

Sir Francis Bacon writer • Linda Hunt actor • Alice Walker writer • Edna St. Vincent Millay writer • Dorothy Allison writer • Aaron Copland composer • Lillian Faderman writer • Andy Warhol artist

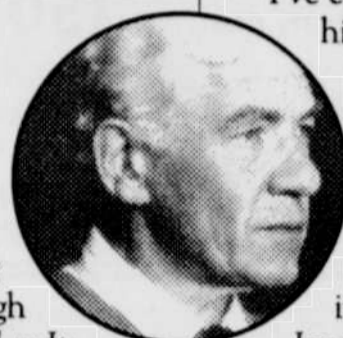
Jewelle Gomez writer • Federico Garcia Lorca writer • John Cage composer • P.I. Tchaikovsky composer • Robert Rauschenberg artist • Allen Ginsberg writer • John Waters director

Quentin Crisp writer • Ian McKellen actor • Stephen Sondheim composer • Lisa Alther writer • Glenn Gould pianist • Jane Rule writer • Georgia O'Keefe artist • Samuel Barber composer

# QUEER BEHIND THE SCENES

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progress against the civil rights movement. It's taken a long time for a black artist to be accepted—say, in an on-screen romance," he says. "We're seeing that in gay characters now, though I hated the character in *As Good as It Gets*—we were the comedy relief—I hated what happened to him."



exist," he says—then he adds unequivocally: "Anyone in the closet does untold damage."

Barnes shares this story that had a great impact on him. "The late composer Brian Lasser was one of the most amazing people I've ever met," he recalls. "The day he told his father he was gay, his dad said, 'You are joining a wonderful fraternity.'"

And then he named all the great homosexual men he knew about historically. Brian credited that as the reason why he had never suffered from a slur or homophobic incident in his life."

Imagine a society so enlightened that every young person could have such an inspiring coming out experience. Surely, when we stand in our strength, we feel less victimized. But, sadly, few parents and schools supply the blessing of historical precedents.

"We're still the comic relief," echoes Katherine Fugate, a former studio executive for 20th Century Fox and Columbia Pictures, and now a staff writer for Warner Bros. "Script after script, that's what you see. I don't understand homophobia, but I do know that I am hated by people who don't know me. The pain of that and the confusion comes out in every character I write."

But Fugate agrees that the problem begins within the queer artistic community. "There are many, many gay people in Hollywood who will not associate with any gay issue or play a gay role," she points out. Which could explain why the two most visible gay roles on television right now—Will and Jack

on *Will & Grace*—are played by straight men. So, does she think hiding is easy? "Not if I were a black person," says Fugate. "I don't see how you can separate [your life] like that."

And what of queer responsibility? "I didn't do this on purpose, but the last script I wrote is about a young person who realizes he's gay and decides to kill himself," she says. Her agent is not happy. Evidently, that sort of queer angle isn't selling at the moment.

Queerness can also be a tough sell for artists in academic settings. Portland poet



ty to be effective in our work."

Then, with real concern, she adds: "How do we balance that? There are dynamics that make that exceptionally difficult."

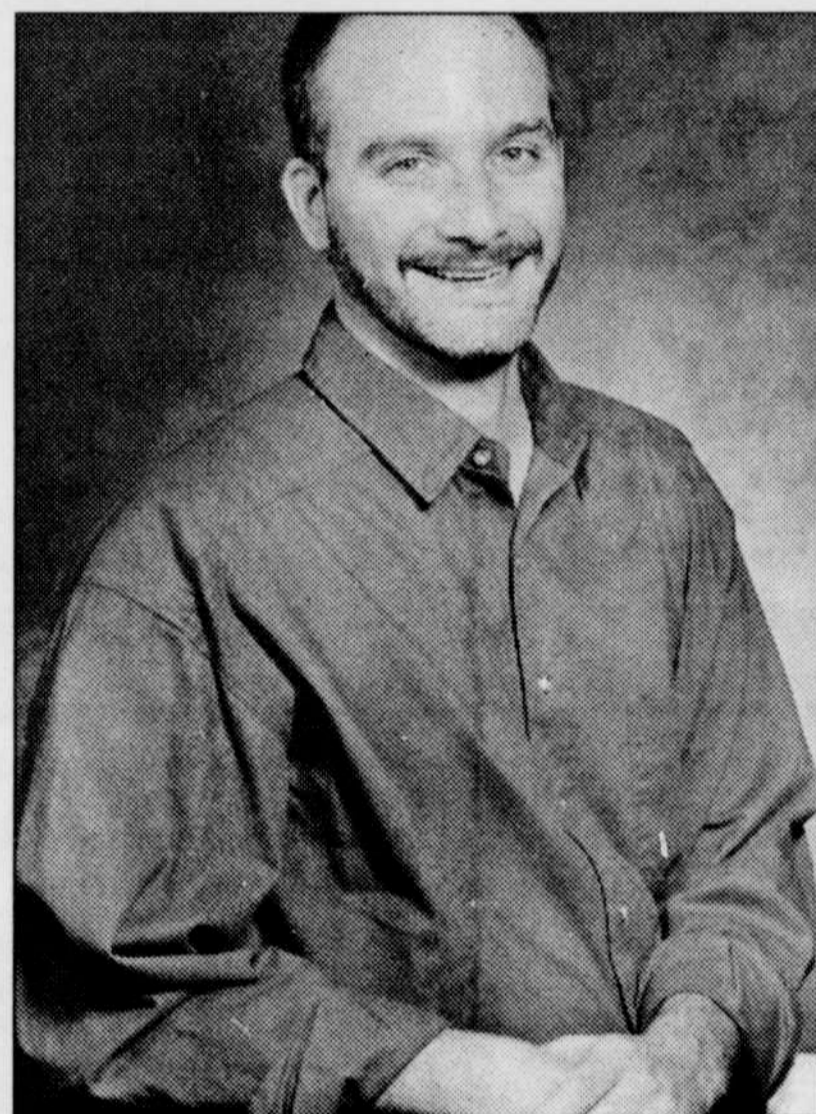
She also talks about the dearth of gay studies courses. At Pennsylvania State University, however, where Broido used to teach, they are adding gay courses. "Yes, they are in the psychology department, but they are not

"I've never called myself a gay artist. I don't think it's a fair thing to do. Every artist is completely different."

Jon Kretzu artistic director



PHOTO BY JODIE JOHNSON



Eric Lane Barnes composer

Barnes agrees about the importance of claiming our heritage. "It's about getting to the point where we're not shoving our history under the carpet. People think we don't



Mimi Wheatwind agrees that being out is still surprisingly uncomfortable in some institutions. "I'm totally out for the first time in my life, because I'm finally somewhere where it doesn't matter," she says. "My partner [poet Janice Gould] and I were recently on the faculty of the University of Colorado. We went there not expecting to closet, but the climate of the student body and the community was not accepting."

Portland State University Queers & Allies advisor Ellen Broido shares her take on visibility. "There is a realistic fear of consequences," she assesses. "We have a responsibility to be out but also an equal responsibility

pathologizing homosexuality," she maintains, adding that they're more exploratory, about how to live as a sexual minority.

Portland Community College sociology professor Rowan Wolfe concurs. "A few years ago there were classes at every university on gay studies," she says. "Now, you usually find them only in psych courses—The Lesbian Relationship, for instance."

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Montgomery Clift actor • Fannie Flagg writer • Gregg Araki director • Halston designer • Olga Broumas writer • Rupert Everett actor • Herman Melville writer • Hart Crane writer • Ned Rorem composer

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