

## REGENCY-ERA GENDER PLAY

Hallie Burt and Kate Werneburg have somehow managed to make their original theatrical adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* sexy. Burt says the sexiness is all in the tension that results from holding back. “You did not touch anyone then and if you did, you had a glove on,” she says. “It’s like all I can do is talk very properly to you, but all I want to do is rip your clothes off.”

This makes for an exciting version of the story, especially since this is a two-woman production, with Burt and Werneburg playing all the parts. With Burt, who identifies as lesbian, as Elizabeth Bennet and Werneburg playing Mr Darcy, the love story takes on a novel appeal. “Kate and I are good friends and we’re very competitive, so it wasn’t hard to find that tension,” Burt says.

They’ve also made the character Charlotte Lucas a lesbian (she has often been speculated to be so). They never explicitly state it in the play or try to make Charlotte, played by Werneburg, somehow seem lesbian in spite of the gender switch — the adaptation is too true to Austen’s story for that — but this understanding of Charlotte’s orientation has in subtle ways guided how they’ve developed that character.

Burt and Werneburg didn’t alter the genders to make some grand argument, although they’re happy to have other people find some gender-



Kate Werneburg and Hallie Burt in *Elizabeth-Darcy: An Adaptation of Pride and Prejudice*. DAHLIA KATZ

related enlightenment in the plot. It was more that they’re good friends and wanted to perform in a play together and both happen to be female. They also wanted to take on the challenge of playing both female and male parts and do it well enough that audiences wouldn’t object. — *Jeremy Willard*

*Elizabeth-Darcy: An Adaptation of Pride and Prejudice* runs Thurs, Dec 18–Sun, Dec 21, various showtimes, at Campbell House, 160 Queen St W. [elizabethdarcy.brownpapertickets.com](http://elizabethdarcy.brownpapertickets.com)



Ari Weinberg and Michael Hughes as Carol Burnett and Carol Channing.

## CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Ari Weinberg and Michael Hughes never quite seem to be on the same page. It’s a Christmas tradition dating back to when they were invited to perform as part of Sharron and George’s Super Fun Christmas Sing-Along in 2012.

“Michael came up with this idea of the Christmas Carols, and we had this miscommunication that because it was a sing-along we thought it was a Christmas event where we had to come as our favourite Carols,” Weinberg says. “So he was in drag as Christmas Carol Burnett and I was Christmas Carol Channing.”

That first year they sang songs related to their respective Carols: “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend” from *Gentleman Prefer Blondes*, “Little Girls” from *Annie* and then “We Need a Little Christmas” from *Mame*.

When they came back the second year as their favourite Carols for the sing-along, their luck hadn’t improved. A vague suggestion of Weinberg’s resulted in Hughes dressing in a giant cooked turkey suit. “I was still in drag,” Hughes says. “I had four-inch heels on and you could only see my eyes, nose and mouth, and I was blind.”

This year’s sing-along will include performances by Sharron Matthews and George Masswohl, of course, and many other guests, including Thom Allison, Micah Barnes, Bruce Dow and Gavin Crawford.

Hughes and Weinberg are tightlipped about what their act will entail this year, but audiences can expect something to go hilariously wrong. “I think we know what the miscommunication will be,” Hughes says. “Usually, it’s a result of him going overboard and I roll my eyes and get annoyed. We just pump that up and do it in stockings and heels.” — *Jeremy Willard*

*Sharron and George’s Super Fun Christmas Sing-Along* runs Fri, Dec 19–Sun, Dec 21, 7pm, at Buddies in Bad Times, 12 Alexander St. [buddiesinbadtimes.com](http://buddiesinbadtimes.com)

## Smells like Christmas spirit

Grunge music probably isn’t the first thing that comes to mind during the holidays, but the ladies of Hervana are hoping to change that.

“We wanted to do something fun and different,” lead singer Carly Beath says. “It’s the end of the year, it’s the holiday season, and two of us have birthdays on Dec 16. So it seemed like a lot of good reasons to throw a party.”

Beath and her bandmates are holding their first annual December Blowout Bash, featuring performances of their trademark Nirvana covers, lots of classic grunge from the 1990s and early 2000s, and an appearance by fellow rockers blue cougars.

The celebration marks the end of a whirlwind year and a half, all of which started with a single Twitter post.



Dave Grrrr, Miss Novoselic, Pap Smear and Skirt Cobain. RANNIE TURINGAN

“I saw a tweet in my feed [suggesting an all-female Nirvana tribute band], and I got really excited by the idea of actually making it happen,” Beath says. “So I pulled in some people I knew and had played music with before in various projects. We

started playing together in mid-2013 and played our first show in March 2014.”

The band has lined up a number of high-profile gigs, including playing at the Drake Underground and at WorldPride.

“Playing WorldPride this year was really an honour,” Beath says. “I ran into Laura Jane Grace on the street and had a bit of a fangirl moment getting my picture taken with her.”

Hervana has been vocal in its support of women’s rights, something that Beath sees as being in line with the music and image of their source band.

“Nirvana were really great allies,” Beath says. “They played some really important fundraisers for feminist causes, and Kurt [Cobain] was always very vocal about his support. He said once that women were the future of rock ‘n’ roll, so I hope that he would have been pleased at the idea of Hervana.” — *JP Larocque*

*The December Blowout Bash* is Sat, Dec 13 at Hard Luck Bar, 772 Dundas St W. [hervanatheband.com](http://hervanatheband.com)