

## 'The Legend of Georgia McBride' – fun and acceptance at Town Hall Theatre



Photo provided

By Sophie Braccini

Opening its 75th anniversary season, Town Hall Theatre offers its audience a show that's part cabaret, part play: "The Legend of Georgia McBride." The story of Casey, a young father-to-be pushed by circumstance to become a drag queen at night and the difficulty he has to accept and share with his wife the real pleasure he derives from it, carries an optimistic message of acceptance and freedom. While the show is easy to love, it is not for younger audiences due to sexually-charged (and mostly funny) language.

In the Bay Area where LGBTQ has become a part of everyday language (although this reporter had to look up what QIAA+ meant: questioning, intersex, asexual, and ally), and fluid sexual orientation is now replacing nonbinary, it would seem that transvestite should not be a topic that would raise any eyebrows. But as the show director Cindy Goldfield noted, in 2018 alone there were some 1,000 hate crimes perpetrated against non-traditional individuals in California. The play offers a message of tolerance toward differences and explores how a straight guy, Elvis impersonator and soon to be father, can easily become a woman and find a freeing pleasure in it. For that matter, the first transformation of Casey into Georgia on stage, and within less than a minute, is both striking and fascinating.

The general feeling of the play is that of a giant party where the audience is encouraged to participate, clap

to the beat, cheer and have fun. At times one no longer knows if this is indeed a cabaret show or a theater performance.

The play is light, even if two or three times Matthew Lopez, the playwright, adds some dialogue alluding to the difficulty of being different, to the importance of looking past appearances and prejudices, and to being true to oneself and one's choices.

Extra kudos goes to the cast: Greg Lynch as Miss Tracy is such a drag empress, with a big heart, a total talent for extravaganza and a monumental presence. Andrew Mondello portrays a very believable Casey, slowly transforming from Elvis to drag queen and escalating his game to the totally fun and crazy finale. Héctor Ramón Zavala as Remy delivers a performance that has depth and poignancy at times - more than one spectator may be astonished to realize after the show that he also plays Jason the landlord, as he is unrecognizable in that other role. Aficionados to THT will recognize Tom Rely as Eddie and April Deitschle is Jo, Casey's young wife, a woman with common sense and a big heart.

The costumes by Shelby Pujol and all the scenic design contribute to make this show a successful visual, auditory and sensory moment of fun.

"The Legend of Georgia McBride" plays at Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette through Oct. 19. For more information, visit [townhalltheatre.com](http://townhalltheatre.com)

## Kindness a focus of recent community event



Peter Pan Foundation founder Leslie Noel and the Executive Director of Born This Way Foundation Maya Smith.

Photos provided

Submitted by Gina Campo

The Peter Pan Foundation hosted a community kindness event Sept. 19 at their location in Lafayette, in partnership with the Born This Way Foundation as part of their #bekind21 campaign. Guests were invited to participate in a variety of activities that represented the four pillars of the #bekind21 campaign: kindness, love, acceptance and bravery. During the two-hour event nearly 100 people visited and participated in the activities. The Peter Pan Foundation and Born This Way were thrilled to see such fantastic community support toward helping spread kindness, an integral part of the mission of both of these organizations.



Lafayette resident Sadie Poole, who participates with the PPF and designed the T-shirt for this kindness event.

## Looking Good in Lamorinda Finding style in sustainable fashion



The Cassie cross-body bag.

Photos Moya Stone

By Moya Stone

The buzzword in fashion this season is "sustainable," as consumers become aware of the negative impact clothing manufacturing has on the environment, including air and water pollution, overproduction and waste. According to Vogue magazine close to three-fifths of all clothing ends up in a landfill or is incinerated. Designers such as Stella McCartney and Eileen Fisher are shifting their business practices to become more sustainable and cause less harm to the environment.

Back in 2013 British designer Vivienne Westwood was ahead of the curve when she said, "Buy less. Choose well. Make it last. Quality not quantity."

One approach to sustainable fashion is to buy secondhand, which is currently a hot shopping trend. Lucky for us Lamorinda has quite a few thrift and consignment stores including the high-end resale shop, Gemlust in downtown Lafayette. Seven years ago proprietor Renee Kubryk opened up the bricks and mortar where she specializes in selling pre-owned upscale designer handbags, in particular the ever-popular Chanel and Louis Vuitton. Additionally she offers antique reproduction engagement rings that she has designed herself. Kubryk says business is strong in consignment. She sells handbags at 20-30% below retail and she accepts only mint condition bags or for a special bag she'll do restoration. Kubryk is very knowledgeable and "loves to talk handbags." She's thinking about starting a meet-up and invites anyone who is into collecting Chanel or LV to contact her. Gemlust is open by appointment only. [Gemlust.com](http://Gemlust.com), (925) 385-7121.

Following Westwood's advice, when we do purchase something new, go for lasting quality, such as the Cass Clutch handbag by Lafayette designer Debra Szidon. I checked in with Szidon, who started her handbag line in 2016, and she tells me that lately she has been considering different shapes and sizes. New this season is The Cassie, a cross body bag that can be worn five different ways. Szidon says she added this style because customers requested an option to the original, which was inspired by a vintage 1970s bag. Made in California in small quantities, a Cass Clutch handbag is an investment piece that is made sturdy and it improves with age. "It's a bag built to last that works for any season," says Szidon, who is thinking sustainable by avoiding waste and using leftover materials to make smaller items like wallets. <https://thecassclutch.com>.

Cashmere is another investment piece and Wayside Inn Thrift Store in Lafayette is having their popular an-

nual cashmere sale on Oct. 8. The shop puts aside the best in their cashmere selection for this special one-day event. While there, look for fall 2019 fashion trends, many of which harken back to past eras: brown and various shades of green are the "in" colors, capes, suits, animal prints (are they ever not in?), long coats, and vintage '70s long shimmery gowns are all the rage for evening wear. Wayside Inn Thrift Store, 3521 Golden Gate Way, Lafayette.

After having heard of the untimely death of fashion designer Isabel Toledo I reread her memoir, "Roots of Style: Weaving Together Life, Love, and Fashion" (Celebra, 2012). Known for designing Michelle Obama's 2009 inaugural day outfit, Toledo died in August at age 59 from breast cancer. I enjoyed her story of starting out in Cuba and moving to America with her family when she was young enough to see it as a big adventure. I also appreciate her positive attitude and of course her amazing talent, which began with desire to see how machines work and soon shifted to how clothing is constructed. While in high school in New Jersey she met her future husband Ruben Toledo, an artist and now a renowned fashion illustrator. The book is full of his charming illustrations. The two moved to Manhattan after graduating from high school and as a couple they forged ahead in their careers in fashion and art. Roots of Style is a great read for more than just Toledo's personal story, it's also a fascinating piece of fashion history, specifically 1980s Manhattan when the city was edgy and raw and full of opportunity for young novices.

Embrace the change of season and go forth in style.



Moya Stone is a fashion writer and blogger at [www.overdressedforlife.com](http://www.overdressedforlife.com).