

LGBTQIA

Representation Matters:

An intersectional study of the confluence of playwrighting, casting practices, and progressive productions as they relate to diversity and inclusion in theatre.

Created for the students of the McLennan College Theatre Department

Kathleen Laundry, Professor of Costume Design

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Why do we need to know this?

American theatre, film, and television have a long and problematic history with systemic racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, and ableism:

LGBTQ people make up 5.6% of the world's population but LGBTQ characters were mostly non-existent until the AIDS epidemic began in the 1980's.

In the 21st Century we should know better and do better. We hope through education and deliberate action toward inclusivity in our productions as well as our classes, to increase the representation of these under-represented groups in both our student population and the plays we produce.

<https://howlround.com/how-liberal-arts-theatre-programs-are-failing-their-students-color>

<https://variety.com/2016/film/news/movie-tv-diversity-study-hollywood-straight-white-male-1201711586/>

http://www.aapacnyc.org/uploads/1/1/9/4/11949532/aapac_2015-2016_10year_report.pdf

<https://allarts.org/2019/03/study-finds-decrease-in-broadway-diversity-following-a-record-breaking-year/>

LGBTQIA: What does that mean?

- **Lesbian**: A woman who is attracted to another woman.
- **Gay**: A man who is attracted to other men.
- **Bisexual**: A person who is attracted to both genders.
- **Transsexual**: A person whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **Queer/Questioning**: A person who don't identify as straight and/or cisgender.
- **Intersex**: A person who has a combination of both masculine and feminine sex organs, chromosomes, or hormones.
- **Asexual**: A person who does not experience sexual attraction or only experiences a low level of sexual attraction. (ACE)

Definition of Terms:

Cis: A person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are the same.

Preferred Gender Pronouns (PGP): Used during introductions; he/him/his She/her/hers They/theirs. For example, My name is Jules. My pronouns are they/theirs.

GLSEN

GENDER

TERMINOLOGY



GENDER ATTRIBUTION

HOW YOUR GENDER IS PERCEIVED BY OTHERS



GENDER IDENTITY

HOW YOU IDENTIFY (SEE YOURSELF)



SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH

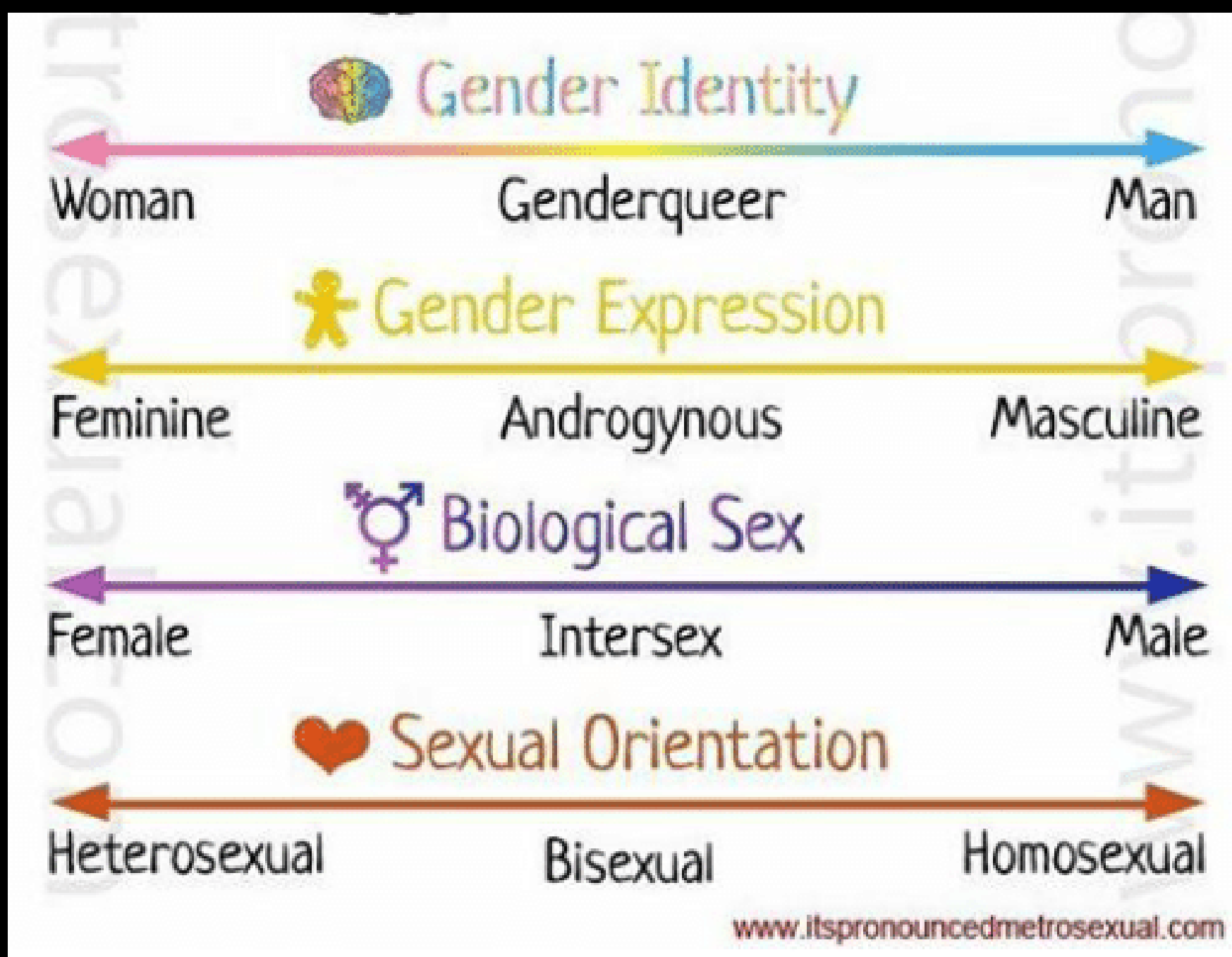
WHAT THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY LABELS YOU

GENDER EXPRESSION

HOW YOU WANT TO DISPLAY YOUR GENDER

Definition of Terms

Heteronormative: the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that everyone who presents as a masculine man or a feminine woman is straight.



Gender Coordinates Test

Why Use This Test?

1. **Free.** This Gender Coordinates Test is delivered to you free of charge and will allow you to obtain your scores related to how your gender identity is being perceived, as studied by Dr. Tanja Hentschel, Dr. Madeline Heilman, Ph.D. and Dr. Claudia Peus. Ph.D.
2. **First of its kind.** This assessment is one of the first major attempts to further operationalize the findings of Dr. Heilman and Dr. Peus' work on stereotypes and turn them into an accessible online personality test.
3. **Statistical controls.** Statistical analysis of the test is conducted to ensure maximum accuracy and validity of the test scores.
4. **Made by professionals.** The present test has been made with the input of people who work professionally with psychology and individual differences research.



