

BlueStone Neighbors

Raine Grayson, LGBTQ activist debuts new play 'La Douleur Exquise' in Rosendale

Jillian Nadiak
BSP Reporter

Twenty-two year old Raine Grayson is a young playwright from New Paltz who is making strides in his field. Grayson uses his work to spread awareness in any way he can about social issues from autism to LGBTQ matters. Unlike most writers however, Grayson is transgender and like the estimated 700,000 other transgender people living in America according to the Williams Institute, identifies as a gender other than the one he was born as.

Though he has since graduated and left SUNY Ulster with a degree in theatre, Grayson is actively doing what ever he can to help raise funds to build a gender-neutral bathroom in the main building of his community college's campus. The LGBTQ club has already managed to build a few but they are all at least a 10 minute walk from any of the major offices, theatre or the student dining hall. "When I'm in the middle of rehearsal," Grayson said, "I don't have time to take a 10 minute stroll to go pee."

This is why, when Grayson debuts his newest play "La Douleur Exquise" at the Rosendale Theatre on April 8, he will be donating half of the ticket sales to the effort of building a gender-neutral bathroom in Vanderlyn Hall on the SUNY Ulster campus. The other half will be donated to The Rosendale Theatre.

"La Douleur Exquise" translates specifically to the emotional experience of the one whose love is not being reciprocated. The show is a series of vignettes, each one involving characters in completely different situations from the last. However, they are all tied together with the unifying theme of love and heartbreak. Covering topics from divorce to filial emotional obligations to unrequited love, Grayson says that every person who experiences the show will be able to relate to at least one vignette.



Raine Grayson.

"Raine develops characters which is what I think is important in representation," said Timothy Bruck Jr. of Accord. "There are too many one dimensional characters out there. That's the whole process of normalization. That's what's important in Raine's work. It's not "the autistic play" or "the gay play." They are underrepresented or misrepresented and Raine uses his platform and his skills as a writer to represent all kinds of people." Bruck plays a drag queen by the name of Eve in the show.

Grayson uses his skills as a writer to write poignant pieces about topics that don't receive enough attention in the media. He uses his work to give people representation and something to identify with.

"It raises awareness for people who don't know any-

thing about anything queer whether it be gay or trans or anything in between," said Grayson. "But also, it gives people who don't normally see themselves in the media a place to see themselves in the media. Literally the only reason I write is because 'Hey! There's not enough of this thing.' And so, I write about it."

"There's not enough proper representation," Grayson said. "In the media, trans people are either dying or have a disease," he said. This is not the case for all transgender people. It is representation like this that often leads to the misunderstanding of transgender people. "Being transgender now is a lot like what it was like to be gay in the '80s."

According to a study done by Transgender Europe, 1,612 transgender people have been murdered since 2008. Forty-one percent of the transgender population have attempted suicide, mostly caused by the hate and abuse from others which has been called "murder disguised as suicide" by many commentators on these topics on the Internet. Names like Leelah Alcorn who walked into nighttime traffic, Blake Zander who killed himself due to the abuse of his family, and Eylul Cansin, a citizen of Turkey who jumped off a bridge are prominent names in the transgender community.

Having experienced acts of hate himself, Grayson hopes that through his writing, he can bring proper LGBTQ awareness to his community and help bring a brighter future to those who are just like him.

La Douleur Exquise will be performed on April 8 at 7:15 p.m. at the Rosendale Theatre. General admission tickets are \$10. \$7 for students and Rosendale Theatre members and will be sold at the door.

For more information, contact Raine Grayson at raine-grayson@yahoo.com. **BSP**

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