



WWW.BADMOUSEORCHESTRA.COM
© BAD MOUSE ORCHESTRA GbR MMXX

BAD MOUSE ORCHESTRA DRUNK WITH LOVE



Times have changed...

When we heard *Das Lila Lied* for the first time, we were immediately gripped by the feeling that we'd stumbled upon something really significant. It was the first gay anthem, written in Berlin in 1920. Without knowing what exactly it was we were looking for, we started searching for queer movements in the interwar period with the hope of understanding what this song was really about. We already knew that the 1920s were wild, golden and roaring, but what we found blew us away.

We found a flourishing queer culture, artists and groundbreaking research...an entire community, with an identity and its own place in society. Even though some members of our band represent the LGBTQ community themselves, our knowledge of queer history started with the Stonewall Riots in 1969 and the following gay liberation movement. We only knew stories about oppression, hardship and suffering about the queer community's experience before Stonewall. It's really no wonder, given the colorful time in between the two World Wars was short, and brought to a brutal end in Germany by the Nazis, while in the US it was almost completely swept under the rug as the country became more conservative during the 1930s.

We started reading about the lives of musicians and performers of that era and, even though there are people out there that care about them and that did

incredible work on researching their stories, they seem to be relegated to a small, neglected corner of history. We decided we wanted to do something to help remind the world of their lives, personalities and amazing music. Their unique stories show how different queer people's experiences were in a time when tolerance and homophobia were constantly battling for the upper hand. While some of their actions and achievements might not seem notable by today's standards, when we look at the context of the era the importance and impact of what they did becomes very clear.

The research that started surfacing in the late 19th century represents the foundation of today's understanding of sexuality and gender. Many terms were created that, for the first time, allowed people to put their feelings and identity into words and that enabled them to share their experience. The art of drag has its roots in the ball-culture of the 1920s that developed in larger American cities and the music hall circuit in England. Also, during this time the first LGBTQ rights organizations were established and started to grow. Queer authors, journalists, artists, musicians and politicians carried queer life into every aspect of public life and, by doing so, society's views on LGBTQ individuals were forced to be re-examined. Visibility changes everything!

It was not a rosy time for queer people by any means, but it was simply no longer possible for society to deny their existence, lock them away in silence, or worse.

The movement gained momentum in the larger cities of Europe and the USA. Even though it had very different faces in the different places, an 'anything goes' spirit permeated the air. The people were longing for freedom and fewer conservative rules. Women were tired of corsets, long skirts, dusty hairdos and lives determined by the men around them. These 'flappers' cut off their hair, wore short and airy dresses just over the knee, claimed their own sexuality and 'partied hard'.

In the USA, it was because of Prohibition, that members of all parts of society were thrown together, shaken up, and poured out again as a cocktail of different cultures. Everybody was in search of the forbidden drink and invariably found it in 'speakeasies', the underground bars which secretly sold liquor and offered colorful evening entertainment. Those locales where the birthplace to many new dances, new music genres and new kinds of shows.

Before, the public image of gay men was limited to drag-balls in certain parts of the cities, and lesbian life to private salons for upper-class women. Prohibition made queer culture visible to the middle and working class and the result was the so-called Pansy Craze, which lasted from 1930 to 1933. Even though it was still a crime to cross-dress, drag performers known as 'pansy performers' and their shows, which were known as some of the hottest ones in town, became immensely

popular until the repeal of Prohibition in 1933. The *Motion Picture Production Code*, also known as the *Hays Code*, prohibited any sympathetic portrayal of homosexuality and tolerance started to fade, quickly taking away any newly won freedom.

In Germany it was against the backdrop of the Weimar Republic that change began to happen. We'd encourage you to read more about it in the *Das Lila Lied* section of this booklet.

We started reading every book we could get our hands on, travelled to London, Berlin and LA to visit archives, museums, graves and other significant historical places such as Bruz Fletchers house, the Venice Pier where Gene Malin reversed his car into the sea, and buildings that once hosted the most dazzling drag shows.

We met some incredible people and biographers on the way who provided us with a lot of information and helped us get our hands onto whole collections of sheet music. Our initial worry of being able to fill a whole CD very quickly melted away. We could easily fill 10 CD's with songs and people that in one way or another were significant to the queer community of the time. We selected a handful of songs that we especially fell in love with.

After a year of research and finding and arranging songs we packed our bags and took the whole project into the studio in January 2020. We invited two incredible guest musicians, Christoph Pelgen and Fio Krauss, who, with their accompaniment on saxophone, violin and Stroh violin, really put the cheery on top of the project. Also, fun fact, most of our instruments are as old as the songs!

Before we finish off this introduction, we want to give you a couple short disclaimers:

We are not historians but musicians. However, dedicated we feel to this topic we can merely offer a glimpse into the historic events and lives of our artists. Even though we were able to view some primary sources in various archives, we draw most of our knowledge from a handful of passionate people who collected and published it over the years. We in no way want to pass off their research and incredible work as our own: quite the opposite. We want to highlight their work just as much as that of the artists and encourage you to visit their websites and buy their publications!

The word “queer” is used as an umbrella term reclaimed by the LGBTQ community to describe everybody who is not heterosexual or cisgender. We chose to use the modern initialism LGBTQ consistently in our booklet, even though it didn't exist yet at the time. It is an umbrella term including the same communities as LGBT, LGBT+, LGBTI and LGBTQIA.

We tried our best to educate and inform ourselves about the correct and appropriate language. Feel free to let us know if we made any mistakes. We're always happy to be corrected and learn something new.

Although the highlighted artists in our booklet represent a wide range of gender expression, our CD is heavily male dominated; just as the queer movement and songwriting industry were. However, since finishing the recordings we continued to dig and found more songs

written or performed by women, which we will include in the concert program of this CD.

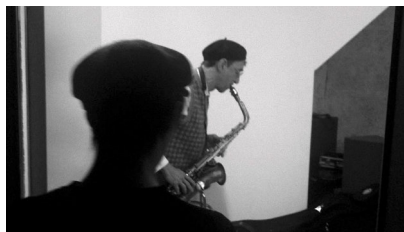
If we learned anything in the past year, it's that there is so much more to discover and so many more songs to be played. This booklet aims to provide some background information about the composer or associated performers. It's important to keep in mind that, even if we stripped away the entire historical context, we are nowhere less convinced that these songs are amazing and deserve to be heard. Let's dance to their songs, learn from their stories and be inspired by their resilience and their creativity!

