

PETER ANASTOS

CHOREOGRAPHER

b. 1948

“It’s very rewarding for me to know I founded this company 50 years ago ... it’s a testament to ... people’s unquenchable desire for laughter and happiness.”

An accomplished choreographer, he is the cofounder of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo.

Peter G. Anastos is an accomplished choreographer famous for blending classical ballet and comedy as a cofounder of the parodic dance company Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo.

Raised in a Greek family in Newtonville, New York, Anastos discovered his passion for dance in junior high during a class trip to see “Oliver!” in New York City. Instead of attending the play with his peers, Anastos slipped off to a Saturday matinee at the Royal Ballet. Although the adventure infuriated his teachers, it altered the course of his life.

Anastos studied classical dance in New York and Leningrad and began choreographing for various companies. In 1974, he cofounded Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, an all-male dance company created to parody classical ballet and, later, modern dance. The troupe quickly gained a following, including sophisticated New York ballet enthusiasts, for its clever send-ups of traditional American and Russian works, along with pieces from 20th-century masters like George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins.

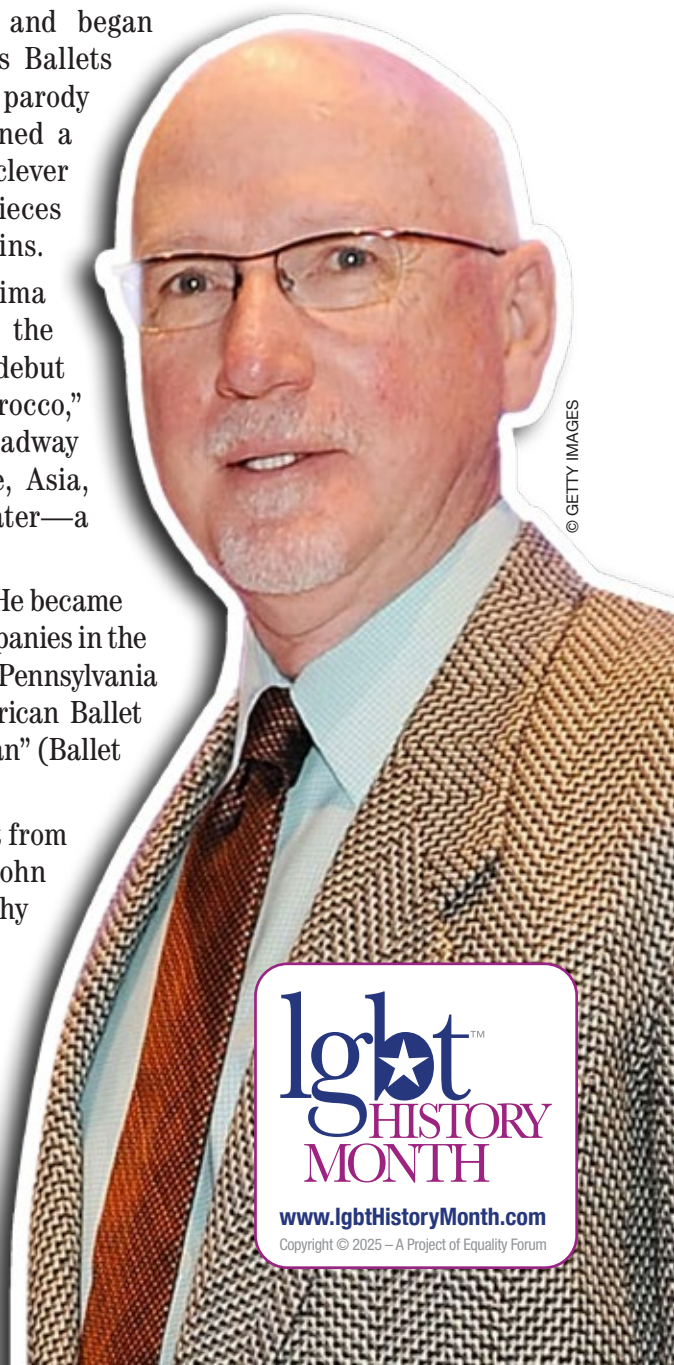
Anastos served as artistic director, principal choreographer, and prima ballerina of the Trockadero from 1975 to 1978, performing under the stage name Olga Tchikabooskaya. He choreographed the troupe’s debut ballet, “Go for Barocco,” a spoof of George Balanchine’s “Concerto Barocco,” performed in a loft. Within a year, the company had made its Broadway debut. Since then, the Trockadero has toured throughout Europe, Asia, South America, and Russia and continues to perform 50 years later—a testament to Anastos’s vision.

Anastos left the Trockadero in 1978 to test his range as a choreographer. He became a sought-after artist, choreographing for some of the most respected companies in the United States, including the Eglevsky Ballet, the Dallas Ballet, and the Pennsylvania Ballet, as well as for companies around the world. “Cinderella” (American Ballet Theatre, 1983), “The Lost World” (Miami City Ballet, 1992), and “Peter Pan” (Ballet West and Cincinnati Ballet, 1994) are among his best-known pieces.

Anastos served as resident choreographer for the Garden State Ballet from 1979 to 1981 and for the Santa Fe Opera in 1983. He received the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship for choreography in 1981 and again in 1991.

Anastos served as the artistic director of the Cincinnati Ballet for two years before returning to freelance work. In 2001, the Trockadero coaxed him back to choreograph “La Trovatiara Pas de Cinq,” a ballet set to Verdi.

In 2007, Ballet Idaho hired him as its artistic director. He remained with the company until he retired 2018. Anastos lives in Boise.



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WALTER ARLEN

July 31, 1920

d. September 2, 2023

COMPOSER & HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

"The music I have written is so heavily influenced by what happened to my family, the tragedies that befell me, the loss of everything ..."

**He was
composer, a
music critic,
and a Holocaust
survivor.**

Walter Arlen was an Austrian-born composer and music critic who fled Nazi persecution and settled in the United States. Although he composed 65 works, chiefly for voice and piano, his music was not performed publicly until he was 88.

Born Walter Aptowitzer in Vienna, Austria, he was the son of Jewish parents who owned a department store established by his grandfather. At 5, Arlen exhibited perfect pitch. He began piano lessons with Otto Erich Deutsch, a noted Schubert scholar, and was composing music by the age of 10.

In 1938, during the Kristallnacht pogrom, Nazis seized the family store and sent Arlen's father to a concentration camp. His mother suffered a nervous breakdown and later committed suicide. Some of his family, including his father, eventually fled to London. Arlen lost his first love, a boy nicknamed "Lumpi," in the Holocaust.

At 19, Arlen immigrated to the United States and settled in Chicago, where he supported himself as a factory worker. He anglicized his surname to Arlen, inspired by Harold Arlen, the composer of "Over the Rainbow" from the 1939 film "The Wizard of Oz."

Struggling with profound depression, Arlen turned to composing on the advice of a therapist. He studied composition with Leo Sowerby, a Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer, and won first prize in a student competition. He continued his education at Vanderbilt University and earned a master's degree from UCLA.

After graduating, Arlen worked as a music critic for the Los Angeles Times. He stopped composing at the time, believing that writing criticism presented a conflict of interest. In 1969, he founded the music department at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where he taught and arranged music competitions. He developed friendships with renowned composers such as Carlos Chávez and Igor Stravinsky.

After retiring from journalism, Arlen began composing again in the 1980s. "It was as though it had been dammed up inside me for all those years," he later said. His music was performed publicly for the first time in 2008 at the Jewish Museum in Vienna. That same year, he received the Decoration of Honour for Services to the Republic of Austria. His works have since been performed in the United States and Europe and recorded on a series of CDs.

In 2013, at the age of 93, Arlen married Howard Myers, his partner of 65 years. Arlen eventually lost his sight and was forced to stop composing around 2000. He died in California at the age of 103. The New York Times published his obituary.



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BECCA BALINT U.S. CONGRESSPERSON

b. May 4, 1968

“It is about basic humanity, people being able to live their lives and work in peace.”

Becca Balint is the first woman and the first openly LGBTQ+ person to serve in both the Vermont Senate and the Vermont House of Representatives.

Born in a U.S. Army hospital in Heidelberg, West Germany, and raised in Peekskill, New York, Balint is the daughter of a working-class mother and a Hungarian-Jewish immigrant father. Her parents’ experiences—and her grandfather’s murder in the Holocaust—instilled in her an early and profound awareness of injustice.

She is the first woman and first openly LGBTQ+ person to represent Vermont in Congress.

Balint was bullied in middle school for having a crush on another girl. She came out as a lesbian to close friends in high school. She attended Smith College, where she was coxswain on the women’s crew team and earned the nickname “the Admiral” for her natural leadership ability. Balint graduated magna cum laude in 1990 with a degree in history and women’s studies. She earned master’s degrees from Harvard University in 1995 and the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2001.

Balint moved to Vermont in the mid-1990s, where she initially taught middle school and wrote for a local newspaper. She met Elizabeth Wohl in 2000, and they married in 2009 after Vermont legalized same-sex marriage.

Though politically engaged for years, Balint launched her political career in 2014 with a successful run for the Vermont Senate. She was the first out lesbian to hold the position. Balint was reelected three times. In 2017, she was unanimously elected majority leader, and in 2021, she made history again as the first woman and first out lesbian to serve as president pro tempore of the Senate.

A Democrat, Balint successfully ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2022 and was reelected in 2024 with over 62% of the vote.

A longtime advocate for progressive causes—gun control, voting rights, and combating bigotry—Balint is a fierce defender of LGBTQ+ rights. She has fought conversion therapy legislation and opposes transgender discrimination. She serves on the House Judiciary Committee and as a leader of the Progressive Caucus and passionately defends American democracy.

In 2023, Out magazine named Balint one of the 100 most impactful and influential LGBTQ+ people. She lives in Brattleboro, Vermont, with her wife, an attorney and opera singer, and their two children.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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SAMUEL BARBER

b. March 9, 1910

d. January 23, 1981

20TH CENTURY COMPOSER

**He was among the
most celebrated
composers of the mid-
20th century.**

"I guess, for better or worse, I am an American composer, and I've had a wonderful life being exactly that."

Samuel Barber was among the most celebrated American composers of the mid-20th century. The winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, he was famous for both his instrumental and vocal works.

Born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Barber composed his first piece at age 7 and wrote his first operetta by age 10. Despite his obvious gift, his family pushed him to play football like other boys his age. At 9, in an apologetic note to his mother, he wrote,

"... I was not meant to be an athlete. I was meant to be a composer."

At 14, Barber began studying piano, composition, voice, and conducting at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There, he became romantically involved with a fellow student, Gian Carlo Menotti, and they began a 40-year relationship. Menotti also achieved fame, chiefly as an opera composer.

Barber entered the adult program at Curtis in 1928. He graduated in 1934 and made his professional conducting debut in Vienna that same year. After several early successes, he received the American Prix de Rome in 1935 and a Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship for 1935-'36—prestigious honors that furthered his dream of becoming a full-time composer.

In 1938, Barber's most popular work, "Adagio for Strings," premiered under the famous conductor Arturo Toscanini. In addition to its frequent use in film and television, it was played in 1945 during the radio announcement of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's death and later at the funerals of Albert Einstein and Princess Grace of Monaco. In 2005, the Library of Congress selected the original recording of the piece for inclusion in the National Recording Registry.

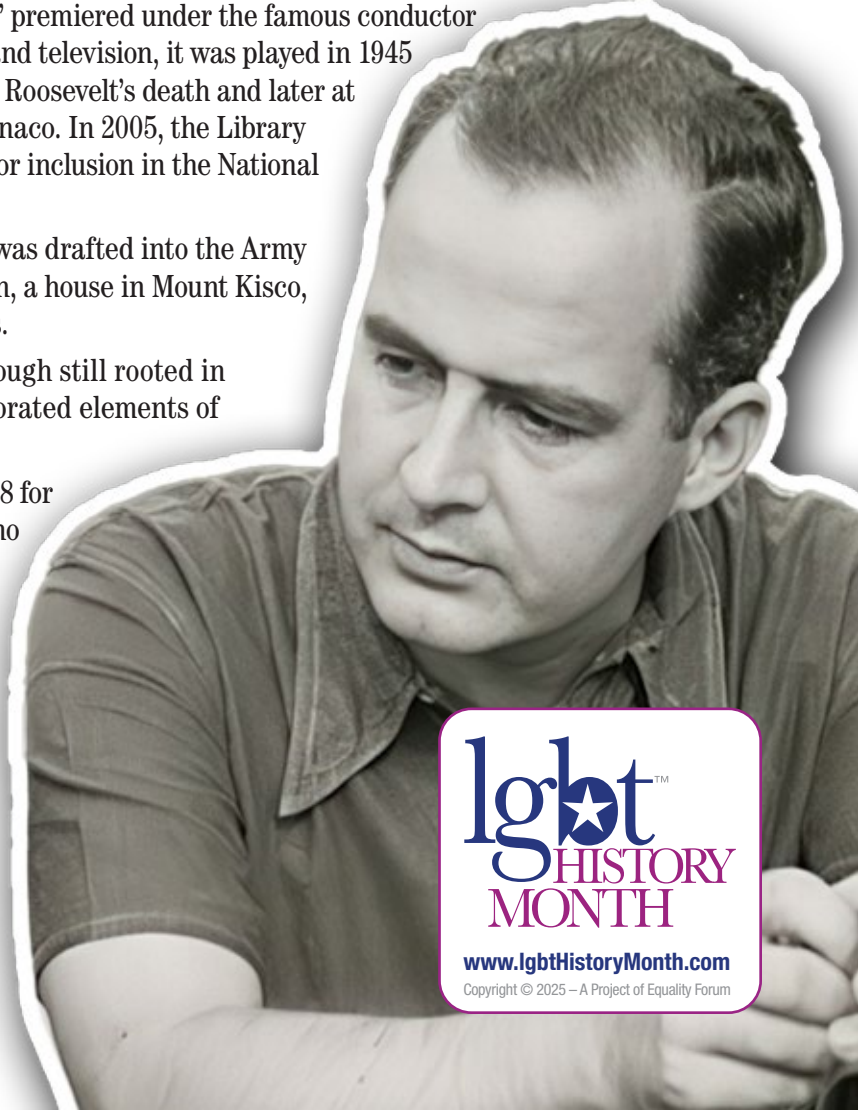
In 1939, Barber returned to his alma mater to teach. He was drafted into the Army in 1942. A year later, he and Menotti purchased Capricorn, a house in Mount Kisco, New York, where they lived and worked for three decades.