Researchers H. Heilman, Ph.D. and C. Peus, Ph.D. used a multidimensional framework to assess how people view men and women respectively. Their research results found that men and women consistently ascribe the same characteristics to each gender. Click on the link to access the test:

<https://www.idrlabs.com/gendercoordinates/test.php>

Sexual Orientation Test

Why Use This Test?

1. **Free.** This free online Sexual Orientation test is delivered to you free of charge and will allow you to obtain your score on the Erotic Response and Orientation Scale, otherwise known as the EROS Scale.
2. **Tested in several countries.** The parameters utilized in the Erotic Response and Orientation Scale test have been studied by researchers and used with success in several different regions, including the USA, Canada, and several European countries.
3. **Based on peer-reviewed research.** The present test was crafted on the basis of peer-reviewed research, as published in notable scientific journals. The original research on the EROS scale was published in the scientific *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
4. **Statistical controls.** Test scores are logged into an anonymized database. Statistical analysis of the test is conducted to ensure maximum accuracy and validity of the test scores.
5. **Made by professionals.** The authors of this free online personality test are certified in the use of numerous personality tests and have worked professionally with typology and personality testing.



The *Erotic Response and Orientation Scale* was developed by psychologist Michael. The test is lauded for its contributions, which include a more complex and less linear understanding of non-binary orientations as well as an appreciation of the fact that some people are asexual. Click on the link to take the test:

<https://www.idrlabs.com/sexual-orientation/test.php>

Hijra: India's Third Gender

One of the oldest non-binary identities, officially known as a third gender in India, is Hijra. India's trans women community has been a part of the subcontinent for about as long as civilization has. With a recorded history of over 4,000 years, the *Hijra* community is a testament to the sexual diversity that is integral yet often forgotten in Indian culture.

The *Hijra* community has been mentioned in ancient literature, the most known of which is the *Kama Sutra*, a Hindu text on human sexual behavior written sometime between 400 BCE and 200 CE. *Hijra* characters hold significant roles in some of the most important texts of Hinduism, including the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. One of the many forms of Shiva, a principal Hindu deity, involves him merging with his wife, Parvati, to become the androgynous *Ardhanari*, who holds special significance to many in the *Hijra* community.

Hijras held important positions in court and various facets of administration during the Mughal-era India, from the 16th to 19th century. They were also considered to hold religious authority and were sought out for blessings, particularly during religious ceremonies.



Photographic Collection of Kanwardip Gujral, 1880's

Two Spirit People: Native Americans' Third Gender

Though Two Spirit may now be included in the umbrella of LGBTQ, The term "Two Spirit" does not simply mean someone who is a Native American/Alaska Native and gay. Two Spirit is a term only appropriate for Native people therefore, if you don't have a tribe, you can't call yourself Two Spirit.

Traditionally, Native American Two Spirit people were male, female, and sometimes intersexed individuals who combined activities of both men and women with traits unique to their status as two spirit people. In most tribes, they were considered neither men nor women; they occupied a distinct, alternative gender status. In tribes where Two Spirit males and females were referred to with the same term, this status amounted to a third gender. In other cases, two spirit females were referred to with a distinct term and, therefore, constituted a fourth gender. Although there were important variations in two spirit roles across North America, they shared some common traits:

- **Gender variation.** A variety of other traits distinguished two spirit people from men and women, including temperament, dress, lifestyle, and social roles. Being a gay native is oftentimes confused with being Two Spirit. While the two may have parallels and intersections, they are not the same. Gay specifically is about attraction to a person of the same sex. Two Spirit is more about the embodiment of two genders residing within one person. A Two Spirit person may be gay, but a gay person is not necessarily Two Spirit. Claiming the role of Two Spirit is to take up the spiritual responsibility that the role traditionally had.
- **Specialized work roles.** Male and female two spirit people were typically described in terms of their preference for and achievements in the work of the "opposite" sex or in activities specific to their role. Two spirit individuals were experts in traditional arts - such as pottery making, basket weaving, and the manufacture and decoration of items made from leather. Among the Navajo, two spirit males often became weavers, usually women's work, as well as healers, which was a male role. By combining these activities, they were often among the wealthier members of the tribe. Two spirit females engaged in activities such as hunting and warfare, and became leaders in war, and even chiefs.

- **Spiritual sanction.** Two spirit identity was widely believed to be the result of supernatural intervention in the form of visions or dreams and sanctioned by tribal mythology. In many tribes, two spirit people filled special religious roles as healers, shamans, and ceremonial leaders. The Two Spirit is a road of long held traditions, prayer, and responsibility. Two Spirit people held a meaningful place in the sacred hoop. In many tribes Two Spirits were balance keepers; thought to be the “dusk” between the male morning, and the female evening. As the role has evolved over time as necessary, the tradition is still alive. At Two Spirit gatherings and communal events, we can be found saying prayers that have needed to be said for decades, and fostering healing to all present, restoring much needed balance to spirit.
- **Same-sex relations.** Two spirit people typically formed sexual and emotional relationships with non-two spirit members of their own sex, forming both short- and long-term relationships. Among the Lakota, Mohave, Crow, Cheyenne, and others, two spirit people were believed to be lucky in love, and able to bestow this luck on others. Two Spirit does not indicate “colonized” definitions of L, G, B, T, or Q. We can be all of these or none of these. Two Spirit acknowledges the continuum of gender identity and expression.

Most Indigenous communities have specific terms in their own languages for the gender-variant members of their communities and the social and spiritual roles these individuals fulfill; with over 500 surviving Native American cultures, attitudes about sex and gender can be very diverse. Even with the modern adoption of pan-Indian terms like Two Spirit, not all cultures will perceive two spirit people the same way, or welcome a pan-Indian term to replace the terms already in use by their cultures.

The disruptions caused by conquest and disease, together with the efforts of missionaries, government agents, boarding schools, and white settlers resulted in the loss of many traditions in Native communities. Two spirit roles, in particular, were singled out for condemnation, interference, and many times violence. As a result, two spirit traditions and practices went underground or disappeared in many tribes.

Today, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender native people throughout North America are reviving the two spirit role and its traditions. National gatherings of two spirit people have been held since the early 1990s, and regional gatherings are held in many parts of the country.

<https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/8-things-you-should-know-about-two-spirit-people-294cNolj-EGwJFOWEnbbZw>

https://www.ihs.gov/lgbt/health/twospirit/?fbclid=IwAR1liYMIe3e_7PjD_OkA5rnesHgkLIU19mSKlyZZGOw1hX_WOzmPtx115S8

I will leave the last words to the late Lakota actor, Native rights activist and American Indian Movement co-founder Russell Means:

“In my culture we have people who dress half-man, half-woman. *Winkte*, we call them in our language. If you are *Winkte*, that is an honorable term and you are a special human being and among my nation and all Plains people, we consider you a teacher of our children and are proud of what and who you are.”



