

## DRAG DEFINED

Where does the word “drag” come from? An early definition found in 1887 and cited in *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (Eric Partridge, 1937) defines drag as “the petticoat or skirt used by actors when playing female parts; the drag of the dress as distinct from the non-drag of trousers.”



## THE LADY DOTH PROTEST: A BRIEF HISTORY OF DRAG

The most famous drag queen of our time, RuPaul Charles, became a household name when the reality television competition “RuPaul’s Drag Race” became a pop culture obsession. Although this prime-time spotlight pulled drag into the mainstream of performance art, it is by no means the beginning of the form. Men have performed as women for centuries in nearly every culture, due in large part to the fact that women were not permitted to perform onstage before the 17th century. In the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, men were cast to perform women’s roles.

Drag as we know it, however, presents a very different embodiment. Today, a drag queen is a performer who creates and develops a persona for personal, artistic or political reasons – and the alter ego can be completely original or modeled after other famous performers with a unique twist.

In his definitive study of the drag art form, Roger Baker notes that while

a man embodying a woman through drag is not necessarily a reflection of sexual orientation, the majority of drag artists identify as gay men. Drag performance allowed gay men to express themselves honestly and safely while entertaining audiences during a time when displaying their identity outside of their performance could lead to serious trouble.

In the 1960s, many gay clubs were being raided, and drag queens paid the price in beatings and arrests. Their acts of resistance, which began in 1969 during a raid at New York City’s Stonewall Inn, were rooted in a stance of opposition to the discrimination and violent treatment they had endured. This unwavering defiance played a major role in galvanizing the gay liberation movement and defeating oppressive laws in many states.

As Remy so profoundly states in *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, “Drag ain’t a hobby, baby. Drag ain’t a night job. Drag is a protest. Drag is a raised fist inside a sequined glove. Drag is a lot of things, baby, but drag is not for sissies.”

## DRAG AND GENDER IDENTITY


“Drag is a type of entertainment where people dress up and perform, often in highly stylized ways. ... Today, many prominent drag artists are people who identify as men and present themselves in exaggeratedly feminine ways as part of their performance. ... While some drag queens live their lives as men outside of their drag personae, people of any gender can be drag queens. ...

As part of their performance, many drag queens ... have a separate drag persona in addition

to the self they live as every day. This persona will of course look different but may also have a different name and ask to be referred to by different gender pronouns. This does not mean they are transgender. Just as actors do not keep being referred to by their characters’ names after stepping offstage, drag performers do not necessarily keep the names or pronouns they use while performing. Drag performers are artists and entertainers, so being in drag is not an integral part of their identity in the same way that gender is.

On the other hand, when a transgender person comes out and asks people to use a different name and different gender pronouns to refer to them, it is not part of a performance. It is an important part of their identity and can be a critical part of affirming their gender identity.

Don’t assume that someone in drag is transgender or vice versa. Just as the vast majority of the general population does not do drag, most transgender people also are not drag performers. It can be hurtful to refer to a transgender person’s presentation as drag because it suggests that their deeply held identity is just a show they are putting on – which is untrue.

Being respectful of a drag performer’s gender is the same as being respectful of anyone else’s gender. If you’re not sure, for example, of which pronouns to use when referring to someone, just ask.” 

Edited from “Understanding Drag,” National Center for Transgender Equality ([www.transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org)), April 28, 2017

# People, Places and Things in the Play

## ACT UP

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power is an international organization that was founded in the U.S. in 1987 to bring attention to the AIDS epidemic. As the first group of its kind, ACT UP has dozens of chapters nationally and globally whose purpose is to find a cure for AIDS while simultaneously providing accurate information, help and awareness through education and radical, nonviolent protest.

## BARBRA STREISAND'S "JINGLE BELLS?"

Barbra Streisand's rendition of "Jingle Bells?" is a jazz-influenced, fast-paced and verbally dexterous cover of the classic. It was included on her 1967 *A Christmas Album* and the "?" in the track title is intentional.



