

Encore, Encore!

We round up 10 great LGBT shows that have come and gone.

None of the Above Q Center, Portland, Ore.

Watching Jennifer Lanier on stage performing her one-person show, it's easy to imagine her having multiple personalities—even more of them than her two-spirit identity might suggest. Without the advantages of makeup or costume changes, Lanier literally transforms on stage, completely embodying a parade of characters that range from her child-self to her military father, known only as the Colonel.

Lanier, a Vancouver, Wash. lesbian also known as Bruce the Drag King, is a classically trained actor whose most notable gig was a four-year stint replacing Sally Struthers as spokesperson for the Christian Children's Fund.

Her play, *None of the Above*, is a lovely historical exploration of race, gender and sexuality in America and her own journey through childhood in the south. As a tomboy who developed crushes on girls, Lanier was acutely aware of her differences. But it wasn't until Lanier was an adult that she discovered why her hair was straighter or why her skin was lighter than the other African American children.

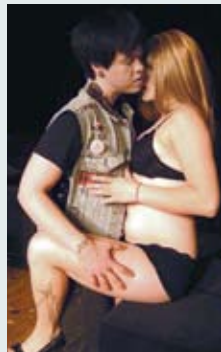
Rather than providing clarity, the knowledge of her mixed-race heritage pushed Lanier farther outside the boxes and onto a journey of self-discovery. *None of the Above* is the result. It's a remarkable performance that burrows into your brain and ruminates there for days.

A Beautiful View Theatre Rhinoceros, San Francisco

There is a lot to like about *A Beautiful View*,



which opened to a sold-out audience at San Francisco's Theatre Rhinoceros. The play, written by Daniel Macivor and directed by Cristina Alicea, focuses exclusively on the complex love relationship between two women, including the lovable basketcase Mitch, played by Jeanette Harrison. The play follows the women through the ups and downs of their 20s and early 30s, including many questionable relationships, job opportunities, ukulele bands and camping trips. The characters in *A Beautiful View* are frustrating, emotionally tangled and totally authentic. They also have a lot of fun. Don't be put off by the fact that the play was written by a man. Except for his penchant for feeding his lesbian characters to large carnivores, Macivor has the sensibilities of a damn fine woman.



The Naked I: Monologues From Beyond the Binary 20% Theatre Company, Twin Cities, Minneapolis

Since it premiered at Smith College in 2003, *The Naked I: Monologues From Beyond the Binary* has been hailed as "the transgender *Vagina Monologues*." This Eve Ensler-inspired play challenges societal conventions of gender and the body through 18 monologues, duologues and short sketches that recount the experiences of differently gendered people. Like Ensler's play, the stories range from heart-breaking to hilarious. The award-winning transgender playwright Tobias K. Davis recently brought his show to a continually sold out house at the Bedlam Theatre in Minneapolis. This show helps put the spotlight on a community rarely seen in theater. As one young FTM audience member wrote, "I saw myself on that stage. I barely see myself in the mirror."



Bitch!Dyke!Fagbag!Whore! Brava Theater Center, San Francisco

Creator and performance artist Penny Arcade and a crew of locally cast erotic dancers combine fresh adult entertainment and "political humanism" in *Bitch!Dyke!Fagbag!Whore!*, a show as comedic, radical and joyously profane as its name. Originally born out of the culture wars of the '90s around sex and censorship, *B!D!F!W!* continues to be ahead of its time, with a queer message of unity and freedom of expression that is crucial now, more than ever. With a history of successful runs in 22 cities internationally, *B!D!F!W!* just ended its stint in San Francisco, and plans are underway for a highly anticipated U.S. tour.

Hedda Gabler Mauckingbird Theatre Co., Philadelphia

It's a classic story—a woman trapped in a less than desirable marriage is dissatisfied with the life she's chosen, until her true love walks back into the picture and debauchery ensues. Only this time, said true love comes in female form. Caroline Kava's explosive new adaptation of Ibsen's classic *Hedda Gabler* brings the question of sexuality to the front of the playbill. Hedda (Jennie Eisenhower) weds aspiring academic George Tesman out of boredom, returning from her honeymoon to find that her hubby's rival, Miss Eilert Lovborg (Sarah Sanford), has returned. Jealousy over Lovborg's ability to love women openly and freely drives Hedda to destroy the lives of those around her—as well as her own. Kava's adaptation gives



audiences a chance to see this classic play as never before.

Babe: An Olympian Musical
 Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts,
 Scottsdale, Ariz.

