

1st Grand Duchess recalls a palace coup from 40 years ago

GRAND DUCHESS PERRY I

The creation of the ducal court 40 years ago came from a deal to keep H.L. Perry from acquiring too much power and influence in San Francisco's gay world.

At the time, Perry was serving on the board of the city's Tavern Guild, consisting of gay bar owners who fought police harassment (from 1962-95), and was simultaneously running for Empress of the Imperial Court system. The way he tells it, he was a shoo-in for Empress, a contest the guild had created in the 1960s and that raised money for causes mainly in the gay community.

"They told me to drop one or the other," Perry, now 84, told The Extra from his Chula Vista home in San Diego County. "I had 44 bars behind me for Empress."

Perry opted to forgo the Empress competition and instead created another contest for Grand Duchess, in a new ducal court, which he won handily. He became Grand Duchess Perry I. His inauguration was in the Fairmont Hotel ballroom, the first gay event to be celebrated

in a major San Francisco hotel, he said.

"All the hotels opened up to the gay community then," Perry said. "And I have no idea how much money we raised over the years, but it was a lot and we gave it all to charities."

Perry went on to create Atlantis House, a halfway house for gay ex-cons. From all his fundraisers — associated with the ducal court or not — 10% always went to the Metropolitan Community Church, he said. The church that celebrates all sexualities is located now at 150 Eureka St.

In 2006, Perry's work was commemorated with a month-long exhibition at San Francisco Public Library. Last year, the state Senate awarded him a certificate of recognition that called him a "gay icon."

Perry plans to donate the inaugural dress he wore 40 years ago to the LGBT Museum in the Castro.

"It was tan and pink and had lots of stones," Perry said. "Very expensive."

— Tom Carter



Queens gather to raise royal bounty for charity



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Moe Jo Coxxx.

The metaphor of a royal court seems an obvious organizational structure for San Francisco's significant drag queen community. It started in 1965 with the Imperial Court that annually would select an Empress of San Francisco, growing to 70 chapters, including some in Canada and Mexico.

But eight years later a rift occurred over the influential H.L. Perry (see sidebar), and he and his retinue of supporters broke away to form the Duke and Duchess system with gay bars like Gangway and Aunt Charlie's forums for the charitable fundraising.

The Gangway's application turn-in was to precede a fundraiser to celebrate those 40 years with a Bay Cruise dinner in September. After 8 p.m. the bar would have an open stage for the queens to perform and donate their tips to the ducal court. A raffle and a beer bust would add more dollars.

Other applicants and past royalty were showing up, well ahead of the 7 p.m. filing deadline, including Kylie Minono, who was Duchess 39 and now is campaign manager for Duke candidate Kippy Marks.

Rules forbid Minono from running for five years after winning. She said that her reign had raised \$47,000, mostly at bars, and the money got spread over 20 organizations.

At her side, Marks wore a formal white shirt and was beaming about his candidacy. He had strong credentials.

"I've worked with the Duke doing charity work before," he said. "Since 2009, I've raised \$130,000 for nonprofits like the AIDS Emergency Fund. I'm a concert violinist and I raise money by playing."

David Herrera, also a Duke candidate, arrived right after Marks. He got involved three years ago when a friend became Duke and he landed a court appointment.

"A lot of the charities we gave to I benefited from, and now I want to give back," Herrera said. "This is a big step up. You form a court — one or two people can't do it alone — and that's what I love about it. And everybody gets a title. It's part of a family, an army to raise money for our community."

(Recipients of this year's funds



Above and left, Paloma Volare St. James, a.k.a. Daniel Fortumo, is the regal Grand Duchess 40 whose hard-working St. James court raised \$50,000. Above, Kippy Marks, candidate for Grand Duke, center, is flanked on left by Kylie Minono, former Grand Duchess, and Royal Crown Princess Kenya Pfister. The Aug. 18 ducal festivities were held at the Gangway bar on Larkin near Geary.

were announced the next Sunday and included this partial list: Project Open Hand, Breast Cancer Fund, Camp Sunburst for HIV youth and others with life-threatening diseases, Positive Force that offers counseling and other support for HIV youth, and LYRIC.)

Suddenly, a Duchess candidate was at the door, Pat N Leather, tall and dressed darkly to the nines. She's Princess Royale, a current court member. Later, at the deadline, surprisingly she was the sole Grand Duchess candidate. Herrera and Marks were the only two vying for Grand Duke. Usually there are four to six candidates for Grand Duchess, fewer for Duke, which is considered a supporting role.

"I think the strength of the Grand Duchess candidate intimidated any competition, in this case," Harper said. "She has widespread support from different factions in the court, extensive connections and fundraising ability that she demonstrated this year."

"Many think people are bidding their time and next year's race will be a free-for-all."

Typically, the Ducal Council, acting as a board of directors, reviews the applications to determine the candidates. The community then votes, this year on Sept. 21 at these polling places: Project Open Hand in the TL, San Francisco Eagle in SoMa and the Magnet in the Castro. The winners will be announced Sept. 29 at the Whitcomb Hotel on Market Street at Eighth. But, in the unlikely chance the community rejects the sole candidate because of some palace intrigue, it's likely the council would appoint a Grand Duchess.

Outside, Harper was nervously waiting for his day job boss to drive by and see him in his elegant transformation. He wasn't antsy about the boss, but because he was already late for, guess what, another fundraiser.

"We've actually got a conflict here," Harper said. "A fundraiser is going on at

the Edge, and I've got to be there. It's for the royal court — to help out with the cost of our 40th anniversary celebration. We want to get the ticket price down."

