

# MEDUSA'S REVENGE

Remembering  
**Sam Gindin**  
1945 - 2026

A history 'zine from the Queer Big Apple Corps



**ISSUE NO.02**

April 2026

**ON THE COVER**

Sam Gindin at Gay Games II in San Francisco in 1986



The Lesbian and Gay Bands of America massed band was playing for the Opening Ceremonies of the Games. Sam is wearing his Lesbian & Gay Big Apple Corps (LGBAC) marching band uniform.

I was in D.C.'s Different Drummers at the time.

I was lucky enough from time to time to sub with Hot Lavender, LGBAC's swing band, conducted by Sam.

- Laura Whitbeck

**SAM CONDUCTING HOT LAVENDER**



# A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the second edition of Medusa's Revenge, the 'zine documenting and celebrating the history of the Queer Big Apple Corps. This issue is very special because it remembers longtime QBAC conductor Sam Gindin, who passed away recently.

I, Nora, got to spend time with Sam and his husband Larry on Zoom before he passed, sharing stories about the band and laughing about memories, mishaps, and mayhem. I was struck by the love and care oozing through the screen, even after decades of being together. I hope that feeling comes through not only in their words in this issue but the words of everyone who loved Sam.

As always, our deep gratitude to everyone who submitted memories and photos of Sam, and a special thank you to Joe Avena, archivist, writer, and memory-keeper extraordinaire.

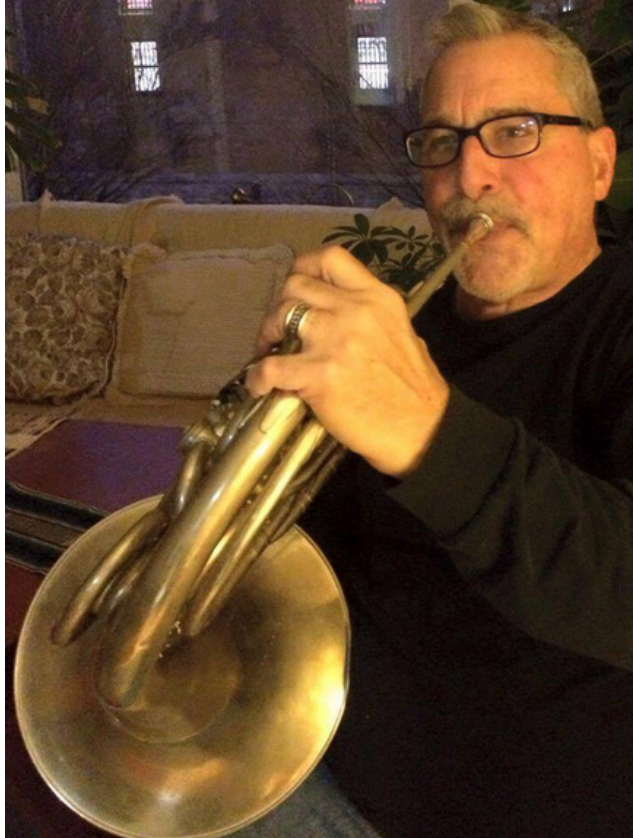
With love,

*Nora and Leah*

Nora Neus and Leah Singerman



**PAINTING BY SAM GINDIN**, who was also a very talented visual artist!



EXCERPTS FROM A  
2023 INTERVIEW WITH  
**SAM GINDIN**

### How did music play a role in your life growing up?

**Sam Gindin:** Even in my highchair, I remember rocking and my mom singing, and we used to sing a lot together. And then I started singing the melody from the Walls of a Merry Widow, which to this day has a haunting effect on my life. My father played one of his favorite records — the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto, very famous with Horowitz and Toscanini conducting, which made my mother furious because it was so much money. She says, how could you do this? There's barely enough food on the table. This was in the forties.

### When did you start playing instruments?

**Sam Gindin:** My sister asked for the piano, and my mother said, you'll get it when you're eight years old. When she became eight, she got it. She practiced and I listened to her practice, and then I went over and picked up her melodies with my own fingers. I never watched her. So I had this ear all the time that was like a sponge. Popular music, all kinds of music, swing music in my blood. My father loved swing music as well as classical. My mother was hooked on Chopin. She'd be happy. She could listen to Chopin her whole life.

