

Event organizer Miriam Genestier in last year's vaudeville play, photo by Sasha Brunelle.

# LE BOUDOIR

## Montreal Dykes Put on a Bawdy Night of Lesbian Talent

By EUAN BEAR

What's bawdy, bilingual, and the best benefit for a Pride event north of the border? Le Boudoir, certainly!

Or at least so said co-producer Miriam Genestier. Le Boudoir was her brainchild in a quest to meld her "mainstream" dance/cabaret work with an entertainment showcase for lesbian talent. It's a benefit for Divers/Cité, the huge Montreal Pride celebration.

Le Boudoir is cabaret and dance, burlesque and vaudeville-style theatre all rolled into a single event that runs from 9 pm (doors open at 7:30) to midnight at Montreal's magnificent art deco cabaret hall, le Lion D'Or. It celebrates "original burlesque, providing an opportunity ripe for the reversal of normal social order and uncensored expression," according to the event's press release.

Genestier has produced many other cabarets at the same venue – a space that is more stage-

friendly than your average bar. "At first, I didn't know enough lesbian performers, so I used straight girls in some acts," Genestier said in a phone interview. "But now it has become so well-known and even generates an occasion to create new work" for lesbian performers. One group, the Mambo Drag Kings, formed expressly for this event, Genestier said, and has now gone on to perform internationally.

The show comes in three parts, with generous intermissions between, and involves 30 acts. In the 35-minute first part, there will be a dozen short acts, including a silent movie, a drag troupe, a pantomime, and a monologist interacting with a projection of her butch self, with whom she makes love. Did I mention bawdy?

Part 2 is a 45-minute play, written especially for le Boudoir. Part 3 is more typical (if anything about le Boudoir can be called "typical") cabaret fare. At the intermissions, audience members can wander around, visit a dream interpreter or have their palms read, get a temporary tattoo, eat, drink, check out the "peep

show," and be very merry.

Genestier produces eight cabarets a year. "Queer culture is not as rich as its potential. There's a lot of talent out there." But because the shows are often risqué, Genestier says, they don't translate to mainstream venues. "I refuse to admit mainstream media. I don't want our shows to become some kind of titillating entertainment for straight people."

Its roots lie in early forms of burlesque, vaudeville and turn-of-the-century music hall. It was a time and a venue in which artists celebrated themselves and their common triumphs and hopes. Burlesque and vaudeville punctured the pretensions of ponderous artistic traditions and celebrated the *joie de vivre* of the community. Performances were often seductive, scandalous, and subversive.

Among other creations showcased will be writer-director Nathalie Claude's naughty vaudeville version of "The Four (cross-dressing) Muskateers," including 2 dueling queens, full of double-entendres, asides, and mistaken identities. Then too, watch for La

Flor de la Canela, or The Cinnamon Flower, a pantomime / group-dance act put in motion by Genestier herself. Somewhere along the line you'll see the Tap Rockettes and Damsels in Dress (though they may or may not stay that way). The thirty pieces of golden talent will be held together by marvelous mistress of ceremonies Johanne Cadorette.

Le Boudoir has been very well received in its past 10 years. Even the puritanical set who have campaigned against the sexual objectification of women (by men), she said, "are seduced by the good quality. This is not spoken word, not folk, it's fun. We get a very mixed crowd ranging in age from 18 to 60. I consider myself a feminist, and most of my performers do too, it's just expressed a bit differently."

One year, Genestier recalled, she discovered that the Francophone lesbian community members who attended were "horrified by dildoes" onstage. Last year there was an incident of language tension when a piece primarily in English drew a catcalled

critique from a Francophone activist. But those were minor bumps compared to the raucous – and positive – response drawn by bumps – and grinds – onstage.

Audiences are invited to come in fancy dress, and be warned: gentlemen seeking admission must be escorted by a lady.

So, for a wickedly fun evening's entertainment in the big city to the north, it might be well worth a trip to le Boudoir. Just please remember to designate a sober driver for the trip back or to make arrangements to stay in the city. ▼

*LeBoudoir will be performed on Thursday (\$15) and Friday (\$20), June 10-11 at le Lion D'Or, located at 1676 Ontario Street East in Montreal. Tickets available online at [www.ticketpro.ca](http://www.ticketpro.ca) and in Montreal at Café Esperanza (5490 St-Laurent). A limited number of tickets will be on sale at the door.*

*Editor Euan Bear lives less than 20 miles from the Canadian border.*