

PUPPETS

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"We have our Young Audience Series two to three times a year at Diana Wortham Theater. We are also using White Horse Black Mountain," said Sturz, who is also in charge of the Young Audience Series.

The APA, however, also provides entertainment for adults interested in puppetry.

"We are trying every year to do something for adults," she said. "We have the Puppetry Slam, which is short form adult material."

The group put on a Puppetry Slam this past summer and plan to have one sometime in October, said Sturz.

"Puppetry slam is a movement that has been going on for about 20 years now. It encourages short adult form," she said.

Although puppetry has only recently become popular in the United States, Sturz said it has been heavily influential everywhere else.

"We are kind of behind in the U.S. Recently, that is changing a little," she said.

Elizabeth Adams, a performing arts student, said puppetry is an underrated art form.

"You definitely don't see it as much, but that doesn't make it any lesser than any other performing arts," she said. "It takes so much talent, from what I have seen, to not only create the puppets, but also control them."

Adams said she would really like to learn more about puppetry.

"I wish I knew of more opportunities to learn about puppets and how they are created," she said.

Sturz has performed puppetry in different forms.

"I've done a lot with opera," she said. "I also did something with The Asheville Symphony."

Puppetry is different than most art forms, Sturz said.

"You can do a lot of nonlinear dream imagery," she said. "Puppets can communicate really well. It is a visual art form."

The APA will perform "Pinochio" starting at 2 p.m. on Saturday at the Diana Wortham Theatre.

For more information about the APA, visit their website.



Local group benefits LGBTQ inmates

Tranzmission provides support, resources to prisoners

Beckett Bathanti

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Tranzmission Prison Project, an offshoot of the Asheville Prison Books Project, has been providing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer inmates with reading materials, resources and pen pals for about five years.

Despite often working with the LGBTQ organizations of UNC Asheville and Warren Wilson College, Tranzmission is unaffiliated with either institution and operates as its own entity.

"Tranzmission is very much a DIY grassroots organization and there is no real assigned hierarchy," said **Melody Rood, a recent UNCA graduate** who has been volunteering with Tranzmission for almost two years.

"We try and get books and resources to inmates who identify as LGBTQ. The education of that community that

is being silenced is important," Rood said.

Tranzmission came about following an influx of letters from LGBTQ prisoners requesting materials received by Asheville Prison Books Project. The project has been providing inmates in the Southeastern United States with reading materials since its inception in 1999.

Rae Swersey is a Warren Wilson College graduate and has been volunteering with Tranzmission, for three years. She said about five years ago, Asheville Prison Project began receiving letters from LGBTQ inmates.

"Some members began replying to these letters and stayed in touch with them," said Swersey.

Rood said Tranzmission Prison Project is not limited to Asheville.

"We are a nationwide program and it has spread mostly by word of mouth, although

we are on some National Prison Resource Lists," Rood said. "We get anywhere from 30 - 70 letters a week from inmates requesting materials or just interested in correspondence."

Rood adds she is amazed at how word travels, but also points out the pen pals program is constantly in need of volunteers and has a relatively low cost of operation compared to the Asheville Prison Books Project.

Since both projects rely entirely on volunteers and donations, funding plays a key role in how many resources can be administered.

"Alliance has sponsored many events in which the proceeds benefit Tranzmission, and we regularly have Alliance members that intern with the organization," says **Roth Doyle, a member of Alliance**, UNCA's student organization that focuses on bringing people who identify

as LGBTQ and their allies together.

Tranzmission's shipping costs often exceed their monetary resources. Doyle said Alliance struggles to fulfill the needs of UNCA's LGBTQ and allied community, while Tranzmission serves a much wider area.

Tranzmission's goals are not only focused on those behind bars, Rood says.

"We want to educate people outside prison walls who treat incarcerated folks as less than human," she says.

Rood says she is amazed at how word about Tranzmission has traveled beyond Asheville. Rood also said it is the only organization of its kind she is aware of.

Doyle said anyone who is interested in volunteering, being a pen pal or wants more information on the organization may contact tranzmissionprisonproject@gmail.com.

Q-Fest: Asheville hosts its first local queer film festival

Garrett Rankin

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Asheville's first LGBTQ film festival will be held soon, courtesy of Philadelphia and Asheville-based production company Gaston Pictures Entertainment.

Gaston Pictures Entertainment's Manager of Production and Development Michael Sheldon feels thrilled to be a part of Q-Fest and is all for the festival's purpose.

"Eight of our films are from new directors. A new wave of gay/lesbian movies are out there, with directors telling new stories different from those in the past. They are films that are not going to play at the Regal Cinemas, and we are going to get them to be seen on the big-screen. We hope to gain an audience in Asheville to appreciate what these films are and what they stand for," Sheldon said.

Sheldon and Gaston have noticed a nuance the volunteers and those partaking in producing and promoting Q-Fest are experiencing.

"The one thing we've noticed as we have been doing this is that it's bringing people together," Sheldon said. "Bringing these wonderful films to town is a blessing. The movies

The idea of Q-Fest came from an individual at "Youth Outright PSA Campaign 8" Sheldon and Artistic Director Robert Gaston took part in recently.

"Someone said, 'Why don't you bring out a film festival to Asheville?' Neil Reid from Fine Arts Theatre said it was a good idea," Sheldon said. "We are receiving help from an amazing group of volunteers. We have too much work for two people to do, so we have a lot of people helping us out, and the Asheville community is too."

Sheldon and Gaston have noticed a nuance the volunteers and those partaking in producing and promoting Q-Fest are experiencing.

"The one thing we've noticed as we have been doing this is that it's bringing people together," Sheldon said. "Bringing these wonderful films to town is a blessing. The movies

contain universal themes, and whatever your sexual orientation, you will take away something from these movies."

The festival will feature movies from countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Iceland, Iran/Lebanon and the United States, according to festival officials.

A few of the films premiering and screening at Q-Fest are the following: "Jamie and Jesse Are Not Together" and "From Hollywood to Dollywood" from the USA, "Run Lola Run" director Tom Tykwer's "3" and separately "Harvest" from Germany, "Jitters" from Iceland, and "Circumstance" from Iran/Lebanon.

Sheldon said he hopes Q-Fest will become a staple in Asheville's vast festival repertoire.

"We hope that it will be an annual event. We hope that next year will have more than one theater showing more than

this year's 15 films, and even more community support," Sheldon said. "The ticket selling is going well, you can go on Gastonpictures.com and buy tickets online. We have been using posters and Facebook for promotion. The Asheville press is releasing information before the 29th."

Gaston and Sheldon both promote Asheville's Q-Fest enthusiastically.

"You'll be left out in the light and not in the dark," Sheldon said.

The festival will show 15 gay/lesbian films from Thursday through Sunday in the Fine Arts Theatre. Show times vary for each film.

Tickets are \$10 per movie or \$60 for an all-access pass.

For more information about Q-Fest, visit the festival's website.

