

# THIS BIRD HAS FLOWN

2004 will be Peacock in the Park's swan song

by Jim Radosta

After 18 years of fun in the sun, the curtain is closing on Peacock in the Park.

The colorful and festive drag revue, which is held every summer at Washington Park Amphitheater to raise money for queer students, has grown too large for the venue and has become too expensive to remain profitable. As a result, this year's event will be its last.

Peacock Productions Inc. cites financial concerns as the primary reason for the decision, which was made Feb. 7. According to board secretary Kimberlee Van Patten, last year's expenses topped out at more than \$20,000, leaving a net profit of about \$7,000.

"The straw that broke the camel's back was when we got our bill from the parks bureau, which was nearly \$2,500 just for the park permit," she says. "In looking at our overall picture, we just decided that we're spending too much to make too little."

Peacock has grown exponentially since it was established in 1987 by Rose Empress XXIX Lady Elaine Peacock. In the early years, park permits cost just \$5, and the event attracted about 800 people; today, an audience of almost 4,000 has the amphitheater bursting at the seams.

"There's limitations to what the park can support," Van Patten says. "There's not enough room for everybody to sit down...for people to move around freely...for all the cars that need to be parked up there during that event, so we have cars...causing congestion in the neighborhood."

Adding to the expenses are the three shuttles, eight portable sinks and 18 portable toilets that are rented for the festivities. Some suggested moving the event to Waterfront Park, which plays host to Portland Pride two weeks prior to Peacock, but organizers rejected the proposal.

"Shortly after Peacock's death, we sprinkled her ashes at the park, and so she is in the park, and we have no desire whatso-

ever to move the event to another venue because of that," Van Patten says. "There's just things that you have to do in trying to carry on the legacy of a person who's passed on. This was her dream."

The event raises money for the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship, which was named after Peacock's mother and is available for students living in Oregon or Southwest Washington who are gay, lesbian, bi or trans or



Darcelle XV performs "The Cell Block Tango" from the musical Chicago during Peacock in the Park 2003

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

- Miriam Volpin, who received three scholarships between 2001 and 2003, recently received her registered nurse's license.

- Kelly Hoepfner, who makes clothing and tapestry, now donates her sewing services to Peacock in the Park.

- Tad Williams, a 2001 scholar who majored in art at Lewis & Clark College, now serves on Peacock's scholarship review panel.

Van Patten hints that a new event with a similar name will replace Peacock in the Park, but she remains mum on details. "We would like to come up with another large-scale fundraiser; however, we don't really want to talk about it at this point because we want to concentrate on making Peacock 2004 the best it could possibly be."

Van Patten is especially proud that the event is well-respected by city officials and neighborhood associations, and she hopes this year's revelers will be respectful of the environment and allow Peacock to fade into the sunset with its reputation intact. She promises this year's party will feature the best performers from past Peacocks along with "a few surprises."

"We wanna be like *Friends* and *Sex and the City*," Van Patten says. "We wanna go out while we're still popular, while we're still well loved, while we're still on top, rather than being like the *Roseanne* show that went three seasons too long." □

The final PEACOCK IN THE PARK will be held 2:30 p.m. June 27 at Washington Park Amphitheater. For more information call 503-281-2811. To make donations or download scholarship applications, which are due May 1, visit [www.peacockinthepark.com](http://www.peacockinthepark.com).

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—Kimberlee Van Patten