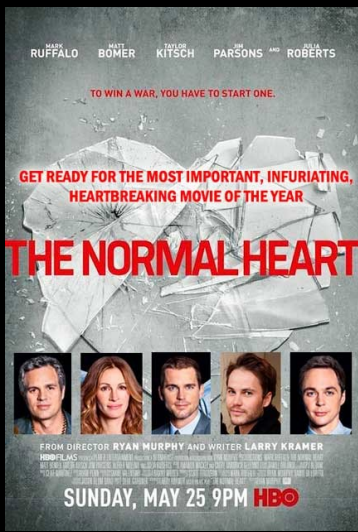
LGBTQIA Tropes

Gays are Promiscuous: This stereotype is the reason why gay people are called “gay”. The word changed meanings over the years from “bright and showy” to “carefree and full of mirth” to “addicted to pleasures” and eventually to “sexually promiscuous”. Sometime in the early 20th C. the word narrowed to specifically refer to homosexual men due to belief in this stereotype.

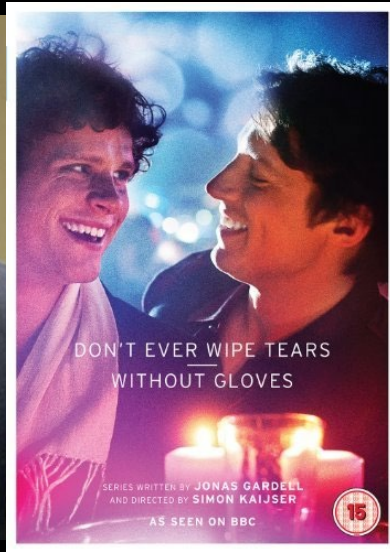
This trope has some interesting historical basis in that many gay and lesbian writers post-Stonewall advocated emphasizing difference from heteronormative life. This difference included denigrating marriage and monogamy, thus strengthening the link between homosexuality and promiscuity in the eyes of those who viewed all homosexuals as sick, sexual deviants. This trope was especially damaging in 1980’s during the AIDS epidemic when it was widely believed that gay men were solely responsible for the spread of the epidemic and that only gay men could be infected.

When it comes to bisexual characters, this trope gets even more pernicious. By committing to a monogamous relationship, the bisexual character might be deemed 'choosing a side', leading either to the appearance they were merely gay-in-denial, or were merely expressing token same-sex affections for the sake of fanservice/diversity. *However*, in real life, even among the LGBT community, bisexuals often face biphobic discrimination for supposedly being promiscuous and unfaithful, as well as accused of being confused/in-denial of their sexuality or even merely wanting attention, so playing this straight *and* averting it both results in negative implications. Avoiding both can be a tricky minefield with no obvious solution, which ironically is part of the problem bisexuals often face when dating.

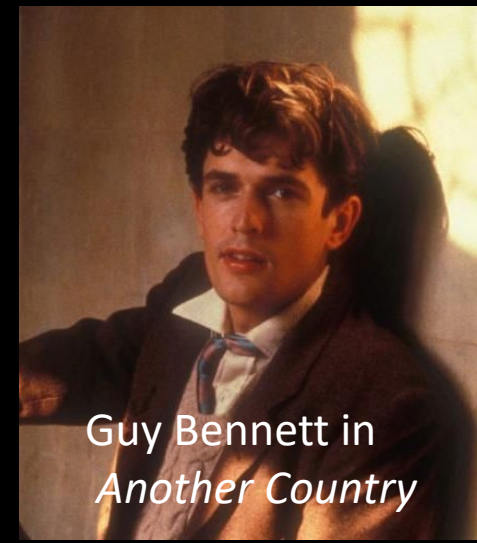
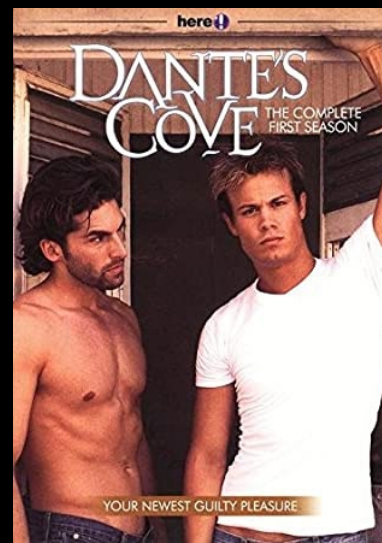
This trope is seen in *The Normal Heart*, Roy in *Angels in America*, Bruno, Wallace in *Scott Pilgrim*, Guy Bennett in *Another Country*, Dante’s Cove, Sebastian on *Glee*, Barney’s brother on *How I Met Your Mother*, *Never Wipe Tears without Gloves*, Ricky on *Noah’s Arc*, Brian on the US version of *Queer as Folk*, Jack on *Will & Grace*.



Roy in
Angels in America



Jack on *Will & Grace*.



