New York’s Best in Drag Is on Point(e)

The pageant-style extravaganza benefited local AIDS service organizations.

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It’s not often that you see a drag queen in pointe shoes, but on Monday night, Mariette Moure performed a classical ballet during the talent portion of the 2018 New York’s Best in Drag event held at New York University’s Skirball Center. Her pirouettes clearly wowed both the audience and the celebrity judges (J. Harrison Ghee, Michael Musto and Richard Pryor Jr.), because Moure was ultimately crowned the winner of the competition, which benefits the programs and services of The Alliance for Positive Change and GMHC.

Mariette Moure is the winner of New York’s Best in DragGMHC/Adam Fredericks

The other contestants—who might as well have been competing for funniest drag name—were Carlos the Über Driver, Ruby Fox, Mini Horrorwitz, Lady Quesa’dilla, Cherry Poppins, Champagne

Bubbles and Didi Cumswell, who was named first runner-up as well as Miss Congeniality. Directed by Robert La Fosse and hosted by former winner Delighted Tobehere, the show featured special performances by the New York City Gay Men's Chorus and 2016's Best in Drag winner, Lady SinAGaga.

"New York's Best in Drag is a party with a purpose—it raises awareness while raising funds to support our work to end the AIDS epidemic," says Alliance executive director and CEO Sharen Duke.

GMHC's CEO Kelsey Louie delighted the crowd by strutting onstage in high heels to talk about the importance of supporting the work of the two New York–based organizations. GMHC provides services to more than 13,000 people living with and affected by HIV each year. Both organizations provide HIV testing and prevention services, access to medical care and other supportive programs. Louie and Duke were both members of New York State's Ending the Epidemic Task Force, and their organizations advocate for local, state and federal public policies that focus on ending AIDS as an epidemic in New York state by 2020.

Prior to the event, the queens competed for votes online (every dollar donated counted for one vote), while those attending the event in person could purchase tickets from volunteers to be used as votes for their favorite queen. After combining the total online and live votes, Mariette Moure, Mini Horrowitz, Champagne Bubbles and Didi Cumswell were announced as the final four and advanced to the evening gown and interview portions of the competition.

When asked what she would do to end HIV-related stigma, Champagne Bubbles referenced her day job as a registered nurse at NYU and highlighted the importance of LGBT equality in every aspect of health care, including ensuring that everyone has access to antiretroviral medication and prevention tools such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

Contestant Didi Cumswell was asked about the political nature of drag and responded by saying that drag can often push the envelope, which, although it inevitably rubs some people the wrong way, is all right because it also pushes you to be the truest version of yourself that you can be.

For all its fun and fabulousness, New York's Best in Drag brings visibility to the work being done to end the AIDS epidemic. And that's the whole point!

Lady SinAGaga, Didi Cumswell, Mariette Moure and Delighted TobehereGMHC/Adam Fredericks

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