And it's a fine drag array like Kenya's that can drive those ducal dollars. ■

Sex in spotlight amid eclectic lineup at the Fringe Festival

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miered in 2010 at the Pan-Asian Repertory Theater in New York and has performed at Fringe festivals in New Orleans, New York and Hollywood.

Based upon her experiences in Flushing, a neighborhood in Queens, N.Y., she tells the vividly accented story of eight distinct characters during a wild visit to the massage parlor.

And, in an unpredictable parable with Siouxsie Q's Fish-girl, Eng, 50, explores what she calls the myth of forced sex workers.

"I want audience members to know that these women are like any other women in the country, and that they are not victims," said Eng. "They are doing it of their own free will and can make a living. These are real people who are not asking for forgiveness."

FOOD, DRINK AND SERVERS

Bartenders and waitresses don't ask you to forgive them, either. And therein lies the theme for three other acts at this year's festival.

First up is "Parly Girl." This is Sandra Brunell Neace's tale about waitressing for five years in New York City while she pursued her master's degree in acting at the Actors Studio in New York City.

Neace, 38, who now lives in Sparks, Nev., is diving into her first Fringe festival, though she has performed "Parly Girl" six times this summer at several theaters in Reno.

She hopes audience members come away with a taste of the service industry and the challenges workers face.

"I think it's (working in the service industry) a journey of humility," said Neace, who teaches introductory



PHOTO BY ERIC LOUIE

Flowers all around added to the festive reopening, and there was an uncharacteristic sense of order amid the rush and crush that surely won't last.

Tu Lan reopens all clean, shiny

Closed 1 year over violations — looks the same but brand new

BY GEOFF LINK

TU LAN, that decades-old fixture on the neighborhood food chain, reopened Aug. 25, one year after the Department of Public Health shut it down for serious and persistent violations.

Now it's back, with gleaming stainless steel equipment, rebuilt counter, sparkling white walls, simple new tables and chairs and the upstairs room nicely redone. Plain white globes hang from the ceiling, making the city's first Vietnamese restaurant a clean, well-lit place.

It was festooned with flowers celebrating the much-anticipated moment. Thuynh and Vinnie and nephew Anthony greeted a long line of customers, old and new, who happily found most of the old crew had returned as well.

It was as if they'd never left. One man in line was Albert Colen-

dres, 47, of Daly City. He said he has been a customer since he started working at a nearby pawnshop almost 25 years ago.

"This is something different," he said, calling Tu Lan better than other Vietnamese restaurants, in part because the fried rice features curry. His order, however, was "No. 24," his old favorite combination plate of rice, imperial roll and pork kabob. "That's the famous one." It was \$6.95, up from \$6.25.

The menu is identical to the old one where customers ordered by number and good customers knew all 77 items by heart. The only difference is that prices have inched upward, but so modestly it's hard to tell — 50 cents per item, \$1 at most. The portions are just as generous and the quality maybe a notch higher. Plus, there are no shame-ful "S.F. surcharges." ■

Eric Louie contributed to this report.

courses in acting and theater at the University of Nevada. "It's easy to get angry, jaded and downtrodden, and in the end you have to let go of pride, and this is a funny take on that."

"Serving Bait to Rich People" adds another act to the Fringe dinner train. New York City stand-up comedian Alexa Fitzpatrick delivers this one-hour solo show chronicling her days as a bartender serving sushi to wealthy patrons at posh restaurants in New York and Aspen, Colo.

"This is the story of dating and waiting, or sex and sushi," said Fitzpatrick.

She said most people who have ever worked as servers or are single will relate to her jokes.

Fitzpatrick calculated she's performed "Serving Bait to Rich People" 41 times. She has been polishing her chops this summer after winning the Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals' lottery, which enabled her to perform at festivals in New York, Orlando, Fla., and in Canada's Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton.

"The Tipped & The Tippy" is the third in the festival's service industry triumvirate. Veteran bartender Jill Vice offers a satiric view of the not-so-glam-

orous bar culture.

Vice, 33, who has lived in San Francisco since 1998, ought to know. She has worked at 28 local bars, and they're all the same, she contended, even the one she currently works at several nights a week.

In a nutshell, they can all be "shit shows," she said. "People can be vomiting on each other and pulling knives."

The 53-minute performance, she said, "is all based on my experiences over the years. For example, there are a group of regulars in the story who are sort of a composite of some of my real regulars, and there has always been an 'Ace' person at every bar I've worked at."

But the show's not all light comedy, Vice said.

"I hope people get a very compelling story about our responsibilities for other people while laughing their asses off," she explained. "The audience will get to laugh at people's foibles, but it's also about people in the throes of their addiction (to alcohol) and bartenders see this."

She has performed "The Tipped & The Tippy" at the Chicago Fringe Festival, the Rogue Festival in Fresno, and San Francisco's Marsh Theater. ■

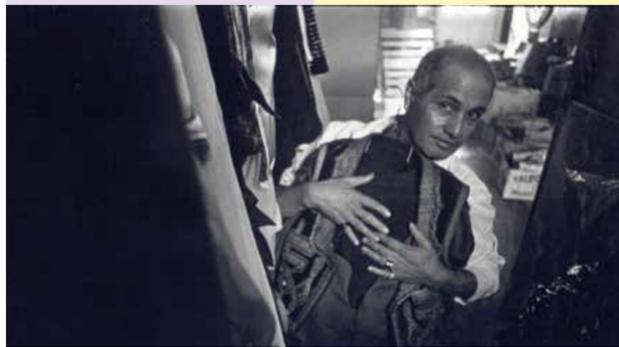


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