Guy Bennett in
Another Country

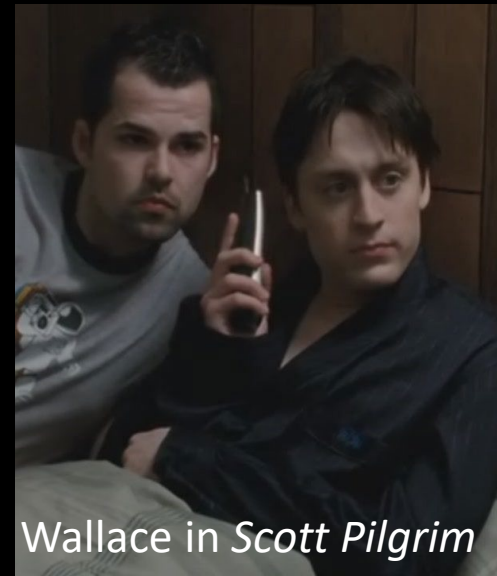
Gays are Promiscuous



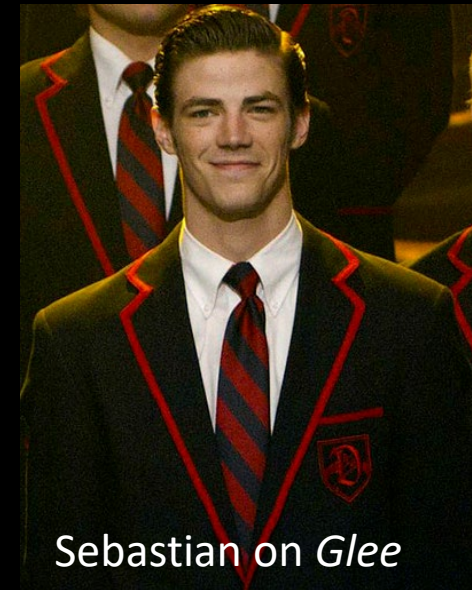
Ricky on *Noah's Arc*



Brian on *Queer as Folk*



Wallace in *Scott Pilgrim*



Sebastian on *Glee*

More LGBTQ Tropes

- **Agent Peacock:** These male characters are badass nancy boys. They're often campy, vain, and in many cases pretty, but they're also incredibly effective at what they do, and quite powerful. Brian Slade from *Velvet Goldmine*, Dr. Frankfurter from *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, The Adventures of *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, Jack Sparrow from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, Guy Bennet in *Another Country*, *Zorro the Gay Blade*, Loki in the *MCU*, Ser Loras from *GOT*, Penguin on *Gotham*, Garak from *Star Trek DS9*, Dennis Bryson from *Twin Peaks*.
- **Lipstick Lesbians:** She dresses and acts in a manner that is considered conventionally feminine, likes "feminine" things such as wearing lipstick— and likes women. Fictional lesbians tend to fall into this category if they're "good" characters as it's often seen as "safer" to depict them, while masculine lesbians tend to be relegated to "edgy" portrayals. Lucille from *Sin City*, Valerie from *V for Vendetta*, Alyssa from *Chasing Amy*, Tala and Leyla from *I Can't Think Straight*, Sophia from *Batwoman*, Lana Winters from *American Horror Story: Asylum*, Queen Maeve from *The Boys*, Zoe from *Degrassi*, Inara from *Firefly*, Delphine from *Orphan Black*, Franziska from *Orange is the New Black*.
- **Butch Lesbians:** The contrasting counterpart to the Lipstick Lesbian, the Butch Lesbian is typically clad in heavy boots, jeans, plain t-shirts, and other conventionally unfeminine attire. She'll have a short haircut and stereotypically male job, and often be taller and bulkier than her femme counterpart. Steph from *Anna and the Apocalypse*, Corky from *Bound*, Aech in *Ready Player One*, Ruth in *V for Vendetta*, Ace and Bill from *Doctor Who*, Yara from *GOT*, Big Boo and Suzanne from *Orange is the New Black*, Jett Reno from *Star Trek: Discovery*, Alex Danvers from *Supergirl*, Dr. Mac from *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, Mama Morton from *Chicago*, Shirly Markowitz from *The Producers*.

<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/AllGaysArePedophiles>

<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/AgentPeacock>

<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/LipstickLesbian>

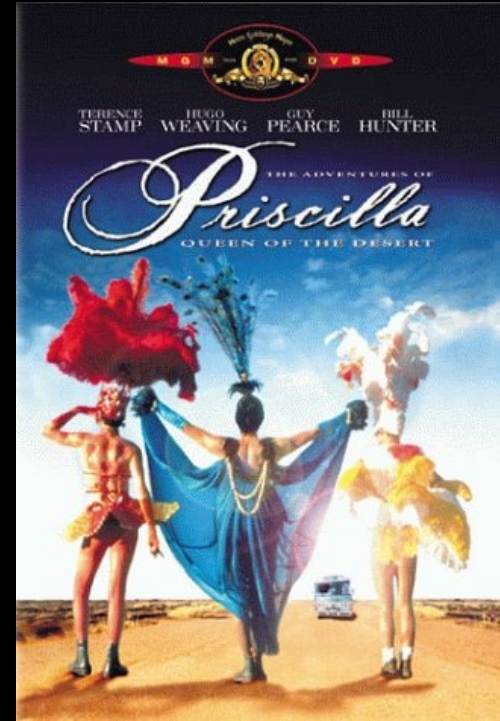
<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ButchLesbian>



