

OutCharlotte 98 offers yet another intriguing line-up

CHARLOTTE—A traditional Jewish lesbian wedding, an African-American LGBT performance ensemble, musical visions of bell bottoms and platform shoes, an ad-libbing comic princess and a “premiere” dance event are coming to OutCharlotte 98, Charlotte’s fourth annual cultural festival celebrating the diverse contributions of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Festival Steering Committee co-chairs Joe O’Connor and Shelly Schoenfeld have been working with a team of 10 members since the beginning of the year.

“Early on, the concept of ‘family’ as a theme for the festival took hold,” said O’Connor.

“With so much happening in the greater Charlotte community,” Schoenfeld added, “we find ourselves more determined than ever before to show others who we are. The LGBT community is uniting and bonding—a stronger sense of family is evolving as we share our commonalities.”

Twenty events will be held over five days, October 7-11, at various venues around Charlotte. “If people are interested in learning who ‘gay people’ are, the festival is the perfect opportunity to meet us,” said Dan Kirsch,

witted, ad-libbing comic princess.”

Musical visions of bell bottoms, discotheques, platform shoes, 8-track tapes and *The Brady Bunch* will fill the theater as the Atlanta Feminist Women’s Chorus presents “We are Family—A Celebration of the Music of the ’70s” as part of the Festival Closing Ceremony. The concert features the great disco hits, love songs and TV themes that made the ’70s what they were! The Atlanta Feminist Women’s Chorus (AFWC) is an 80-member, community-based group and is under the direction of Robert Glor. Their appearance at OutCharlotte will be co-hosted by One Voice, Charlotte’s Gay, Lesbian and Gay Affirmative Chorus.

It will be a night of Hollywood fantasy as “Tinseltown: The Dance!” OutCharlotte’s annual fundraising dance will be held at the historic Carolina Theatre in Uptown Charlotte. The red carpet will be rolled out for stars and star-gazers alike, so come see and be seen at this “premiere” event. The dance celebrates the Golden Age of Hollywood, the 1930s-50s. There will be a costume contest for those dressed like a true star of that era. Clark, Bette, Bogart—come as your favorite or come as the star that you know you are. The music will be ’90s and hot, provided by Charlotte DJ Randall Warren of 300 Stonewall.

Two films will be shown as part of the festival: *It’s in the Water*, Kelli Herd’s sexy feel-good comedy masquerading as a *Steel Magnolias*-style potboiler. The setting is conservative Azalea Springs where underneath classy wealth, big hair and country clubs lies a hotbed of sexual frustration. The film was voted Audience Favorite at the Laguna Beach, Copenhagen and Washington, DC gay and lesbian film festivals.

Alive & Kicking, a lively romance between unlikely lovers, stars Jason Flemmyng and acclaimed Tony-nominee Antony Sher. The mismatched pair stumble along the rocky path of commitment in a sometimes poignant, often hilarious, always believable portrayal of a gay courtship in the new “Swinging London.” The film received the Audience Award at the London International Film Festival.

The 1998 OutCharlotte art exhibition’s theme is family within the LGBT community. OutCharlotte solicited photographs from the community that illustrate the various examples of traditional and non-traditional families within our community. In addition, three local photographers will be adding their photo interpretations to the exhibit: Jason Kinney, Kelly J. Owen and Kim L’Amoreaux. The exhibit is curated by Bill Schinsky and will be displayed at the Blue Pony Gallery from October 2-31.

The festival will also provide 15 free workshops and hold the OutCharlotte Marketplace at the Great Aunt Stella Center on Elizabeth Avenue on Saturday, October 10. Mobile Health Outreach will give free mammograms that day and free child care will be available. On Sunday, October 11, the Don King Community Service Awards will be presented at the Closing Ceremony. There will be a potluck dinner, a tea dance, a fun run/walk, social events and a reading of *Fixing Things*, a new one-act play by Steve Willis.

A complete festival schedule is now available. Tickets go on sale September 23 at White Rabbit Books & Things, 834 Central Ave., Charlotte. Tickets range in price from \$5.00-\$15.00 with many events offered for free. A Festival Pass, available for only \$58.00, allows admission to all events along with additional special benefits.

This year’s host hotel is the Four Points Hotel, 201 S. McDowell Street. For reservations, call (704) 372-7550 or 1-800-762-1995.

For OutCharlotte’s line-up “at-a-glance,” see their ad on page 2 of this issue. To receive a festival schedule, order tickets, make a donation, volunteer or get a vendor application, write OutCharlotte 98 at PO Box 32062, Charlotte, NC 28232-2062; call (704) 563-2699; or visit their web site at www.outcharlotte.org. ▼



OutCharlotte executive director. “Come dine with us, come learn with us or come laugh with us.” The festival’s purpose is to foster awareness and appreciation of LGBT culture through arts-related, educational and historical programs.

A solo artist from San Francisco, Sara Felder, and Chicago’s A Real Read, an African-American, LGBT performance ensemble, will join OutCharlotte as artists-in-residence for the 1998 Festival.

Since legalization of same-sex marriage is such a national hot topic, OutCharlotte will bring the debate home with performances of Sara Felder’s *June Bride*. The title describes a traditional Jewish lesbian wedding—only with a little more juggling! The show takes us from an awkward first date to the culmination of the wedding ceremony—the shattering of the glass under the wedding canopy. In between, we meet the reluctant parents, the blissful brides and the ageless spirit of the Jewish tradition. The show features juggling, sharp knives, colorful scarves, a rhyming poem, a crystal ball, and (hopefully) a strait jacket escape!

A Real Read is a collection of artists who bring to the stage original works of poetry and prose, giving a voice to an often overlooked community. Artistic Director Byron Stewart describes the ensemble this way: “In a society that often misreads as well as misrepresents who we are, the voices of our people are seldom heard. We are silenced by the dominant culture simply for being black and silenced by our own community simply for being gay. Through poetry, prose, music and vignettes, we hope to testify to the distinctive experiences of a minority within a minority, with the goal that other communities find something they can relate to as well.” A Real Read will perform two shows at OutCharlotte 98: *The Best of A Real Read* and *Comin’ Straight At Cha*, their newest work, a series of humorous and thought-provoking pieces on the emotions and conflicts straight people experience in dealing with the sexual orientation or gender identity of people they care about.

Also scheduled is comedian Michele Balan, a born and bred Brooklyn native who writes her own routines. Manhattan subway ads, taxi drivers, bagels and Miami are all fair game to this self-proclaimed “neurotic Jew.” When she’s single (“not single—between ex’s”), she’s sure to turn her raucous humor on dating angst. She’s been appearing in Provincetown the last few summers and *Provincetown* magazine tagged her a “cute, funny, high-energy, quick-

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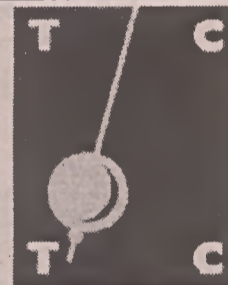
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