Vander Clyde as Barquette  
PHOTO: MILNER LIBRARY

## BARBETTE

Born as Vander Clyde in Texas in 1899, Barquette won substantial acclaim as one of Europe's most famous drag queens. Clyde embarked on his career when he answered a want ad for a replacement aerialist for The Alfaretta Sisters. The other sister had passed away, and upon being hired, both Clyde and the surviving sister decided that the drama of trapeze art dwelled in the female performance. Clyde agreed to dress as a woman, and from that day forward, his iconic drag performances took his aerialist career to new heights.

In 1923, Barquette began an European tour where he worked in largest clubs and casinos in England, France, Germany and Belgium. In Paris, he became a huge success and would return there many times to perform at the Moulin Rouge, Cirque Medrano and the Casino de Paris. Barquette died from a self-inflicted drug overdose on August 5, 1973, in Austin, Texas, at age 73.



The intersection of Gay and Christopher Streets in Manhattan  
PHOTO: CATHERINE KU

## CHRISTOPHER STREET

The street in the West Village in Manhattan where the infamous

Stonewall Inn was located. After the Stonewall Riots in 1969, Christopher Street became the center of the New York City gay rights movement in the late 1970s.



A publicity photograph of Divine from the 1980s  
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

## DIVINE

Also known as Harris Glenn Milstead, Divine was an American actor, singer and drag queen. A character actor who often performed female roles in both cinema and theater, Divine also adopted a female drag persona in his musical performances, leading *People* magazine to describe him as the "Drag Queen of the Century." He was often associated with independent filmmaker John Waters and starred in ten of Waters' films, usually in a leading role. Concurrent with his acting career, he had a successful career as a disco singer during the 1980s, at one point being described as "the most successful and in-demand disco performer in the world."



Elvis on *The Ed Sullivan Show*  
PHOTO: WWW.GRACELAND.COM

### ED SULLIVAN

*The Ed Sullivan Show* was an American television variety show that ran on CBS from June 20, 1948, to June 6, 1971, and was hosted by New York entertainment columnist Ed Sullivan. Elvis Presley's first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* was on September 9, 1956. Before singing his first song, Elvis told the audience that appearing on the show was "probably the greatest honor I have ever had in my life."



Édith Piaf in 1940  
PHOTO: GILLES PETARD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

### ÉDITH PIAF

Édith Piaf, also known as "The Little Sparrow," was born in Belleville, the outskirts of Paris, on December 19, 1915. She rose to international stardom in the late 1930s as a symbol of French passion and tenacity. Of Piaf's many ballads, "La Vie En Rose," which she wrote, is remembered as her signature song. Other favorites among the singer's repertoire include "Milord," "Padam, Padam," "Mon Dieu," the charming "Mon Manège à Moi"

and the anthemic "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien." Having a life beset by addictions and related health issues, Piaf died in France in 1963 at the age of 47. She continues to be revered as a national treasure.

### ELVIS IMPERSONATOR

An Elvis impersonator is someone who impersonates or copies the look and sound of musician Elvis Presley. Professional Elvis impersonators are more commonly known as Elvis Tribute Artists (ETAs). There are many different types of Elvis impersonators and levels of impersonation, which depends largely on who is doing the impersonation and for what purpose:

**Professional:** Full-time and part-time ETAs who perform for a living. Reenactments of a typical 70s Elvis concert is a preferred choice of most ETAs, however some may portray various phases of Elvis' career in a single show.

**Amateur:** Enthusiasts who impersonate Elvis in contests, as a hobby or at social gatherings and parties. Most have aspirations to perform as a professional ETA.

