

*“Oh, ‘tis a glorious thing, I ween,
To be a regular Royal Queen!”*

Sir William Schwenck Gilbert

1836–1911

The Gondoliers



A "SWELL NIGHT" FOR THE TIJUANA AIDS PROJECT

On World Aids Day, Friday December 1, Empress Philomena hosted a cabaret gala, One Night Only, at the Triad in New York. The event was the ICNY's part in a remarkable joint fundraising effort by the East Coast Coalition of Imperial Courts to benefit the Tijuana Aids Project/ Outpatient Clinic in Tijuana, Mexico.

The New York fundraiser drew nearly one hundred patrons and raised a total of \$1772 for the Aids Project. One Night Only was conceived and produced by Empress Philomena, with Thom Hansen acting as event co-chair, and the ICNY as co-producers. The event was sponsored by Time Out and the Court itself underwrote \$350 in production expenses.

The enthusiastic, diverse crowd was treated to performances by an array of stars from the cabaret circuit. With the ubiquitous and droll Joel Maisano at the piano, more than a half-dozen performers took the stage, including Rick McKay, Bonnie Scher, Mark Alan, Karen Wilder, Fred Barton, and K.T. Sullivan, all graciously donating their talents for the Tijuana Aids Project. Empress Philomena herself sang two numbers, and appeared in no fewer than four (count them) fabulous gowns, not to mention the jewelry.

Midway through the evening, a fund-raising auction was held, with the gloriously bee-hived Katie O'Malley, aka Thom Hansen (Panzi), presiding. Items on the block included many celebrity-autographed photos, Playbills and CDs. An autographed topcoat was donated by Michael Feinstein, who also included a photo and an additional \$100 donation. In the evening's fiercest action, a bid was made for Panzi's panties, sight unseen (one would think). The price was upped by Larry Vrba, but on condition that Panzi keep them to herself. In the end, the dubious undergarment was sold for forty-five dollars.

"The event was significant", said President Panzi, "because it shows the kind of stuff we're made of here in New York. This will do a lot of good in Tijuana. I am more than pleased with the results."

Empress Philomena, in her report to the membership the following week simply said "It was a pretty swell night, and we made a lot of money." 

The Court Circular

The Official Newsletter
of the Imperial Court of New York



New York, NY 10003

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To raise funds for Gay & Lesbian Community and social service organizations; to provide a safe, social environment for people with the same interest as those of the corporation; to create and promote positive Community awareness of the ideals of the Imperial Court System.

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Johnny Cella

The Executive Board of the Imperial Court of New York meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month. The General Membership meets on the first Wednesday of each month at The Center, 208 West 13th St. at 8:00pm.

WORDS OF WISDOM

We all go through life "day by day", but how many of us take time... time to reflect on what positive things we may have done during the course of our day? No, I am not referring to getting out of bed, going to work, eating, sleeping... those are the things we must do to survive day by day. But just stop a moment and take time... time to think of how much pleasure you can bring another by calling them on the phone to say, "I was thinking about you. I wanted to say hello." It is a very small effort, but think of the rewards to both of you. Perhaps you can offer help to someone who needs it; perhaps you can tell someone how nice they look.

There are countless ways to reach out in a positive way...and take time... time to think "If I can't say or do something positive, then perhaps it's best to do nothing." I have felt the negative reactions of others from time to time, but I try not to react in kind... instead I try to find the positive side of it, and I do feel the better for it. It is counterproductive to waste our precious energy on negative things.

And to all dear Imperial Court families, let's try to take time... time to remember that the families who thrive are the families who reach out to each other. Reflect on this, and soon I will reach out to all of you again.

I bid you all Peace and Love,
Empress VIII Billie Ann



TEATIME WITH KAY SERA

Meet your Monarch:
**H.M.I.S.M. Philomena
Regina, Empress of Faith,
Hope and Cartier, aka Philip Stoehr.**

As editor of The Court Circular we are blessed with unexpected golden opportunities, but it would be difficult for us to imagine many greater than being graciously received in the lushly appointed drawing room of H.M.I.S.M. Philomena Regina, The Ninth Elected Empress of New York, Faith Hope and Cartier her own self. We were served afternoon tea in a rare commemorative mug emblazoned with the likeness of another revered Monarch, H.I.M. The Late Elvis "The King" Presley. KAY SERA: No sugar, thank you. So Your Majesty, what's the story here? PHILOMENA: I grew up in Rutherford, New Jersey, and escaped at 27. Actually,

that's not fair- I did live at home until an unseemly age, but it got me through some awful years. I had a rather close relationship with my parents- my mother passed in 1994, and my dad now lives in Florida. My brother's in North Carolina, married with two kids, a truck driver- very heterosexual. My dad was a tool and die maker- a real, dying craft- and my mother was very artistic. I would come home from school to find she'd completely forgotten about dinner, having passed the day away painting, plastering, merrily doing home improvements.