After World War II, Barber's musical style evolved. Although still rooted in 19th-century Romanticism, his subsequent work incorporated elements of jazz and modernism.

Barber twice received the Pulitzer Prize for Music: in 1958 for his opera "Vanessa" and in 1962 for his "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra." His only critical failure came with the opera "Anthony and Cleopatra" (1966), which premiered to poor reviews. Devastated, Barber spiraled into depression and alcoholism. Menotti eventually ended their romantic relationship, but the two remained close.

Barber composed throughout his life. Among other works, he produced two symphonies, three concertos, three operas, and more than 100 songs. In the late 1970s, he underwent extensive cancer treatment. Barber died in Manhattan at age 70.

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ANDY COHEN

b. June 2, 1968

TV PERSONALITY & PRODUCER

“The one guiding principle over my 23-year career in TV has been as long as I’m having fun, I really don’t care what my job title is.”

He is an award-winning TV and radio host, a writer, and a producer.

Andy Cohen is a television and radio host, a writer, and a prolific producer known for successful Bravo reality TV franchises such as “The Real Housewives,” “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” “Project Runway,” and “Top Chef.” He became the first openly gay person to host an American late-night talk show with “Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen.”

Andrew Joseph Cohen was born to Jewish parents in St. Louis, Missouri. At an early age, he knew he wanted to work in television. In 1990, he earned a B.S. in broadcast journalism from Boston University. While there, he accidentally came out to his mother when she found a letter he intended for someone else.

After graduation, Cohen interned at CBS News, where he remained for the next decade. Starting as a news clerk, he rose through the ranks to produce shows such as “CBS This Morning,” “The Early Show,” and “48 Hours.”

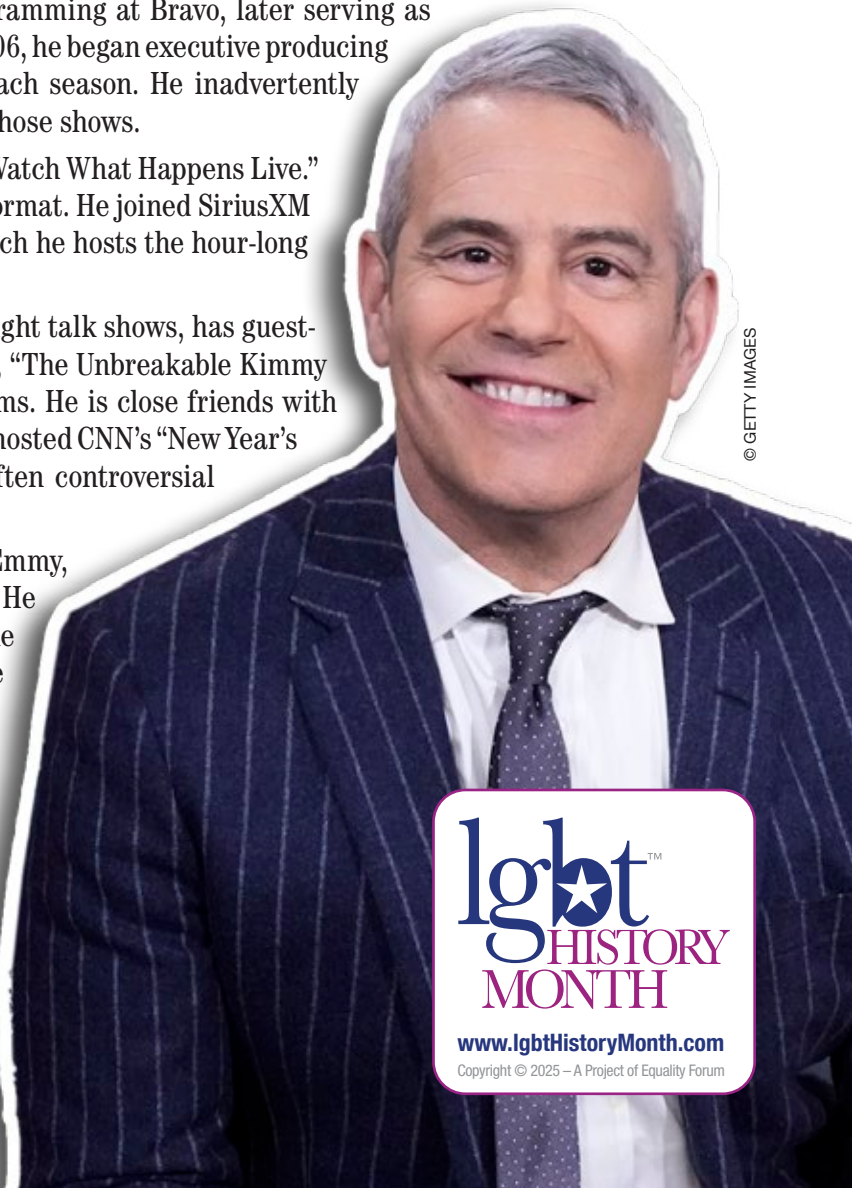
In 2004, Cohen became vice president of original programming at Bravo, later serving as executive vice president of development and talent. In 2006, he began executive producing “The Real Housewives” and hosted reunion specials each season. He inadvertently publicly outed himself during the 2010 taping of one of those shows.

Since 2009, Cohen has hosted the midnight talk show, “Watch What Happens Live.” Initially airing weekly, the show expanded to a nightly format. He joined SiriusXM in 2015 and has two personally curated channels on which he hosts the hour-long program “Andy Cohen Live.”

Cohen regularly appears on popular daytime and late-night talk shows, has guest-starred as himself on multiple comedy series, including, “The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” and has guest-hosted countless other programs. He is close friends with the broadcast journalist Anderson Cooper. They have co-hosted CNN’s “New Year’s Eve Live” since 2017-18. Cohen provides a witty and often controversial counterpoint to Cooper.

Among many honors, Cohen has received a Primetime Emmy, two Peabody Awards, and GLAAD’s Vito Russo Award. He has appeared on multiple power lists and was named one of Out magazine’s most influential LGBTQ people for five consecutive years.

Cohen has authored three memoirs: “Most Talkative: Stories from the Front Lines of Pop Culture” (2012), “The Andy Cohen Diaries: A Deep Look at a Shallow Year” (2014), and “Superficial: More Adventures from the Andy Cohen Diaries (2016)” — all New York Times best sellers. A proud single father, he lives with his son and daughter in Manhattan.



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JOHN D'EMILIO

b. September 21, 1948

LGBTQ HISTORIAN

He is a preeminent author, professor, and pioneering LGBTQ+ historian.

“Movements aren’t magical, they evolve, and they grow under different circumstances.”

John D’Emilio is an author, a professor, and a pioneering LGBTQ+ historian.

Born in the Bronx, New York, D’Emilio was raised in a working-class Italian family. He attended an elite Catholic boys’ school in Manhattan on a scholarship and struggled with his sexuality, he said, “when it was impossible to be gay.”

D’Emilio developed an interest in history during the 1960s antiwar movement and pursued the subject at Columbia University. He focused on the history of gay activism and graduated cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa. He earned his Ph.D. in 1982.

Based on his groundbreaking doctoral dissertation, D’Emilio’s first book, “Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970,” was published the year after he graduated. He met his life partner, Jim Oleson, around the same time and began teaching LGBTQ+ history at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, where he remained for over a decade. In the 1980s, during the early years of the AIDS epidemic and in a period of widespread homophobia, D’Emilio was among the first educators to study and teach the subject.

In 1995, D’Emilio became the founding director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s Policy Institute. He returned to academia in 1997 as a professor of history and women’s and gender studies at the University of Illinois Chicago.

D’Emilio has authored numerous books, including a memoir, “Memories of a Gay Catholic Boyhood.” In 1988, he collaborated with Stanford history professor Estelle Freedman on the best seller, “Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America.” Notably, in 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court cited the book in its decision on *Lawrence v. Texas*, the landmark case striking down state sodomy laws nationwide. That same year, D’Emilio published the biography “Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin,” which earned a National Book Award nomination and won the Stonewall Book Award and Randy Shilts Award.

Among additional honors, D’Emilio has received fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He won the David R. Kessler Award for LGBTQ Studies from CLAGS at City University of New York in 1999; he was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2005; and he received the Bill Whitehead Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2013.

Oleson, D’Emilio’s partner of more than 30 years, died in 2015 in their Chicago home where D’Emilio still lives. He is a professor emeritus at the University of Illinois Chicago.



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COLMAN DOMINGO

b. November 28, 1969

ACTOR & PLAYWRIGHT

"I think what we're trying to do in theater is heal someone."

Colman Domingo is an Oscar- and Tony-nominated, Obie and Emmy Award-winning actor, director, and playwright. Most recently, he earned acclaim for his starring roles in the films "Rustin" (2023) and "Sing Sing" (2024). He plays Joe Jackson in the biopic "Michael," which opened in October 2025.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Domingo is the son of a Black mother and a Belizean father who left when Domingo was 9. His mother later remarried, and his stepfather worked sanding floors.

Domingo earned a degree in journalism from Temple University. After college, he moved to San Francisco to pursue acting. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, he appeared in small roles on television shows such as "Law & Order" and in films including Clint Eastwood's "True Crime."

In 2008, Domingo received an Obie Award for his Broadway debut in the rock musical "Passing Strange." He reprised the role in Spike Lee's 2009 film adaptation. In 2010, he appeared Off Broadway in his autobiographical play, "A Boy and His Soul." One of six plays written by Domingo, it earned multiple nominations and the Lucille Lortel Award. The following year, he earned a Tony nomination for his performance in "The Scottsboro Boys."

While continuing in theater, Domingo secured supporting roles in acclaimed films including "Lincoln" (2012), "The Butler" (2013), and "Selma" (2014). He landed his breakout role in the AMC TV series "Fear the Walking Dead" (2015-2023). In 2018, he directed three episodes of show, wrote the book for Broadway's "Summer: The Donna Summer Musical," and appeared in the award-winning film

"If Beale Street Could Talk," based on the novel by James Baldwin.

After directing Domingo in his 2018 film, "Assassination Nation," Sam Levinson cast him on the hit TV series "Euphoria"—a part that earned Domingo a Primetime Emmy Award in 2022.

In 2023, Domingo starred as the civil rights activist Bayard Rustin in the Netflix biopic "Rustin." The portrayal made him the first Afro-Latino and the first openly gay American man to receive an Academy Award nomination for playing a gay character. Domingo produced and starred in the 2024 film "Sing Sing," which earned him three Oscar nominations and numerous awards. To date, Domingo has garnered more than 40 awards for his stage and screen performances, countless nominations, and a place on TIME magazine's list of the 100 most influential people of 2024.

Domingo lives in California with his husband of 11 years, Raúl Domingo.

He is an award-winning actor, playwright, and director.

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BILLIE EILISH

b. December 18, 2001

INDIE MUSIC SUPERSTAR

*“I’ve always done whatever I want and
always been exactly who I am.”*

**She is an award-
winning record-
breaking indie music
superstar.**

Billie Eilish is a nine-time Grammy and two-time Academy Award-winning indie music superstar.

Born in Los Angeles, Billie Eilish Pirate Baird O’Connell is the daughter of a female actor and a musician. Homeschooled alongside her brother and musical collaborator, Finneas, she played the ukulele at 6 and composed her first song at 11—the same year she was diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome. She is an advocate for people with the disorder.

Before focusing on music, Eilish acted as an extra in films such as “Diary of a Wimpy Kid.” In 2015, she and Finneas recorded two songs and posted them on SoundCloud for fun. They uploaded “Ocean Eyes” later that year.

In January 2016, Apple Music’s artist incubator, Platoon, signed Eilish. In August, she signed a record deal with Darkroom and Interscope Records, who officially released “Ocean Eyes.” After Apple Music featured her at SXSW, she released several singles, leading to her debut EP, “Don’t Smile at Me,” which reached No. 14 on the Billboard 200.

By 2018, Eilish launched her second tour. In 2019, she became the youngest artist to achieve one billion Spotify Streams with “Don’t Smile at Me.” That same year, her debut album, “When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?” debuted at No. 1 on both the Billboard 200 and UK Albums Chart. As the first Gen Z artist to top the U.S. charts, she set another record with 14 songs simultaneously hitting the Billboard Hot 100.

Eilish was nominated for six 2020 Grammy Awards. She is the youngest artist to be nominated—and to win—in all four major categories. A documentary chronicling her meteoric rise, “Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry,” premiered in 2021. She won two more Grammys that year.

Eilish is the youngest musician to write and perform a James Bond theme, “No Time to Die.” It won the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 2022, making Eilish the first person born in the 21st century to win an Oscar. The following year, “What Was I Made For?”—the song she wrote for the “Barbie” movie soundtrack—won an Academy Award and two Grammys.

To date, Eilish is the youngest person to win two Academy Awards in any category. In addition to numerous other honors, she holds 20 Guinness World Records for music.

