



Glamour reigns supreme at annual event

Matthew Gologor
Arts Editor
Anneke Tryzelaar
Editor-in-Chief
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"Is it a boy or a girl? Can we tell? Well, that's the point."

So mused emcee Ginger Vitus (senior David Getsy) at one point during the runway competition at Oberlin's fifth annual Drag Ball last Saturday night. Parading down the steps of Wilder Main were Oberlin's best and worst examples in glitz and cross dressing.

In an event that would rival Homecoming at many other colleges, Oberlin's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Union (LGBU) had once again brought the campus together wearing other people's clothes.



Photos by Kate Ewald and David Reeves

With a majority of campus in attendance, the group netted a total of \$4,200 by the end of the night.

Junior Nick Hallet, all decked out as Pauline, said it was "the most outrageous it's been for years." He added, "Look how much we've grown."

Some debutantes were quick to note how unique the event is. The Drag Ball is the "only true Oberlin experience," said senior Dylan O'Reilly, adding that it is "the only thing that's become a tradition. I think traditions are important."

"Everyone should be in the opposite gender once in a while," said junior Omar Márquez. "It's just fucking fun."

The ball could just be a question of costume — a grandmother's blue wig, a roll of duct tape or maybe nothing at all.

"The best part is putting on makeup and wearing a dress," junior Leonard Kusdra said. "After an hour, it gets old."

Or the ultimate questions could go deeper: to shave or not to shave. Senior Scott Hale, bearded and bearded, announced, "I shaved two years ago and looked like hell." So this year, he didn't bother.

"I'd have to agree, I didn't shave," said senior Ruth Bothstein, who was standing with him.

Many women opted for an elegant bra, jacket and tie. Why? "To look sexy," first-year Christine Ham said. "It's something I've never done before. It's the one place



where I feel comfortable doing it." Senior Lea Filippi stylishly rented a full tuxedo. "It's actually kind of fun," she said. "But it's really hot. You can't take off the coat."

The famed runway competition featured approximately 80 participants, all vying for the top honors of Drag King and Queen. Though narrower than last year, the aisle still provided the transformed with chances to draw applause and cheers from onlookers.

Appointed judges for the evening were Assistant Dean of the Conservatory Ellen Sayles, Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian Timothy Scholl, Assistant Professor of Dance Ann Cooper Albright and Aubrey Wertheim.

What were they looking for? "Bribes," Scholl said. "We were disappointed with everyone."

Other judges said students had to be transgender both in cost and action. That meant especially keeping the act up to the end

of the aisle where the judges were — some runway contestants just rushed right by.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the judges looked for originality.

Stepping right out of the Sun King's court in an extravagant white gown and towering powdered wig, senior Michael Maccaferri, dressed as Marie Aquanette, succeeded Paul Fisher OC '94 to become the queen of the 1995 Drag Ball. He and Robin Russell OC '93 (an intern at the Office of Multicultural Affairs) had worked on his costume since the beginning of Spring Break. "I owe my life to her," he said.

"The competition itself was fierce," Maccaferri added. "People thought twice before getting up there." Although excited about his victory, Maccaferri viewed the contest differently. "I look at the runway competition as more of an exposition," he said.



Maccaferri attributes his success largely to his family: "Marie Aquanette would like to thank his mother Judy, and his aunts Terry, Holly and Sandy, for starting his drag career at the age of three," he said.

He and Russell are already planning for next year.

Regressing to childhood heroes, seniors Julie Muz, Justin Green and Ashis Mahapatra collectively captured the title of Drag King (held last year by senior Robin Breeding) as they armed themselves with swords and shields to be the "Masters of the Universe."

So what's to look forward to in next year's ball? One way or the other, the event can do nothing but get even better.

2024

Ease On Down The Road: BHM Fashion Show

Nikki Keating
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The Black History Month Fashion Show is one of the main events that I participated in during Black History Month at Oberlin. During my first year, I had little to no idea it was happening until the start of the second semester. Because of that, I acted as a fly on the wall during the show, helping models change into costumes and poking my head through the curtain to see the crowd roar as people walked down the catwalk. I knew then that I was going to model next year.

In my second year, I was the first person to arrive at the initial fittings during the fall semester. When February came around, I was prepared to walk. I still remember strutting on stage for the first time, sporting a tie-dye jacket and custom deconstructed slacks, and the crowd's energy as it burst into applause and screams. When this year rolled around, I found myself wanting to be more involved with the fashion show, especially behind the scenes. I mentioned my interest to some committee members and was quick to offer up my service as a costume designer.

Meetings and planning for the show started up in late September, with the committee going



over themes, financing, and the location for the show itself. *The Wiz* was going to be the theme of the show, as the musical is currently doing a pre-Broadway tour before hitting Times Square.

The Wiz has always been my favorite musical. As a kid, my family and I used to pull out the CD and watch it during the winter, a memory which I hold close to my heart. I knew all the songs by heart and was enamored with the costumes. When asked what I wanted to design, I offered up my services for the Emerald City lines — Green, Red, and Gold. Much to my delight, the committee was happy to bring me on as the sole designer for the Red line. I created countless Pinterest boards and

shopped for pieces for my line, which took up the better part of the semester. By the time Winter Term hit, I had design ideas for 10 models and was eager to get started once February hit.

It's important to note that while I was at home, the executive board of the fashion show committee was hard at work. They spent Winter Term developing the costumes for the other eight lines. College fourth-year Divine McAllister and College second-year Mia Knox came up with not only the concepts for multiple lines and costumes but designs for their own lines as well. College fourth-years Alyson Jefferson and Wya'e Stewart handled the logistics for the fashion show as well as

helping with lines. College fourth-year Bour Opoku worked into the night to show me the various makeup looks she planned to design for the models, and ended up doing makeup and hair for nearly every model in the show.

Throughout this process, the former faculty-in-residence of Afrikan Heritage House Candice Raynor helped guide them and gave tips drawn from her experience. During the frigidty of January, this group figured out who would do sound and lights, help backstage, take photos, and even find an entirely new location. The Black History Month Fashion Show is usually held in the Carnegie Building Root Room, but construction forced the committee

to find an entirely new space and completely rework logistics this year. Without this work, my line would have never seen the light of day, and I am eternally grateful for all the time and effort the committee put in to create a show I could be a part of.

By the time I got back to campus, we were two and a half weeks away from the show. The same day my feet landed on Oberlin soil, I was in the Edmonia Lewis Center for Women and Transgender People crafting pieces for the Red Line. I struggled to get going at first, scared to make the first cut or glue on the first gem, but the encouragement of my peers allowed me to start putting together full pieces for the models. It was never easy and I spent many late nights rethinking my original designs. On top of starting class and my other responsibilities, there were plenty of nights where I was missing my bed and dreading the cold walk back to my house. However, those times were all overshadowed by the laughter, food, and singing while working on the show.

One of the best things about Black History Month is that I am able to spend so much time devoted to a common goal with my Black peers. We all have busy schedules outside of Black Histo-

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