Space at the Rose Street Co-op in Burlington last month, where, as usual, he wove together his experiences as a gay, Jewish Vermont resident into his comedy.

Email him at jasonplorber@aol.com to be added to his comedy email list.

Gabriel Q is one of those artists for which "Vermont Living Treasure" status should be instituted. An artisan and artist of the theatre, he finds wonder in nature's transformations, bringing them magically to life for his audiences through masks and puppets.

Since he was a teenager and long before he moved to Vermont, Gabriel made and performed with Venetian-style Mardi Gras

masks and puppets. The White River Junction-based artist likes Vermont because in the Green Mountain State he can be both theatrical technician and performing artist. His studio is at Tip Top Media & Art Building on Main Street in White River Junction, a project of Matt Bucy, Gabriel's partner.

Particularly attentive to the sort of metamorphosis that is part of every gay person's experience, Gabriel envisioned giant butterflies, each a breed from one of six continents and operated from below by an oversized "caterpillar." When the electric illuminated but-



left, San Gordon will perform funky, bluesy, jazzy pop rock.



right, Gabriel Q finds wonder in nature's transformations.

terfly is seen at a distance in a parade, one sees the butterfly, not the caterpillar. Then, as the butterflies pass by they are above the viewer's heads and the caterpillars become the prime focus.

At night performances and parades, the butterfly wings are illuminated by electroluminescent wire. The fantasy technician's butterflies perform choreography including circling, clustering and other flight patterns. You have to see these oversized puppet-butterflies to believe their wonder! I predict they will be a big hit at First Night in Montpelier.

San Gordon is a Vermont musical whirlwind with a smoky, sexy voice, pitched in the range where it is ever-so-easy to listen forever. Gordon will perform funky, bluesy, jazzy pop rock at First Night. With the two other members of her power trio, Mike Gray (drums) and Chris Martin (bass), San on guitar and vocals will provide the energy-packed music

that night for listening and dancing in one's seat if not on the dance floor. If you catch San on her CD, *Life So Fine*, you will be sure to attend her performance at First Night. In my judgment she could be doing a gig anywhere that night, but happily she will be in Montpelier.

Gordon began her musical life at age nine. But she loved the Supremes and the Beatles from the age of four or five. San says, "Music is my true passion." *Life So Fine* proves that she is succeeding at her passion. Her performing, music study (currently jazz), and teaching (guitar, piano, and voice), took her to Austin, Texas; Lawrence, Kansas; and San Diego, California.

But San was a founding member of Virginia and the Wolves, a Vermont-based all-female rock & roll dance band (1990-1994), and was happy to return to Vermont. "Vermont is a good music scene: good players and a sense of community lacking elsewhere," she says. Her

newest musical effort is Hell-Divin Divas in which San sometimes performs in drag. Hell-Divin Divas performs at Charlie O's on Main Street in Montpelier, the third Wednesday of each month, with special guests. Other divas in the new group are Sue Schmidt on drums and Linda Bassick on guitar. San's website is currently down, but you can learn of upcoming performances by contacting her at sanspot@aol.com.

So there you have it, a brief guide to some of the queer talent mixed into an incredibly diverse batch of performances for the last night/First Night of the new year. ▼

Bob Wolff is a theatrical and performance space designer and potter who lives in Randolph.