If you have any questions or comments, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact us!

Love from the Mice

www.badmouseorchestra.com
badmouseorchestra@gmail.com
Facebook / Instagram / YouTube:
Bad Mouse Orchestra

To read the booklet online
and in other languages
and for related links go to
www.linktr.ee/DrunkWithLove



Cole Porter

Born: 09 June 1891, Peru IN, USA

Died: 15 October 1964 (aged 73), Santa Monica CA, USA

“Anything Goes”
“Let’s Misbehave”



Cole Porter was praised for his witty, intellectual songwriting as much during his lifetime as after his death. He not only set a new standard in musical composing for Broadway and film in his active years but also continued to

influence American pop music for decades after. He is often referred to as one of the most influential American musicians and songwriters not only of the 20th Century but all time.

Cole Porter did not lead an outwardly homosexual life. He hid his own identity and biographical content by adding clever tropes and metaphors to his lyrics and by distancing himself from the narrator’s voice. While a queer audience could pick up on such metaphors, the mainstream masses wouldn’t even suspect a hidden meaning in amongst the various pop culture references Cole was famous for inserting in his songs. This tactic allowed Cole to operate his career and live his life free from judgement and possible consequences that would follow an outing in a society where homosexuality was not widely accepted.

Not only did Cole’s clever songwriting help him conceal his queer identity, it also protected the social status he had established for himself.

He was born into a wealthy family, had a strong academic record and led an upper class, extravagant socialite lifestyle in a lavender marriage (marriage of convenience between a man and woman in order to hide the sexual orientation of one or both of the partners).

He married Linda Lee Thomas in 1919 and they remained married until her death in 1954. She was well aware of Cole’s homosexuality and even though this brought friction to their marriage, considering Cole was known to be loose with his escapades, the marriage was beneficial for both of them.

Cole was able to maintain his social status; for Linda he was a gentle and welcome contrast to her abusive first husband and through him she was able to lead a wealthy and comfortable life.

A mix of privilege and strategic, careful choices in both his music and public life allowed Cole to enjoy a widely successful and influential career.

In *Anything Goes* the condemnation of a decadent society stands in direct contrast to the cheerful melody and delivery. It serves as an introduction to the 1920s in which everything was changing, and nothing stayed the same, whether you liked it or not. It was an era of upheaval and change that set the stage for many of our artists and composers.





Douglas Byng

Born: 17 March 1893 Nottingham, England
Died: 24 August 1987 (aged 94), Hillingdon, England

“Cabaret Boys”

In England the death sentence for perpetrating homosexual acts was abolished in 1861 and even though homosexuality remained a crime until 1967, it was tolerated by many as a passing fancy of the upper class. Even though this view would today be considered highly unacceptable, at the time it created a society which let many queer people breathe easier and which allowed for a slow change in social paradigms.

While the government tried their best to put an end to what they then considered overt displays of perversion, police raided parties to uncover and persecute gay men, and the newspapers were filled with scandalous stories about music-hall stars of the time, there was still a change in the air that was hard to deny. Mega stars such as Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich expanded the idea of gender expression and pushed the boundaries of what was considered normal, the suffragette movement celebrated successes with their campaigns for women's voting rights both in the USA and the UK (as long as you were *white*), and the music hall scene in England had long established itself as a

safe space for both male and female impersonators and queer artists. It was Britain's version of the US Pansy Craze.

Whereas some artists hid their queer identity in conventional lifestyles and heterosexual marriages and were dependent on secret symbols to reveal and identify other members of the community (such as the green carnation, popularized by gay poet and playwright Oscar Wilde), some lived a life fully out of the metaphorical closet. One of them was Douglas Byng.

He was a highly admired and loved actor and female impersonator known for his camp cabaret performances. The countless songs he wrote and recorded ooze sexual innuendo and double entendre. Billed as ‘bawdy but British’ he was one of London's brightest stars of the music hall circuit and was absolutely unapologetic about his identity as a gay man. He performed right until the year before his death in 1987.

Cabaret Boys was one of his biggest hits which he recorded with his performing partner Lance Lister in 1928.

Gene Malin

Birth Name: Victor Eugene James Malinovsky
Stage Names: Jean Malin and Imogene Wilson
Born: 30 June 1908, Brooklyn NY, USA
Died: 10 August 1933 (aged 25), Venice CA, USA

“That’s What’s The Matter With Me”



the tables and chairs, hands on his hips, and charmed the audience with his witty and cheeky manner.

He headlined in numerous clubs and his performances took him all over the US until he landed on the west coast in the fall of 1932 where he worked at famous nightclubs such as the *Ship Café* at the Venice Pier. That was also the place where he on the 10th of August 1933 accidentally reversed his automobile off the pier into the water after just having performed a ‘farewell performance’. Pinned under the steering wheel, Gene died when he was just 25 years old.

All he left behind were a few movies he starred in, pictures and newspaper clippings and two recordings pressed in a single royal blue shellac 78 published posthumously on Columbia.

That's What's The Matter With Me was not written by Gene Malin himself but by Eugene Conrad. Gene interprets this song beautifully and tells us the story of a person struggling with, and proudly breaking out of, society's gender norms.

Gene Malin was an actor, drag artist, master of ceremonies, the first openly gay performer on the speakeasy scene and, for a while, the highest-paid nightclub entertainer during the Pansy Craze. According to an article in *Broadway Brevities*, other ‘pansies’ hailed him as their queen and among his fans were movie greats such as Ginger Rogers.

