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## Magazine

Gay Calgary and Edmonton Magazine



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## Heterophobia

**Beyond Closed Doors kicks off Pride Week**

*Theatre Preview* by Dallas Barnes

From [September 2010 \(Page 54\)](#)

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In June 2009, the IGNITE! Festival with Sage Theatre hosted its most successful play ever, Heterophobia, by Pam Rocker. Since then, Rocker has expanded the play by another 20 minutes to add more depth and detail to the already intriguing and multi-layered characters. This newest production of Heterophobia will be playing from September 1st to 11th at The Motel Theatre.

Heterophobia is described as a dark comedy, “a tall glass of gay with a twist of straight.” The play bill states, “In the world of heterophobia, social norms are flipped their ears, and extreme role reversal ensues. Being gay is the norm, and being straight the deviance.” It is essentially a story of relationships and our capacity for love.

Rocker describes the general plot. “Our leading lady, Grant, [comes] home for a visit after a tough break-up, with a secret that gets heavier by the second. As she struggles hold on to her hidden cravings, her Moms try to woo her with waffles, clean underwear and the prospect of settling down and being artificially inseminated. Meanwhile, her b friend Peter bursts onto the scene with erotic thoughts about Nathan Lane and a determination to cheer Grant up. But as Grant’s secret becomes too big to hold onto, s is forced to make a choice about revealing who she really is.”

The theatre company, Behind Closed Doors, is a perfect fit for this production. Amber Alexander, Producer and founder, created it on a vision “to bring the stories of the forgotten, stereotyped, and ignored individuals within our society to the stage.”

Rocker agrees with the fit. “The whole heart behind Behind Closed Doors is to produc is infused with a spirit of play and social justice – which is what Heterophobia is all ab part of the courageous footprints they are making.”

Gay Calgary and Edmonton Magazine had the privilege of talking to Pam in greater de production.

“When I started to write Heterophobia, I was working for the largest evangelical church trying to figure out why I couldn’t get my feelings to align with my belief system. Beir religious home meant that the word gay was synonymous with evil. I had been struggli terrifying idea that I may be gay, and had yet to utter those words aloud to anyone. I f Playwrighting course and our final assignment was to write a one-act play about anyth

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was searching for truth, acceptance, and answers, and I looked at that opportunity as : ideas that I had been trained to fear. I was sitting at a Christian retreat centre, with all floating through my heart, and the word heterophobia came to me. I was angry at how ever came out, and I thought, I need to create a world where it's absolutely normal to honestly curious about what that would look like. Being political was never on my mir this play would see the light of day."

"Years later, while still navigating my sexuality and dipping my toe into the idea that myself, I entered Heterophobia into the IGNITE! Festival with Sage Theatre. It was ac I saw Heterophobia come alive on the stage. I was ecstatic, even though my personal l what I call, impossible choices – where you know you will be rejected in some way by but that you have to have the integrity to be honest about who you are. The success of huge validation for me. I felt in a tangible way that so many other people got it – they when I looked at this world where phobias were reversed. I was starting to experience community where I didn't need to explain or justify who I was, but that I was accepte required. It was extremely liberating and gave me the courage I needed to come out to

Director Ayla Stephen and the cast and crew compliment Heterophobia well. Stephen, Artistic Director of the Shakespeare Company, jumped at a chance to work with Rock very accessible. Pam has taken an issue play and made it very enjoyable to watch. Ess relationships and expectations. She doesn't push a political agenda, or place judgment gives the audience a new perspective and really starts a dialogue. Not only is the subj show is fun!"

The rest of the cast are just as enthusiastic. Whitney Richter, in the role of the lead ch importance of this role. "I absolutely believe that this play presents important subject : of all different types of relationships and, as Pam puts it so eloquently, one very funda successful relationship in your life: grace. Having grace with each other; whether you choices, whether they be spiritual, sexual or otherwise, so that the love we have for or forefront and is the most important thing. There is a lot to be learned from Pam and th written. She has the ability to take a topic that can be so controversial and political an core, strips away all pretenses and makes it about the people and relationships involve

When asked why the public, regardless of sexual orientation, should come to Heteropl no hesitation. "Whatever your background, whatever your belief system, this show is about a family who is struggling to love and understand each other. As political as the anything but issue-based. It sprang from real questions that I, and millions of other pec be loved? Will I be accepted? Will my parents be proud of me? It's an interesting way what makes us hate, and why. I hope that it challenges all of us to see each other as hu labels or ideas." ?

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Heterophobia  
September 1-11  
The Motel Theatre  
[www.heterophobia.ca](http://www.heterophobia.ca)

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