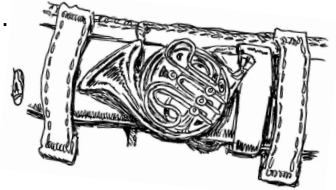


## When did you realize that you were gay?

**Sam Gindin:** I guess I was four or five. I was attracted to men. I don't know why exactly, but I was. I was attracted to women for other reasons, but not in any kind of erotic way.

## What was that like for you? That would have been the sixties.

**Sam Gindin:** Terrible. It's a good thing I had a friend of mine in high school — he went to art school and he was quite mature at the time. He told me all about his adventures and nobody really knew except me. So we kept in touch because I just wanted to know his drive for life. And with me, it was everything I could hear, I put in my hands. So we had a lot in common.



## Do you remember when you first heard about the Lesbian and Gay Big Apple Corps?

**Sam Gindin:** Oh my God, that's another story. That fall of 1983, I happened to go to a party around the block from where I lived in Brooklyn. I wore this belt with a buckle of a French horn, and there was this guy there who says, oh, you play the French horn? I said, actually, yes, I do play the French horn and I actually conduct too. He said, I'm with the gay band — the New York Gay Community Marching Band. He said, we have no conductor, and he mentioned his name, who I won't mention, left us two weeks ago. I was physically sad. I said, well, I wonder how I can help. He says, if you come to our rehearsal in Chinatown, bring your horn. Don't say a word. Just sit and play. So I did. I sat and I played for an hour.

Sam!



## And then what happened?

**Sam Gindin:** Then someone said to me, are you a conductor too? I said, well, I've conducted a little bit. She said, could you take the second half, please? I went, ooo, that's your B flat. Tune to it. In two minutes, they were in tune. I said, what's on the program? They said we're playing in the Village and going up Christopher Street to raise money. At that time, there must've been at least ten bars on Christopher Street in three blocks. We had a fifteen, twenty piece band and we took up a lot of room. I jumped up on a bar stool and I just gave a downbeat, and all these places with the wooden background — it just powerhoused them. People were very excited. I would be very fresh with the audience and I'd say, oh, come on, you old queens, I know you've got money in your pockets, so toss it in. And that's the first time I ever said anything like that. It was kind of a liberating feeling.



SAM AT REHEARSAL, YEAR UNCERTAIN

## Tell me more about traveling with the band.



**Sam Gindin:** We went down to Florida. The Lesbian and Gay Bands of America was putting on a concert in a very well-known hall in Fort Lauderdale. So I called up my mama, who lives in that town. I said, hey ma, we're playing. She says, oh my God, I'll be there. She looked good, and she was very happy to see me. And the free boat ride, which we had after the concert, all around Fort Lauderdale's canals — she's a dancer and a party girl. She had a great time. At the end, I said, hey ma, I introduced you to a lot of people. She says, I never saw such tall women in my whole life. I said, ma, they're drag queens. She says, oh my God, what a time. Of course they were all wearing heels. She hit five feet and that's it, and they're all six feet something or other. She was in her eighties at that time. She was cool. She lived to be 101.



## How did you meet Larry, your husband?

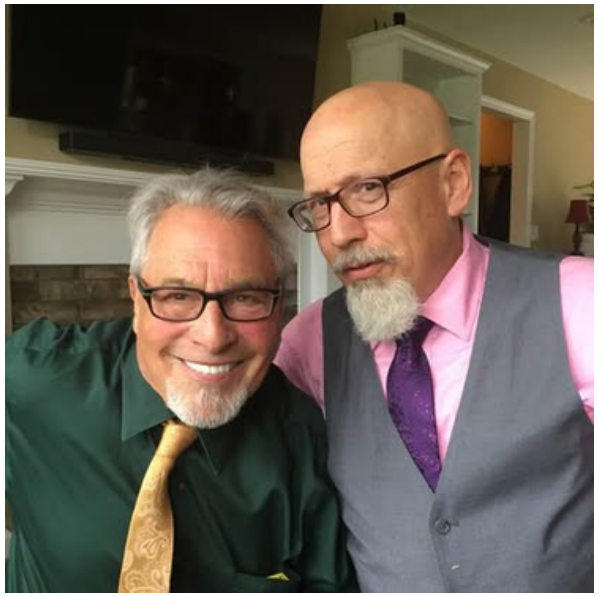
**Sam Gindin:** I met him at a copy store. I just walked up to him and said, my name is Sam Gindin, I play the French horn, and if you make a copy of this, I'll make you famous. And we became friends. Then when I was singing in the local chorus, I saw him again and said, hello, my name is Sam. He said, okay. We became close right away. He was a Taurus. A lot of my boyfriends were Tauruses — on the same day even. So I said, it must be something in destiny.