It is evident that Gene had a massive influence on prohibition-era nightlife. His career began when he was just a teenager, winning prizes for his costumes at Manhattan drag balls, working as a chorus boy in Broadway shows and performing in drag at Greenwich Village clubs. He is however most notably remembered for his appearances as a flamboyant, effeminate and openly gay man in an elegant tuxedo acting as the master of ceremonies. He moved among

Tony Jackson

Birth Name: Antonio Junius Jackson

Born: 05 June 1876, October 1882 or 25 October 1884

(conflicting sources)

Died: 20 April 1921, Chicago IL, USA

“Pretty Baby”

Before the American Pansy Craze and the rise of queer Berlin during the Weimar Republic, ragtime composer Tony Jackson lived as an openly gay Black man in Storyville, New Orleans. Friends, including none other than jazz legend Jelly Roll Morton, described him as one of the greatest entertainers on the piano. He could pick up almost any tune, sing beautifully in a wide range of styles including opera and blues, and compose a show-stopping ragtime hit in two minutes. It is said that his death marked the end of the ragtime era.

Tony Jackson was the sixth child of a freed slave and had a twin brother who died in his teens. At the age of ten, Tony found a junk piano somewhere in the backyard and started to teach himself by playing tunes from memory. He worked as a dishwasher at a neighbor's house so he could practice and develop his skills on their old reed organ. At the age of 13, Tony had his first job as a piano player in a honky-tonk and from the age of 15, at the latest, he got so famous that he was one of the very few Black musicians who

later also played in the *white*-run entertainment districts. It wasn't just his ragtime that influenced many musicians, but also his style that shaped the way a whole generation of ragtime pianists dressed. According to the *Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame* he wore grey derby shoes, an ascot tie with a diamond stickpin, a checkered vest, and sleeve garters; in later years his garment of choice was an immaculately tailored tuxedo. Tony was said to act effeminately, which wasn't accepted by society, but his charming nature and ever-present 'happy-go-lucky' attitude helped him to survive.

Around 1911 he wrote the song *Pretty Baby* which is said to have been dedicated to a lover. He refused to sell his songs for a long time and many of his rags were lost with his death. When he finally decided to sell *Pretty Baby* to a publisher in 1916 it instantly became a big hit and it remains a standard even today. Egbert Van Alstyne and Gus Kahn were tasked with rewriting the song for Fannie Brice to sing.

By changing the lyrics the song was also better suited for mass consumption after the removal of its risqué content.

The original version of *Pretty Baby* is considered lost. We only know that he used the designation 'jelly rolls' which in those days was a slang expression for genitals. That seems unsurprising given that he performed a lot in brothels and the listeners could surely appreciate the explicit lyrics. There's only a short part remembered by Jelly Roll Morton in an interview in the library of congress recordings, vol. 1 (1938) which goes:

“You can talk about your jelly rolls, but none of them compare with Pretty Baby.”

Life as a gay man was difficult and dangerous in New Orleans and that's why, in the late 1910s, Tony moved to Chicago, which had established itself into somewhat of an LGBTQ cultural and Bohemian hotspot which made life easier for him. Yet we shouldn't forget that it was still the time of strict segregation. The queer community was no exception. Although some Black pianists and drag queens performed in *white* venues, Chicago was divided into north and south with the north being reserved for *white* locales and audiences, and Bronzeville in the south for Black ones.

In 1917, when Tony was performing in New Orleans again, many houses and cabarets of Storyville were raided and destroyed by the police because the Navy didn't like their soldiers to be entertained in such 'indecent places'. Tony went back

to Chicago but life there became tougher after the race riots in August 1919. Eugene Williams, a Black teenage boy, was killed because the raft he was on with two friends had drifted too close to the *white*-only section of the beach. Even Tony was briefly arrested as a suspect in conjunction with a series of murders in the south of Chicago. He was later released without charge. Tony's health was already on the decline and on 20 April 1921 he passed away. The assumed cause of his death sounds rather bizarre as it was reported to have been the result of an eight-week case of the hiccups. Other sources postulate that his death was related to a syphilis infection.

In 2011 Tony Jackson was inducted into the *Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame* as someone who helped lay the foundation for Chicago's reputation as a jazz capital, a brilliant showman who danced a high cakewalk while playing his piano and a pioneer of the LGBTQ community.



Copy from BMO archive

Karyl Norman

Birth Name: George Francis Peduzzi
Born: 13 June 1897, Baltimore MD, USA
Died: 23 July 1947 (aged 50),
Hollywood FL, USA

“Nobody Lied”

Karyl Norman was the stage name of George Francis Peduzzi, who toured the vaudeville and nightclub circuit as a female impersonator in the 1920s. Along with others, such as Gene Malin and Ray Bourbon, he is undoubtedly one of the artists that instigated the *Pansy Craze*.

Karyl Norman was known for his extravagant gowns, which were mostly made by his mother, quick changes of clothes and gender and his repertoire of Southern songs. A critic once wrote about him:

"Not only does this impersonator wear his feminine togger in tiptop shape, but has a voice that fools 'em at the start. Then to a lower register he descends - a lusty masculine voice...."

His successful debut as a female impersonator in New York in May 1919 was followed by many appearances in stage plays and musical comedies and even tours throughout Britain, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. In anecdotes by other artists of the era Karyl is often remembered lovingly as a wonderful performer and friend.

Actress Fifi D'Orsay, for example, said about him:

"He was marvelous. He was a great performer and I loved him. Karyl Norman was a wonderful guy, beloved and respected by everybody, although he was a gay boy... it was harder for them than it is today. He did an act with two pianos and those gorgeous clothes. He had such class and he was so divine."

As was the fate for so many other queer artists Karyl's popularity diminished greatly in the 1930s due to conservative trends in society and politics. He disappeared from the public eye and little is known about his later life. It is believed that he continued to perform in clubs such as *Finocchio's* in San Francisco. At one point he reportedly got arrested on a morals charge but was released after the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt who was greatly interested in a charity he had done a benefit for.

Karyl wrote many of the songs he performed himself, including *Nobody Lied*, causing him to stand out from other female impersonators, who often exclusively interpreted songs by other composers.



