

a e THEATER

# Queer Theory: Performances and Workshops

## Boston Performer Tommy DeFrantz Visits Burlington

BY LANI STACK

“What is ‘queer theory’ and how does it relate to ME?” That’s the question Dr. Thomas DeFrantz will ask, and try to answer, during a weeklong Burlington residency, from October 30 to November 5. “Do queer

and post-performance discussions. During his residency, he will also impart his insights in a public forum on queer arts at R.U.1.2? Community Center, and in discussions at UVM and other local colleges. With Margaret Ann Brady, a member of his theater troupe, the Slippage Ensemble, DeFrantz will lead a two-part physical theater

Theater Offensive, “brings together characters from the pantheon of ‘queer studies’ to tease the underpinnings of this new branch of the academy,” DeFrantz said. “Will queer studies be useful to queers of any persuasion? Or will it be an ivory-tower distorting mirror that stretches the everyday into high theory - just because it can?”

County the opportunity to learn much more about the artists we’re presenting than just by buying tickets to the show.” He added, “Vermont has a very rich tradition of organizing around lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender issues. The opportunity to match Tommy up with R.U.1.2? and Outright Vermont is a great partnership.”

Kara DeLeonardis, executive director of R.U.1.2? agreed. “One of the reasons we’re interested in *Queer Theory!* and having a discussion group here is to emphasize the importance of art for the queer community and let people share their experiences and their stories in an art form like [DeFrantz’s],” she said. “The other reason is education - to increase the knowledge of queer life and reduce homophobia through the visibility and education it can provide to our allies and the rest of the community.”

Lluvia Mulvaney-Stanak, executive director of Outright Vermont said she expects DeFrantz’s comedy improv workshop for teens, in particular, to resonate with local youth.

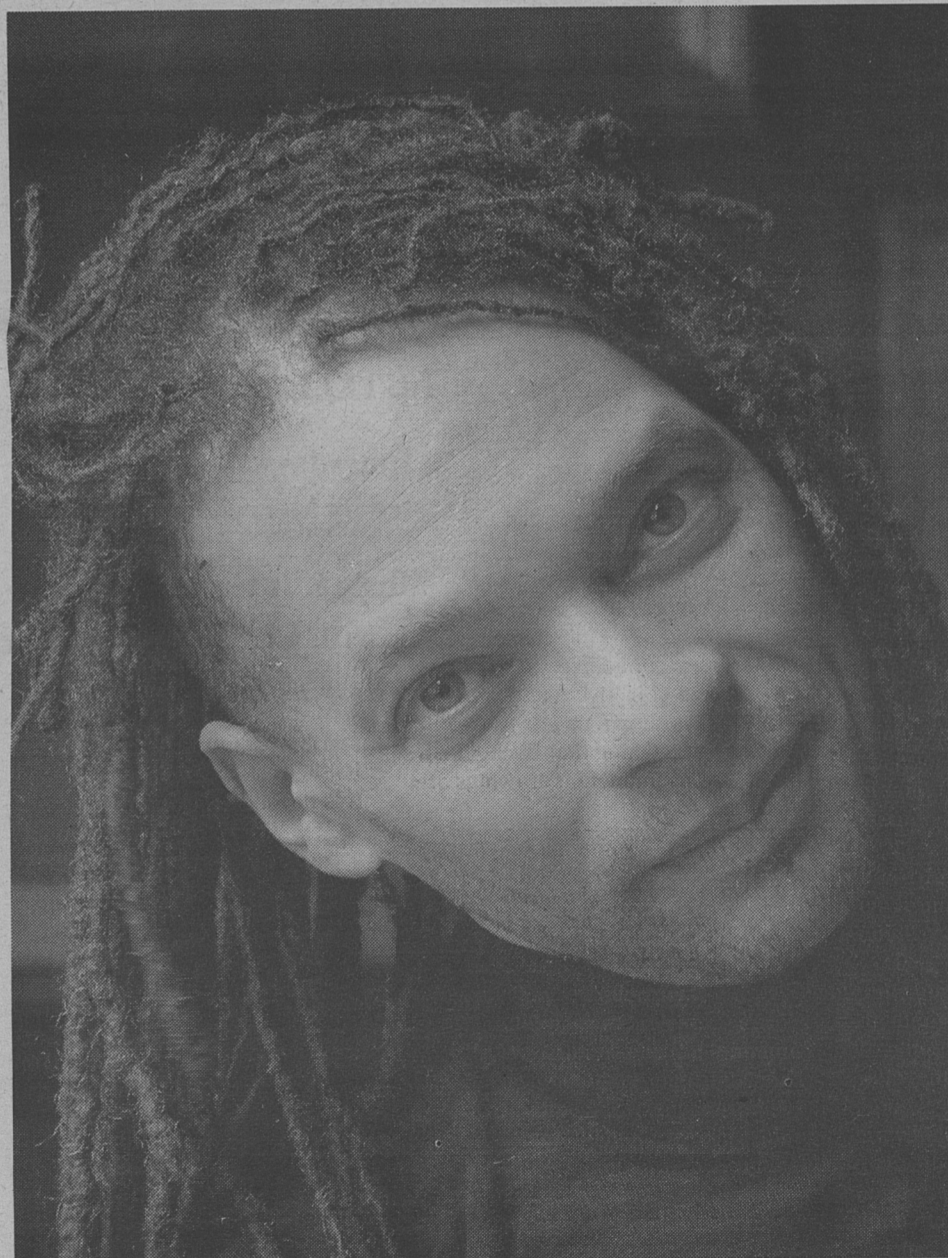
“We’re always excited to work with any national queer-related or queer-identified performers who come to the area,” she said. “Living in Burlington, it’s really rare for our community to have an opportunity to interact with these people, who seem larger-than-life, so it’s always a special treat to have those performers interact with our youth.”