KAY SERA: Splendid! When did you don your first frock?

PHILOMENA: I sort of slipped into drag around eighteen- I began buying pretty things at church rummage sales, without consciously thinking of wearing them, of course. I kept it from my family for a short time. One minute my mother was saying "I don't know why you would want to wear a dress", and the next minute she was earnestly advising me to straighten the seams of my stockings. The first time I dressed up was definitely a major turning point in my life. No one was home, and I put on a red taffeta ball gown. I think I had some horrible wig. I found it not to be a sexual thrill, but very empowering. I heard the front door slam and realized my brother had come home early. There was no lock on the bedroom door, and as he came up the stairs I tried to hold the door closed and unzip at the same time. He's yelling "Phil, let me in", and I'm saying "I'm not dressed" (we had only shared a room for twenty years). I couldn't even get into the closet, so I decided to get under the bedclothes. As I dove for the bed, he walked in, and there I was, in a red taffeta ball gown. He acted like nothing was happening.

KAY SERA: What was your parents' reaction?

PHILOMENA: When I was around 11, Christine Jorgensen was all over the news, so my parents took me to a child psychologist. After a few sessions, they were assured that I wasn't a transsexual, but that I would probably be gay. To their credit, they decided against any kind of intervention, any therapy.

KAY SERA: What did drag mean to you then, as a young person?

PHILOMENA: It was like theater for me. I loved the 1940's star look. I was frequently mistaken for a girl anyway until I was 30...well, maybe 25. I didn't like that at all. I'd always thought of myself as a

man. Well, as a boy, at any rate. I entered a contest at the Follies Bar in Passaic, and came in third, but it was really for my period costume. They all thought I was a girl. It was a mixed bar, and the lesbians were hitting on me all night. I tried dressing for dates once or twice, but I didn't care for it. Just for events and parties. I was really quite good at it.

KAY SERA: Where did you go from Passaic?

PHILOMENA: A friend called and asked me to "do" Bernadette Peters at the Gypsy of the Year contest at the Palladium. That was a big thrill, to have thousands of people fall apart thinking I was someone else. I did shows at the Red Parrot, and then I went to my first Night of a Thousand Gowns. I was doing a show at the Actors' Playhouse with Razor Sharp, and he urged me to join the Court, which was re-organizing that year.

That year, 1990, proved to be another major turning point for me. I won the Fire Island Homecoming Queen competition, then won Miss Fire Island. That seemed to ruffle some feathers as I had never before entered (not being on the beauty queen circuit), and what's worse, I wore a plain white dress with not a bead or a sequin on it. In the middle of it all, my lover Michael died. Then I joined the Court (Hallowe'en

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

I would like to congratulate you and the staff on turning out a great publication. People cannot always be "on the spot" for events and happenings, and this is a great way to keep us informed. And, there are times when members would like to be heard, so this is a great format for that too. It will also help bring individual Courts and brother and sister Courts closer together as well. Keep up the good work.

Empress VIII, Billie Ann Miller

SAY CHEEEEEZE!

Plans have just been finalized by the ICNY Board of Directors for world famous photographer Anthony Colantonio (known for his breathtaking male nude portraits) to shoot the 1996 Night Of A Thousand Gowns Journal head-shots. All members will have their pictures taken during the month of January (pre-scheduled for January 13, 14, and 20) and must contact Johnny Cella [REDACTED] with any questions or problems regarding their scheduled time.

Anthony Colantonio was selected from a list of very talented, dedicated, and generous photographers. We thank them all for their interest in the Imperial Court of New

York and its mission.

Anyone interested in a private sitting with Anthony, for your personal use, may contact: Anthony Colantonio Photography, 38 West 26th Street, Studio 10-B, New York, NY 10010, (212) 675-7545. 

ICNY'S ANNUAL WINTER PARTY

Johnny Cella, Membership Chairman, has announced the venue and plans for the Court's annual winter party. To be held on Sunday, January 14, 1996, from 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Le MAX Restaurant, 147 West 43 St., (Between 6th Ave and Broadway), New York, NY 10036 (212) 764 3705

The cost is \$25. per person (member/non-member guest). There will be a cocktail hour with a cash bar and full course dinner with soup of the day, house salad, choice of entree (pasta, chicken, salmon, or steak), fruit dessert, and coffee or tea.