Copy from BMO archive



Bruz Fletcher

Birth Name: Stoughton J. Fletcher III
Born: 12 March 1906, Indianapolis IN, USA
Died: 08 February 1941 (aged 34), Tarzana CA, USA

“Drunk With Love”

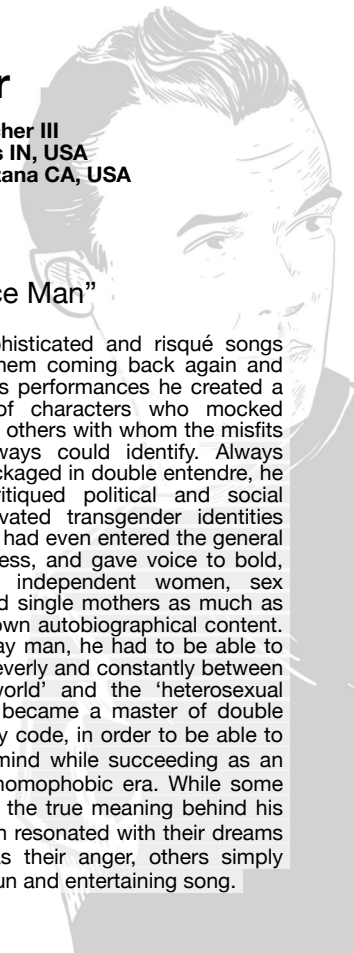
“Lei From Hawaii”

“Madly In Love With The Ice Man”

Though Bruz Fletcher's wit and brilliance as a performer brought him much success and notoriety, his life was one marked by tragedy. He was born into one of the wealthiest families in Indiana; but his family was as dysfunctional as it was rich. During his childhood, to name but a few of the traumatic events of his early years, he briefly ran away from home, lost his mother and grandmother to suicide, shot himself as a teenager during a suicide attempt and watched his father lose the fortune and business the family had built up over generations.

Bruz turned to music early on and created a unique and clever way of telling stories that earned him many bookings in some of the most glamorous nightclubs, including a five-year run at LA's *Club Bali*. Aside from being a writer, photographer and composer, he was above all a brilliant entertainer. He knew how to create a bawdy yet sparkling atmosphere which attracted the city's celebrities and socialites, but it was his electric, quick-

witted, sophisticated and risqué songs that kept them coming back again and again. In his performances he created a multitude of characters who mocked society and others with whom the misfits and castaways could identify. Always cleverly packaged in double entendre, he strongly critiqued political and social norms, elevated transgender identities before they had even entered the general consciousness, and gave voice to bold, smart and independent women, sex workers and single mothers as much as he hid his own autobiographical content. As every gay man, he had to be able to navigate cleverly and constantly between the 'gay world' and the 'heterosexual world'. He became a master of double talk and gay code, in order to be able to speak his mind while succeeding as an artist in a homophobic era. While some understood the true meaning behind his lyrics, which resonated with their dreams as much as their anger, others simply enjoyed a fun and entertaining song.



Bruz lived together with his lifelong partner Casey Roberts, a fact they never tried to hide. Their living arrangements were often the subject of magazine and newspaper articles, but so were their many artistic collaborations. Bruz successfully created a unique niche for himself that allowed him to live a comfortable life during the Pansy Craze years. There are a handful of other artists who adopted a similar style of performing songs, half sung, half spoken, but Bruz was the shining star.

His life, which he built out of ash and rubble, started to crumble once again when he and Casey lost everything in a house fire in 1938. Many friends rallied to help the couple but the sadness of losing their home, possessions and pets was overwhelming.

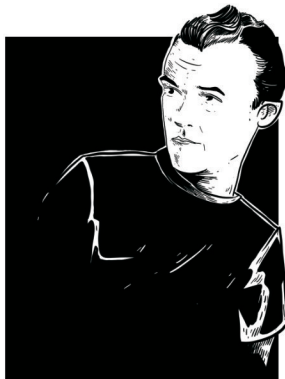
In 1939 Bruz and Casey were sued for \$30,000 after Bruz crashed Casey's car while driving drunk and by 1940 he had lost his billing at *Club Bali*. 1940 was rough for nightclubs and *Club Bali* was among the many that didn't make it to 1941.

In the following years it was incredibly hard for gay performers, including Bruz, to find work. The Pansy Craze had come to an end and frequent police raids were part of many nightclubs' everyday experience. In 1941 Fletcher committed suicide by asphyxiating himself in a running car in a friend's garage. As Tyler Alpern, Bruz Fletcher's biographer, puts it,

"his dramatic life was an ever-changing saga, a wild and sad story of extremes and incredible plot twists." We are proud to play three of his songs on our album, including the never before published *Madly In Love With The Ice Man*, which can finally be heard again after about 90 years. *Drunk with love* is played in Frances Faye's version, who recorded a beautiful arrangement of the song in 1946.

Please visit Tyler Alpern's Bruz webpage www.tyleralpern.com/bruz.html.

He provided us with all the information about Bruz's life. We are extremely grateful for the heartfelt exchange, the knowledge he shared with us and the enthusiasm and readiness with which he shared it.



Ray/Rae Bourbon

Birth Name: Richard "Hal" Wadell

Born: 11 August 1892

Died: 20 July 1971 (aged 78), Brownwood TX, USA

"Strong, Solid & Sensational"

Ray Bourbon was one of the most dazzling characters during the Pansy Craze, whose career as a female impersonator started in the 1910s and lasted until the late 1960s. He appeared in silent movies, vaudeville, theatre and on various gay nightclub stages. He gained notoriety on the US West Coast as a drag performer and had friendships with Hollywood celebrities who attended his shows. When talking about his own history he was known for telling half-truths and creating myths about himself. People were often not sure about it but were fascinated and intrigued none-the-less. He went as far as to claim to have had gender reassignment surgery which, in the end, was just a tactic to draw attention away from problems with the police. Also, nobody really knew if his claim about being a descendant of the Austrian House of Habsburg was true or mere fantasy. He recorded lots of songs and comedy numbers on shellac discs and later LP. All in all, more than ten hours of material.

The early 1930s Pansy Craze made it possible to not only entertain the audience by acting as a female impersonator but

also to include aspects of gay life and gender identity for an LGBTQ audience. Ray Bourbon often experienced harassment, the police raided his shows and he even was arrested for cross-dressing once on live radio while his show was being broadcast from San Francisco.