## Is there anything else you'd like to share?

**Sam Gindin:** Well, after I retired, my music left me for a while. I moved up to Springfield with my husband and took up painting. I used my hands this way and not with the baton. I have a dozen seascapes. As a boy I grew up by the ocean in Brooklyn — the sound, everything. It calls to you.



PAINTING BY SAM GINDIN



WORDS FROM  
**LARRY GINDIN**

Sam's husband

*Note: This interview was conducted by Nora Neus in the fall of 2023.*

**Nora:** How did you meet?

**Larry:** It was through the band, sort of. There were a few routes, but there was one clincher. Literally, I'm going to give you all three.

**Nora:** Great.

**Larry:** There was an organization, a social organization in Park Slope, Brooklyn at the time, called Gay Friends and Neighbors of Brooklyn. And we were both involved in that. And we both sang Christmas carols with their chorus. And so we sort of knew each other through that. And then we also knew each other because we knew a husband and wife team. So they kept talking about us to each other, so we knew each other more then.

And then my roommate at the time was singing with Hot Lavender, the swing band. And she also kinda was interested in a trumpet player with the band who was having a party for the band called Dancing Through the Decades that it started at seven o'clock, and each decade was a new decade, starting in the twenties, thirties, forties, fifties.



And you were supposed to dress as a decade. And both Sam and I both dressed as the forties. We both, more or less had Zoot suits on. And there was a time when everyone went up to the roof and to hang out and smoke weed apparently. And Sam didn't go up. And I found my way down for some unknown reason. And we were dancing to Sinatra. And that's how, so it was like through the band, but not of the band. It wasn't an official band event, but that's how we met.

**Nora:** And what year would that have been?

**Larry:** That was '86. Okay. I was seeing someone else at the time, kind of addicted to relationships, et cetera.

**Nora:** So how did you go from that night to being together?

**Larry:** Well, first I had to break up with my boyfriend of three years. Then we started seeing each other. So yeah, that was July. It was the Hardwick decision of the Supreme Court, privacy and sodomy laws. And there was a protest down in Sheridan Square, and the band played. The band, as many as could attend, came and played, and Sam spoke a bit, and they played a Sousa march or something. And that was sort of the clincher for me because there we were out in the streets. And there, my old boyfriend wasn't out — the biggest queen in New York City, but he wasn't out. God bless him. He's a good man. But we were young. I was 29 at the time.



**Nora:** I'm 29!

**Larry:** Oh, God bless you. That's such an old man thing to say. Fuck. Anyway, but so you know the fervor and passion of youth. So I had a political reason for breaking up with my ex to be with Sam. 🎵



SAM (L) AND JOE, 1986

MEMORIES OF  
**SAM GINDIN**

by Joe Avena, Legacy Clarinet Player

**“AT TONIGHT’S REHEARSAL, WE’RE GOING TO TURN THIS CHICKEN  
SHIT INTO CHOPPED CHICKEN LIVER.”**

-Sam Gindin, Artist and Inspiration (ca. 1980s)

Sam and I grew up just a few hundred feet away from each other. He was a few years older than me, so while I likely would have seen him and his French horn walk past my home, I never knew him. When I joined the band, my life, like that of countless others, changed - and soon Sam and I were to develop an artistic friendship built on respect and admiration. Following are just a few of my wonderful memories created by Sam Gindin.

When the band's new name came about, "The Lesbian & Gay Big Apple Corps" was far from a household name in the NYC LGBTQ+ community. Sam entered the band as our new conductor quite by accident in 1983. He conducted his first concert that Spring and the difference in our quality of performance was truly noticeable. A month later, on May 2, 1983, something was to occur that none of us were prepared for: New York City's first AIDS March and Vigil and the band was asked to 'lead' the march. Sam was our Artistic Director, but was classically trained, so we were not prepared for an event like this. We didn't even have a banner. Sam rolled up his sleeves and brilliance emerged. We were instructed to wear white long-sleeved shirts, black pants, black shoes, and a black arm band. We lined up in a strong formation with instruments in hand - and NO music. Just a solemn and continual 'funeral' cadence by the percussion section. Instead of a banner, we carried a large poster in front that read, "WHERE WILL WE BE WHEN ALL THE MUSIC STOPS." There were no smiles, and often tears as thousands upon thousands of marchers holding candles followed us. Thank you, Sam, for helping our small organization make a huge impact on the lives of so many.