Zorro the Gay Blade



Dr. Frankfurter from
Rocky Horror Picture Show



Loki from the MCU

Agent Peacock



Brian Slade from *Velvet Goldmine*



Ser Loras from GOT



Penguin on *Gotham*



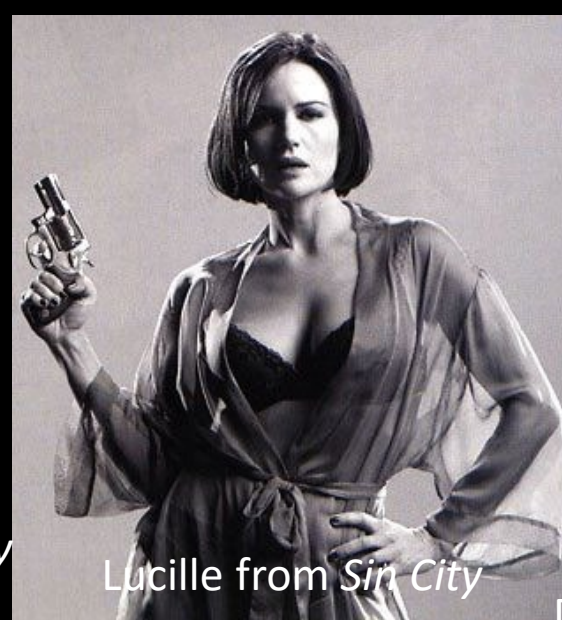
Inara from *Firefly*



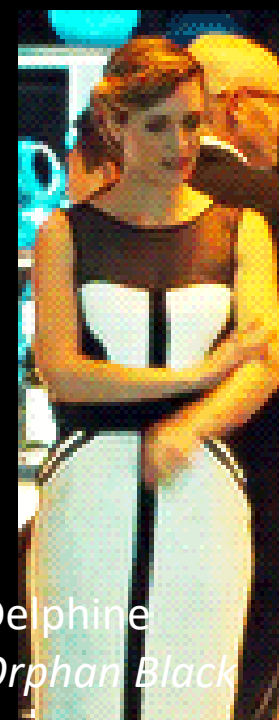
Valerie from *V for Vendetta*



Alyssa from *Chasing Amy*



Lucille from *Sin City*



Delphine
Orphan Black

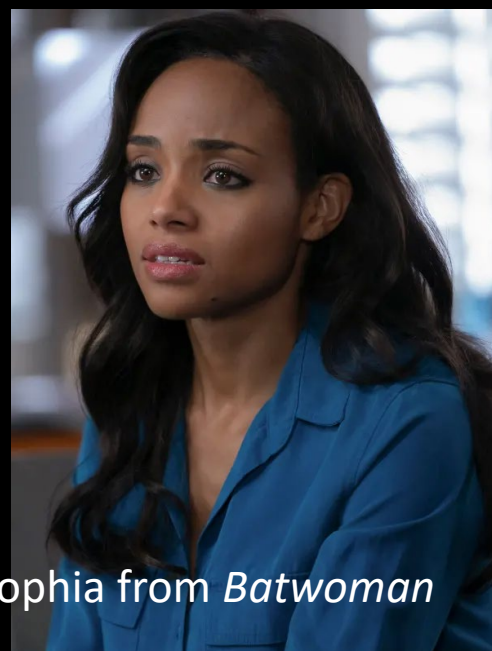
Lipstick Lesbians



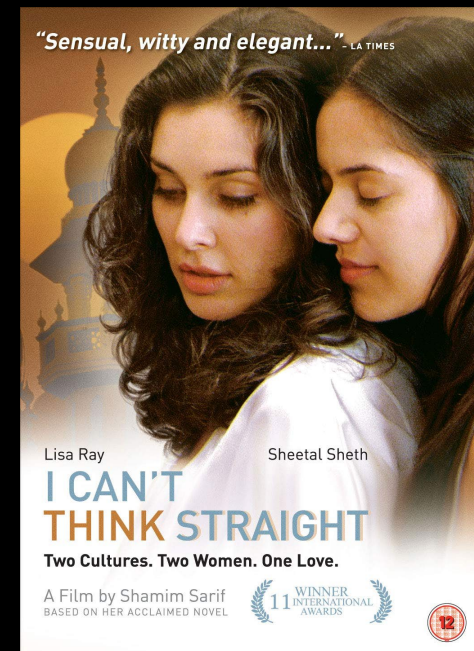
Lana Winters
AHS: Asylum



Queen Maeve
The Boys



Sophia from *Batwoman*





Mama Morton
Chicago



Big Boo and Susannah
Orange is the New Black



McCoy
Streets of Fire



Dr. Mac
*Miss Fisher's
Murder Mysteries*



Yara from *GOT*

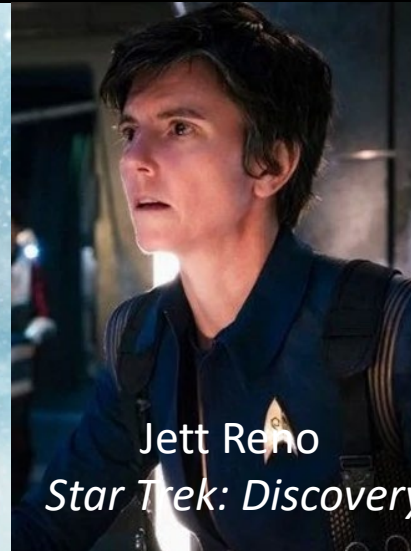
Butch Lesbians



Aech
Ready Player One



Ace and Bill
Doctor Who



Jett Reno
Star Trek: Discovery



Alex Danvers
Supergirl

What now?

Without bringing attention to the mistreatment of LGBTQIA characters, it makes it difficult for writers to change how they write these characters. By learning about stereotypes, we grow to appreciate quality storytelling. We always have to ask ourselves certain questions: Are these stereotypes damaging? How should show-runners and writers improve their storytelling when it comes to LGBTQIA characters? Can we like certain pieces of media while simultaneously recognizing their mistreatment of LGBTQIA characters?

The Captive, 1926

Based on the French play *La Prisonniere* by Edouard Bourdet, Arthur Horblow translated and adapted it. It was the first Broadway play to deal with lesbianism and caused a scandal in New York City. Irene is a lesbian tortured by her love for Mdm. D'Aiguines but is engaged to Jaques. The Madame leaves bouquets of violets for Irene. "Violet" at the time was a slang word for lesbian. The audiences were overwhelmingly female and would pin violets to their lapels to show solidarity with the characters. The character Irène is depicted as a lesbian who is feminine, attractive, and seductive. Sherrie Inness writes that "the play dismantles the idea of the lesbian as the easily recognizable Other (i.e., the mannish lesbian), instead offering a lesbian prototype more threatening to the hegemony of heterosexuality." It was protested vehemently by many groups. Finally, the play was shut down after 160 performances when the cast was arrested after a performance, which prompted the adoption of a state law dealing with obscenity.



The Children's Hour, 1934

Maxine Elliott Theatre

Lillian Hellman's play is based on a scandal in Scotland in 1810 about two women in charge of a boarding school accused of having an affair by a student, and how the scandal destroyed their lives. It was considered for the Pulitzer Prize but it lost, ostensibly because the subject matter was too controversial. The official reason was that it wasn't an original play because it was based on a court case. However, the play that won was based on a book. There was a public outcry and this is the reason that the New York Drama Critics' Circle began awarding its own annual prize for drama the following year. It was adapted for a film in 1961 starring Audrey Hepburn and Shirley MacLaine.

<https://www.historymattersbacktothefuture.com/plays/view/The-Childrens-Hour>



Robert Keith, Anne Revere, Florence McGee, Katherine Emery



Audrey Hepburn and Shirley MacLaine

Soap, 1977-81

Created by Susan Harris. Billy Crystal as Jodie Dallas, was the first openly gay regular series character on network TV. Before the soap opera parody ever aired, it was at the center of protests and boycott threats that made front page news all summer. *Soap's* pilot episode featured a story thread of homosexuality and gender-reassignment. Affiliate protests and advertiser boycotts were announced. The National Gay Task Force and a group called the International Union of Gay Athletes weighed in with their own concerns about Jodie, whose lover Dennis, was a pro football player. The scandal and the three months worth of coverage paid off. *Soap* opened as a hit and it stayed one.

Jodie was one of the most levelheaded, intelligent characters on the show, which in itself was a feat of sorts given his place in TV history. Crystal fumbled with Jodie only in the first few episodes when he's forced to prance around in a dress and a bad wig singing show tunes. Once that was gone, Jodie Dallas shines, even when Billy Crystal's selling you on the idea that he needs a sex change or that Dennis leaving him would drive him to attempt suicide. Jodie was a strong man with conviction and ideals. He didn't appear to lead any kind of deviant lifestyle nor did he seem promiscuous. He genuinely loved and loved strong, never more so than his baby Wendy. The lengths to which he was willing to go to protect her and what they had together are some of the strongest moments for the character.

<https://www.out.com/entertainment/today-gay-history/2013/09/13/today-gay-history-billy-crystal-goes-gay-proudly>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/tv/2017/08/31/soap-abc-billy-crystal-40-years-ago/618464001/>

<http://theruedmorgue.blogspot.com/2006/03/worst-homosexual-ever-created.html>



Last Summer at Bluefish Cove, 1980

Jane Chambers' play was the first mainstream lesbian piece of theatre in America. Set in 1980, the play is set at Bluefish Cove, a lesbian beachside haven where Lil Zalinski and her close-knit group of friends take refuge each summer to live and love freely. When a straight woman named Eva wanders unknowingly into their midst, she sends the Cove into a tailspin and knocks Lil off her feet. Starring Jean Smart as Lil and Susan Slavin as Eva.

In 2020 *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* was revived for its 40th anniversary. Directed by Cynthia Nixon, it features Broadway's first all-female creative team and cast.



<https://www.broadway.com/shows/last-summer-bluefish-cove/>

https://www.presspubs.com/white_bear/news/century-playhouse-to-perform-soon-to-be-broadway-production/article_b2e7b50e-534e-11ea-8798-b3ac1dbaef0.html

Torch Song Trilogy, 1982

Harvey Fierstein's collection of three short plays that center around Arnold, a Jewish homosexual drag queen and torch singer who lives in New York City. Near the end of the play, Arnold's partner is beaten to death by a group of homophobes and Arthur is left to raise their adopted gay son by himself. "At the height of the post-Stonewall Riot era, Fierstein challenged both gay and straight audiences to champion an effeminate gay man's longings for love and family." It was called a radical breakthrough because of its forthright depiction of gay sexuality, gay youth, and gay families during an era of political backlash against the gay rights movement. Additionally, the play addressed intersectionality in a newfound way. Today, the play is primarily remembered as a groundbreaking moment for LGBTQ theatre. It is lauded for touching on issues such as gay marriage and adoption before they were acceptable. The inclusion of both the Jewish and queer identities allowed for the representation and (arguably) rejection of the stereotypes associated with each group. *Torch Song* won two Tony awards, including for Best Play. It was adapted to a film in 1988. The Revival opened on Broadway in 2018.