A sign-up sheet will be distributed on Wednesday, December 6, 1995 at the General Membership Meeting for all interested members. Our maximum attendance is 150 people! If you plan to bring a guest or guests, please contact Johnny at [REDACTED] as soon as possible. Payment for the dinner will be expected at the January 1996 meeting. 

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS '95-96

Lady Elario, Lord Matthias, Lady Beatrice, Lady Tyler Alyxander, Lady Chris, Lord Nicodemus, Lord Greene, Lord Micheal, Lady Tori Adore, Lady Kiwi Pavlova, Lord Killingsworth, Lady K.C., Lord Patrick, Lady Fanny Fondu, Lady Demonica, Lady Liz Taylor, Lady Mrs. Pamela Harriman, Lady Tammie Recine, Lady Javid, Lady Luisa, Lady Gefil Tefisa, Lady Fabu LaRue, Lady Jeremey-Stuart de Fishberg, and Lady Zondra Fox. The Court has a total of 85 members. The Board welcomes its new and renewing members. 

ARTICLES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Deadline for articles and photographs for *The Court Circular* is the first of the month. Materials should be submitted to Richard Eagan, editor, at the membership meetings, by FAX [REDACTED], or by mail to: Richard Eagan, [REDACTED], Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215. 

DECEMBER

Tuesday, December 19

- Cyberqueers at Crazy Nanny's, 7:30pm \$20. to benefit Madrigal House

1996

JANUARY

Saturday, January 13

- Journal Photo Shoot, 38 W. 26 St., 10B, Reserve time slots: Johnny 807-7239

Sunday, January 14

- ICNY Holiday Party at Le Max, 147 W. 43 St, 5 - 8pm, \$25. reservations: Johnny 807-7239

- Journal Photo Shoot, 38 W. 26 St., 10B, **NOTE: THIS IS A NEW DATE** Reserve time slots: Johnny 807-7239

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Saturday, January 20

- Journal Photo Shoot, 38 W. 26 St., 10B, Reserve time slots: Johnny 807-7239
- Victor/Victoria at the Marquis Theater 8:00pm curtain

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

• Coronation – Houston, TX

Sunday, January 21

- Journal Photo Shoot, 38 W. 26 St., 10B, **CANCELLED** Reserve time slots: Johnny 807-7239