Eilish first acknowledged her attraction to women in a 2023 Variety interview. She now openly embraces her queer identity and has been praised for exploring it in her latest album, “Hit Me Hard and Soft.”



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CECILIA GENTILI

b. January 31, 1972

d. February 6, 2024

TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST

“Equality is an endless cake. The more who eat from it, the more there is to share.”

She was a transgender activist and actor who advocated for under-represented minorities.

Cecilia Gentili was a transgender activist and actor who advocated for undocumented immigrants, sex workers, and people struggling with addiction.

Born in Argentina to Italian and Argentinian parents, Gentili endured sexual abuse from a neighbor throughout her childhood. At age 12, she came out as gay. Her grandmother helped her explore her gender expression. When Gentili did so publicly, she faced attacks from the locals as well as the police.

Gentili moved to the city of Rosario, Argentina, to attend college. She met people there who identified as transgender and adopted the term for herself, identifying as a woman for the first time. When she was 26, she moved to Miami, Florida. An undocumented immigrant, she worked in the sex industry until she was arrested for prostitution and placed in a men's jail.

Gentili moved to New York in 2003. Broke, she turned again to sex work. She was arrested for drug possession in 2009 and sent to Rikers Island, a violent New York prison complex. She was abused and assaulted in both men's and women's jails.

After her release, Gentili spent 17 months in an addiction recovery program. She was granted asylum and legally changed her name. She remained in New York, where she interned at the LGBT Community Center before finding a job at the Apicha Community Health Center as an HIV peer navigator and, eventually, as the health program coordinator. She went on to become the Director of Policy at GMHC, a nonprofit AIDS support organization. Around this same time, and until 2021, Gentili guest starred on the television show “Pose,” set in New York during the AIDS crisis. Her other acting credits include the film Sex(ual) Healing (2021).

In 2019, Gentili cofounded a consulting firm assisting immigrants, sex workers, trans women of color, and incarcerated people. That same year, she cofounded the DecrimNY campaign to decriminalize sex work. She also became a board member of the Stonewall Community Foundation, where she served until her death. In 2020, Gentili and another trans woman unsuccessfully sued the Trump administration for permitting discrimination by medical providers against LGBTQ+ people.

Gentili received the Callen-Lord Community Health Award in 2019. Her memoir, “Faltas: Letters to Everyone in My Hometown Who Isn't My Rapist” (2022), won the Stonewall Book Award. In 2023, her autobiographical play, “Red Ink,” opened Off Broadway, and she cofounded the first all-trans music festival, “Transmissions Fest,” to benefit LGBTQ+ charities.

In 2024, Gentili suffered a fatal overdose from fentanyl-laced heroin. She is survived by her longtime partner, Peter Scotto.



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JEFFREY GIBSON

b. March 31, 1972

INDIGENOUS ARTIST & SCULPTOR

“I’ve thought of a lot of my work as being the call part of call and response. There’s sort of these calls to people ... letting them know I’m here and that they should respond.”

Jeffrey Gibson is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist. Through a fusion of Native American craftwork, contemporary art, and queer iconography, he explores the complexities of identity.

Born in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Gibson is of Cherokee and Mississippi Choctaw descent. His father worked as a civil engineer for the U.S. Department of Defense, and the family lived in various countries during his childhood, including the United States, England, Germany, and South Korea.

After returning to the U.S., Gibson reconnected with his Native heritage and found a sense of community among other queer people of color. He earned a B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1995. While in college, he

worked at the Field Museum of Natural History, facilitating the return of Indigenous artifacts to their original tribes under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990).

In 1998, with funding from the Choctaw Nation, Gibson received his master’s degree in painting from the Royal College of Art in London. The same year, he met a Norwegian artist, Rune Olsen. They married in Norway 14 months later.

The couple moved to New York City, and Gibson began his career as an artist. After years of modest

success and self-doubt, he had a breakthrough in 2012 with his first solo exhibition, “one becomes the other.” The show, which exclusively featured sculpture and video, proved pivotal. It earned Gibson recognition for integrating traditional Native American crafts, such as beading and drum making, into his work and led to his first representation by a commercial gallery.

As his career progressed, Gibson’s work included his now-iconic beaded punching bags and other handwork referencing Native crafts, such as quilting, painting on rawhide, and totems. He also incorporated words and phrases into his art.

In 2024, Gibson made history as the first Indigenous artist to represent the United States with a solo exhibition in the American Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale. The exhibit showcased his signature pieces alongside new creations, such as beaded portrait busts.

Gibson’s work resides in countless prestigious collections, including the Whitney, the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. He has received multiple coveted honors, such as the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Award (2015) and the MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship (2019).

Gibson lives and works in upstate New York and serves as an artist in residence at Bard College. He and Olsen have been married for more than 25 years. They have a daughter and a son.

He is an award-winning multidisciplinary contemporary artist whose work explores Indigenous and queer identity.



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NIKKI GIOVANNI

b. June 7, 1943

d. December 9, 2024

CELEBRATED POET & AUTHOR

She was one of the world's best-known children's authors and African American poets.

"If you don't understand yourself, you don't understand anybody else."

Nikki Giovanni was a professor, an activist, a children's author, and one of the world's best-known African American poets, revered for her deeply personal social commentary on race, gender, and sexuality.

Yolande Cornelia "Nikki" Giovanni Jr. was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. Seeing her father abuse her mother shaped Giovanni's fiercely feminist worldview. She left home at 15, returning to Knoxville to live with her grandparents.

In 1960, Fisk University in Nashville accepted Giovanni as an early entrant, allowing her to start college without completing high school. After a forced hiatus, she earned her degree in history with honors in 1967. When her grandmother died shortly thereafter, Giovanni started writing poetry to process her grief.

In 1968, Giovanni self-published her first book, "Black Feeling Black Talk." It included her most famous poem, "Nikki-Rosa," about her childhood. In 1969, she became a single mother by choice, giving birth to her only child, Thomas.

Giovanni quickly became a luminary in the Black Arts Movement, often performing her poetry with gospel choir accompaniment. She toured widely and appeared on television, most notably at age 28 in a groundbreaking conversation with the author and activist James Baldwin, during which she discussed Black women's treatment by their Black husbands.

By 30, Giovanni was selling out major venues, including 3,000 seats at Lincoln Center in New York. In 1970, she cofounded a publishing company, NikTom Ltd, to support Black female writers. Her memoir "Gemini," released in 1973, was a National Book Award finalist.

Around this time, Giovanni began teaching. She worked at several colleges before Virginia Fowler, associate head of the English department at Virginia Tech, recruited her in 1987. The two entered a long-term relationship and married in 2016.

In 2007, one of Giovanni's former Virginia Tech students carried out a mass shooting on campus, killing 32 people. Giovanni's address to the student body the next day, delivered with President George W. Bush in attendance, received a standing ovation.

Over her lifetime, Giovanni published numerous poetry anthologies, a dozen children's books—including a Caldecott Honor winner—and several spoken-word albums, including a 2004 Grammy-nominated poetry collection. Her many accolades included 20 honorary doctorates, seven NAACP Image Awards, and Governor's Awards from two states. She was repeatedly celebrated in the media and named one of Oprah Winfrey's 25 Living Legends.

Giovanni retired from Virginia Tech in 2022. She died two years later, after battling lung cancer for more than a decade. Her final poetry collection, "The Last Book," was released in 2025.

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LILY GLADSTONE

b. August 2, 1986

INDIGENOUS ACTOR

She is an award-winning actor best known for her role in “Killers of the Flower Moon.”

“You are constantly a role model for the generation to step right behind you.”

Lily Gladstone is an award-winning actor best known as the female lead in Martin Scorsese’s 2023 film, “Killers of the Flower Moon.” She is the first Indigenous American to win a Golden Globe Award for acting.

Gladstone was born in Kalispell, Montana, and lived on the state’s Blackfeet Indian Reservation until she was 11. Her father, a broadcast journalist, is of Blackfeet and Nez Perce heritage, and her mother, an early childhood education specialist, is white. Her paternal second great-grandfather was Chief Red Crow of the Kainai Nation.

At age 5, after watching “Return of the Jedi,” Gladstone was inspired to act. She earned one of her earliest roles as an evil stepsister in the Missoula Children’s Theatre production of “Cinderella.”

In middle school, Gladstone and her family moved to the Seattle area, where she joined a nonprofit youth theater. In high school, classmates voted her “Most Likely to Win an Oscar.”

Gladstone graduated from the University of Montana with a bachelor’s degree in acting/directing in 2008. She taught acting in her Native American community and performed on stage. She made her film debut in “Jimmy P: Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian” (2012).

Gladstone’s breakthrough came with “Certain Women” (2016), earning her Los Angeles and Boston Film Critics Association Awards and Independent Spirit and Gotham Award nominations. During this time, she also performed in theater productions, including “The Miracle Worker” (2014), and participated in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Gladstone’s starring role in the 2022 film “The Unknown Country” won her a Gotham Award for Outstanding Lead Performance. In 2023, she garnered additional acclaim for her “Fancy Dance” role and secured her place in cinema history, co-starring with Leonardo DiCaprio in “Killers of the Flower Moon.” That performance made her the first Native American to win a Golden Globe for Best Actress, the first to win a Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Female Actor, and the first Indigenous American woman to be nominated for an Oscar.

In 2024, Gladstone co-starred in the miniseries “Under the Bridge,” which earned her a Primetime Emmy nomination. That year, she served on the Cannes Film Festival jury and was invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Gladstone uses both “she” and “they” pronouns, a choice she attributes to the absence of gender pronouns in many Native American languages. She identifies as “middle-gendered” and part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Gladstone’s film, “The Wedding Banquet,” was released in 2025.



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MEL HEIFETZ

b. November 4, 1935

PHILANTHROPIST

“I have spent my entire life working with [the gay community] to achieve the same equality that everyone else enjoys.”

Mel Heifetz is a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based real estate developer, business owner, activist, and philanthropist best known for his unparalleled support of the city's LGBTQ community. Over the last 70 years, he has donated millions to benefit LGBTQ institutions and initiatives nationwide, directly and through major political contributions. For over 25 years, he has supported LGBTQ rights in Uganda, Colombia, and Thailand.

He has contributed millions of dollars to support LGBTQ institutions, issues, and candidates.

Raised in South Philadelphia, Heifetz was the child of working-class Jewish parents. By age 9, he was cleaning his parents' hair salon and accompanying his father door-to-door selling household goods. As a Boy Scout, he quickly reached the rank of Eagle Scout, the organization's highest achievement.

At 18, Heifetz enlisted in the Army and served in Germany. Because of the military's ban on gay soldiers, he kept his sexuality secret.

After returning home, Heifetz studied real estate for a year at Temple University.

His purchase of a small Philadelphia coffee shop, the Humoresque, marked his first business venture.

Under his ownership, the Humoresque welcomed gay and interracial couples at a time when homosexuality and mixed-race relationships were illegal. Police harassed Heifetz until they finally raided his business, arresting him and his customers on trumped-up disorderly conduct charges. Though unsuccessful, volunteer attorneys from the American Civil Liberties

Union defended him in court. The incident catalyzed Heifetz's lifetime of activism and forged his enduring relationship with the ACLU.

Over the following decades, Heifetz acquired properties and accumulated wealth. During the 1980s, he financially supported nonprofits combating the HIV/AIDS crisis and provided health insurance to scores of people infected with the virus.

He built numerous successful LGBTQ-friendly businesses, including Sisters, Philadelphia's first and only full-time lesbian bar, and the city's first gay hotel, the Alexander Inn, along with hotels and bars in Key West, Florida. He paid off the substantial mortgage of Philadelphia's William Way LGBT Community Center and founded the Philadelphia Foundation's GLBT Fund of America. In 2017, he endowed the foundation with \$16 million to help ensure future funding for LGBTQ organizations. His contributions have been instrumental in assisting homeless LGBTQ youth and creating permanent housing for them as they enter adulthood. He has supported Democratic candidates, spending millions on the campaigns of Bill and Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden, with whom he has forged personal relationships.

Heifetz has received numerous honors for his philanthropy and activism, including the Human Rights Campaign's Equality Award, the Philadelphia Award, and Equality Forum's Frank Kameny Award. The Gill Foundation counts him among its OutGiving Network, “whose generosity has made a significant impact on the march toward equality.”

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SIR LADY JAVA

b. August 20, 1942

d. November 16, 2024

TRAILBLAZING DRAG STAR

*“There was nothing to help us. No one cared.
So I had to care, and I kept on ...”*

She was a celebrated transgender entertainer who bravely fought Los Angeles' cross-dressing laws.

Sir Lady Java was a pioneering transgender singer, dancer, comedian, and activist, best known in Los Angeles during the 1960s and '70s. Her act was considered “female impersonation” at a time when cross-dressing was illegal.

Java was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. With her mother's support, she transitioned at an early age. She began her career performing in local nightclubs before moving to Los Angeles in the 1960s.

In Los Angeles, Java's shows attracted both LGBTQ+ and Black fans as well as straight white audiences. Inspired by entertainers like Mae West and Josephine Baker, she was celebrated for her beauty and charisma. She performed alongside prominent Black singers and comedians, such as Little Richard, Sammy Davis Jr., Richard Pryor, and Redd Foxx. She became a darling of the Black press, which helped popularize her act—a mix of comedy, song, and striptease. Sepia magazine dubbed her “America's loveliest female impersonator,” a tagline she proudly adopted.