Before there was Martina Navratilova, there was Babe Didrikson, a queer female athlete in the 1940s who challenged the gendered bias of professional athletics. Despite the social obstacles of her gender, sexuality and class, Babe went on to win three Olympic medals and helped found the Ladies Professional Golf Association. *Babe: An Olympian Musical* celebrates this athletic pioneer's accomplished life with a "big, brassy" (read: butch) cast. Striving to "do for theatre what Babe did for sports: break the gender line,"



playwright-lyricist Carolyn Gage and composer Andrea Jill Higgins have collaborated to create the first ever mainstream musical featuring a leading masculine woman with a lesbian

love interest. Concert readings in Arizona and Minneapolis were hits; Gage is currently looking for a home for her groundbreaking play.

Dykes on Mics
 Ochi's Lounge, New York City

For a doubled-over theater experience, catch a performance of *Dykes on Mics*. Produced by two New York-based comedians, Leah Dubie and Amy Beckerman, *Dykes* features rotating queer (and queer-friendly) stand-up acts and has made a side-splitting impact on the Northeast comedy scene since its November '07 launch. Past *Dykes* performers also seen on LOGO and Comedy Central include Gloria Bigelow, Jackie Monahan, Margaret Cho's tour-mate Ian Harvie, Brad Loekle and Diana Yanez. These performers were featured in the LOGO documentary *Out in the City* and bared all for the cause



during their topless comedy benefit, Generosities, which raised money for breast cancer research in 2008.

V-Love
 Hudson Guild Theatre, New York City

V-Love is a virtual kitchen sink theater production, complete with singing, dancing, burlesque, beat-boxing and spoken word. Billed as a "multimedia cabaret," this play tells the tale of six women who "sing, dance and talk their way through some sticky situations." Among the cast of characters is Dr. Gorgeous, a sex columnist and housewife



who moonlights as a stripper and Miss North Dakota, a dirty-mouthed debutante who MCs the show. Written by Lucille Scout and starring burlesque icon Dr. Lucky and sexy actress Glenys Javier, *V-Love* had audiences swaying in their seats, tapping their toes and even participating in the action.

Never After
 Somerville Theater, Somerville, Mass.

Behold a tale of woe and adventure for a fated-from-birth lesbian. Written and composed by Colleen Campbell, *Never After: Not Your Grandmother's Fairytale Musical* is the story of Princess Lesley Ann (Cheryl Bellows), a damsel who's not too keen on princess life in the kingdom of Generica. A tale of self-discovery complete with dragons to battle and unexpected love to conquer, *Never After* truly is a far cry from your classic bedtime story.



Dykeotomy
 Center for Sex and Culture,
 San Francisco

Kimberly Dark is a professor, poet, performer and self-described "pop-socialist." Her most recent one-woman show, *Dykeotomy*, spins a poetic tale of modern gender confusion. Told in highly crafted, and often hilarious, narratives, *Dykeotomy* tackles everything from awkward strap-on sex to tales of her own dating life. But the performance isn't just about dildos and dating, Dark's academic side comes through with explorations of biology and gender. If you're looking for a comedic but cerebral play, *Dykeotomy* will fit the playbill. [Jacob Anderson-Minshall, Kimberly Bale, Briana Hernandez, Sassafras Lowrey, Heather Robinson, Kristin A. Smith, Yana Tallon-Hicks] ■



Best of the Rest

Lesbian plays were scattered across the marquees this year. Here are a few more that caught our eye... *And Baby Makes Seven*, which showed at the Philadelphia Gay and Lesbian Theatre Fest, is a play about a gay family who must rid their house of three imaginary children to make way for their real newborn... *Once Upon a Lesbian*, a collectively written and directed Vancouver, Canada production about two futuristic women who find a time capsule left by the Lesbian Collective in 2169... Fringe Festival hit *My Mother's Lesbian Jewish-Wiccan Wedding* played at The Panasonic Theatre in Toronto... *The Second Coming of Joan of Arc*, a one-woman show from established playwright Carolyn Gage, which played at the Central Florida Gay and Lesbian Theater Festival. Lesbian-themed *The Color Purple*, starring *American Idol* winner Fantasia rocked Atlanta before going national... And coming soon, the launch of the new epilogue to *The Laramie Project*, developed by the Tectonic Theatre Project, and based on new interviews from last fall. It will have readings in all 50 states, Spain, Australia and Hong Kong, as well as at the University of Wyoming—the college Matthew Shepard attended at the time of his death.

SCOTT PAKUDATIS (BABE), ANYA GARRET (DYKES ON MICS), JOHANNA BOBROW (NEVER AFTER)