1983 AIDS MARCH

**FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES**



**AN AIDS CANDLELIGHT MARCH**  
A personal expression to honor the dead and support the living.

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
7:30 P.M.  
FROM CASTRO & MARKET  
TO U.N. PLAZA/CIVIC CENTER  
BRING CANDLE  
INFO / AIDS & KS FOUNDATION  
(415) 864-4376

**NEW YORK**  
8:00 P.M.  
FROM SHERIDAN SQUARE  
TO FEDERAL BUILDING  
BRING CANDLE AND WEAR  
BLACK ARMBAND WITH  
PINK TRIANGLE  
INFO / GMHC HOTLINE  
(212) 685-8952

**MONDAY, MAY 2, 1983**

Illustration by David Estroff; Graphic Design by Estroff-Walker Associates



**SAM AND LESESNE VAN  
ANTWERP**

The year was 1986. There was a national Pride Bands conference in San Francisco that included a massed band concert in Davies Symphony Hall. Many of our New York band members attended, and Sam and I were among them. Sam was not there just to make music. He was on a mission - to pay a visit to Lesesne Van Antwerp who was the former Artistic Director of the San Francisco Freedom Band. Lesesne was dying of AIDS, so Sam deeply wanted to see him. With that in mind, Sam insisted I accompany him. By then I was 33 years old, and like so many, was deathly afraid of this horrible disease. I told him I would rather not go and he quickly dressed me down saying, "It is important for you to go with me. Lesesne is dying and is expecting to see both of us." He then exclaimed angrily, "If you don't go, you will regret it for the rest of your life!" So, I went. To this day I will never forget Sam's words - and in retrospect, I was so proud of myself for showing up when it was most important. A life lesson - and that was because of Sam Gindin.



**SAM, 1986**

That weekend, the massed concert band played to an enthusiastic sold-out crowd, and the theme was 'Circus'. We were wearing grease paint on our faces and had trapeze artists swinging over our heads. (Yes, literally!) The audience had a great laugh when the head of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors announced, "And here from New York's Lesbian & Gay Big Apple Corps is Pinocchio!" Talk about a surprise - it was Sam Gindin - completely in costume. He lifted his baton and conducted the most beautiful arrangement of 'When You Wish Upon a Star' - and it was artistic perfection. The audience went wild, and so did our massed band. To this day I will never forget how amazing Sam was when he was conducting. He had a gift like no other.



**1985 NYC: "FIVE AND STILL ALIVE" 5TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT  
(L-R) PADY BLACKWOOD, PINK PANTHER (DUH), SAM GINDIN**

Yes, it's true. Sam Gindin actually had a duel with The Pink Panther - and it was a stand-off! It was the 1980s and Sam somehow had met up with a puppeteer who wanted to perform with the band. Sam came up with the brilliant idea of putting Johann Strauss' Trish-Trash Polka on our concert program. That evening, the audience was introduced to our puppeteer dressed in black, and of course our special guest, a three-foot-tall Pink Panther marionette. Sam smiled at the band and we began playing. Not 20 seconds later did the Panther walk up to Sam, with a baton in its hand signaling to Sam he wanted to conduct - so Sam stepped aside. In turn, just 20 seconds later, Sam went up to the Panther, tapped him on the shoulder, and signaled he'd like to continue conducting, and so the Panther stepped aside. This soon angered the Panther, so he again walked up to Sam and signaled he was ready to return to conducting - but Sam flatly refused! Instantly, the Panther swung into action, and right in front of the audience, a duel ensued between the two with batons in hand. The audience began howling and applauding in elation, and the band ended the piece with two conductors and an unforgettable memory made by Sam.



The “Atlantic Antic” was a popular annual street fair held on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. The event was always opened with a parade, and our marching band was hired to lead the procession. Every year, we donned our old uniforms, and Sam was playing his French horn along with us. As we approached the reviewing stand, the announcer on the mic loudly announced, “The Big Apple Corps Marching Band.” We played a song, and suddenly, Sam Gindin walked out of formation, went up to the announcer, and whispered something in his ear. Moments later, the announcer proclaimed to the audience we were the “L and G Big Apple Corps”, at which the band was in shock! Well, Sam once again walked out of formation, and went up to the announcer to whisper something in his ear. Reluctantly, the announcer for the third time proclaimed, let’s give a hand to “The Lesbian & Gay Big Apple Corps” to which we all cheered and marched on!