In 1967, during one of Java's shows at Redd Foxx's nightclub, the LAPD arrived to enforce Rule 9, a municipal ordinance banning “impersonation by means of costume or dress of a person of the opposite sex.” Police threatened to arrest Foxx and shut down his business. In protest, Java picketed outside the club, demanding the right to work. Backed by the ACLU, she filed a lawsuit to overturn the ordinance. Although the case was unsuccessful, LA repealed the law two years later. Her defiance helped pave the way for future transgender rights battles. Java gradually withdrew from the limelight and stopped performing in the 1980s but continued to appear publicly. She served as guest of honor at the Trans Pride LA festival in 2016 and as Community Grand Marshal for the LA Pride Parade in 2022. Although Java's activism predated the Stonewall uprising by two years, she only received due recognition more recently. She died at 82 of a stroke in Los Angeles. The New York Times published her obituary.

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ELLA JENKINS

b. August 6, 1924

d. November 9, 2024

FIRST LADY OF CHILDREN'S MUSIC

*"I feel very strongly about making peace
and love in the world."*

**She was a pioneer
of multicultural
children's music.**

Ella Jenkins was an award-winning folk musician and educator. Known as the "First Lady of Children's Music," her joyful, African-American-inspired call-and-response songs revolutionized the genre.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Jenkins moved with her family to Chicago's South Side when she was 4. She was raised in a vibrant, multicultural neighborhood filled with music.

After high school, Jenkins worked in a series of jobs before enrolling in Chicago's Roosevelt University. She finished her studies in 1951 at San Francisco State University, earning a degree in sociology with minors in child psychology and recreation.

Jenkins returned to Chicago after graduation and began working at the YWCA and in community centers, where she created songs to engage children from diverse backgrounds. Her interactive style resonated deeply, and before long, she was invited to perform on television. In 1956, she became one of the first African American hosts of a children's TV segment, "This is Rhythm," on WTTW in Chicago. The program featured children of all races and introduced audiences to Black musicians like Odetta and Big Bill Broonzy.

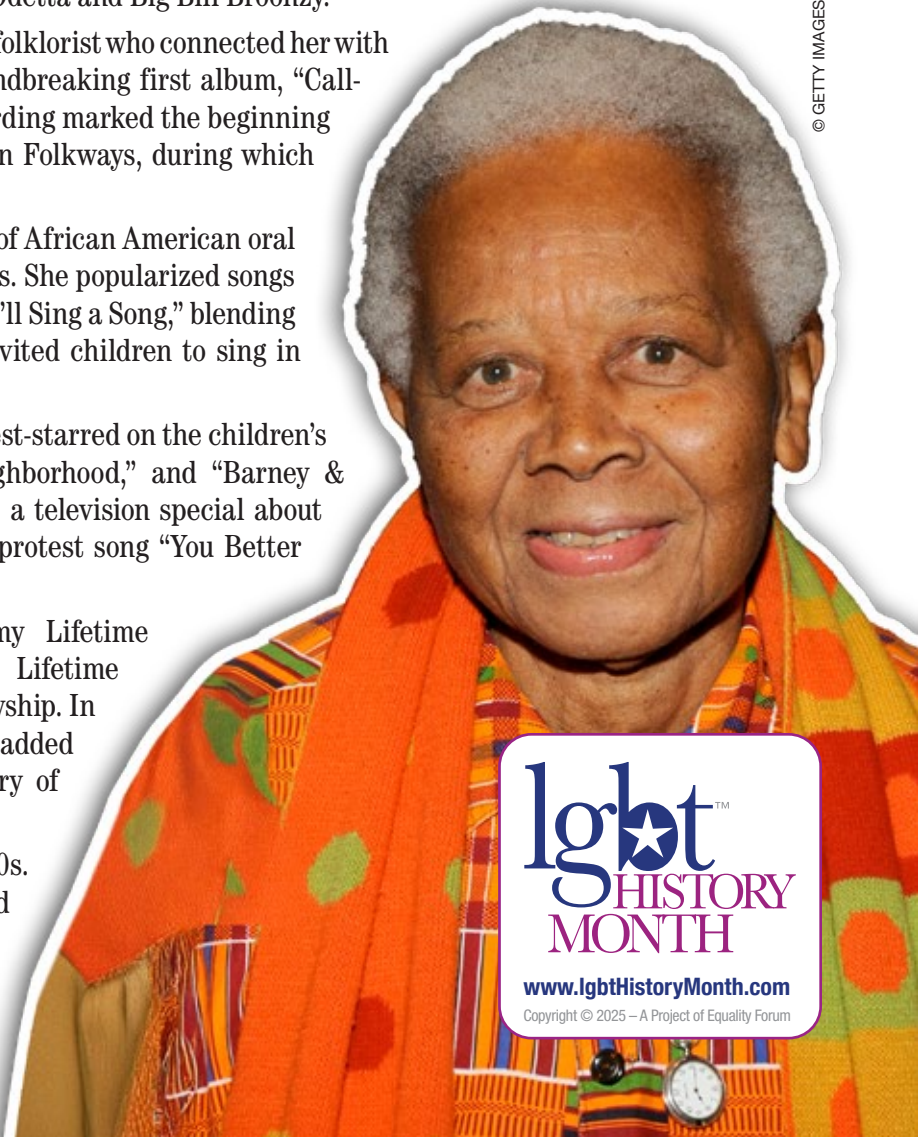
The same year, Jenkins met Kenneth S. Goldstein, a folklorist who connected her with Folkways Records. In 1957, she released her groundbreaking first album, "Call-and-Response: Rhythmic Group Singing." The recording marked the beginning of a prolific, decades-long career with Smithsonian Folkways, during which she released 39 albums.

Jenkins's music drew liberally from the wellspring of African American oral traditions, world cultures, and children's folk games. She popularized songs like "Miss Mary Mack" and "You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song," blending them with original compositions. Her approach invited children to sing in various languages and rhythms.

Jenkins performed worldwide. In the 1980s, she guest-starred on the children's TV shows "Sesame Street," "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," and "Barney & Friends." In 1985, she appeared on "Free at Last," a television special about Martin Luther King Jr, where she performed the protest song "You Better Leave Segregation Alone."

Jenkins's numerous honors included a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, an ASCAP Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award, and a National Heritage Fellowship. In 2007, "You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song" was added to the National Recording Registry at the Library of Congress.

Jenkins was professionally active well into her 90s. For her 100th birthday, she celebrated with the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago. She died three months later. She shared her life with a female partner for 63 years.



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ABILLY JONES-HENNIN

b. March 21, 1942

d. January 19, 2024

LGBTQ
ACTIVIST

“I am [an] activist till death do I part. Once it gets in your blood, you may step back, but you can't take it away.”

He was a pioneering LGBTQ+ activist and founder of the first organization for Black gays and lesbians.

ABilly Jones-Hennin was a pioneering LGBTQ+ activist and founder of the first organization for Black gays and lesbians. He helped organize the first national march on Washington for gay and lesbian rights.

Born Lannie Bess in Antigua, he was adopted at the age of 3 by American civil rights activists and raised as Allen Billy Scott Jones in Virginia. Immersed in activism from an early age, he participated in the civil rights movement and the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He served in the Marines before earning a degree in business and accounting from Virginia State University in 1967 and a master's degree in social work from Howard University in 1990.

After graduating from Virginia State, Jones-Hennin's father encouraged him to marry and raise a family. He married a woman and had three children. They separated seven years later but remained lifelong friends and co-parents. Around this time, Jones-Hennin came out as bisexual.

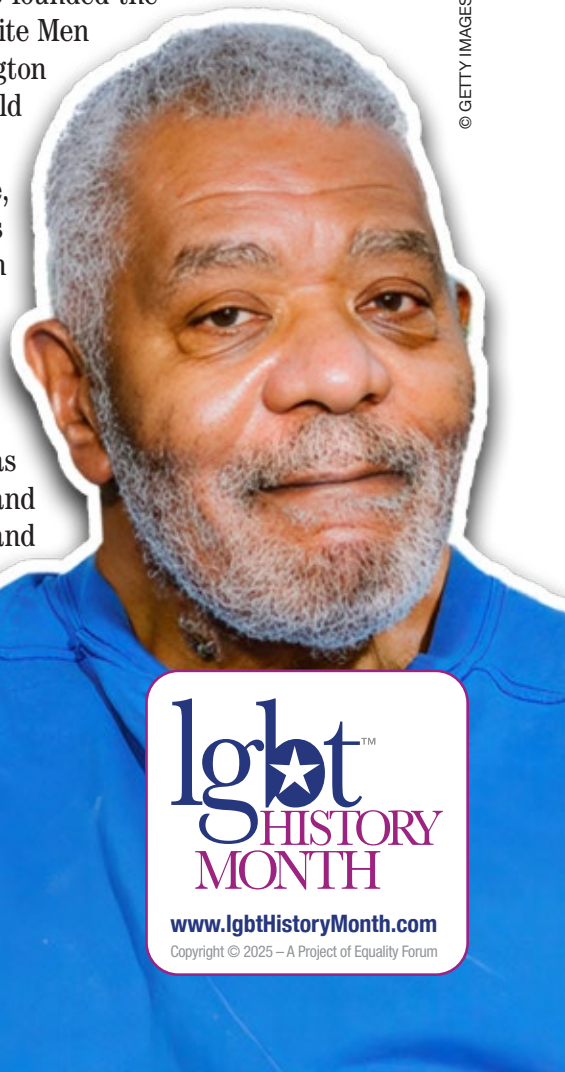
He relocated to the Washington, D.C., area and became actively involved in LGBTQ+ advocacy. Noting the lack of Black representation, he cofounded the D.C. Coalition of Black Gays in 1978 (later renamed the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays)—the first national Black LGBTQ+ advocacy group. He also founded the Gay Married Men's Association and cofounded the D.C. chapter of Black and White Men Together. In 1979, he coordinated logistics for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights and helped organize the First National Third World Lesbian and Gay Conference at Howard University.

During the 1980s, Jones-Hennin focused on HIV/AIDS education and health care, working with the Whitman-Walker Clinic. He served as director of minority affairs for the National AIDS Network and managed federal and state HIV/AIDS research projects.

In 1985, Jones-Hennin received a one-year prison sentence stemming from drug addiction. He used the experience to advocate for those struggling with substance use disorder. After his release, he returned to Washington, where he led HIV/AIDS prevention efforts at Whitman-Walker Health. He served again as the minority affairs director of the National AIDS Network and held research and advisory roles at Macro International, all while continuing to lead antiracist and other political organizations. When he was diagnosed with spinal stenosis in the 1990s, he included disability rights in his activism.

In 2007, the Rainbow History Project recognized Jones-Hennin as a Community Pioneer. He married his longtime partner, Chris Hennin, in 2014. They raised a blended family with five children between them.

Jones-Hennin died at home in Mexico from complications of Parkinson's disease and spinal stenosis.



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ELLSWORTH KELLY

b. May 31, 1923

d. December 27, 2015

CELEBRATED ABSTRACT ARTIST

“I believe people have to be open to what’s happening when they’re alive.”

**He was one of the
leading abstract artists
of the 20th century.**

Ellsworth Kelly was an American sculptor, printmaker, and painter. As one of the preeminent abstractionists of the 20th century, he significantly influenced the Minimalist, Color Field, and Pop Art movements.

Born in Newburgh, New York, Kelly moved with his family to New Jersey in 1929. He studied art at the Pratt Institute before serving in the Army during World War II. Following his discharge, Kelly attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and then the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris under the G.I. Bill.

Kelly’s time in France exposed him to experimental, abstract, and surrealist art— influences reflected in his 1951 paintings “Colors for a Large Wall” and “Spectrum Colors Arranged by Chance.” His work was included in several group shows before the Galerie Arnaud in Paris mounted his first solo exhibition in 1951.

Kelly returned to New York in 1954, where he encountered an art scene dominated by abstract expressionism. Unwilling to conform, he further developed his own style: hard-edged and geometric. He settled in lower Manhattan’s Coenties Slip, where he joined a community of emerging art luminaries, including Robert Indiana and James Rosenquist.

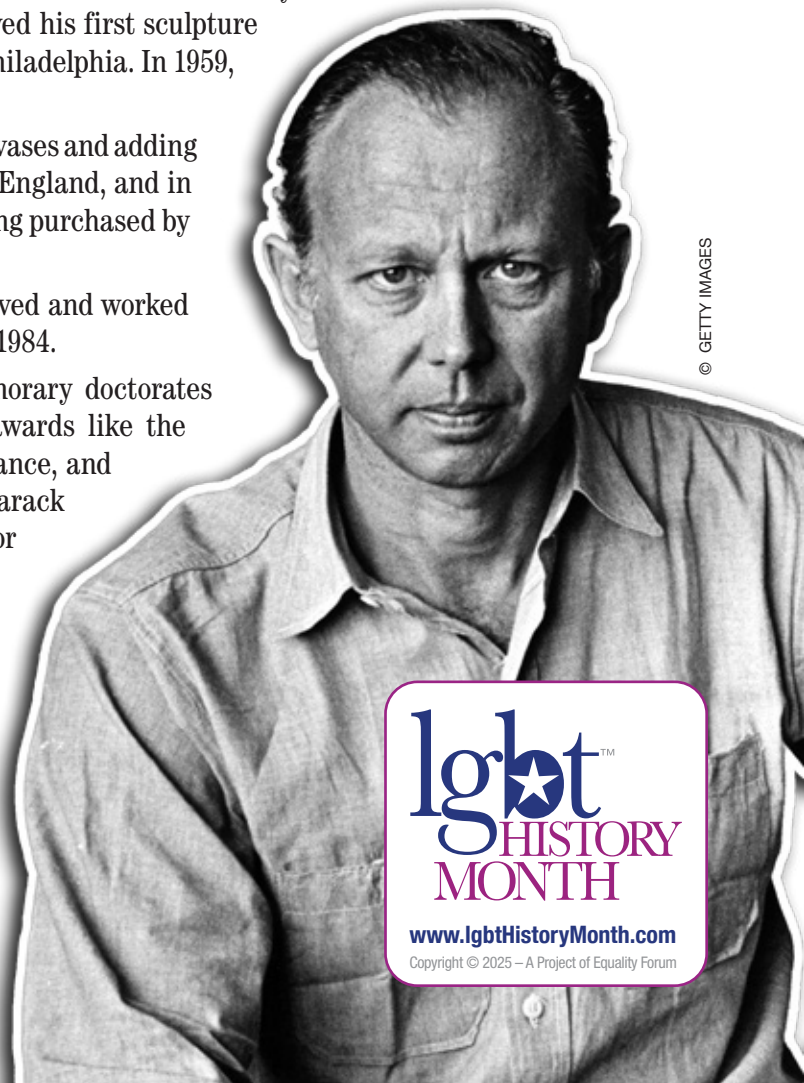
In 1956, the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York presented the first solo exhibition of Kelly’s paintings in the United States. The following year, he received his first sculpture commission for the lobby of the Transportation Building in Philadelphia. In 1959, the Parsons Gallery presented his first sculpture exhibit.