Ray Bourbon's biographer Andy A. Riddle created an extensive webpage where he gathered together all his research about Ray. There he states that Ray's recordings were usually original compositions and routines he wrote himself, or songs tailor-made for him by contract writers. *Strong, Solid & Sensational* was the exception, as it was neither original nor written for him. The credits on the shellac disc read "Strong, Solid & Sensational" / Roberts-Fischer / from the Mike Todd production / "Catherine Was Great". *Catherine Was Great* was one of the most famous Mae West shows that toured the US in the mid-1940s.

The biographer's research suggests that the performance, recorded live on shellac

disc, seems to be the only existing version ever recorded and may have been composed specifically for that Mae West tour.

Riddle wasn't able to find "a copyright or music publishing listing for *Catherine Was Great*, so it may be a show that made the rounds in the 40s and no one bothered with the performance rights since it was never revived after Mae West toured in it." This is not too surprising as Mae West shows were known for their frivolity and radio stations in the mid to late 1940s wouldn't play songs like *Strong*, *Solid*, *Sensational* which had surely been considered too saucy for mainstream audiences of the time.

In the 1950s his career started more and more to decline. Society and the law would no longer tolerate cross-dressing on stage or in public. Police raids increased and authorities began cracking down on the places where LGBTQ culture was celebrated.

Even though the high point of Ray's career had passed, he never fully stopped performing in drag. He did however perform some shows out of drag to satisfy local police and to keep them at bay.

In November 1967, while he was traveling to a venue as an eccentric, with a whole pack of dogs in tow, his car broke down and he was forced to leave his animals in the kennel of a Mr. Blount. Ray didn't have the money to pay for the care and maintenance of his beloved pets and three months later the keeper of the kennel gave them away. Ray was totally distraught and, in fear that his dogs were sold for medical

research, he desperately, and unfortunately unsuccessfully, tried to get them back. In an email Riddle told us that "two drifters traveling with Ray took it upon themselves to either rob or put pressure on Blount and it went terribly wrong. Blount was killed. Ray was prosecuted by the State as the 'mastermind' of the killing."

Ray Bourbon died in July 1971 from a heart attack in prison while working on his memoirs. Riddle writes in Ray's biography that "Ray's death certificate noted that his father's name was *Franz Joseph of the throne of Austria* and his mother's maiden name was *Louisa Bourbon*. We may never find out if he really was a descendant of the Austrian throne, but as one of the most eccentric Drag Queens of his time, he surely deserves a crown regardless.



For more information visit Riddle's webpage www.raebourbon.com.

Ma Rainey

Birth name: Gertrude Pridgett

**Born: September 1882 or 26 April 1886, Columbus GA, USA
or Russel County AL, USA (conflicting sources)**

Died: 22 December 1939, Rome GA, USA



"Prove It On Me Blues"

Today Ma Rainey is known as the *Mother of the Blues*. She was raised in poverty as the second of five children and started to perform in vaudeville while still a teenager in the early 1900s. Her outstanding influence on American Blues, Jazz and Rock 'n' Roll is beyond doubt not only for music historians but also any keen listener's ear. She was also an early mentor of the Blues singer Bessy Smith and some historians believe that they had a relationship.

It is reported that Ma Rainey was arrested and accused of having an orgy with women of her chorus which is said to have led to the creation of the *Prove It On Me Blues*. The lines of that very song describe a woman wearing a man's suit and tie going out, "with a crowd of my friends, it must have been women 'cause I don't like no men." This kind of open gender nonconformity was provocative and revolutionary. In the newspaper advert for the record she is depicted in men's clothing, flirting with two girls, while a policeman round the corner is secretly

watching her. This is a direct reference to the line: "They say I do it, ain't nobody caught me / Sure got to prove it on me".

As a Black woman in pre-Stonewall America, she can be considered one of the bravest people for having spoken openly about her lesbian or bisexual nature in at least five of her songs that were recorded and sold on disc. Like Gladys Bentley, a famous cross-dressing, openly lesbian, Black Jazz and Blues performer, Ma Rainey was threatened by the bigoted social morality and experienced racism combined with homophobia and misogyny. Yet, she was musically and economically successful. She had contracts with important labels and even had her own bus with her name on it while touring throughout the country.

She worked with some of the greatest stars of her time (e.g. Louis Armstrong) and ended her career as a wealthy woman running three theaters in her hometown before dying unexpectedly from a heart attack three days before Christmas in 1939.

Bruno Balz

Born: 06 October 1902, Berlin, Germany
Died: 14 March 1988 (aged 85) Bad Wiessee, Germany

“Kann denn Liebe Sünde sein”

Bruno Balz was one of the most productive German songwriters and during his career, spanning over three decades, he wrote the lyrics to over 1000 songs, many of which were among the biggest hits of their time. Yet, he suffered unimaginable hardship throughout his life.

When Bruno was 17 he used the term gay (*schwul*) to describe himself in front of Magnus Hirschfeld, a renowned physician, sexologist and outspoken advocate for LGBTQ rights, who he developed a close relationship with. Bruno was active in the homosexual movement, published poems and short stories in gay magazines, was a member of the Federation for Human Rights (*Bund für Menschenrecht*) and wrote lyrics to one of the first gay records *Bubi laß uns Freunde sein*.

His close relationship with Magnus Hirschfeld was discovered by the Nazis in 1933 which resulted in Bruno being put on the ‘pink list’, a Nazi attempt to identify and

catalog all homosexuals. In 1935, Article 175 of the German Criminal Code (*Strafgesetzbuch*), which dealt with criminalizing homosexual acts, was broadened and the penalties drastically increased. In 1936 Bruno was arrested in a park in Berlin for violating Article 175 and, as a result, he was not allowed to be credited for his own work until the end of the Nazi regime. All official photos of him were destroyed and he was forced to marry a woman. In 1937, he was sentenced to six months of solitary confinement. After agreeing to work anonymously, he was released early.

In 1941, Bruno walked into a trap when a beautiful blonde man was set up to seduce him in his own home during a party. When the two hugged in bed members of the Gestapo (Secret State Police) jumped out of the closets, where they had been hiding, and, once again, Bruno was taken away, put into solitary confinement and badly tortured.