THE BIG APPLE  
CORPS  
L AND G BIG  
APPLE  
THE LESBIAN  
AND GAY BIG  
APPLE CORPS

SAM AND JOE, 1994



*Sam was the flame that brought our band back to life when we needed him most. Under his baton, I was Concert Master and played the clarinet at the top of my game. This photo is of me playing the opening solo in Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue – with Sam Gindin conducting. It sits in my piano room, and never a day goes by when I don't remember that sold out evening at FIT's Haft Auditorium. It was the greatest gift in my life – and Sam Gindin gave it to me. For that I am eternally grateful.*

**--JOE AVENA**



**SAM AND JOE WITH RITA MORENO AT THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL**

The 1980s were a time of calm and great restraint - but never in the band. At that time the band rehearsed in a huge loft that was the home of Roberta Raeburn and her friendly black lab dog, Negra. There were no cell phones, no internet, and the only way to find and order an item that was not in a brick-and-mortar store was by phone. For some background history, in the back of most magazines and newspapers were pages of "Mail Order Catalogues" - some with photos and some not. I'm sure you've heard Marita won't take shit from anyone - but that was all about to change when she spotted an advertisement to purchase 'real looking rubber dog poop'. Needless to say, that item was soon to find itself at a band rehearsal. I was sitting next to Marita, and she told me about "a scathingly brilliant idea" she had and basically gave me the scoop on the poop, explaining it was solid rubber and odorless. At the break, the whole band went down to the street level to get some air, at which point Marita placed her new toy a few feet in front of the podium on top of Sam's pile of scores so the flutes, clarinets, and of course Sam could spot it. It wasn't long before clarinet player Bob Imlah spotted the poop and yelled out, "That's disgusting - I *knew* I smelled something!" The room was in an uproar as Bob pointed out the poop to Sam, who exclaimed, "On my scores? Oy vey, my gay and lesbian nerves." Everyone assumed it was poor Negra and Marita abruptly stood up and said, "I'll get it!" She walked over, picked it up in her bare hand... as everyone screamed in disgust. Quite honestly, when Marita says her shit doesn't stink - she means it! 🎵





## MARITA'S MEMORIES

by Marita Begley

When I joined the band in 1982, we were really small...and really bad. We were like 10 people maybe. At one of my first performances, a Greater Gotham Business Council event, they closed the curtain on us after our first song, and we were waving our hands, going, "No, no, we're not done!" (They grudgingly reopened the curtain.) That was the day Sam Gindin first heard the band!

Years later, I asked Sam what he thought of us that day. "Oy," he said. "You were a bunch of vilde chaya." (That's pronounced vill-deh high-yuh.) I didn't know what that meant but it didn't sound complimentary. "So why did you join?" I asked. He said he thought we needed him, that he could help, so he went up to somebody and got a phone number and rehearsal information. I had to ask: "What's that mean anyway, vilde chaya?" He held my gaze, then: "Wild beasts."

I go to band the Monday after the Greater Gotham event, and this guy walks in with a French horn. Sam. Our previous conductor had quit a couple weeks before — just "I'm done" and walks out — so Trudy Lundgren (trombone) had been going, "A one, a two..." and we'd play another Sousa march. Anyway, Trudy asks Sam if he plays anything else, and he says, "Well, I do a little conducting..." And she goes, "Great! We need a conductor." And that was that. That's how we did things in those days.



**JOE AVENA (L) WITH SAM, 1994**



**MARITA AND SAM DRUM MAJORING TOGETHER**

“I do a little conducting.” That was an understatement. Sam Gindin is, in my opinion, the best conductor our band has ever had. His personality was not to everyone's taste — he was very temperamental. He was also extraordinarily gifted. The band grew under Sam. And we grew pretty quickly. We went up to 30 in no time, which was a lot in those days.

Something can happen sometimes with a great conductor, where you kind of go someplace in the middle of the piece. It's like you're swept into something... pulled into the music, you all the other musicians become one, a blur of music and emotion. It's electric, extremely powerful. The first time I ever experienced it was with Sam. And it happened a lot with him. I think because he had absolutely no self-consciousness. He completely gave himself to the music. It was like he was the music. He had a great gift, and he was a force of nature. Everything was in the music. Everything was in that. He was gifted beyond anyone I've ever run across.


