

Peacocks and dragons

Just Out reviews some recent queer events in Portland



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

They ain't got nothing but the blues

Peacock in the Park

Organizers practically guaranteed there wouldn't be rain at the 14th annual Peacock in the Park, because it hadn't rained during the event since the early '90s. But they were wrong.

It was a downpour. Just as the popular song suggests, it was raining men. Now, many of those men were in heels and skirts, but Washington Park's amphitheater was filled with skin, skin and more skin.

The June 25 Portland event drew a capacity crowd—an estimated 3,500 people who brought coolers, umbrellas, sunscreen and their favorite eats and cool beverages. Some even brought along their family pet.

Co-hosts Maria and Poison Waters, joined by Patti O'Dora and Tiara Desmond, dazzled the crowd with a choreographed opening number singing "Ain't Got Nothing But the Blues." Shawn Deven-Lynn, Butch Lad Chad, Derek Dever, the Butch Kid Syd and the Butch Bitch Mitch followed, clad in '50s street punk attire, performing "At the Hop" with five pink-skirted divas who joined them onstage.

Patty Branch came with her sister, her sister's partner and a friend to enjoy the show. The three women also brought their five children, who held court in the first row beneath the large stage. Branch's son, Joshua, 5, rarely looked away from the characters dancing and singing before him—there was a lot to see onstage and off for anyone from 5 to 105. Despite his age, though, Joshua knew what was going on. Maybe it was the daylight that destroyed the illusion.

"Boys!" he said when quizzed about the gender of the performers. But it may have been the beards and hairy chests on the five drag queens from Seattle that tipped him off! Their rendition of "Respect," featuring Maria, brought down the house and lifted the energy of the crowd. From that moment forward, the party was underway.

At the end of the first set, the music stopped and Maria took a few minutes to catch her breath and chat up the audience, reminding those in attendance that the event is a fund-raiser.

"I'm still trying to fill my bucket," she said. "Do you want to help?"

That's all that needed to be said. Children flocked to the stage with cash in hand.

Rachelle, 4, was the first one to help out. Wolfgang, 2, escorted by his dad, wasn't far behind, plopping a \$5 bill into the clear bucket at center stage.

And every dollar counted. Kimberlee Van Patten, co-director of the popular event, says more than \$33,000 was collected from the audience and corporate sponsors. Net proceeds will go to the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund.

Peacock in the Park organizers have awarded more than \$73,000 in scholarships since 1988. Scholarships totaling \$13,500 were presented to sexual minority college students (or the student children of sexual minority parents) prior to the afternoon drag show. Receiving scholarships were: Kelly Hoeppner, Nancy Slocum, Rebecca Clark, Michael Aucoin Jr., Joel Campos-Alvis, Cynthia Hubble, Jazmyn Hutchinson, Heather Kimberly, Dori Hinamon and Jessica Brunelle. —Jonathan Kipp

Amazon Dragons

An increasingly popular event at the Portland Rose Festival is the Portland-Kaohsiung Dragon Boat Races, organized in 1989 by the Portland-Kaohsiung Sister City Association. This year, dozens of international and local teams raced June 10 and 11 on the Willamette River.

Among those competing was a mostly lesbian team, the Amazon Dragons. The 25-member, all-female team was started a decade ago by the Lesbian Community Project. This year the Dragons made it to the semifinals; in 1998 they placed fourth.

Christina Borgens is the team captain, and she takes care of all the administrative issues. Unfortunately, she was unable to compete this year due to a knee injury, but she can vouch for the physical demands of the sport.

"Sometimes you can't even walk after you get off the boat, because you brace with your legs," she explains.

Wendy Murray is the Dragons' coach and caller, the person who sets the pace and keeps all the rowers in line.

Ten people are needed in order to take a boat out for a spin, and this year the team hopes to keep practicing all summer. They are recruiting new members for next year's team, so contact Borgens at (360) 573-1353 if you have a strong back and the heart of a dragon.

—Orland Green

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