In the 1960s, Kelly began working with irregularly shaped canvases and adding curved shapes to his art. He held his first solo exhibition in England, and in 1962, the Tate Gallery acquired “Broadway”—his first painting purchased by a museum in the United Kingdom.

In 1970, Kelly moved to Spencertown, New York, where he lived and worked until his death. His partner, Jack Shear, joined him there in 1984.

Kelly received numerous prestigious honors, including honorary doctorates from renowned institutions like Harvard University and awards like the Officer of the Legion of Honor, the highest distinction in France, and the National Medal of the Arts, presented by President Barack Obama. His work resides in the permanent collections of major museums in the U.S. and Europe.

Kelly died of natural causes at 92. Two years later, the University of Texas at Austin’s Blanton Museum of Art unveiled his final work, “Austin” (2015), a 2,715-square-foot pavilion. The Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, established in 1991, continues his philanthropic contributions in support of art, education, and cultural and environmental preservation.



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KARL LAGERFELD

b. September 10, 1933

d. February 19, 2019

LEADING FASHION DESIGNER

He was among the most famous fashion designers in modern history.

“Change is the healthiest way to survive.”

Karl Lagerfeld was among the most famous fashion designers in modern history, celebrated for his transformative leadership at Fendi and Chanel, his iconic personal style, and his artful ability to blend classic couture with bold, contemporary elements. He was also an accomplished fashion photographer.

Born in Hamburg, Germany, Karl Otto Lagerfeld was the son of a successful import business owner. He moved to Paris at the age of 14, where he completed his secondary education, focusing on drawing and history.

At 21, Lagerfeld won first prize in the coat category of the International Wool Secretariat competition in Paris. The accomplishment led to a position as an assistant to Pierre Balmain, the competition's judge. By 1957, Lagerfeld was serving as the artistic director at Jean Patou, where he designed 10 haute couture collections.

In 1962, Lagerfeld left Patou to become one of the first freelance fashion designers. He worked with various houses, including Chloé, Krizia, Charles Jourdan, and Valentino. In 1965, he began a longstanding collaboration with Fendi, revolutionizing the brand's approach to fur and leather goods.

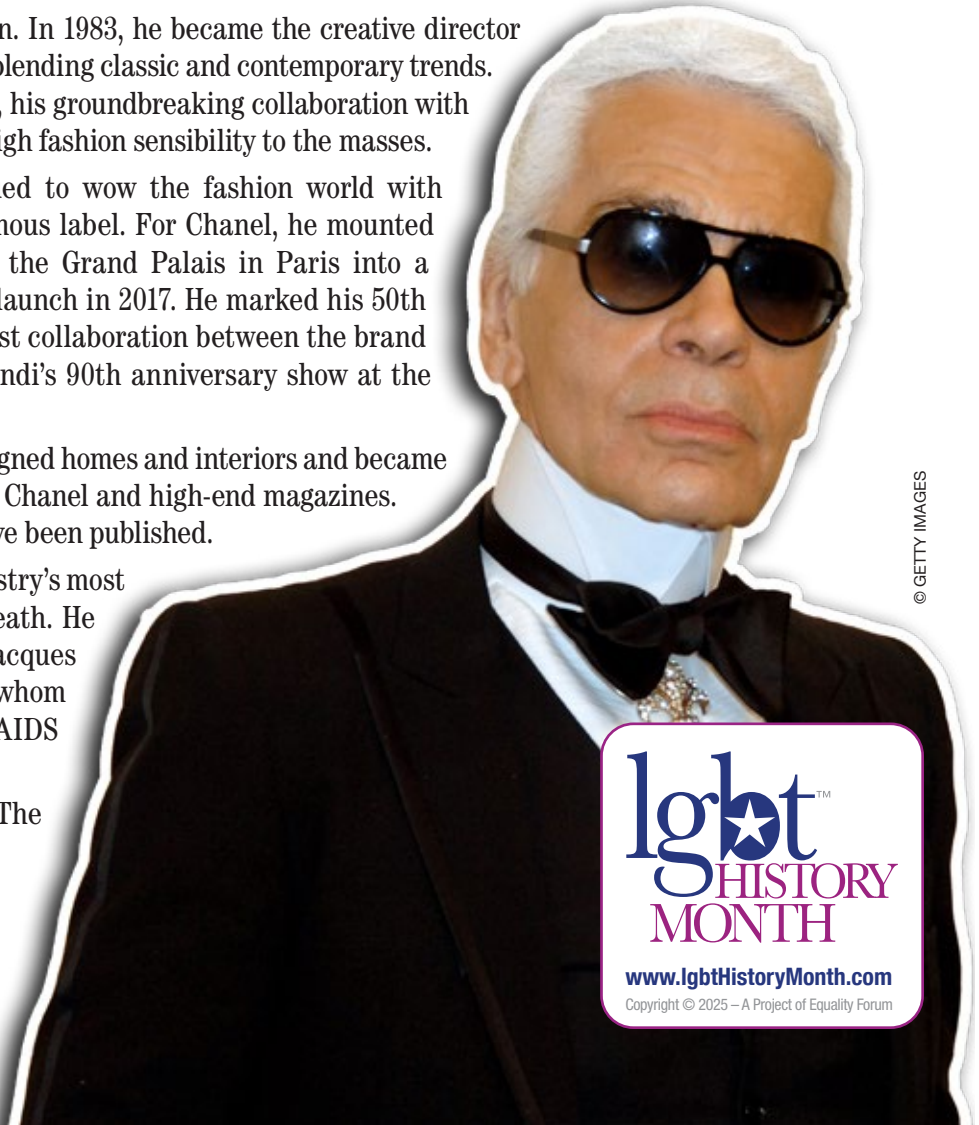
Lagerfeld gained a reputation for innovation. In 1983, he became the creative director at Chanel, revitalizing the luxury brand by blending classic and contemporary trends. In 1984, he launched his own label. In 2004, his groundbreaking collaboration with the budget-friendly retailer H&M brought high fashion sensibility to the masses.

Throughout the 2000s, Lagerfeld continued to wow the fashion world with his work at Chanel, Fendi, and his eponymous label. For Chanel, he mounted extravagant runway shows, transforming the Grand Palais in Paris into a supermarket in 2014 and staging a rocket launch in 2017. He marked his 50th anniversary with Fendi by debuting the first collaboration between the brand and his label. In 2016, he orchestrated Fendi's 90th anniversary show at the Trevi Fountain in Rome.

In addition to fashion design, Lagerfeld designed homes and interiors and became an acclaimed commercial photographer for Chanel and high-end magazines. Dozens of collections of his photographs have been published.

Lagerfeld remained one of the fashion industry's most prolific and influential figures until his death. He maintained an 18-year relationship with Jacques de Bascher, the son of a French aristocrat, whom he cared for until de Bascher's death from AIDS in 1989.

Lagerfeld died in Paris at the age of 85. The New York Times published his obituary.



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TROY MASTERS

LGBTQ PUBLISHER

b. April 13, 1961

d. December 11, 2024

“It’s a perilous time ... reporting from a journalistic perspective about things that are happening in the community is so important.”

He was the pioneering publisher of several leading LGBTQ+ publications.

Troy Davis Masters was a pioneering American LGBTQ+ journalist and publisher. He played a leading role in founding what became Gay City News—a free New York newspaper—and the Los Angeles Blade, among other publications. He spent more than 35 years passionately advocating for the LGBTQ+ community.

Masters was born in Gallatin, Tennessee. His parents divorced when he was young, and his mother remarried a musician who performed at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. Masters’s childhood was steeped in conservative values, racism, and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment.

In 1973, at age 12, Masters realized he was gay. About a year later, he was raped on a train by a dining-car employee. Fearing stigmatization, he told no one, including his parents. He left home at 17 and, in 1986, earned a bachelor’s degree in communication from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

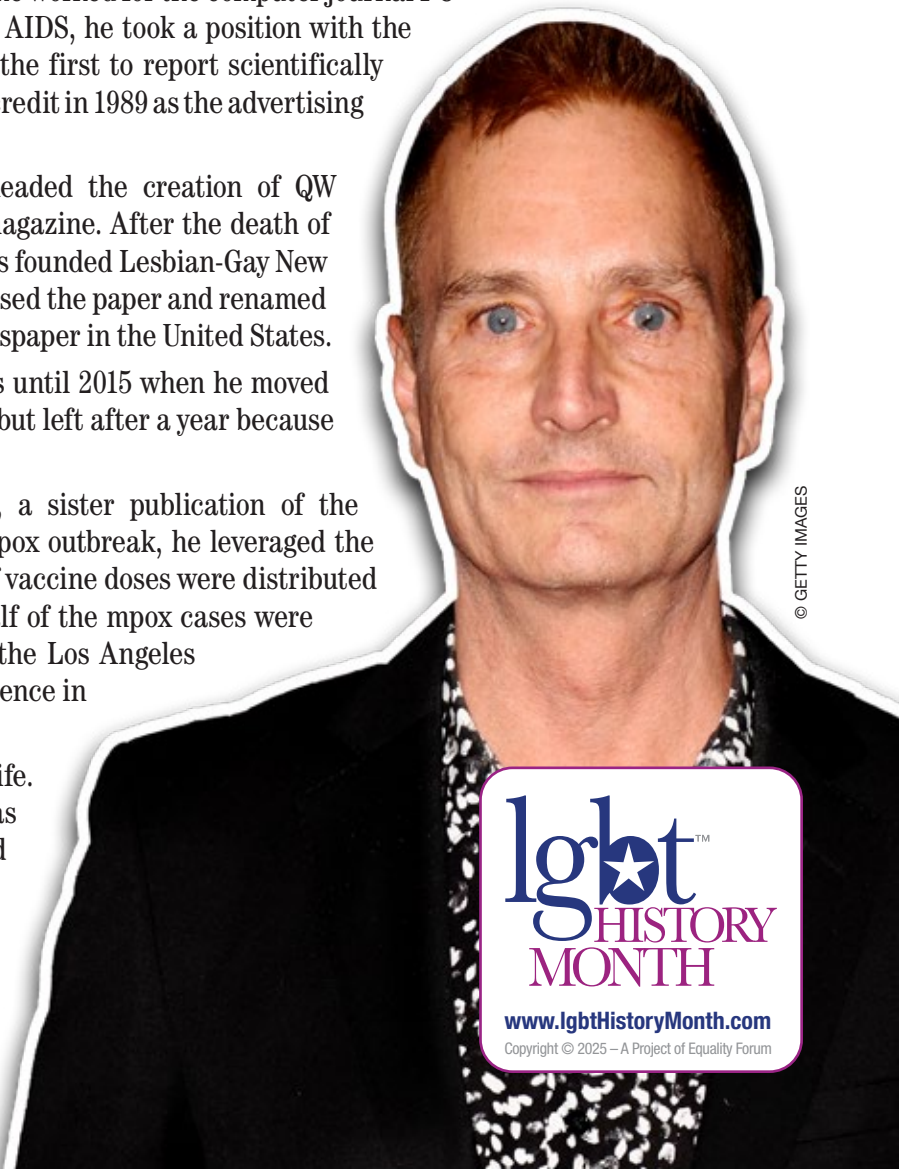
In the 1980s, Masters moved to New York City, where he worked for the computer journal PC Magazine. After watching many of his friends die of AIDS, he took a position with the activist newsmagazine Outweek, which was among the first to report scientifically about the AIDS crisis. He received his first masthead credit in 1989 as the advertising account executive.

After Outweek shuttered in 1991, Masters spearheaded the creation of QW (QueerWeek), the LGBTQ community’s first glossy magazine. After the death of its funder, QW closed two years later. In 1994, Masters founded Lesbian-Gay New York (LGNY). In 2002, Community Media LLC purchased the paper and renamed it Gay City News. Today, it is the largest LGBTQ+ newspaper in the United States.

Masters continued as the publisher of Gay City News until 2015 when he moved to Los Angeles. There, he co-launched The Pride LA but left after a year because of political disagreements.

In 2017, Masters founded the Los Angeles Blade, a sister publication of the Washington Blade. In 2022, during the California mpox outbreak, he leveraged the newspaper to help ensure that the limited number of vaccine doses were distributed to those most at risk. At the time, approximately half of the mpox cases were found among bisexual or gay Latino men. In 2023, the Los Angeles Blade received the Barbara Gittings Award for Excellence in LGBTQ Media from GLAAD.

Masters remained with the Blade for the rest of his life. His death at the age of 63 was ruled a suicide. He was discovered in his apartment by his close friend and former partner, Arturo Jiminez. The New York Times published his obituary.