To some of us, he was almost like a religious figure in a funny sort of way, and he was family and a dear friend. When Leslie Becker and I had our commitment ceremony, we asked him to perform the ceremony and it was wonderful. He was the perfect person to have do it. I thought the world of him. We both did.

He was a very complex guy, and not complex at the same time. You never knew what he was going to say — he could say something so wise, so profound, so shift-your-world, or he could say the most bizarre things.



One time we were at Riis Park Beach — me and Leslie and Sam and Larry. Sam was standing in the water up to his knees, smoking a cigarette, looking around, and you could see the wheels turning in his head. Larry and I were sitting there watching Sam, and we were discussing the fact that you never knew what he was going to say. It could be incredibly profound...or totally ridiculous. As we're watching him, he turns around, he's got a pensive look on his face—deep in thought—and he starts toward us. "Here we go," I say. "What's it going to be?" Sam walks up, takes a drag on his cigarette, and says, "You know...." Larry and I glance at each other, "...that water is so freaking cold, I swear my balls are in the back of my throat."

Speaking of which.... The band was playing a concert in a bandshell in Elmhurst, Queens on a glorious summer night. We were all dressed up in black concert pants and white tuxedo shirts, and our banner was proudly displayed behind us in the bandshell—the outie version: Lesbian & Gay Big Apple Corps. Not the inie: Big Apple Corps. (Yes, we had an outie and an inie in those days.) The sun had set, so the park was dark and we could only see the faces of the people closest to the stage. Sam was conducting, and in the middle of a piece, an egg sailed through the air and hit Bob Imlah, splattering all over his clarinet and his tux shirt. And then in came another, and another. We were stunned. I don't recall whether we finished the piece but I doubt it. We were all staring out into the darkness, not knowing what might come next. I was band president at the time, and I froze in shock and fear...I didn't know how to protect the band. But Sam knew exactly what to do. Without hesitation, he got on the mic. I wish I remembered his exact words. I don't. But I remember how deftly he handled the moment. He told them: Don't do this. We're here for you, to entertain your neighbors. They're having a good time. Don't spoil it for everyone.... And don't hide out there in the dark and throw things. If you have something to say, come up here and say it. The crowd roared their approval. And there were no more eggs.

We called him Sam-ehleh, a riff on the Yiddish *bubbeleh* ("sweetie"). Sam-ehleh, I miss you, I love you, and I know one day I'll play under your baton again in that great queer concert band in the sky! 



**PAINTING BY SAM GINDIN**

# ANA'S TRIBUTE

by Ana Del Campo

I first met Sam at an event shortly after I joined the BAC, and I remember him being incredibly gregarious and full of life.

It was a wonderful experience when he returned to conduct the band for our 30th anniversary; rehearsing and performing under his baton felt as natural and comfortable as talking to an old friend. 🎵

TRIMUSICANGLE PRESENTS  
**THE LESBIAN & GAY BIG APPLE CORPS  
 SYMPHONIC BAND**


IN  
**THE GAYEST SHOW  
 ON  
 EARTH**



**SAM GINDIN**  
 MUSICAL DIRECTOR  
 & CONDUCTOR

**CANDIDA SCOTT PIEL**  
 PRODUCER

FEATURING PERFORMANCES BY  
 THE WORLD RENOWNED DIVA OF  
**LA GRAN SCENA  
 OPERA COMPANY**  
 MADAME VERA GALUPE-BORSZKH  
 \*\*\*  
**HOT LAVENDER**  
 \*\*\*\*  
**JENNIFER MILLER & FRIENDS**  
 \*\*\*\*  
 GUEST HOSTS  
**BRUCE HOPKINS AND CELESTE**



**CLOWNS, JUGGLERS!  
 STILTWALKERS, BODYBUILDERS!  
 SPINNING FLAGS, FLYING BATONS!  
 AND OTHER ASTONISHING ACTS  
 OF WONDER AND DARING!**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15 • 8 PM**  
 FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY • HAFT AUDITORIUM  
 227 WEST 27TH STREET

TICKETS: RINGSIDE \$35, GRANDSTAND \$15, \$10 IN ADVANCE, \$8, \$12 AT THE DOOR  
 CALL CHARGIT (212) 944-9300 • GROUP RATES AND INFORMATION (212) 869-2920

TYPE AND DESIGN MARYELLEN NUZZO, ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN KAREN MERRILIN, PRINTING KB PRINTING

# **MEDUSA'S REVENGE**

Issue 2

Support QBAC and make a donation now!  
<https://qbac.org/donate/>



**BY SAM GINDIN**