It was during this time, or just shortly thereafter, that he wrote the songs *Davon geht die Welt nicht unter* (engl.: this won't make the world end) and *Ich weiß es wird einmal ein Wunder geschehen* (engl.: I know someday a miracle will happen). Even though they were used in a propaganda movie where Zara Leander sang them to raise the morale of the German troops, the songs played on radios nationwide in every home and even in the concentration camps. It was up to the listener to interpret the lyrics. In a short video clip of Bruno from 1982 he says that you can either interpret “Davon geht die Welt nicht unter” as it being the bombs that won't make the world end, or the terrible Nazis. In his songs he hid hope for everybody suffering from the Nazi regime, including himself. Jürgen Draeger, Bruno's longstanding companion, describes these songs as “songs with a double bottom: lines of hope for the desperate and cynical optimism of the Hitler regime that dreamed of world domination.”

The end of the war eventually came, but Bruno Balz continued to be on the wrong side of the law. He was accused of being the private propaganda-hit songwriter for Hitler and once again was locked up. Upon his release, he started writing music again, he and his wife began living in separate apartments, and he met Jürgen Draeger.

Bruno experienced further run-ins with the law due to his homosexuality, but he was never again sentenced during his lifetime. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to see the abolishment of Article 175 in 1994.

The heartfelt yearning and double entendre in his songs contributed to making Bruno a gay icon even to this day and his life has now been immortalized in the Bruno Balz Archive in Berlin, established by Draeger. Visit www.bruno-balz.com for more information.

Kann denn Liebe Sünde sein (engl.: can love really be a sin?) speaks for itself and we are proud to write Bruno's name on our CD.



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Пётр Ильич Чайковский

Born: 07 May 1840, Kamsko-Votkinski Sawod, Russia
Died: 06 November 1893 (aged 53), St. Petersburg, Russia

“Tonight We Love”

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was a famous Russian composer of the Romantic Period. His music is still an integral part of the classical repertoire of various piano soloists and orchestras.

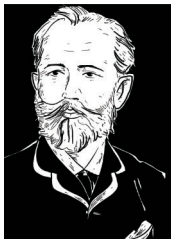
Among his most famous compositions you can find gems like the *Swan Lake* ballet, *The Nutcracker* and the *piano concerto No. 1 in B minor* which he composed in 1875 and which is considered to be the most played piano concert of all time. The main theme from the first movement of that very concerto was adapted over 60 years later to become the melody of the song *Tonight We Love*, written by Bobby Worth in the early 1940s. The song was recorded by various artists and according to Tyler Alpern, Bruz Fletcher's biographer, that song was “really big for 20 years in the Lesbian bars, sung by beloved drag kings and played on juke boxes”.

While for most of Tchaikovsky's lifetime he was a successful and respected composer, it is reported that he did not find true love and happiness in his private

relationships. He was married to Antonina Miliukova, but sources suggest that it was only one more example of a lavender marriage.

Even though researchers still debate Tchaikovsky's sexuality today, most are convinced about his same-sex attraction. His brother Modest wrote about it in the composer's biography and Tchaikovsky himself had written enthusiastically about having fallen in love with his student Iosif Kotek. Photos exist of the two holding hands. Many Russian biographers from the Soviet era prefer to deny that to this day.

It may be comforting to know that his music reached out over decades to touch other people who may have been or are still fighting similar battles.



Mischa Spoliansky Kurt Schwabach Magnus Hirschfeld

Berlin in the 1920s

“Das Lila Lied”

Berlin had established itself as the gay capital of Europe and a hotspot for queer culture by the mid-1920s. Some say there were more gay bars in Berlin in the 20s than in New York in the 80s. Whereas sex between two men was still forbidden under Article 175 of the German Criminal Code (Germany's anti-sodomy law, criminalizing sexual acts between men as well as bestiality), the queer subculture was tolerated by, and openly visible to, the public. The first gay and lesbian magazines had already surfaced by the end of the 19th century and in 1897 Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld created the world's first gay rights organization, called the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*); but even though new ideas and research were initially met with genuine interest, tolerance was unstable and easily shaken by scandals and critical opponents. The end of World War I and the establishment of the Weimar Republic, however, ushered in a new era, accompanied by basic democratic rights such as freedom of association, assembly and press freedom, along with the elimination of publishing and artistic censorship. Together, these factors created the ideal foundation for a new, more tolerant societal mindset, at least in larger cities.

Networks of gay bars and cafés were created, gay neighborhoods were established and gay publications and magazines were publicly sold, filled with advances in research, relevant news, poems and short stories. These publications also advertised events and venues, making it possible for likeminded people to meet and, maybe most importantly, to find out more about themselves. Nobody had to question whether or not they were alone in the world with their feelings. Queer people had a place and a voice and through that grew a sense of community that was able to flourish in Berlin more than anywhere else. A lot was happening and changing there at the time, especially for gay men, but it is important to mention that it was also home to a strong lesbian movement and some of its most important and loudest pioneers, such as singer and cabaret artist Claire Waldoff.

Of course it wasn't an entirely rosy or unproblematic time. Not by a long shot. In the Weimar Republic millions were unemployed, the country was broke and inflation soared to unprecedented levels. While some people used this time to re-examine traditional values and build a new



society, others saw the freedom and tolerance towards LGBTQ folks as clear signs of the country's overt decadence.

But nevertheless, it was a time in which queer people could for once, relative to other times and places throughout history, breathe easy.

Another massively important factor that made this possible was an incredibly progressive and tolerant policing policy. In the late 19th century, police commissioner Meerscheidt-Hüllessem deemed Article 175 impossible to enforce, as a conviction was only possible if someone confessed or if there was an actual witness present. Since intimate relations, more often than not, occur in private and since nobody would confess to a crime like that voluntarily, he decided that it would be more sensible to simply keep an eye on suspected homosexuals than to try and convict them. This ultimately led to a policy that tolerated openly gay establishments, accommodations and even events. It was a crime for two men to have sex, but it wasn't a crime to go to a gay bar and a bar wasn't shut down because there were gay patrons frequenting it. In fact, police even recognized the danger of blackmail that came with the existence of Article 175 and, as a result, blackmail was treated as a worse crime by far.

As early as 1920 a song entered the stage which would be the first queer anthem ever created: *Das Lila Lied* (engl.: The Lavender Song). It provided the soundtrack to this new, confident, emancipation movement, underlining the expression of a new identity.