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SARAH MCBRIDE

b. August 9, 1990

FIRST TRANS CONGRESSPERSON

“There is no question that the political is personal.”

Sarah McBride is a leading LGBTQ+ rights advocate and the first transgender member of Congress. Elected in November 2020, she serves as the U.S. representative for Delaware’s at-large congressional district.

Born in Wilmington, Delaware, McBride showed an early interest in politics. At 13, she volunteered for Matthew Denn’s 2004 campaign for the Delaware State Senate. McBride attended Calloway School of the Arts and volunteered for several other campaigns before graduating in 2009. She attended American University in Washington, D.C., where she was elected student body president. At the end of her tenure, she immediately announced her gender identity and preferred name on Facebook.

She is the first transgender member of Congress.

McBride became the first transgender person to intern at the White House, serving in the White House Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs, where she focused on LGBTQ+ issues. In 2013, she joined the board of directors for Equality Delaware and quickly became the state’s leading advocate for LGBTQ+ rights.

In 2014, McBride married her boyfriend of two years, Andrew Cray, a transgender man. The ceremony was performed by Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Episcopal bishop. Cray, a lawyer and accomplished LGBTQ+ policy advocate, was diagnosed with cancer in 2013. He died four days after their wedding.

Four years later, McBride announced her candidacy for the Delaware State Senate. She won in 2020 and promptly advanced her legislative agenda. She helped pass the Healthy Delaware Families Act (2022), providing paid parental, medical, and military deployment leave to eligible workers. She also helped pass the Digital Citizenship Education Act (2022) and the Protect Medicaid Act (2024).

In 2023, McBride announced her campaign for Delaware’s sole seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. She secured the Democratic nomination by a landslide and won the election 2024.

Two weeks into McBride’s term, Rep. Nancy Mace (R-SC) introduced a bill specifically targeting her. The bill proposed a “bathroom ban” barring transgender women from using the women’s restroom on Capitol Hill. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) enacted the policy.

On March 11, 2025, McBride was again publicly disrespected when Rep. Keith Self (R-TX) deliberately misgendered her during a hearing, addressing her as “Mr. McBride.” She calmly reciprocated, addressing Self as “Madam Chair.” Rep. Bill Keating (D-MA) intervened, condemning Self for his indecent behavior.

McBride resides in Wilmington, Delaware. She is a proud aunt to seven children.

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T. J. OSBORNE

b. November 18, 1984

COUNTRY ROCK STAR

“Instead of always kind of having the veil there, I think it’s time to remove that and lean into who we are.”

He is a Grammy-winning gay country-rock musician.

T.J. Osborne is a Grammy-winning country-rock musician and the only openly gay artist signed to a major country music label. Known for hits such as “Stay a Little Longer” and “All Night,” he sings lead vocals in the duo Brothers Osborne.

Raised in Deale, Maryland, Thomas John Osborne grew up in a musical family. With his brother John, he performed locally with his father’s blues band and enjoyed singing and playing guitar for friends in their dad’s shed. John moved to Nashville for college. When T.J. graduated from high school two years later, he immediately relocated to join his brother.

After trying for some time to make it in the industry separately, the brothers decided to team up, with T.J. on lead vocals and John on lead guitar. In 2011, they signed their first publishing contract with Warner-Chappell. A year later, they landed a recording deal with EMI Nashville. Around this time, T.J. told John he was gay.

In 2013, Brothers Osborne released their first single, “Let’s Go There,” which debuted to limited success. In 2014, their second single met the same fate. Hoping for a better reception, EMI released the songs on an EP later that year. The EP reached the top 25 on the Billboard Top Country Albums list.

In 2015, the duo released their first hit, “Stay a Little Longer,” which led to their first full album, “Pawn Shop” (2016). The album eventually went platinum. In 2016 and 2017, Brothers Osborne won Vocal Duo of the Year awards from both the Academy of Country Music (ACM) and the Country Music Association (CMA). Their next two albums, released in 2018 and 2020, reached the top five on the Billboard Country Albums chart.

In 2021, in an exclusive TIME magazine feature, T.J. came out as gay. He described his closeted life as “lonely and isolating” and said he channeled his feelings into his music. He appeared at the CMA Awards later that year with his boyfriend, Abi Ventura, with whom he shared a kiss upon winning another Vocal Duo of the Year award. In 2022, “Younger Me,” a song inspired by his coming out experience, earned a Grammy Award for Best Country Duo/Group Performance.

All told, Brothers Osborne have achieved four platinum and four gold singles. Among other recognition, they have been nominated for 10 Grammy’s and received six CMA and six ACM awards. Their album “Brothers Osborne” was released in 2023.



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TED OSIUS

b. 1961

U.S. DIPLOMAT

“There are some who think diplomacy is about money and power. It’s not. It’s about relationships.”

One of the first openly gay U.S. ambassadors, he is known for significantly advancing U.S.-Vietnam relations.

Theodore George (Ted) Osius III is one of the first openly gay U.S. ambassadors and a prominent advocate for LGBTQ+ representation in international diplomacy. His distinguished career has significantly shaped U.S. relations in Asia, particularly with Vietnam. He is fluent in four languages, including Vietnamese.

Raised in Annapolis, Maryland, Osius graduated from The Putney School in Vermont in 1979. He earned his bachelor’s degree in social studies from Harvard University in 1984, where he wrote for The Harvard Crimson. After a yearlong internship at the American University in Cairo, he served as a legislative correspondent for Senator Al Gore from 1985 to 1987.

In 1989, he completed a master’s degree in international economics and U.S. foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. He joined the U.S. Foreign Service, with early assignments in Manila, Vatican City, and at the United Nations. In 1996, he became one of the first U.S. diplomats to serve in post-war Vietnam, where he helped establish the U.S. consulate in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) in 1997.

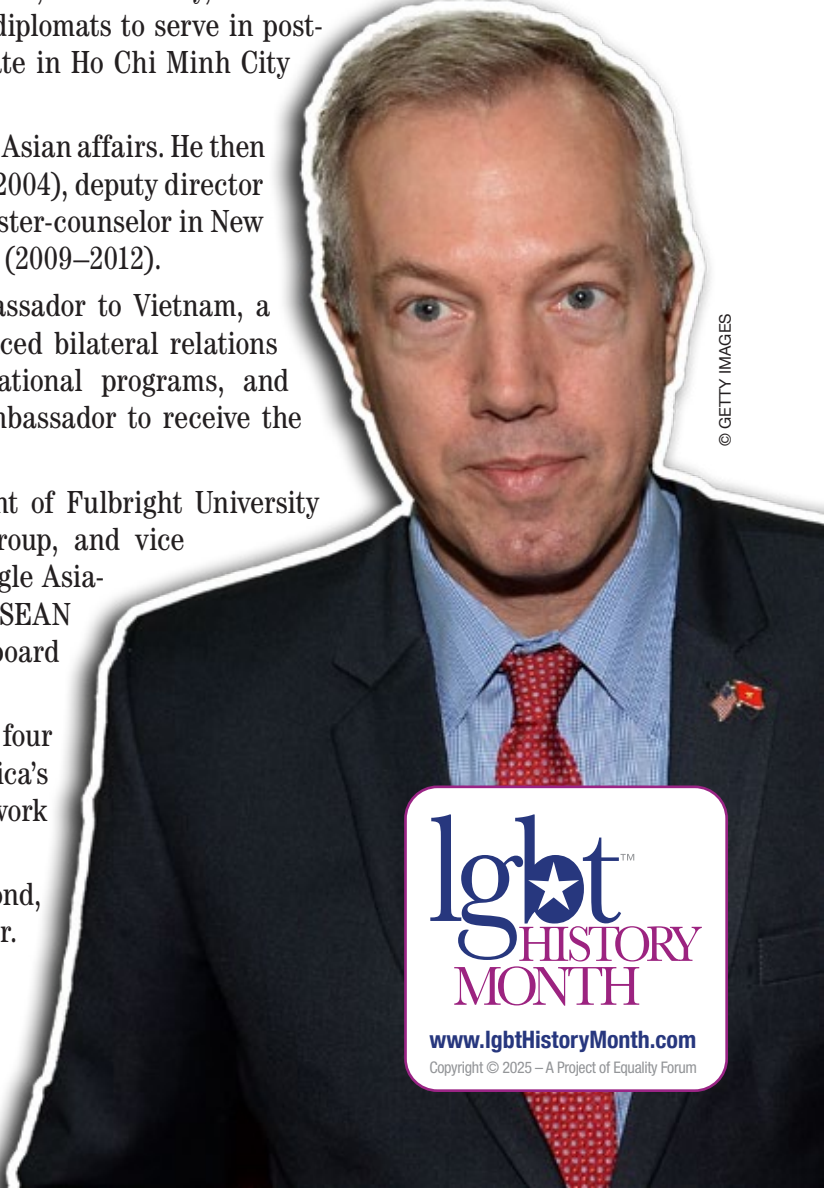
From 1998 to 2001, Osius advised Vice President Al Gore on Asian affairs. He then served as regional environment officer in Bangkok (2001–2004), deputy director of the Office of Korean Affairs (2004–2006), political minister-counselor in New Delhi (2006–2009), and deputy chief of mission in Jakarta (2009–2012).

In 2014, President Barack Obama appointed Osius ambassador to Vietnam, a position he held until 2017. During his tenure, he advanced bilateral relations through defense cooperation, trade agreements, educational programs, and historical reconciliation efforts. He was the first U.S. ambassador to receive the Order of Friendship from the president of Vietnam.

After his ambassadorship, Osius served as vice president of Fulbright University Vietnam, senior advisor at the Albright-Stonebridge Group, and vice president for government affairs and public policy at Google Asia-Pacific. In 2021, he became president and CEO of the US-ASEAN Business Council. He also serves on the Asia Foundation’s board of trustees.

Osius has published numerous policy articles and four books. His 2021 memoir, “Nothing Is Impossible: America’s Reconciliation with Vietnam,” recounts his diplomatic work and personal journey.

Osius met a fellow State Department official, Clayton Bond, in 2004. They married in 2006 and have a son and daughter.



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ANN PHILBIN

b. 1952

MUSEUM DIRECTOR

“Humans need culture—not just art but the whole network of experiences that link us to one another.”

**She is an acclaimed
American museum
director and
AIDS activist.**

Ann Philbin is an acclaimed American museum director and AIDS activist. She led the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles for 25 years, growing it from a small local gallery into a vibrant international center for contemporary art.

The daughter of a Kennedy administration lawyer and an artist, Philbin earned a B.F.A. in art history and painting from the University of New Hampshire in 1976 and an M.A. in museum studies/arts administration from New York University in 1982.

At the University of New Hampshire, she joined the Gay Students Organization. When the state's governor threatened to cut university funding if the group remained active, the club won a landmark lawsuit affirming the constitutional right of gay student groups to exist on campus. The experience ignited her political activism.

After graduation, Philbin moved to New York, where she worked as an art dealer. During the early AIDS crisis in the 1980s, she became a curator for Livet Reichard, a fundraising consulting firm with ties to the art world. The American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR) was among its clients. Philbin saw countless friends fall ill with the virus. To raise money for AmFAR, she organized art exhibitions nationwide. She also helped organize a major AIDS awareness campaign and joined the radical AIDS activist group ACT UP.

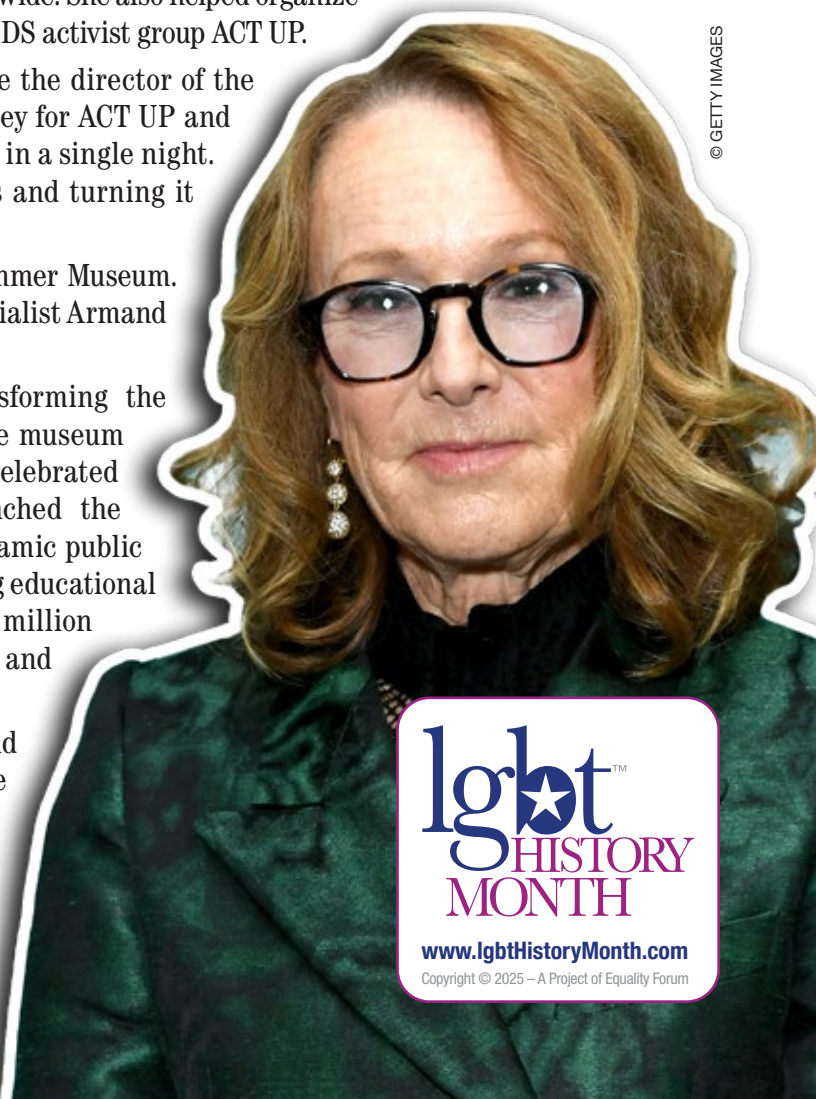
After working as an independent curator, Philbin became the director of the New York Drawing Center in 1990. There, she raised money for ACT UP and related programs, generating as much as a million dollars in a single night. She revitalized the museum by incorporating new works and turning it into a community hub.

