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Special Event

Operation Soap: Raid

Thirty-five years ago over three hundred men were arrested during *Operation Soap*, a simultaneous police raid against four Toronto bathhouses and a turning point in LGBT history. "This story is about an unlikely activist whose personal transformation happens in the face of unforgivable brutality" says director Raymond Helkio who co-wrote the play with David Bateman. "Whenever I hear people referencing the bathhouse raids it's almost always with a certainty of how things played out, but there was no certainty about anything, life for the LGBT community had been overshadowed by mounting fear and doubt for years leading up to the raids."

Helkio wrote the play with help from David Bateman as a way to commemorate the 1981 bathhouse raids." I was the generation directly below the raids," says Helkio, "so while I was too young, my teacher/mentor and many of his friends were heavily involved in both the management of the arrests as well as the riots that followed. As an example of how the generation today completely misunderstands their role in the larger world, we did an [experiment on Grindr](#) and asked guys about the raids and the responses were much what we suspected: blissfully unaware. It's as if the younger generation has decided that because we have rights in Canada, it's like this all over the world.

"The play does deal with the broader historical circumstances of the time but it's told through the eyes of Bathhouse Betty, a character we loosely based on the infamous Bette Midler who got her start performing to gay men at the Continental Bathhouse in New York City.

"We know history repeats itself, so it's important for our community to understand and appreciate our history so that we continue to move forward. To a very large degree, youth under 35 generally have little connection to the reason we celebrate Pride yet the recent shootings of 49 innocent LGBT club-goers was a wake-up call for all of us."

The Reading Salon presents the premiere of **RAID: Operation Soap** | *Written and directed by Raymond Helkio with David Bateman, music by Stewart Borden starring Keith Cole and Johnny Salib, featuring Paul Bellini, Brock Hessel and Amy J. Lester. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2016* | 8PM | Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St. Toronto, as part of Queer Pride 2016.