<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/torch-song-trilogy-4176#ProductionStaff>



<http://www.newnownext.com/harvey-fierstein-torch-song-commercial/10/2018/>

Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean 1982

Ed Graczyk's play is about a group of women who are having a twenty-year reunion of their high school James Dean fan club. All of the women have had problems since high school--breast cancer, an illegitimate child, mental health issues--but when a mysterious woman Joanna shows up and turn out to be Joe, the only male member of the club, post sex reassignment surgery, the group must rehash the past in order to heal from it. It was made into a film by Robert Altman, starring most of the original cast and featured a gay man, Mark Patton, as Joe and a cis woman, Karen Black, as Joanna.

It was unusual for its time in that it treated the character of Joe/Joanna with empathy. As film critic Willow Mclay said, "there is an equality in her struggles. She isn't a sideshow or a sidekick narrative. It isn't there for shock value or anything repulsive. She's there, because she was always a part of this sorority, and the film understands that while she has changed, and her relationship to these people has morphed into something different, there is still an essential familial connection that brings these people together despite their differences. To put it very bluntly she's just one of the girls. Another woman in a narrative comprised entirely of them with the lone exception being the metaphysical ghost of James Dean."

<http://curtsiesandhandgrenades.blogspot.com/2018/03/body-talk-conversations-on-transgender.html>



Angels in America, 1993

Tony Kushner's play about homosexuality and the AIDS epidemic written in two parts separately titled *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*. The action of the play is set in the five years between 1985 and 1990. It tells the story of Prior Walter, a gay man with AIDS and revolves around his relationships with others in his life. Eight actors play multiple roles. It was nominated for 9 Tony awards, and won 4 including for Best Play. It also won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Turned into a mini-series for HBO in 2003. The playwright and professor of theater studies John M. Clum called the play "a turning point in the history of gay drama, the history of American drama, and of American literary culture". In response to the frank treatment of homosexuality and AIDS, as well as male nudity, conservative religious groups protested it, most notably in Charlotte, NC. It was revived recently in 2018.



Rent, 1996

Jonathan Larson's Rock Musical based on Puccini's opera *La Boheme*. *Rent* tells the story of a group of impoverished young artists struggling to survive and create a life in the East Village under the shadow of HIV/AIDS. "Seasons of Love", is the most well-known song from the show. The story revolves around Tom Collins who meets Angel, a trans woman, and they begin a relationship. She dies of AIDS a year after they meet.



The original cast included Taye Diggs, Wilson Jermaine Heredia, Jesse L. Martin, Idina Menzel, Adam Pascal, Anthony Rapp, Daphne Rubin-Vega, and Fredi Walker. It won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and four Tony awards, including for Best Musical. It ran for 12 years on Broadway. It was adapted for film in 2006. Larson never got to see the show he created, having died before opening night of AIDS.

"*Rent* tackled the frustrated, defiant aftermath of the first wave of the AIDS crisis, putting HIV positive characters at the forefront. It was deliberately diverse, with queer characters and a cast that featured Hispanic and black leads. It was held together by alt-rock and grunge. It sneered at gentrification — embodied by Taye Diggs's sellout landlord, Benny — and trumpeted the virtues of living your artistic truth, no matter how grimy things got."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rent_\(musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rent_(musical))

<https://www.vox.com/2016/4/29/11531350/rent-musical-20th-anniversary>

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 1997-2004

Buffy the Vampire Slayer was one of first TV shows to depict a naturally progressing relationship between two women that wasn't for ratings and wasn't a punchline. For many young viewers, this was the first time they had ever seen gay characters fall in love and find acceptance among their peers. Even 20 years later the multi-season romance between Willow Rosenberg (played by Allyson Hannigan) and Tara Maclay (played by Amber Benson) resonates.

Writer Amanda Grace said, "Seeing the evolution from friendship to romantic relationship between Willow and Tara made me feel so much more comfortable with myself. At a time where I had limited exposure to lesbian relationships and was questioning my own sexuality, the relationship on *Buffy* made me feel so much more normal."

In a Reddit AMA, Benson wrote, "The most rewarding thing about playing Tara was that the relationship on *Buffy* between her and Willow helped kick open the door for more amazing LGBTQ characters on TV. We were so blessed to walk in their shoes and play those ladies. It's one of the things I am most proud of in my life." She also noted that in a perfect *Buffyverse*, Willow and Tara would go on to open an ice cream shop and live happily ever after.



<https://archive.nerdist.com/buffy-the-vampire-slayer-lesbian-relationship-willow-tara/>

https://www.reddit.com/r/IAmA/comments/2rfkbh/i_am_amber_benson_actorwritergoofballlesbian/cnfdus5/

Stop Kiss, 1998

The Public Theatre, NY

Stop Kiss is a play by Korean American playwright Diana Son. It was her first full length play. It is about two bisexual women in New York who are assaulted on the street while sharing their first kiss, starring Jessica Hecht and Sandra Oh. It won the GLAAD award for Best New York Production. The run was extended three times. It has since been produced by hundreds of theatres across the US.



Playwright Diana Son



<http://www.curtainup.com/stopkiss.html>

<https://howlround.com/where-are-all-bisexuals-understanding-gray-areas-lgbtq-representation>

<https://www.playbill.com/article/jessica-hecht-goes-public-with-a-range-of-emotions-in-stop-kiss-com-101281>

The Laramie Project, 2000

Denver Center Theatre Company

Moises Kaufman's play about the 1988 murder of gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard in Laramie WY. The murder was denounced as a hate crime and drew attention to the lack of laws against hate crimes. The members of the [Tectonic Theatre Project](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-laramie-project-overview-2713500) in New York devised the script from hundreds of interviews with inhabitants of Laramie, journal entries and published news reports. Eight actors play more than 60 characters. Members of the Westboro Baptist Church have picketed performances of the play because they are depicted picketing Matthew Shepard's funeral in the play as they did in real life. In 2002 it was adapted into an HBO film and was nominated for four Emmy awards. The company went to Laramie in 2010 and wrote another play about the lasting effects of Shepard's murder, called *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-laramie-project-overview-2713500>