In 1999, Philbin accepted a job as the director of the Hammer Museum. Affiliated with UCLA, the quiet gallery was home to industrialist Armand Hammer's art collection. Philbin saw great potential.

During her tenure, she quadrupled the budget, transforming the 35-employee institution into a 200-employee cutting-edge museum that attracts 250,000 visitors annually. Philbin curated celebrated exhibitions, showcased underrepresented artists, launched the popular biennial show “Made in L.A.” and developed dynamic public programs, including films, lectures, and an award-winning educational series for K-12 students. In 2022, she oversaw a \$180 million renovation that added 20,000 square feet of public space and expanded the gallery by 60 percent.

Philbin was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2020. When she left Hammer in 2024, she received the Lawrence A. Fleischman Award for Scholarly Excellence in the Field of American Art History from The Smithsonian Institution.

She lives in Beverly Hills with her wife, Cynthia Wornham.



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CHAPPELL ROAN

b. February 19, 1998

POP MUSIC STAR

"I think that people just want to be happy and reflect, sing, dance and dress up, and feel free."

She is an award-winning pop music star and LGBTQ+ advocate.

Chappell Roan is a Grammy Award-winning openly lesbian pop sensation. As a singer and songwriter, she tackles themes like heteronormativity, queer acceptance, feminism, and self-love.

Born Kayleigh Rose Amstutz in the conservative town of Willard, Missouri, Roan felt out of place growing up. She was raised in a trailer park and spent summers attending a Christian camp. The church taught that being gay was a sin.

Roan learned to play piano as a child and won her school's talent show at 13. She first entered the public eye via YouTube with her original song, "Die Young." It led to a deal with Atlantic Records in 2015 when Roan was only 17. The following year, she adopted her stage name, inspired by her grandfather's surname, Chappell, and his favorite song, "The Strawberry Roan."

Roan released her first single, "Good Hurt," in 2017, followed by her first EP, "School Nights."

She lived with her parents in Missouri until 2018 when she moved to Los Angeles.

There, she found what she longed for: the freedom to live as an openly gay woman.

Her breakout single, "Pink Pony Club," which reflects her journey, would later become an LGBTQ+ anthem.

After releasing several more singles, Atlantic dropped her in 2020. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Roan continued to write and produce independently. Then, about a year after its release, "Pink Pony Club" suddenly tapped into the zeitgeist. USA Today rated it No. 3 on the list of "10 best songs of 2020," and Vulture dubbed it "Song of Summer 2021."

The belated success of "Pink Pony Club" earned Roan a publishing deal with Sony in 2022. The following year, she began her first headlining tour, "Naked in North America."

She garnered attention for booking drag queens as show openers and encouraging fans to dress however they liked, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Her own fashion choices draw on camp styles popularized by drag performers.

In 2023, Island Records published Roan's debut solo album, "The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess." It became one of the top sellers of the year. In 2024, she opened for Olivia Rodrigo's Guts World Tour, and her song "Good Luck, Babe!" earned a Top 10 spot on the Billboard Hot 100. Shortly thereafter, Billboard ranked her No. 1 on its Artist 100 chart. When she won Best New Artist at the 2024 MTV Video Music Awards, she dedicated the honor to queer and trans people.

In 2025, Roan was nominated for multiple Grammys and received the award for Best New Artist.

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HARPER STEELE

b. August 1961

TV COMEDY
& SCREENWRITER

“[T]here isn’t a trans person I’ve met who doesn’t have a sense of humor about themselves.”

She is an Emmy-winning comedy writer famous for her work on SNL.

Harper Steele is a comedy writer best known for her work on “Saturday Night Live” (“SNL”). After coming out as a transgender woman, she brought attention to trans-related issues in the acclaimed documentary “Will & Harper,” co-starring the comedian Will Ferrell.

Steele was raised by two University of Iowa professors. She attended Iowa City High School but struggled academically and socially until she discovered the theater department in her senior year.

Though she had difficulty with spelling and grammar, Steele aspired to be a writer. She enrolled in a writing class at the University of Iowa, where she learned there are many ways to write and that she might achieve her dream despite her shortcomings. She graduated in 1985 with a degree in English.

Ten years later, Steele earned a coveted position as a writer for the comedy sketch show, “SNL,” where she worked for 13 years. She was promoted to head writer in 2004.

Steele was nominated for four Emmy Awards and won a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special in 2002. She left “SNL” in 2008 and took a position as creative director for the production company Funny or Die. In addition to TV, she has also co-written multiple films, including “The Ladies Man” (2000), “Casa de mi padre” (2012), and “Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga” (2020).

At 61, Steele came out as a transgender woman to her close friends. She struggled with gender dysphoria for much of her life but believed that coming out sooner—especially in the male-dominated field of comedy—would have damaged her career. Steele transitioned and publicly reintroduced herself in the 2024 documentary “Will & Harper.”

Steele and Ferrell have been close friends since 1995 when they began working together at “SNL.” When Steele came out to Ferrell, he wanted to learn about her transition. Steele, who loves dive bars, diners, and the American heartland, wanted to revisit the places she frequented while living as a man, but concerns over transphobia prevented her from going alone. Urged by Ferrell, the idea for the film was born. A meditation on belonging in America, it follows the pair on a cross-country road trip, providing a funny and poignant window into Steele’s journey and the duo’s friendship. Nominated for a variety of awards, the film was named one of the Top 5 Documentaries by the National Board of Review and won the Critics’ Choice Award for Best Documentary Feature.

In March 2025, the University of Iowa Lecture Committee presented Steele with its Notable Iowan Award.



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BREANNA STEWART

b. August 27, 1994

WNBA
SUPERSTAR

*“Everything doesn’t happen in one day
or at the snap of your finger.”*

**She is a world-
renowned professional
women’s basketball
superstar.**

Breanna Stewart is among the most accomplished professional women’s basketball stars in history. A five-time WNBA All-Star, a two-time WNBA MVP, and a two-time FIBA World Cup MVP, she has won three U.S. Olympic basketball gold medals and three FIBA World Cups.

Born Breanna Baldwin in Syracuse, New York, to a single mother, Stewart was adopted by her stepfather and given his surname. Between the ages of 9 and 11, Stewart was sexually abused by an uncle—a fact she disclosed in 2017. He later confessed and served prison time.

Stewart’s stepfather encouraged her to play basketball at an early age. A talented forward, she joined the team at Cicero-North Syracuse High School. Before graduating in 2012, she was named National Gatorade Player of the Year, Gatorade Female Athlete of the Year, and a McDonald’s All-American. She earned MVP honors at the WBCA High School All-America Game.

Emerging as the top recruit in the country, Stewart committed to the University of Connecticut, where she led the Huskies to four straight national championships. She was named the NCAA Tournament’s Most Outstanding Player each time—a first for any athlete of any gender. She was named Naismith College Player of the Year three times and the Wooden Award winner twice.

In 2016, Stewart who was drafted first overall by the Seattle Storm, earned the WNBA Rookie of the Year title, and participated in her first Olympics, capturing the gold with the U.S. women’s national team. With the U.S. team, she went on to win two more Olympic gold medals and three FIBA World Cups.

In Stewart’s third season with the Storm, she led the team to the 2018 WNBA title and swept both the regular season and Finals MVP honors. Sidelined from the Storm in 2019 by an injury, she secured a spot with the Dynamo Kursk in the Russian Premier League. There, she began a romantic relationship with the Spanish player Marta Xargay Casademont. Stewart returned to the Storm in 2020, leading the team to another championship and earning her second Finals MVP title.

In 2023, Stewart signed with the New York Liberty and set a new WNBA single-season scoring record. She also cofounded Unrivaled, a new 3-on-3 professional women’s basketball league. In 2024, she helped lead the Liberty to their first WNBA Championship and earned her second WNBA MVP title.

Stewart and Xargay married in 2021 and are the parents of two children. In 2025, TIME magazine named Stewart to its list of the 100 most influential people in the world.



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ARTHUR TRESS

b. November 24, 1940

FINE-ART PHOTOGRAPHER

“Photography is my method for defining the confusing world that rushes constantly toward me.”

He is a trailblazing photographer, best known for his staged surrealistic images.

Arthur Tress is a gay American photographer renowned for his diverse body of work, which encompasses surrealism and homoerotic fantasy. He was one of the first artists of the 1970s to diverge from documentary street photography to create staged, dreamlike images.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in a poor Jewish neighborhood, Tress was a lonely child, confused about his sexuality and often bullied. He took up photography in his teens, shooting the deteriorating nearby amusement parks of Coney Island.

After high school, Tress enrolled in Bard College, earning a B.F.A. in Fine Arts in 1962. He attended film school in Paris but dropped out to travel the world, spending much of his time in Africa and Asia. He developed an interest in ethnographic photography, which led to an assignment with the U.S. government, shooting documentary photos of Appalachian culture.

In 1968, the Smithsonian Institution and the Sierra Gallery in New York City presented Tress's first solo exhibition, “Appalachia -- People and Places.” He worked for a year as a documentary photographer for AmeriCorps VISTA before the Sierra Gallery exhibited his series “Open Space in the Inner City” in 1970. The series, which reflected his concern for the environment, earned him a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Tress subsequently pivoted toward staged photography. In 1972, he created his seminal series, “The Dream Collector,” steeped in Jungian archetypes, ritual, and allegory. Reminiscent of children's nightmares, it earned him a National Endowment for the Arts grant and gave rise to an expanding portfolio of staged images. These works included “Theater of the Mind”—a series representing the hidden anguish of relationships, which earned him a second New York Council of the Arts grant—and “Arthur Tress: Facing Up, A 12-Year Survey” (alternately titled “Phallic Phantasy”), his 1980 homoerotic book of male nudes.

During the '80s, Tress began shooting in color and expanded his staging techniques, photographing sculptures he created from found medical equipment and exploring narrative still lifes. From 1986 to 1988, his first major retrospective, “Talisman,” toured through Europe. By the 2000s, he had returned to black-and-white format and was experimenting with mid-century modern themes and abstraction.

Tress's work is on display in many of the world's premier institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. He has published more than two dozen books.

Tress left New York in 1993 and settled in California. He resides in San Francisco.

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CY TWOMBLY

b. April 25, 1928

d. July 5, 2011

PROMINENT PAINTER & SCULPTOR

*“Every line is the actual experience
with its own unique story.”*

**He was among the
most prominent artists
of the 1950s.**

Edwin Parker “Cy” Twombly Jr. was among the most prominent artists of the 1950s. A photographer, sculptor, and painter, he is best known for his scribbling abstractions incorporating cultural, poetic, and historical references. Twombly inspired artists such as Julian Schnabel and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Born in Lexington, Virginia, Twombly inherited both his birth name and nickname from his father, a former Major League Baseball pitcher nicknamed after the Baseball Hall of Famer Cy Young.

At age 12, Twombly took private art lessons at Washington and Lee University. He attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University in 1946, then studied at the Art Students League of New York on a scholarship. In 1951, he spent a summer at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he met a lifelong friend and fellow artist Robert Rauschenberg. In November of that year, a Chicago gallery hosted Twombly’s first solo exhibition, showcasing paintings he created at Black Mountain.