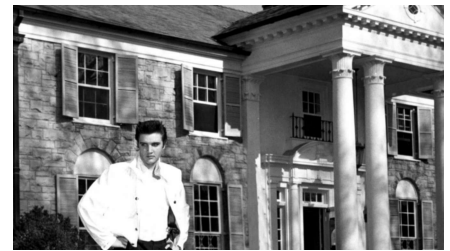
**Comedic:** Usually performed as part of a parody. There is even 10-member skydiving team called The Flying Elvi who were first featured in the movie *Honeymoon in Vegas* and perform at events around the world. Learn more at [www.flyingelvi.com](http://www.flyingelvi.com).



Judy Garland (far left) performing with her older sisters  
PHOTO: BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

### FRANCES ETHEL GUMM (JUDY GARLAND)

When Ethel Milne Gumm learned she was pregnant in the fall of 1921, it wasn't happy news. Her husband, Frank Gumm, contacted his friend Marcus Rabwin, a medical student at the University of Minnesota, to seek advice about terminating the pregnancy. Abortion wasn't permitted at the time, and Rabwin informed Gumm that an illegal procedure could put his wife at risk. He urged the couple to go ahead with the pregnancy, which they did. On June 10, 1922, Frances Ethel Gumm, who would later become Judy Garland, was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.



Elvis at Graceland  
PHOTO: ELVIS PRESLEY ENTERPRISES

### GRACELAND

Graceland is a mansion on a 13.8-acre estate in Memphis, Tennessee, that was owned by Elvis Presley. When he purchased Graceland for \$102,500 on March 25, 1957, he was a rising star filming his third movie, *Jailhouse Rock*.



Steven Polito as Hedda Lettuce  
PHOTO: WWW.HEDDALETTUCE.COM

### HEDDA LETTUCE

Hedda Lettuce is an American drag queen, comedian and singer who lives and works in New York City. The New York actor Steven Polito debuted his persona Hedda Lettuce in 1991.



U.S. Attorney General-designate Janet Reno being sworn in on March 9, 1993  
PHOTO: BARRY THUMMA, ASSOCIATED PRESS

### JANET RENO

Janet Reno is the first woman to serve as U.S. Attorney General. She was born in Miami, Florida in 1938. After attending Cornell University and Harvard Law School, she worked as an attorney in Florida for several years. Her work in Florida as an attorney and county prosecutor from 1978 to 1993 established Reno's stern and liberal reputation. In 1993, she was appointed U.S. Attorney General by President Bill Clinton, and she soon became one of the most respected members of the Clinton administration, serving until 2001. Reno died in 2016 at the age of 78.

### JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT

A 1970 musical by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice that is often revived and was turned into a film. The play is loosely based on the biblical story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. One number, "The Song of the King (Seven Fat Cows)," portrays Pharaoh as an Elvis type who tells Joseph about a dream that involves fat and gaunt cows.

### "KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS SONG"

A song composed by Charles Fox with lyrics by Norman Gimbel. In 1973, it became a number-one hit in the U.S. and Canada for Roberta Flack, and it also reached number six on the U.K. singles chart.



The Lady Chablis in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*  
PHOTO: WARNER BROS., VIA PHOTOFEST

### THE LADY CHABLIS

A transgender performer featured in the 1994 bestselling book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* and the subsequent film version.

### LORD OF THE FLIES

When Rexy says "It's like *Lord of the Flies* out there and I'm the pig," she's referring to William Golding's first novel published in 1954. At one point in the story, the boys, who have been stranded on an uninhabited island, hunt and graphically murder a female pig nursing her babies.



John Epperson as Lypsinka  
PHOTO: PETER PALLADINO

### LYPSINKA

John Epperson is an American drag artist, actor, pianist, vocalist and writer who is mainly known for creating his stage character, Lypsinka.

### MATTACHINE SOCIETY

The Mattachine Society began in Los Angeles in the winter of 1950 and is one of the earliest American gay movement (or homophile) organizations. Formed by Harry Hay, a leading gay activist and

former Communist Party member, along with seven other gay men, the name refers to the Société Mattachine, a French medieval masque group who allegedly traveled from village to village using ballads and dramas to point out social injustice. The name was meant to symbolize the fact that "gays were a masked people, unknown and anonymous."