In 1920 the song was absolutely revolutionary. For the first time homosexuality was expressed entirely

openly in a song while connecting it to pride and honor. Some lines read, for example:

Why allow the imposed morals of others to torture us? / Listen up closely, we are who we are, even if we might be hanged for it / But really it's the people who would consider hanging us who should be pitied / Be on the lookout because, with the break of day, our sun will also shine

We are simply different than the others / Who only love in the march of morality / Who first were curious to wander through a thousand wonders / Only to find, in the end, banality / We however don't know that feeling / Because we are all children of another world / We only love the lavender, sultry night / Because we're different that the others

The song was met with mixed reviews but, those who didn't like still couldn't get away from it. It was everywhere. The first editions were sold out in record time and, by December of the same year, the fifth edition's publication was announced at a reduced price, so that everybody could afford it.

Contemporary print sources show the different reactions the song evoked. Extracts from two letters published in *Die Freundschaft*:

"As protection-song for thousands of people with misunderstood souls (...) it screams for human rights, redemption from chains and enslavement."

"(I) showed these verses to my mother and sister (...). Mother, and especially my sister (...) took my hand and told me "I think, now I can understand you"."

From an article in the *Staatsbürgerzeitung*, 1921:

"As long as the perverted with their predisposition stayed back discreetly one could at least overlook them; but now, that they seem to become a plague, the authorities would do well to keep a close eye on them."

Das Lila Lied was written by Kurt Schwabach (lyrics) and Mischa Spoliansky (music, under the pseudonym Arno Billing). Neither of their careers had really started at the time, but they would become two of the most significant composers and lyricists of the era. While neither of them had any visible connection to the queer community, they were introduced to Magnus Hirschfeld by their mutual friend Fritz Heymann. *Das Lila Lied* is dedicated to Hirschfeld, describing him as a "tireless researcher and friend".

The line "anders als die Andern" (engl.: different than the others) is a reference to the eponymous movie which had been released in the previous year. It was the first movie about homosexuality and starred Hirschfeld, who had by that time proven himself as a renowned and respected researcher. His Institute of Sex Research (*Institut für Sexualwissenschaften*) promoted legal reform and did groundbreaking research on gender and sexuality including first examinations of what we today know as transsexuality. He supported and reinforced the idea that sexual orientation is biological and even succeeded in convincing the police to issue 'transvestite passes' already before the World War I. Those passes allowed people who preferred to dress in opposite-sex clothing to do so in public, where they otherwise would've been arrested. In 1921 he hosted the first International Conference on

Sexual Reform in Berlin.

By the end of the 20's the Nazis were on the rise, and with them the dream of freedom was over.

It started with the closure of gay establishments that once hosted glamorous balls for queer people, straight people, locals and tourists alike at night, and were places of political activism by day. In 1934, the Gestapo created a special department to monitor and keep a list of all homosexuals. Simply looking at another man the wrong way could get you into serious trouble. Article 175 was expanded and enforced more stringently and any club, hotel, bar, bathhouse or café, suspected to have any bond to homosexual patrons, was shut down immediately.

The LGBTQ rights movement was often thought to have ties to the Jewish community as many leading physicians, psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers and academics who supported reform, including Hirschfeld, were Jewish. This connection is believed to have reinforced the condemnation of homosexuality by the Nazis, who subscribed to the outdated theory of it being a learned behavior and a contagious disease. On the 6th of May 1933 Hirschfeld's Institute of Sex Research was ransacked; he had personally long since fled the country but countless books, magazines, photographs, films and other irreplaceable items were destroyed. Gays were forced back into the closet or had to flee the country and over 50,000 were imprisoned. Many thousands died in concentration camps. *Das Lila Lied* tells us of a time when the future looked so incredibly promising and reminds us to carry ourselves with our heads held high.



Judy Garland

Birth Name: Frances Ethel Gumm
Born: 10 June 1922, Grand Rapids MN, USA
Died: 22 June 1969 (aged 47), London, England

“Somewhere Over The Rainbow”

Actress and singer Judy Garland is widely considered a gay icon for a whole range of reasons. For one, Judy played the role of Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939. In the film she makes the journey from traditional, black and white Kansas to ‘Oz’, where she finds herself surrounded by quirky, colorful characters who she accepts without hesitation. The movie mirrored many gay men’s desire to escape the limitations of their life and Judy’s natural understanding in the film resulted in the slang phrase “a friend of Dorothy”, which was used by gay men to refer to themselves and each other. In the movie she sings *Somewhere Over The Rainbow*, written by Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg. It is filled with the sincere desire for a better life and it is believed to have, at least in

part, been an inspiration for the pride flag, standing as a symbol for the entire movement.

Judy was also known and admired by the queer community for her camp and over-the-top manner in her performances, which also made her a wonderful person to imitate in drag acts. She is often referred to as a tragic figure, who has gone through an array of personal struggles that in some ways seem to align with the struggles of gay men in America during the time of her career. She was beaten up by life but managed to survive through it all and still come out the other side as her glamorous self. She represented a power that gay men dreamed of having but couldn’t in the setting of conservative post-war America.

After the Stonewall riots and with the gay liberation movement her status as an icon started to crumble as gay men did not want to continue identifying with tragic and emotional stories anymore, and instead started to carry their sexuality with pride.

Some sources suggest a direct link between her death in 1969 and the beginning of the Stonewall riots. This theory is to be consumed with caution as it is important to remember who in fact started the riots. Witnesses remind us that the people who started Stonewall “were not the type to moon over Judy Garland records or attend her concerts at Carnegie Hall. They were more preoccupied with where they were going to sleep and where their next meal would come from”, as written in John Loughery’s book *The Other Side of Silence: Men’s Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth Century History*. The same book states however that there were many Judy Garland fans at the Stonewall Inn in the night the first riot erupted. They had attended Judy’s emotional funeral earlier that day and the sadness over her death might have played some role in causing emotions to ‘boil over’, resulting in a series of events, led first and foremost by PoC and Black trans women like Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Zazu Nova, that would change LGBTQ history forever. As a person who openly supported queer

people throughout her life and one who’s closest friends and family were members of the LGBTQ community, she didn’t just make it onto our CD as a gay icon but also as an ally. *Somewhere Over The Rainbow* connects the under-researched and often forgotten queer movements of the interwar period to the later gay liberation movement. It also connects the queer community to the ukulele world, in which the song has become one of the most beloved standards. Its message of a better life still resonates today as we look back on how much has already been achieved, and as we look forward to what still needs to be done to ensure a safe and equal life for every individual.