Avenue Q, 2003

Musical comedy parody of *Sesame Street* that addressed themes of homosexuality, racism, and internet pornography. Nominated for six Tony awards and won three: for Best Musical, Book and Score. Ran for 6 years. 2 US tours, 3 UK tours, productions mounted in Australia, France, Portugal, Germany, China, and South Africa. There were 4 puppeteers using 11 puppets and 3 human actors. All four of the original cast's principal puppeteers—John Tartaglia, Stephanie D'Abruzzo, Jennifer Barnhart and Rick Lyon—were *Sesame Street* performers. Puppets were designed by Rick Lyon. The human actors were Natalie Venetia Belcon, Ann Harada, Jordan Gelber. *Variety* wrote, “While the musical’s core journey is the rocky transition from college to financial independence and emotional maturity, the adversities faced by its puppet and human characters are familiar to any age group. They also seem especially keyed into the recession zeitgeist — bills to pay; a low-paying job or no job at all; housing worries; education qualifications that prove useless in the real world. What’s most irresistible about Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx’s songs, and Jeff Whitty’s book, is the impish way they confront us all with some of the thornier aspects of human nature. Songs like “It Sucks to Be Me,” “Everyone’s a Little Bit Racist,” “Schadenfreude” and “The More You Love Someone the More You Want to Kill Them” cleverly articulate feelings pretty much all of us have experienced. As for “The Internet Is for Porn,” no comment.” <https://variety.com/2009/legit/reviews/avenue-q-2-1200476729/>

<https://avenueq.com/>



Saving Face, 2004

Alice Wu's first feature length film was a semi-autobiographical story about coming out to her mother. Starring Michelle Krusiec as Wil, a surgeon, Joan Chen as Wil's mother, and Lynn Chen as Vivian, Wil's dancer girlfriend. The cast had to speak both English and Mandarin Chinese. David Rooney of Variety Media said that the film excelled at "spanning the fragile bridge between traditional values and independent spirit" and providing "gentle humor and [a] universal emotional experience".



Steven Universe, 2013-2020

- Coming of age story of a young boy , Steven, who is half boy and half gemstone. He has adventures with the other Crystal Gems—Garnet, Amethyst, Pearl—and helps them protect the world from their own kind.
- The series has developed a broad fan base and has been critically acclaimed for its design, music, voice acting, characterization, prominence of LGBTQ themes and science fantasy worldbuilding. For example, the show featured the first ever animated lesbian bi-racial wedding. The voice actor for Bismuth is Uzo Abuda, a black trans female.
- First Cartoon Network series to be created solely by a woman, Rebecca Sugar, who is also bisexual and non-binary.
- Ran for 5 seasons, had a TV film, and an epilogue limited series.
- Won GLAAD award in 2019.
- Nominated for 5 Emmy awards and 5 Annie awards.
- Won Peabody Award for Children's and Youth Programming in 2019



Transparent, 2014-2019

Created by Jill Soloway for Amazon. Inspired by Soloway's mother's transition, the story follows the lives of one family as their father transitions into a woman. As part of the making of the show, Soloway enacted a "trans-firmative action program", whereby trans applicants were hired in preference to cis ones. Over eighty trans people worked on the show, including writer Our Lady J and trans consultants and co-producers Zackary Drucker and Rhys Ernst. All the bathrooms on set were gender-neutral.

In its fourth season sexual harassment claims were filed against Jeffrey Tambor who played the lead character Maura, instead of an actual Transwoman. Soloway said, "We are grateful to the many trans people who have supported our vision for *Transparent* since its inception and remain heartbroken about the pain and mistrust their experience has generated in our community. We are taking definitive action to ensure our workplace respects the safety and dignity of every individual, and are taking steps to heal as a family." Tambour was later fired from the show and his character was killed off in the season finale.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/magazine/can-jill-soloway-do-justice-to-the-trans-movement.html?Src=longreads&r=0>
<https://deadline.com/2018/02/jeffrey-tambor-out-transparent-amazon-series-harassment-investigation-1202290473/>



Jill Soloway



Writer Our Lady J



Alexandra Billings



Trace Lysette



Van Barnes

Bessie, 2015

HBO film about Bessie Smith, a queer blues legend who rose to fame in the 1920's. Directed by Dee Rees, one of today's most accomplished lesbian directors and starring Queen Latifah as Bessie and Mo'Nique as Ma Rainey. Won 4 Emmy Awards including Outstanding Television Movie.

According to Laura Bradley, writing for Slate, "*Bessie* has been in development for more than two decades, giving Latifah plenty of time to get comfortable in Bessie Smith's shoes. The persona she portrays, simultaneously warm and rowdy, is consistent with accounts from Chris Albertson's *Bessie*, which describe her giving away generous amounts of money, but also beating people up when they crossed her. (And yes, in case you were wondering, Smith really did chase about a dozen Ku Klux Klan members away from one of her tent shows. No word on whether or not she used a hatchet, though.)"

Queen Latifah has 101 film and TV credits and is the first female rap artist to be nominated for an Oscar. She has won a Grammy, Emmy, Golden Globe, 3 SAG awards, and 4 NAACP Image Awards.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bessie_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bessie_(film))

<https://www.npr.org/2015/05/16/406453568/in-hbos-bessie-queen-latifah-stars-as-empress-of-the-blues>

<https://slate.com/culture/2015/05/bessie-hbo-accuracy-fact-vs-fiction-in-the-hbo-biopic-of-bessie-smith-the-empress-of-blues.html>



Pose, 2018

Pose is Ryan Murphy's TV series about the fabulous hidden world of Black and Latino LGBTQ New York City ballroom culture in the late 1980's. It's based on Jennie Livingston's 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*. The main characters are all Black trans women played by Black trans women. In fact, it has the largest LGBTQ cast in TV history, with 140 trans actors and crew members and 50+ trans characters. It features Billy Porter, the first openly gay black man to be nominated for and win an Emmy in a Leading Actor category. It also features producer Janet Mock, who wrote and directed the sixth episode, making her the first trans woman of color to write and direct any episode of television. Production of the third season was halted due to the pandemic. <https://hornet.com/stories/pose-actresses-two/>



(L-R), Indya Moore, Hailie Sahar, Producer/Director Janet Mock, Dominique Jackson, Angelica Ross, and MJ Rodriguez

Bohemian Rhapsody, 2018

Bohemian Rhapsody was the biopic of Freddie Mercury lead singer of Queen, a famous English rock band. He was born as Farrokh Bulsara, the son of Parsi-Indian Zoroastrianism parents who fled the Zanzibar Revolution and emigrated to England. He had a relationship with Mary Austin, whom he considered to be his common law wife, and truest and only friend. When he came out as a bisexual man, he formed toxic relationships fueled by alcohol and drugs, eventually finding Jim Hutton, his lifelong partner who stayed with him and nursed him the last seven years of his life. He died of AIDS in 1991.

Rami Malek starred as Freddie. Rami Malek was born in Los Angeles to Egyptian immigrant parents. He works with RED to eliminate HIV/AIDS in Africa. Nominated for 5 Oscars, including Best Picture, won 4. Nominated by BAFTA for Outstanding British Film of the Year, Rami was nominated by GALECA for Best Actor.