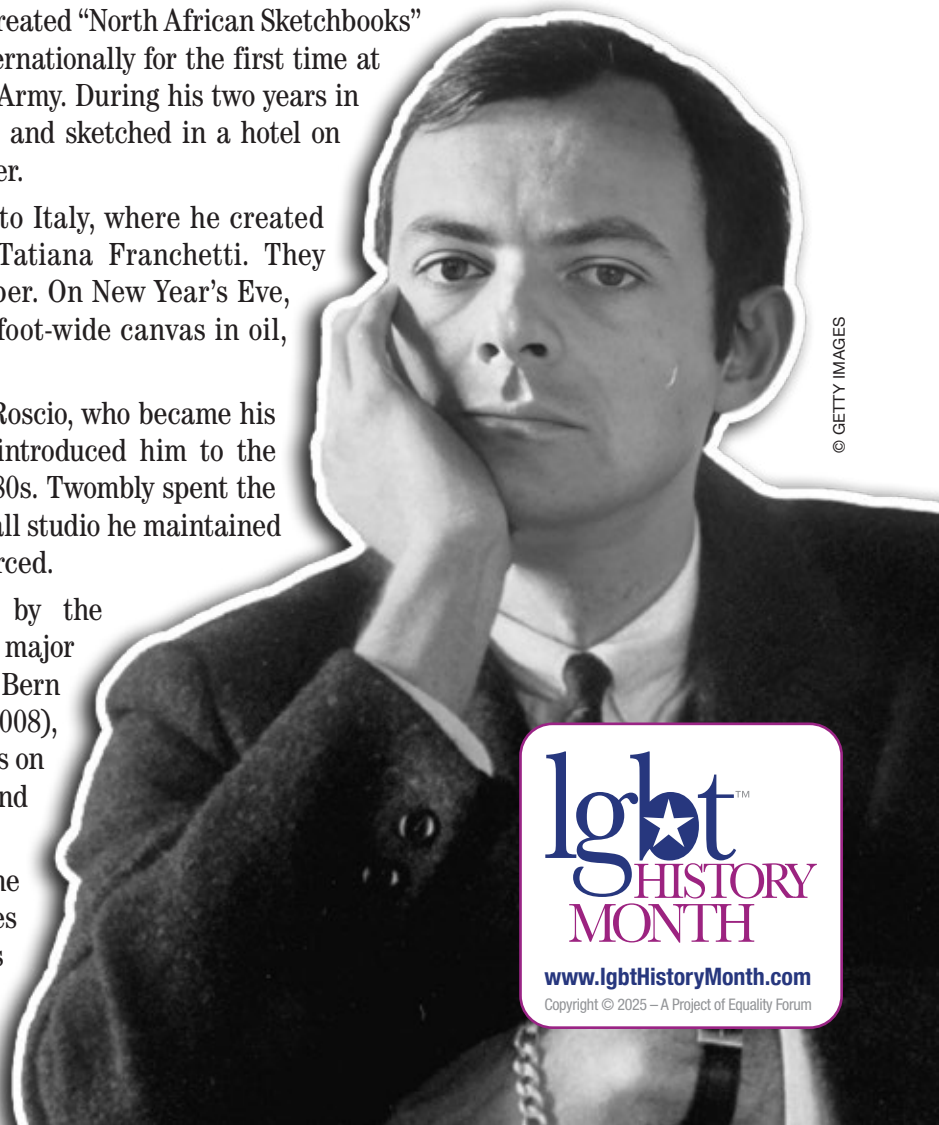
In 1952, Twombly traveled to Italy and North Africa on a grant from the Virginia Museum of Fine Art. Influenced by those cultures, Twombly created “North African Sketchbooks” in 1953. That same year, he showed his work internationally for the first time at a gallery in Rome, before being drafted into U.S. Army. During his two years in the service, Twombly worked as a cryptographer and sketched in a hotel on weekends—a period that shaped his artistic career.

Shortly after his discharge, Twombly returned to Italy, where he created “Olympia” (1957) and met the Italian artist Tatiana Franchetti. They married in April 1959 and had a son in December. On New Year’s Eve, Twombly created “The Age of Alexander,” a 16-foot-wide canvas in oil, crayon, and graphite.

In 1964, Twombly met a Roman man, Nicola Del Roscio, who became his assistant and longtime companion. Del Roscio introduced him to the Italian town of Gaeta, where he moved in the 1980s. Twombly spent the rest of his life alternating between Italy and a small studio he maintained in Lexington, Virginia. He and his wife never divorced.

Twombly’s first retrospective was presented by the Milwaukee Art Center in 1968, followed by major exhibitions at institutions such as Kunsthalle Bern (1973), Kunsthaus Zürich (1987), Tate Modern (2008), and the Art Institute of Chicago (2009). His work is on display at the Museum of Modern Art, The Tate, and other major museums worldwide.

Twombly died of cancer in Rome. A plaque in the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella commemorates him. His longtime companion, Del Roscio, serves as the president of the Cy Twombly Foundation.



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OCEAN VUONG

b. October 14, 1988

POET & AUTHOR

*“Being queer saved my life ... it made me curious;
it made me ask, ‘Is this enough for me?’”*

**He is an award-winning
Vietnamese American
poet and novelist.**

Ocean Vuong is a Vietnamese American novelist, poet, and professor whose work explores themes of LGBTQ identity, trauma, and the immigrant experience.

Vuong was born in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Vietnam. His family fled the country when he was 2, settling in Hartford, Connecticut. They found work in nail salons and factories. Seven family members shared a one-bedroom apartment. Vuong learned English in elementary school and wrote his first poem in fourth grade. He became the first member of his family to achieve full literacy.

He attended Manchester Community College in Connecticut before enrolling in Pace University. After a brief stint studying international marketing, he transferred to Brooklyn College, where he cultivated his gift for writing. He won the Academy of American Poets College Prize and graduated with a bachelor's degree in English literature. He earned his M.F.A. in poetry from New York University.

During the early 2010s, Vuong released several chapbooks, and various publications featured his work. He published his first full-length poetry collection, “Night Sky With Exit Wounds,” in 2016. Named one of the New York Times 10 best books, it earned the T.S. Eliot Prize, the Whiting Award, the Thom Gunn Award, and the Forward Prize for Best First Collection.

Vuong released his debut novel, “On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous,” in 2019. It spent six weeks on New York Times best-seller list and was nominated for numerous prestigious honors, including the National Book Award for Fiction. It earned him the Mark Twain Award, the American Book Award, and the New England Book Award. He received the MacArthur “Genius” Grant in 2019 and lost his mother to breast cancer that same year. In 2022, he published his second book of poetry, “Time Is a Mother,” inspired by his grief. He told TIME magazine, “I went to school for her, I worked for her—she was the source.”

Vuong is dyslexic. He has struggled with addiction and anxiety—challenges he attributes in part to personal and intergenerational trauma: war, poverty, loss, displacement, and otherness.

Vuong’s many additional honors include multiple fellowships from esteemed institutions such as the Poetry Foundation and The Academy of American Poets. His writing has appeared in a wide range of prominent journals, such as The Atlantic, The New Yorker, The American Poetry Review, and The New Republic.

Vuong taught at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and serves as a professor of Modern Poetry and Poetics at NYU. He lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, with his partner, Peter Bienkowski.

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ABBY WAMBACH

b. June 2, 1980

WOMEN'S SOCCER STAR

“There’s something to be said ... about women standing on their own two feet, owning who they are ... and being unapologetic about it,”

She is a U.S. soccer legend and two-time Olympic gold medalist.

Abby Wambach is a retired U.S. women’s soccer legend, a podcaster, and a best-selling author. She was a six-time Female Athlete of the Year, a two-time Olympic gold medalist, and a FIFA World Cup champion.

Born in Rochester, New York, Mary Abigail Wambach learned the game at age 4 and often competed on boys’ teams. An elite high school player, she received a full athletic scholarship to the University of Florida in 1998. In college she was twice named a conference Player of the Year and set multiple records.

Wambach debuted with the U.S. Women’s National Team (USWNT) in 2001. In 2002, the Washington Freedom selected her as a first-round pick in the Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA) draft. After a successful first season, Wambach and Mia Hamm led the team to a WUSA title in 2003. That same year, Wambach played in her first FIFA World Cup and was named U.S. Soccer’s Female Athlete of the Year.

In 2004, Wambach helped the USWNT win an Olympic gold medal and earned her second of six Female Athlete of the Year titles. In 2011, she became the first soccer player—male or female—to be named Athlete of the Year by the Associated Press. She helped the U.S. win Olympic gold again in 2012.

With the formation of the National Women’s Soccer League in 2013, Wambach joined the Western New York Flash. That same year, she married her longtime partner and teammate, Sarah Huffman, and surpassed Mia Hamm to set a new international goal-scoring record—one she still holds.

Wambach sat out the 2015 season to prepare for her final Women’s World Cup. She retired after leading the team to victory alongside Megan Rapinoe.

In April 2016, Wambach was arrested on a DUI charge. In September, she published her New York Times best-selling memoir, “Forward,” chronicling her struggles with substance abuse. She and Huffman divorced less than a month later. In 2017, Wambach married Glennon Doyle, whom she met at a writer’s event.

Wambach was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame in 2019. She has written five books, including the New York Times No. 1 best seller, “Wolf Pack” (2019). Her podcast, “We Can Do Hard Things,” launched in 2021. Apple named it their No. 1 new podcast.

An equality activist, Wambach is a part-owner of Angel City FC, the first majority-female-owned pro soccer team, and serves on the board of Together Rising, a nonprofit founded by her wife. The couple lives in California with their three children.



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LANFORD WILSON

**PULITZER-WINNING
PLAYWRIGHT**

b. April 13, 1937
d. March 24, 2011

*“If you ... once dreamed of everlasting love,
don’t give up the dream, find it again.”*

**He was a Pulitzer
Prize-winning
playwright and
Off-Off-Broadway
pioneer.**

Lanford Wilson was a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and a pioneer of the Off-Off-Broadway and regional theater movements. Known for his experimental style and nuanced exploration of relationships—including themes of gay identity—he was among the first playwrights to transition from Off-Off-Broadway to Broadway productions.

Wilson was born in Lebanon, Missouri. When his parents split five years later, he moved with his mother to Springfield. She remarried when he was 11, and the family settled in Ozark, where Wilson remained through high school.

In 1956, Wilson moved to San Diego, California, to live with his father and study art in college. A year later, he relocated to Chicago. He found work as a graphic designer and studied playwriting at the University of Chicago.

Wilson moved to New York City in 1962, where he met Joe Cino, owner of Caffe Cino, a coffee house turned theater in the West Village, credited as the birthplace of Off-Off Broadway. Wilson premiered his first play there in 1963. His 1964 play, “The Madness of Lady Bright,” marked a breakout success for Wilson and the venue.

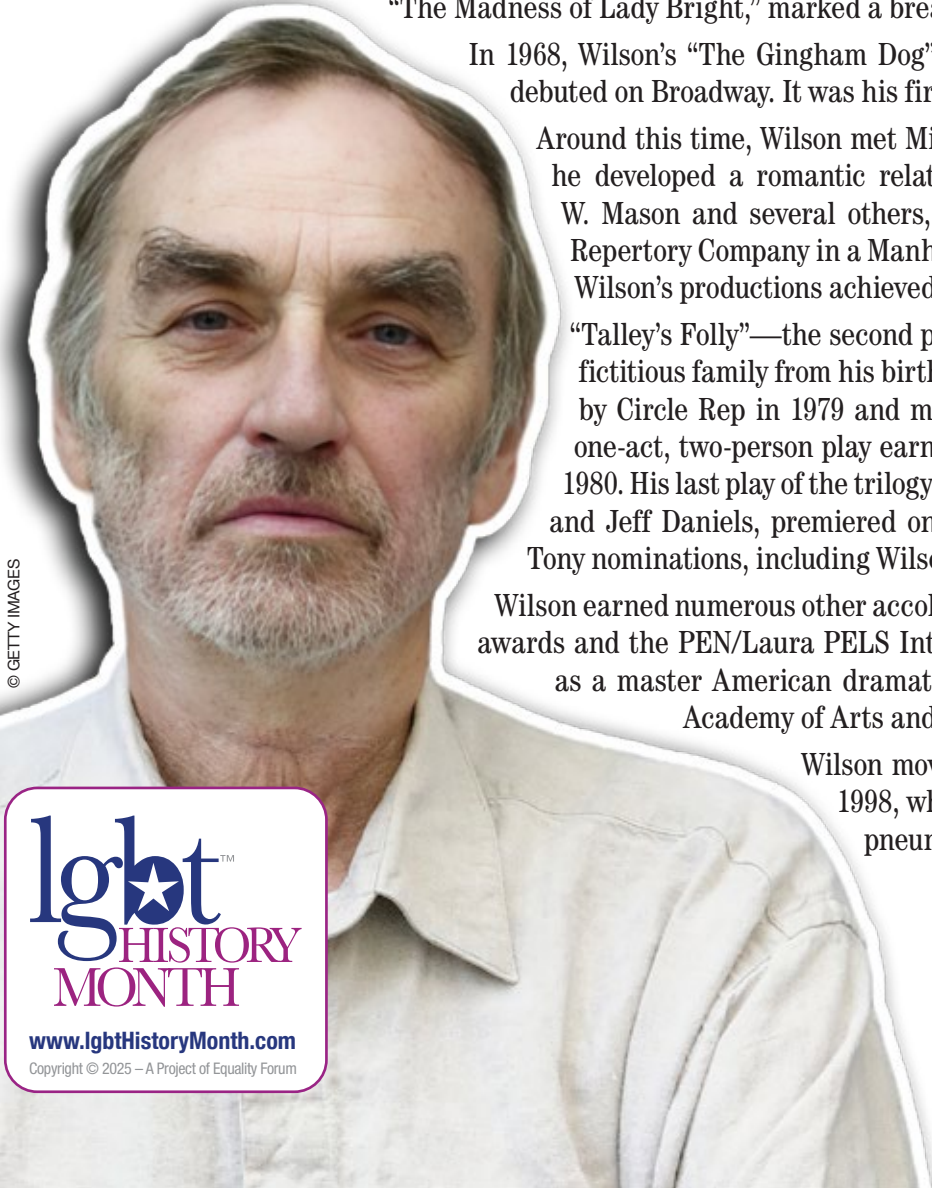
In 1968, Wilson’s “The Gingham Dog” opened at a regional theater. In 1969, it debuted on Broadway. It was his first play to achieve that feat.

Around this time, Wilson met Michael Warren Powell, an actor with whom he developed a romantic relationship. In 1969, with director Marshall W. Mason and several others, Wilson and Powell cofounded the Circle Repertory Company in a Manhattan loft. With Mason’s direction, many of Wilson’s productions achieved considerable success.

“Talley’s Folly”—the second play in Wilson’s “Talley Trilogy,” based on a fictitious family from his birthplace—was first performed Off Broadway by Circle Rep in 1979 and moved to Broadway the following year. The one-act, two-person play earned Wilson the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1980. His last play of the trilogy, “Fifth of July,” starring Christopher Reeve and Jeff Daniels, premiered on Broadway later that year. It earned five Tony nominations, including Wilson’s first of three for Best Play.

Wilson earned numerous other accolades during his career, including five Obie awards and the PEN/Laura PELS International Foundation for Theater Award as a master American dramatist. He was also elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Wilson moved to his vacation home in Sag Harbor in 1998, where he lived full-time until his death from pneumonia at 73.



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