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 24

- Connecticut Coronation, Hartford, CT

MARCH

Saturday, March 2

- *Brian & Donna's Excellent Adventure*, Coronation – San Francisco, CA

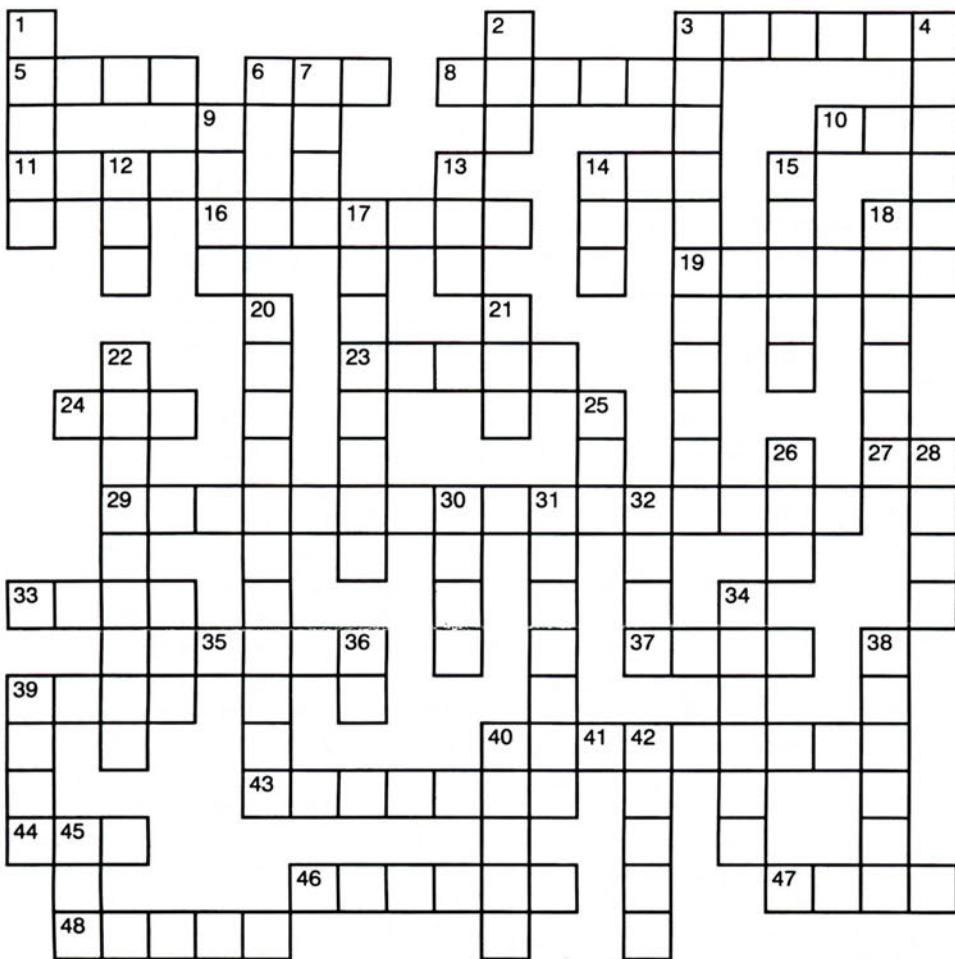
APRIL

Saturday, April 20

- *Night of a Thousand Gowns*, Coronation – New York, NY

Sunday, April 21

- The 'Widows' Victory Brunch



Across

- 1 Cab
- 5 Small, flat cap
- 5 Fire Girls
- 6 Blue
- 8 Novice
- 10 To come to be
- 11 Proportion
- 14 A deliberate slight
- 16 Clear, brilliant glass
- 19 Slave's counterpart
- 23 Faithful, steadfast
- 24 As American as apple _____
- 27 Above-ground subway
- 29 Highest level of British knighthood (4 words)
- 33 Absolute Empress 1
- 35 _____ lens, for close-ups
- 37 To strive toward a goal
- 39 Loan
- 41 Hawaiian guitar
- 43 Bernhardt and Dee
- 44 Tibetan ox
- 46 Belonging to Joan River's dog
- 47 Low, vile, sordid
- 48 Black and white striped animal

Down

- 1 Oak nut
- 2 Female deer
- 3 The Divine Miss M (2 words)

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was my first event), and that fall I was diagnosed HIV positive. It was quite a year. Eight months of therapy helped pull me through.

KAY SERA: Tell us a bit about your run for the Monarchy.

PHILOMENA: By 1990 I had given up the idea of a professional performing career, and the Court seemed to suit my talents and temperament. I first ran for Empress in 1993 against Vanessa Diamond and Billie Ann, who of course was elected. In '94, the year I was chosen, I ran against Ran-dee and Victoria Weston.

KAY SERA: During your successful campaign, you outed yourself as an HIV positive person. What was that like for you, without putting too fine a point upon it?

PHILOMENA: I had always been out (as a gay man and as a drag queen), but in terms of my HIV status I thought of it like a pregnancy- not appropriate to announce until nature rendered it unnecessary. Outing myself as HIV positive was rather difficult, one might say,

although enormously liberating in the end. **KAY SERA:** What does the Monarchy mean to you?

PHILOMENA: I take the job more seriously than I take myself. I've turned down only one request for an appearance, and that was due to a prior booking. I made six appearances at Gay Pride '95, five during Hallowe'en week. I feel that as Empress I have a valuable contribution to make both to the Court and the community. I especially gravitate to somewhat "straight" events, such as Cooks for Kids, the pediatric AIDS benefit, which drew considerable mainstream press. They took me most seriously and treated me with great courtesy. I'm not a political type; I don't believe in beating people over the head, but I love to expose people to unexpected choices.

KAY SERA: How has your reign affected your personal life- what can a prospective Monarch expect?

PHILOMENA: Oh, the office has taken over my personal life- I have no time for socializing! But it has been immensely important to me, and to the transgendered community. The scope of the com-

mitment can be formidable, but the rewards are even greater. I do a great deal of what's required myself- my face, hair and makeup- I'm really an independent sort of person. For the World AIDS Day benefit, it will take me two days to coordinate and accessorize four different outfits alone.

KAY SERA: But?

PHILOMENA: Yes, but. To have been chosen to make the official announcement opening Gay Pride Week, to travel out of town and have complete strangers treat me with warmth and dignity, these are things that have given me a great deal of gratitude. Of all that I've done, these are the biggies.

KAY SERA: Your Majesty, you have been more than kind, but enough is enough. Could you pick me up a set of these (mugs) on your next trip to Graceland? 



NIGHT OF A THOUSAND GOWNS

APRIL 20, 1996