Controversy surrounding the film in that the queer community had issues with the way that Freddie's gayness was limited to sordid trysts that were punished by AIDS. "Instead, the film winds up being the last thing Mercury himself would have wanted it to be, given his own embrace of the queer community: an erasure of that community, and of Mercury's own uniqueness, as well as a flimsy, demonizing stereotype of queer men. All fans of Freddie Mercury, but especially the queer ones, deserved better."

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/freddie-mercury-queen-biopic-bohemian-rhapsody-movie-fact-check-746195/>
<https://www.vox.com/2018/11/16/18071460/bohemian-rhapsody-queerphobia-celluloid-closet-aids>



Rocketman, 2019

Biopic about Elton John, British pop star, starring Taron Egerton as Elton. The story revolves around his partnership with Bernie Taupin, as Elton comes to terms with his own homosexuality and rising fame, he descends into alcohol and drug addiction.

During filming there was controversy over a gay sex scene between John and his manager, Reid. There were rumors that Paramount wanted it cut to get a PG-13 rating, and the LGBTQI community were angry at the perceived “straight washing” of the film. The director Dexter Fletcher responded to criticism “The real story is that I shot the love scene and like any scene, we go through the edit of the scene and we look at how it works best for what we’re trying to communicate. That’s down to me, that’s how I need to tell the story at that particular moment. You might see a little bit of butt, you might not. That remains to be seen.”

Whether it remains in the film or not, Egerton takes pride in his part in the love scene. “I think it’s a really beautiful bit of male intimacy,” Egerton said. “It’s one moment in a film that I believe is full of great moments.” Fletcher is also proud of the scene, telling Malkin that “what’s important is you see two people having a moment, Elton’s first love. And that’s what needs to be approached responsibly and it’s a beautiful scene I’m very proud of.” It was nominated for the BAFTA Award for Best British Film of the Year, the GALECA Award for LGBTQ Film of the Year, and the GLAAD award for Outstanding Film in Wide Release.

<https://variety.com/2019/film/news/taron-egerton-rocketman-sex-scene-controversy-nonsense-1203180959/>



Southern Comfort, 2019

Dan Collins and Julianne Wick Davis' blue-grass musical is set in Georgia in 1998. The story follows the last year of patriarch Robert Eades life, a trans man who's dying of Ovarian cancer, as he surrounds himself with his chosen family of mostly trans friends. Based on the 2001 documentary of the same name that won the Sundance Grand Jury prize. Winner of the Jonathan Larson award. Originally it was cast with Cis gendered actors, starring Annette O'Toole as Robert, for which there was much controversy from the trans community.

For the first time in 2019 it is being produced by Pride Films and Plays in Chicago with an all trans cast. North Homeword, who plays Robert said, "We're now building a theatre community that is very representational. We showcase members of the community that rarely get the opportunities. It is an empowering show."



<https://www.chicagolandmusicaltheatre.com/the-authenticity-of-pride-films-plays-southern-comfort-may-just-make-humans-better/>

Trans Actors

- **Ian Alexander** is best known for Buck Vu on *The OA*. <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2019/04/18/ian-alexander-transgender-actor/>
- **Alex Blue Davis** is best known for Dr. Casey Parker on *Grey's Anatomy*. <https://wofo.press/19295/a-e/an-interview-with-alex-blue-davis-of-greys-anatomy/?print=true>
- **Tom Phelan** is best known for Cole on *The Fosters*. <https://www.pride.com/women/2014/3/03/exclusive-tom-phelan-breaks-ground-trans-actor-playing-trans-teen-fosters>
- **Elliot Fletcher** is best known for *Faking It*, Trevor on *Shameless* and Aaron on *The Fosters*. <https://www.pride.com/transgender/2016/2/17/trans-man-elliott-fletcher-joins-mtv-faking-it-shows-first-trans-role>
- **Brian Michael Smith** is best known for *Queen Sugar*. <https://www.them.us/story/take-5-brian-michael-smith-the-l-word-generation-q>



Ian Alexander



Alex Blue Davis



Tom Phelan



Elliot Fletcher



Brian Michael Smith

Trans Actors

- **Amiyah Scott** is best known for playing Cotton on *Star*, made her the first trans woman with a regular role on a major network series. <https://www.jetmag.com/entertainment/lee-daniels-star-amiyah-scott-transgender/>
- **Laverne Cox** is best known for playing Sophia Burset on *Orange is the New Black*. <https://ew.com/article/2014/08/08/sophia-orange-is-the-new-black/>
- **Jamie Clayton** is best known for Nomi Marks on *Sense 8*. <https://www.them.us/story/sense8-finale>
- **Hunter Schafer** is best known for Jules on *Euphoria*. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/euphoria-jules-trans-teens>
- **Nicole Mains** is best known for Nia Nal on *Supergirl*. <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2019/01/supergirl-nicole-maines-interview-dreamer-trans-superhero>



Amiyah Scott



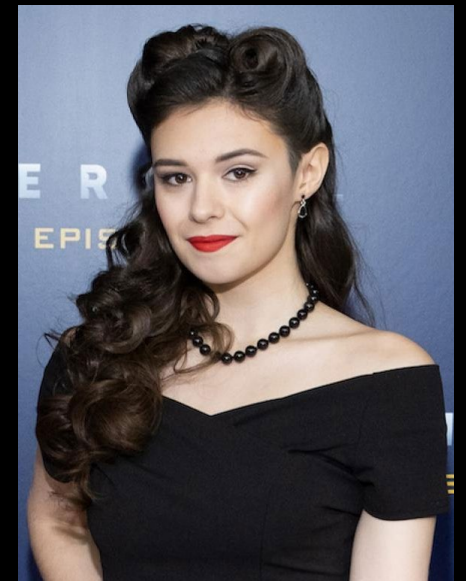
Laverne Cox



Jamie Clayton



Hunter Schafer



Nicole Mains

Non-Binary Actors

- **Lachlan Watson** is best known for playing Susie/Theo on *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, 2018. <https://www.them.us/story/lachlan-watson-sabrina-cover-story>
- **Ellie Desautels** is best known for playing Michael on *Rise*, 2018. <https://www.thegazette.com/hoopla/transgender-representation-is-central-for-ellie-desautels-star-of-orange-julius-opening-at-csps-20191112>
- **Asia Kate Dillon** is best known for playing Brandy on *Orange is the New Black*, 2016-17, and as Taylor Mason in *Billions*, 2017-2020. Their advocacy forced MTV to create a gender-neutral category for acting awards. <https://www.thecut.com/2019/06/asia-kate-dillon-billions-john-wick.html>
- **Ser Anzoategui** is best known for playing Eddy on *Vida*, 2018. <https://www.advocate.com/television/2020/5/27/vidas-ser-anzoategui-carving-path-nonbinary-actors>
- **Indya Moore** is best known for voicing Shep on *Steven Universe*. <https://variety.com/2020/tv/features/indya-moore-pose-transgender-community-pride-1234623265/>



Lachlan Watson



Ellie Desautels



Asia Kate Dillon



Ser Anzoategui



Indya Moore