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As Much for Your Sake: Gay History in Performance

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SHANE LUTZ
GradCon 2020

AS MUCH FOR YOUR SAKE

Gay History through Performance

Cover: A couple dances on New Year's Eve. London, January 1947.

AS MUCH FOR YOUR SAKE is a play devised out of letters sent between gay men and queer people during the 20th Century as they document their experiences in life, loss, and love.

The project developed out of Rictor Norton's collection, *My Dear Boy*, which anthologizes hundreds of love letters written by real gay people across history from Marcus Aurelius to Tchaikovsky. These letters make up the entire text of the play. This type of work in which a performance is built out of found material is known as Verbatim Theatre and emphasizes selection and organization as an act of creative expression.



A soldier & sailor dance together. 1947



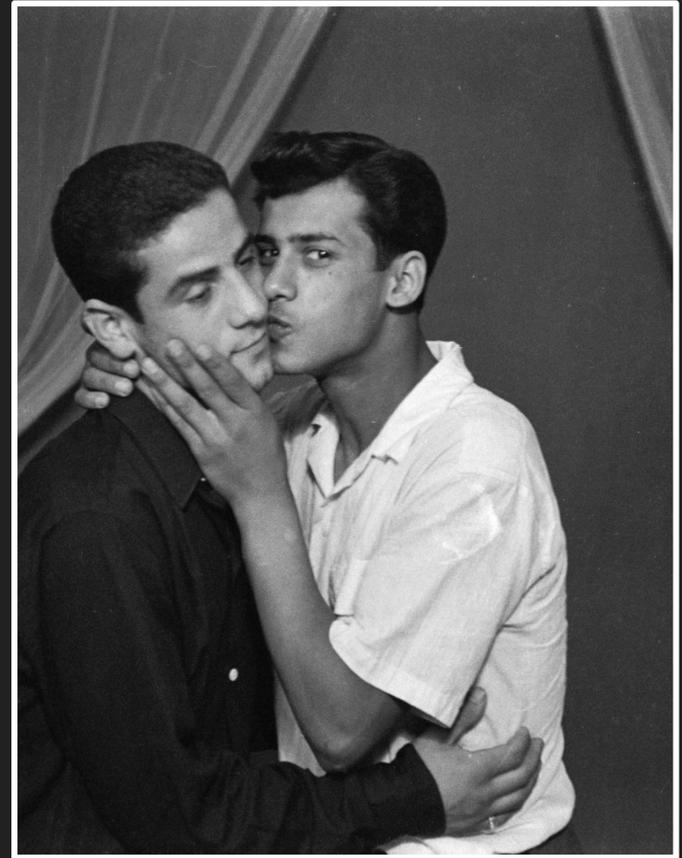
Unknown. An absolute candid.

The play is comprised of letters from 11 different gay and queer people across the 20th Century. Working with this period allowed me to leave much of the text in its original, unchanged form as the language of this period remains accessible to modern audiences. All of the letters are woven together to create a single narrative that follows the lives of two individuals and a third narrator figure. The letters form the dialogue between the characters as a myriad of authors become their voices.

AS MUCH FOR YOUR SAKE offers visibility to a community whose rich and colorful past still remains eclipsed and buried today. This amalgamation of queer history acts as a testimony that LGBTQ+ people have always existed, finding exquisite bravery to risk everything in the pursuit of an illegal love.

An intimate look at these letters in performance allows us to consider how oppression and resistance within the gay community has changed. And yet, in many ways the issues faced by the characters in this play remain as pertinent today as they did in a time when being queer was unlawful, dangerous, and often deadly.

AS MUCH FOR YOUR SAKE asks us to consider what we are fighting for today that generations yet to come will reap. This verbatim performance celebrates the past, emphasizing its value and importance in knowing who we are today as a community and a society. However, at its core, the three characters in the play – stand-ins for real people in real places having real experiences – remind us that life is a fleeting thing, we have no guarantee of tomorrow, and love will always be worth fighting for.



A couple poses playfully in Lebanon (1970)

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LGBT Community Center
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MY DEAR BOY:
Gay Love Letters

Norton, Rictor, and James W. Jones Collection of Gay Lesbian Literature. *My Dear Boy : Gay Love Letters through the Centuries*. 1st ed., Leyland Publications, 1998.

Out History Digital Archives

OutHistory: It's About Time. [Outhistory.org](https://outhistory.org), www.outhistory.org/.

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