The Mattachine founders attempted to redefine the meaning of being gay in the United States. They devised a comprehensive program for cultural and political liberation. In 1951, the Mattachine Society adopted a Statement of Missions and Purpose. This Statement stands out in the history of the gay liberation movement because it identified and incorporated two important themes. First, Mattachine called for a grassroots movement of gay people to challenge anti-gay discrimination. Second, the organization recognized the importance of building a gay community.

The Mattachine Society also began sponsoring discussion groups in 1951, providing lesbians and gay men an opportunity to share openly, often for the first time, their feelings and experiences. The Society also became active in protesting police entrapment of gay men and other oppressive tactics and policies. Some of Mattachine's more political actions, as well as the Communist leanings of several of its founders, put the organization under considerable pressure and public scrutiny during the country's anti-Communist era of McCarthyism in the early 1950s. (Edited and reprinted from [www.glbtc.com](http://www.glbtc.com).)

## MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

A gay bar in the Montrose neighborhood of Houston, Texas, that opened in March 1978. When it closed in September 2016, it was known as the oldest gay bar in Houston.

## OXY

“Oxy” is short for OxyContin, a controlled narcotic with a high risk for addiction and dependence. It can cause respiratory distress and death when taken in high doses or when combined with other substances, especially alcohol.

## “PADAM, PADAM”

A song that was written for Édith Piaf by Henri Contet (lyrics) and Norbert Glanzberg (music) and originally released in 1951. The lyrics are about experiencing a memory of a song that cannot be forgotten and describing how a certain melody evokes memories of a former lover.

