

West Hollywood's LGBTQ Arts Festival kicks off May 22

Virtual staged reading of 'Dear Harvey' features all trans, non-binary cast

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Each year, the City of West Hollywood celebrates the artistic contributions of the LGBTQ community with its WeHo Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival (formerly known as the One City One Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival).

The festival runs for 40 days, from Harvey Milk Day on Sunday, May 22, 2022 through Thursday, June 30, 2022, which marks the end of Pride month. This year, some events will be presented in-person and others will be available online.

Note that for all all programming details please visit pride.weho.org.

The LGBTQ Arts Festival is presented in addition to WeHo Pride Weekend from Friday, June 3, 2022 through Sunday, June 5, 2022 and will include a Street Fair, the Dyke March, the Women's Freedom Festival, the ticketed OUTLOUD Raising Voices Music Festival, and the WeHo Pride Parade.

For decades, the City of West Hollywood has been home to the largest Pride celebration in Southern California. Hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ people and allies from around the world make West Hollywood their destination for the Pride season. Home to the "Rainbow District" along Santa Monica Boulevard, which features a concentration of historic LGBTQ clubs, restaurants, and retail shops, the City consistently tops lists of "most LGBTQ friendly cities" in the nation. All #WeHoPride weekend programming details: www.weho.org/pride.

"The City of West Hollywood is thrilled to be producing the LGBTQ Arts Festival and #WeHoPride for our community again this year," said City of West Hollywood Mayor Lauren Meister.

"The City has a long-standing and proud commitment to both the arts and the LGBTQ community, and what better way to meld those commitments than with the #WeHoPride LGBTQ Arts Festival? Join the City online and in-person for art exhibits, thought-provoking panel discussions, entertaining performances, invigorating creative writing, educational self-guided walking tours, and even our very own queer ComicCon, where cosplay is encouraged and celebrated. Pride starts right here in West Hollywood and I'm looking forward to seeing you all in-person and virtually!"

The WeHo Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival theme for 2022 is "With Liberty, Diversity, Inclusion and Progress for All" and this year's festival poster was designed by Kaija Sydowski through an open call poster competition which received submissions from around the world.

The City of West Hollywood will celebrate Harvey Milk Day, kick-off #WeHoPride, and commence the LGBTQ Arts Festival with a virtual staged reading of the play *Dear Harvey: Stories of Harvey Milk*, by Patricia Loughrey.

Extensively researched and beautifully constructed, this documentary-style ensemble play recounts the life and lasting impact of groundbreaking LGBTQ activist and politician Harvey Milk, as told by the people who knew him best ... the real-world figures whose lives were forever altered by Milk's too-short career. This spirited play reaffirms his impact and the continued relevance of his campaign towards equality, three decades after his assassination.

This year's production features an entirely transgender and non-binary cast including: Luckie Alexander, Blossom C. Brown, Abdullah "Abby" Rahsheen Hall, Marval A. Rex, Mallery Jenna Robinson, Sydney Rogers aka Miss Barbie-Q, and Emily Westheimer. This performance is directed by Brittney S. Wheeler and produced by Parnell Damone Marcano and



Our Pride, a mural by artist LATOYA D. PEOPLES (Photo by Jon Viscott)

Celebration Theatre, LA's oldest theatre dedicated to producing LGBTQIA+ work.

The reading will be available for the public to view for free on the City's WeHo Arts YouTube page (www.youtube.com/wehoarts) for one week, from May 22 through May 29, 2022.

The City has also installed *Our Pride*, a mural by artist LaToya D. Peoples on the N. Sweetzer Avenue east-facing wall of West Hollywood City Hall, located at 8300 Santa Monica Boulevard. The mural features four hands, symbolic of LGBTQ equality, activism, and pride: the first is a fist, symbolizing the LGBTQ and BIPOC community's fight against oppression throughout history; the next is a painter's hand symbolizing the community's creativity and openness; the next hand holds a sunflower, a symbol for self-love and the seeking of light; and finally, a hand in a classic peace sign.

The background is a gradient bright sky, symbolic of the progress the community has made and has yet to make. Each hand is painted realistically, in color, representing diverse people. Installation is complete and the mural will remain on

City Hall through May 2023.

The Meringue public art exhibition by LGBTQ artist Kim Kiduck will be lit up in pink, light blue, and rainbow colors for the duration of Pride Month. The translucency of Meringue lets sunlight in to glow naturally during the daytime, and at night transforms Meringue into a mixing chamber of various light combinations. Meringue is located in the median on Santa Monica Boulevard near N. Doheny Drive.

Some highlights of the 40-day festival include:

- **QUEER DIASPORAS: Lavender City of Dreams presented by Rubén Esparza and Queer Biennial – May 27, 2022 through August 19, 2022. Free. Online exhibition with some in-person events at ONE Gallery. Touching on issues of identity, activism, futurity, and beauty where queerness is the thread that weaves through all these personal – yet universal – perspectives. Realized in imagined (no limits) digital galleries, spaces, and textures as the backdrop, along with up-to-the-minute live performances on May 28, June 3, and June 4, 2022. View the exhibition beginning May 27, 2022 and find in-person event info at www.lavendercity.art**
- **Queer Crossroads – June 1, 2022, 10 a.m. Free. Online at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcTAimXulpWYkLkUeRZdxiw> – An exploration of queer intersectionality through video performance and conversation! What else do we bring to our beautiful queer spaces? Are you queer and Black, differently-abled, neurodivergent, HIV positive, Trans, Muslim, etc.? Let's meet and share our stories in this workshop where intersectionality is explored and championed.**
- **Write Out Proud LGBTQ writing workshops – Wednesdays and Saturdays in June. Free. When we Write Out Proud, we share the love of who we are for the world to see, so the world can become better at loving us back. We write fun and flirty stories of our magical LGBTQ selves influenced by our personal ideas of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation. All are welcome, both new and seasoned writers. This no-cost four session writing workshop will take place virtually on Zoom.**