She added, “We’re really excited about Tommy’s visit in particular because it’s a comedy workshop. The number one goal of all our activity-based programs is to have fun, have a new experience, maybe spark a new interest. It would be awesome to have someone be awakened to a whole new realm they’ve never tried before.” ▼

➔ *Queer Theory!* will premiere at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts’ FlynnSpace on Friday and Saturday, November 3 and 4, at 8 pm. A Q&A session with the audience will follow the Friday show and a free pre-performance lecture on “Transforming Queer Theory into Laughter” will precede the Saturday show at 6:30 pm in the Flynn’s adjacent Amy E. Tarrant Gallery.

➔ Tickets for *Queer Theory!* performances at the Flynn are \$23 for adults and \$19 for students - with 25% ticket discounts for members of R.U.1.2?, Outright Vermont, and Vermont Gay Social Alternatives. Reserve your tickets by calling 802-86-FLYNN, 802-863-5966, or at [www.flynncenter.org](http://www.flynncenter.org).

➔ Lani Stack is a marketing coordinator with the Flynn Center.



theorists help me understand myself? Or do they spin on gerbil wheels, spouting ideas without any consideration for everyday pleasures and pains?” DeFrantz wondered in a recent interview.

DeFrantz, a professor of music and theater arts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, will share his discoveries in two premiere performances of *Queer Theory!* at the Flynn Center, and in pre-

workshop and a special Halloween improv comedy workshop at FlynnSpace, and a comedy improv workshop for LGBTQA youth at Outright Vermont.

Boston-area actors Thomas Bardwell, Amatul Hannan, and Albert Chan will join DeFrantz and Brady in the performances.

*Queer Theory!*, a wickedly satiric “musical travesty” co-commissioned by the Flynn and Boston’s acclaimed gay theater company

DeFrantz’s physical theater workshop for teens and adults will be held in FlynnSpace on Monday, October 30 at 7 pm; and Saturday, November 4 at 1 pm. His Halloween improv comedy workshop will be on Tuesday, October 31, at 7 pm. To register, call 802-652-4548 or visit [flynnarts@flynncenter.org](mailto:flynnarts@flynncenter.org).

DeFrantz will speak about queer arts at R.U.1.2? Community Center on Wednesday, November 1, at 7 pm. For further details, call 802-860-RU12 or visit [www.ru12.org](http://www.ru12.org). His comedy improv workshop for teens (23 and younger) will be at Outright Vermont on Thursday, November 2, at 6:30 pm. FMI call 802-865-9677 or visit [www.outrightvt.org](http://www.outrightvt.org). To learn more, contact Christopher Kaufman at 802-652-4539 or [ckaufman@flynncenter.org](mailto:ckaufman@flynncenter.org).

He added, “As someone who identifies as queer at times, but always as African American; and as a Midwesterner at times, but always as male; and as an academic at times, but always as a performance artist open to asking questions and trying new things, I wondered how queer theory could help me bridge some of the and/but divides that press on me. This fantastical movement/music/theater work questions the foundations of this new branch of the academy. As I developed the work with an amazing company of collaborators, we found that the sparks fly when people disagree about the importance of race, class, gender, popular culture, philosophy, and materialist analyses of everyday queer life. In other words, the characters ‘carry on,’ as academics do, but in the process come to see each other as members of a ‘queer tribe,’ one that must work together or fall way, way apart.”

Christopher Kaufman, the Flynn’s new programming manager and the founding executive director of R.U.1.2?, organized DeFrantz’s Burlington itinerary as one of his first tasks with the arts venue.

He said the Flynn’s artist residencies “give audiences and people in Chittenden