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**The Gay No More Telethon**  
**Directed by Dennis Erdman**  
**Written by Michael DiGaetano**  
**New York International Fringe Festival**  
**The Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University**  
**3 Spruce Street**  
**866-468-7619**

Review by Gena Hymowech

Country Joe Barbara (David Abeles) used to dig men; Barbara Joe Barbara (Gerti Lee James) liked the ladies. Now, they're a heterosexual couple hosting *The Gay No More Telethon*, the goal of which is to "turn every homosexual straight by the Rapture or the 2014 Winter Olympics, whichever comes first." Imagine *Hee Haw* as written by the late Jerry Falwell, and you'll get the general idea.

The telethon is being broadcast by a religious network owned by the feisty Reverend Wiley Ray Henderson (Corey Glover of the rock band Living Colour). At first, Henderson is enthusiastic about his cause, but eventually starts questioning whether God really wants him turning people straight.

Telethon phone operator Ricky (Scott Thomas) is also having his doubts. On his way to becoming an ex-gay, he still feels the pull of homosexual attraction. Ricky sings a poignant song called "Everything," in which he reminisces about his romantic days with C.W. (Kurt Robbins), a handsome (now ex-gay) country singer. Though the entire cast is amazing, Thomas is especially compelling, making us feel deeply for Ricky's plight. It's hard to believe the actor is only a recent Juilliard grad — he has the confidence and chops of a seasoned pro. Minor characters include Royal Canadian Mountie Bartholomew Softwood (Michael F. McGuirk) and ventriloquist Jody Butler (Edward Staudenmayer), who has a puppet called Miss Thang. Staudenmayer doesn't get a lot of stage time, but he should: He's hysterical as an ex-gay, Wayland Flowers.

However, the musical is not without its problems: The ending isn't well earned, the actors stumbled over lines on opening night and the lyrics were a bit muddled. But overall, this is a witty production that deserves to hang around long after its Fringe residency ends. *The Gay No More Telethon* may not be the cure for homosexuality, but it's certainly the cure for the blues.



• The Gay No More Telethon



• The Be(A) Mac (picture)  
 • Damn Yan  
 • Marie Ant  
 The Color of  
 • The Little



• Arias with  
 • Marko the  
 • Palace of  
 (pictured)  
 • A Midsum  
 Dream