### An excerpt in French with English translation:

*Cet air qui m'obsède jour et nuit*

This tune which haunts me day and night

*Cet air n'est pas né d'aujourd'hui*

This tune wasn't written today

*Il vient d'aussi loin que je viens*

It comes from as far away as I come

*Trainé par cent mille musiciens*

Trawled around by a hundred thousand musicians

*Un jour cet air me rendra folle*

One day this tune will drive me mad

*Cent fois j'ai voulu dire pourquoi*

A hundred times I've wanted to say why

*Mais il m'a coupé la parole*

But it's interrupted me

*Il parle toujours avant moi*

It always speaks before i do

*Et sa voix couvre ma voix*

And its voice drowns out my voice

*Padam ... padam ... padam ...*

*Padam ... padam ... padam*

*Il arrive en courant derrière moi*

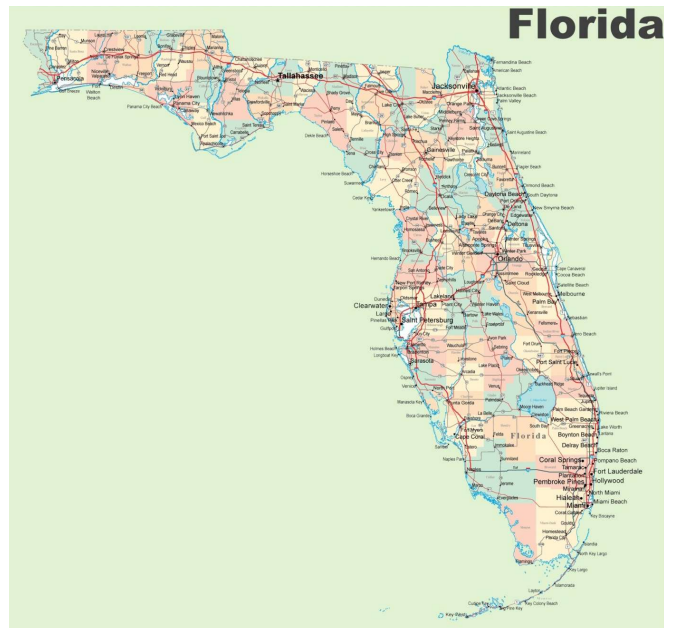
It comes running up behind me

*Padam ... padam ... padam ...*

*Padam ... padam ... padam*

*Il me fait le coup du souviens-toi*

It plays me the trick of: do you remember



## PANAMA CITY BEACH

Panama City Beach is a city located in Bay County, Florida, along the coast of the beautiful emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico in the Florida panhandle. Panama City Beach's population was estimated to be 12,741 permanent residents in 2017, but it increases to a peak daily population of more than 100,000 in July. More than 17 million people visit Panama City Beach each year. To learn more, visit their official city website at [www.pcbgov.com](http://www.pcbgov.com).

## SERENITY PRAYER

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.” This prayer was written by American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) and was a staple in Niebuhr’s sermons and church groups in the 1930s and 1940s. It was later adopted and popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step programs.

## “SKATE TOWARD THE LIGHT, CAROL ANN.”

Tracy’s take on a famous line from the 1982 film *Poltergeist*: “Run to the light, Carol Anne. Run as fast as you can! Mommy is in the light! Mommy is waiting for you in the light!”

## STEVEN SEAGAL

Steven Frederic Seagal is an American actor, film producer, screenwriter, director, martial artist and musician. Although Jason mentions his movie *Blood Justice* 6 in the play, it is not an actual film. However, Seagal did produce and star in a television series titled "True Justice," the last episode of which was "Blood Alley."



The Stonewall Inn in September 1969 with a sign that reads, "We homosexuals plead with our people to please help maintain peaceful and quiet conduct on the streets of the Village."  
PHOTO: DIANA DAVIES VIA THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

## STONEWALL RIOTS

Just after 3 a.m. on June 28, 1969, a police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay club located on Christopher Street in New York City, turned violent as patrons and local sympathizers began rioting against police.

Although the police were legally justified in raiding the club, which was serving liquor without a license among other violations, New York's gay community had grown weary of the police targeting gay clubs, many of which had already been

closed. Soon the crowd began throwing bottles at the police. The protest spilled over into the neighboring streets, and order was not restored until the deployment of New York City's riot police.

The Stonewall Riots were followed by several days of demonstrations in New York and acted as the impetus for the formation of the Gay Liberation Front as well as other gay, lesbian and bisexual civil rights organizations. It is regarded by many as history's first major protest on behalf of equal rights for homosexuals.

## "WE'RE ANGRY AT THE RUSSIANS RIGHT NOW."

A line Tracy says in the play after requesting Grey Goose, a French brand of vodka, which refers to the federal law unanimously passed by the Russian State Duma "for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values," also referred to in western media as the "gay propaganda law." It was signed into law by President Vladimir Putin on June 30, 2013.

The law placed severe restrictions on the free expression rights of LGBTQI+ people and gave a tacit nod of encouragement to those who seek to persecute them. The law makes the vaguely-worded "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among minors" a criminal offence.

In June 2017, The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the law breached European treaty rules. Under the legislation, any event or act regarded by the authorities as an attempt to promote homosexuality to minors is illegal and punishable by a fine. The law has been used to stop gay pride marches and detain gay rights

activists. The Strasbourg court ruled the law violated people's right to freedom of expression and discriminated against gay people.

Shortly after the law was enacted, a movement began to boycott Russian vodka. Gay bars around the world joined the #dumpstoli campaign, a movement created by Dan Savage in July 2017 that asked gay and straight bars across the country to boycott Russian vodka to protest the country's aggressive, anti-gay laws.

## ZIMA

Zima Clearmalt is a clear, lightly carbonated alcoholic drink made and distributed by Coors Brewing Company. Introduced in 1993, it was marketed as an alternative to beer, an example of what is now often referred to as a cooler. U.S. production ceased in 2008, but in June, 2017, MillerCoors announced a limited release of Zima for the U.S. market.