There are two workshop groups, each with the same writing prompts and plans. One group meets on Wednesday evenings in June from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., the other group meets on Saturday afternoons from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. culminating on Wednesday evening June 29, 2022 with an online reading of writings for those who care to participate. For more info go to writeoutproud.com. To sign up for this free workshop email info@writeoutproud.com.

- **Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence Pledge Allegiance to Your Flag: A Festival of LGBTQ Flags** – June 4, 2022 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at various locations. Free. The Sisters will delight you as they work their butts off to erase shame and stigma and lovingly help you to claim your LGBTQ identity by choosing from a myriad of their spectacular LGBTQ color guard flags (or bring your own!) and create your personalized made-up mad cap mad lib Pledge of Allegiance. The Sisters will record content for you for your Pride media posts with Sisters, your flags, and your pledge. For details: <http://www.writeoutproud.com/pledge.html>
- **Church of Trans Love** – June 5, 2022 at 2 p.m. Free. The fictitious 'The Church of Trans Love' presents a queerdo take on ecclesiastical liturgical practices in the tradition of 'The Book of Mormon'. The audience plays a 'full, active, and conscious' role in the show. The Church of Trans Love performance includes music from David Bowie and features Key Exchange, the show's gospel choir of professional trans and non-binary singers. More information: <https://bit.ly/churchtranslove>.
- **WeHo Reads: Pride & Joy in the Matrix** – June 7, 2022 at 6 p.m. Free. Online, RSVP: www.weho.org/wehoreads. LGBTQ+ authors are taking a hard look at society IRL and virtually, pinpointing the ways we come up short in connecting with and loving each other.
- **Pride Poets – "Pledge" Poetry Hotline** – June 11, 2022 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and again from June 11, 2022 at 11 p.m. to June 12, 2022 at 2 a.m. Free. Call (202) 998-3510. LGBTQ poets are standing by ready to tackle all your poetic needs! Call in and have an original poem created for you or a loved one. This year's theme is "Pledge: come share your allegiances with us!"
- **Q Con: A One Day Comic Convention Celebrating LGBTQ Comics** – June 18, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Plummer Park's Fiesta Hall, located at 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard. Free. Find an exciting, diverse selection of LGBTQ comics and graphic novels all in one place! Talk to creators, get autographs! Q Con is family friendly, and admission is free. Cosplay is encouraged. Join in the costume contest for fun and prizes! For the latest updates on Q Con, visit <https://www.prismcomics.org/q-con>.
- **Trans Pride LA 2022: The VarieTy Show** – June 18, 2022 at 7 p.m. RSVP required. Free. For more information and to RSVP: <https://transpride.lalgbtcenter.org/>. The VarieTy Show serves as the grand finale of the annual Trans Pride LA Festival.



Our Pride, a mural by artist LaToya D. Peoples
(Photo by Jon Viscott)

More detailed information and a full list of the City of West Hollywood's LGBTQ Arts Festival 2022 programming is available at pride.weho.org.

In addition, archived online programs from 2020 and 2021 are available to view. Among these is a collection of short films which tell the fabulous, fun, and deep LGBTQ history of the City of West Hollywood called the Stuart Timmons West Hollywood LGBTQ History Tour. Acclaimed author/historian Stuart Timmons (author *The Trouble With Harry Hay*, co-author of *GAY L.A.*, former executive director of the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives) was in the process of writing his West Hollywood LGBTQ History Tour as the final in a trio of walking tours (Downtown Los Angeles and Silverlake are the other two) when he suffered a debilitating stroke in 2008. The tour remained incomplete until the City of West Hollywood's Arts Division funded its completion as part of the City's 2015 LGBTQ Arts Festival, allowing Timmons and a small team to help finish his research, bringing it to completion as both a self-guided walking tour and a special in-person event featuring performance artists as tour guides. This fun and informative tour returned for two more years, and in 2021, was recorded as a collection of short films that can be viewed on the City's WeHo Arts YouTube channel.

The City of West Hollywood's #WeHoPride LGBTQ Arts Festival is organized by the City's Arts Division. The City of West Hollywood is committed to providing accessible arts programming for residents and visitors. The City of West Hollywood's Arts Division delivers a broad array of arts programs including: Art on the Outside (temporary public art), Urban Art Program (permanent public art), Summer Sounds, Winter Sounds, the WeHo Reads literary series, Free Theatre in the Parks, Arts Grants for Nonprofit Arts Organizations, Library Exhibits and Programming, the City Poet Laureate Program, Human Rights Speakers Series and the #WeHoPride LGBTQ Arts Festival.

For additional information, please visit www.weho.org/arts. For more information about the City of West Hollywood's WeHo Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival, please contact the City of West Hollywood's Arts Coordinator, Mike Che, at (323) 848-6377 or at mche@weho.org or visit www.weho.org/pride.