Thank You!

We wouldn't have been able to do this project without the help and support of a whole bunch of absolutely fantastic people.

First of all, thank you to all the people who supported our crowdfunding campaign! Without you, we wouldn't have been able to turn all our work into a finished product. A special thank you goes out to **Ute Schulz**, **Anette Battenberg**, **Wolfgang Gruner**, **Martin Kuzel**, **Sabine Wendt**, **Andy Maier** and **Mary Agnes Krell**. Your generous help made a huge difference.

Also, a big thank you to:

Our parents, for always having our backs and supporting us in so many different ways.
Tyler Alpern, for the lovely correspondence and all the invaluable information about Bruz Fletcher, including the unpublished manuscript of *Madly In love With the Ice Man*.
Randy A. Riddle, for all the information about Ray Bourbon and the friendly exchange.
Winston Jud, for not only recording our CD, but for making our time in the studio an absolutely wonderful experience.
Nick Gordon, for proofreading and editing the booklet.
Elisabeth and **Marcus Pfeiffer**, for hosting us during our time in the studio.
Erik Willis, from *Golders Green Crematorium* in London, for giving Charlotte access to the resting place of Ella Shields, the emotional conversation and background information on British male cross-dressers, which unfortunately didn't make it onto the CD.
ONE Archives at the USC Libraries in LA, for giving Stefan access to sheet music from the *Ralph W. Judd collection on cross-dressing in the performing arts* and the opportunity to use relevant material. Special thanks to **Loni Shibuyama**, for her help in the archive.
Susan Kudsi, for hosting Stefan during his time doing research in LA.
The friendly **staff from the Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery** in Carson, who helped finding the grave of Gladys Bentley.
The **anonymous handsome life guard** with the thrilling biceps at Venice beach, who helped Stefan find the remains of the former Venice Pier, where Gene Malin died.
Naomi Schmidt, who played *Madly In Love With The Iceman* for Stefan during her lunch break, when he stumbled into the music school in Freiburg one day with the unpublished sheet music looking for somebody who could give him an idea of what the song was intended to sound like.
Jason A. K. George, for supplying us with additional information about Tony Jackson.
Mark Yates, for allowing Stefan to visit and take pictures of the house which was Bruz Fletcher's home in the late 20s.

Hartmut Stiller, for inviting us to speak in his show on Freiburg's radio channel Schwule Welle and motivating us to dig deeper into the subject.
Last but not least, to all the people in **our audiences**, that talked to us after our concerts asking about *Das Lila Lied*, long before we decided to do this project. You showed us that there's an interest for this music and that we are not the only ones who are touched and moved by the lives of these artists.

Sources

Books:

Tyler Alpern: *Bruz Fletcher: camped, tramped & a riotous vamp*, collectors edition, self-published (2010)
George Chauncey: *Gay New York - Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, Basic Books (1995)
Robert Beachy: *Gay Berlin - birthplace of a modern identity*, Vintage Books (2015)
Curt Moreck: *Ein Führer durch das lasterhafte Berlin*, be.bra verlag GmbH (2018) (originally published 1931)
Magnus Hirschfeld: *Berlins drittes Geschlecht*, Verlag rosa Winkel (1991) (originally published 1904)
Ralf Jörg Raber: *Wir sind wie wir sind - ein Jahrhundert homosexuelle Liebe auf Schallplatte und CD*, Männerschwarm Verlag 2010
Clayton J. Whisnant: *Queer identities and politics in Germany - a history 1880 - 1945*, Harrington Park Press (2016)
Darryl W. Bullock: *David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music*, Duckworth Ltd. (2017)
Rudi Blesh, Harriet Janis: *They All Played Ragtime - The True Story of an American Music*, Nelson Press (2008)
Patricia L. Roberts: *A Lynching in Little Dixie: The Life and Death of James T. Scott, ca. 1885-1923*, McFarland & Co Inc. (2018)

World Wide Web (last visited June 2020):

www.bruno-balz.com/
www.tyleralpern.com/bruz.html
www.raebourbon.com/
www.queermusicheritage.com/
www.coleporter.org/bio.html

www.transascity.org/norman-karyl/
www.digital.scaa.sk.ca/gallery/genderimpersonators/karyl_norman/karylnorman_index.htm
www.time.com/5602528/judy-garland-funeral-stonewall/
www.bbc.com/culture/article/20190923-why-is-judy-garland-the-ultimate-gay-icon
www.worldqueerstory.org/2019/06/19/heroes-of-stonewall-zazu-nova/
www.andrejkoymasky.com/liv/fam/biom2/malin01.html
www.ig.ft.com/life-of-a-song/anything-goes.html
[www.queermusicheritage.com/Fletcher/Bellissimo,%20Hidden%20in%20Plain%20Sight%20\(Final\).pdf](http://www.queermusicheritage.com/Fletcher/Bellissimo,%20Hidden%20in%20Plain%20Sight%20(Final).pdf)
www.sites.google.com/site/theashleaze/genealogy/research-blog/douglascoybyng-1
www.queerportraits.com/
www.billboard.com/articles/news/pride/7824784/ma-rainey-lesbian-lyrics
www.worldqueerstory.org/tag/prove-it-on-me-blues/
www.outhistory.org/exhibits/show/rainey/rainey2
www.biography.com/musician/ma-rainey
www.chicagolgbthalloffame.org/jackson-tony/
www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pjotr_Iljitsch_Tschaikowski

CDs:

Mischa Spoliansky - musikalische Stationen zwischen Morphium und Widerstand, KLEINaberKUNST (1998)
Wir sind, wie wir sind! - Homosexualität auf Schallplatte, Teil 1, Bear Family Records (2002)

Other:

ONE Archives at the USC Libraries Los Angeles - *Ralph W. Judd collection on cross-dressing in the performing arts*
Schwules Museum Berlin Archive - files on Bruno Balz