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A&E Briefs: New TV, Art Show, & Two Concerts

BY EUAN BEAR

Wonderfalls Worth Watching

There's a new mid-season replacement show to watch for on the Fox Network, of all places, called *Wonderfalls*. Set in Niagara Falls, the show follows Jaye Tyler (Caroline Dhavernas), a college grad working in a tourist-gift shop. Inanimate objects in the shapes of animals start talking to her and browbeating her into taking specific actions, mostly talking to designated people. It's quirky and weird and quite funny, and even my often dour, cynical, TV-bashing partner laughed out loud.

The family of origin comes in for quite a send-up, too, as they (mom Karen, dad Darrin, sister Sharon, and brother Aaron—are we sensing a theme here?) rather awkwardly attempt an intervention, while Jaye is hibernating with depression, after being passed over for a promotion. *OITM* got a preview of the pilot because Jaye's sister Sharon (played by Katie Finneran) is a lesbian. In the first episode, two or three people end up with new love interests, including Sharon, as a result of Jaye's involvement in their current crises.

It came across as a combination of *Joan of Arcadia*, *Ms. Match*, *Twin Falls*, and *Northern Exposure*.

Art & Activism

There's a space at UVM dedicated to art with an inclusive message: the Center for Cultural Pluralism, also home of the LGBTQA Services office. Last month, the Center hosted a "closing" reception for Caitlin Daniel-McCarter's show of photograms and two video works. Daniel-McCarter is president of Free to Be, a student organization.

Daniel-McCarter exhibited "Identity," a series of works meant to be viewed from over the shoulder with a mirror in hand. Combining drawn images, old fashioned typewriter-style type, and handwritten words, the series makes physically as well as cognitively obvious the anxiety and sense of coming from outside the mainstream. Further, it explores the idea of identity as a liability in a bigoted world. The text briefly summarizes two stories: that of Brandon Teena, a transman raped and killed in the U.S., and Severa, a Tutsi raped by Hutu men in Rwanda.

A self-portrait collage of images the artist felt shaped her, a series

called "Coming Out," and a photogram series called "Grace and Deterioration," juxtaposing images of war and torture next to American Eagle advertisements to signify "backwards progress," rounded out the exhibition's artwork.

Daniel-McCarter also showed two videos she had made, the first called "Lover," the reenactment of a poem she wrote. Arty and purposely out of focus, it suggested a tryst between lovers enacting the voice-over narration of the poem.

The second video, "Silent War," was an advocacy piece pushing both participants and viewers to think about rape. Talking heads (or parts thereof: chin and lips, or nose and eyes) say what rape is to them, intercut with images of war and torture, including the famous Vietnam War-era image of a Viet Cong shot by a South Vietnamese officer. The point is explicit: rape is war against women.

More disturbing is the ending, in which Daniel-McCarter's message is that victims of rape never recover from the trauma, that they are doomed to lead mediocre lives of substance abuse and psychic pain forever.

Daniel McCarter said she made the film in a "bizarre" film class she shared with "800 frat boys." She characterized their films as "Are you queer? I'm going to shoot you, queer!" So perhaps the hopelessness of the message is an understandable attempt to shock an unreceptive audience into actual thought, feeling, and awareness of the consequences of a violent sexual act. The video was the embodiment of Daniel-McCarter's credo that art and activism go hand in hand.

Music on Memory Lane

Alix Dobkin played a house concert in Burlington last month for two-dozen women and a handful of kids, and it was an up close and personal tour down memory lane. Between songs from *Lavender Jane Loves Women* (technically the second overtly lesbian album produced in the U.S.) and later albums, the "mother of women's music" told stories of breaking into the folk scene in the Greenwich Village of the 60s, then moved on to the 70s (*Lavender Jane* came out in 1973, Dobkin in 1972) and 80s.

Liza Cowan, the woman Alix came out with, was the concert's host, and Dobkin's daughter Adrian, heard on *Lavender Jane* in the kids' song "Theirs is a Little House," was present with her

infant son.

Dobkin looks like the grandmother she now is, and told lots of grandmotherly jokes about death and dying, some with her distinctly Jewish flavor. But her voice instantly took us back 30 years to a time when simply declaring out loud a woman's joy in loving another woman—much less performing in women-only venues—was an intensely radical act. It was surprising how few members of Burlington's "radical women's community" of that era were there, and gratifying how many of the audience were under 30.

Strong and Sweet

Sweet Honey in the Rock has been singing everything from gospel to rabble-rousing feminist political and lesbian love songs for 30 years. They made it very clear in their November concert in Burlington that they have no intention of stopping now.

They're still flowing smoothly with the deepest, richest harmonies I've ever heard any five women produce. And they've produced a show, *Eveningsong*, that moves into the future with founder Bernice Johnson Reagon's daughter Toshi and her rock band Big Lovely (including guitarist Judith Casselberry, formerly of the duo Casselberry & DuPree).

The musical transformation began with the a cappella quintet sitting eight rows up in the audience, pouring forth a pre-show repertoire of their strongest songs of the past three decades, as all around them, audience members sauntered in, chatting and finding their seats, thinking it was a "best of" cd playing and meaning no disrespect.

The lush wall of sound and emotion went on for two hours, including a long medley shaped into a primer on the history of why residents of Washington, DC, still have no right to vote. African chant moved into rock city, with Toshi Reagon on electrified acoustic, backed by drums, electric bass, and two other guitars. The wall became a tower.

It was nothing short of emotional and musical redemption, such power as to make you want to follow them anywhere. ▼

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"be who you are," said the duchess to alice

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Dear Zeno,

I wanted to say goodbye. On behalf of everyone here at 135 PEARL, you will be missed.

I pray you are at peace. Your light shined on so many. I hope it led you to a place where you are needed. I remember many times when you made people smile. I remember many times when I wanted to throw you out of the bar (LOL). You had such a way about you...a special something. You were a cross between TAMMY WYNETTE and MAUDE. ZINGO, what a phenomenon. I think it was so amazing that you raised so much money for PRIDE, and you never got discouraged, you never gave up. I think of your continued support of 135 PEARL. Thank you for that. I am happy that you considered this your second home. Always remember you are welcome here. Please continue to send that beautiful energy to those in need. Your impact on this community has been awesome. I thank you for everything you have done, and look forward to seeing you again someday.

Be at peace dear friend, be at peace.

Love always,

Robert Toms

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