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Catalunya (Catalonia)
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Self-proclaimed pagan claims she was fired due to bias

PRINCETON, Minn. - The former companion of a self-proclaimed vampire is claiming the Princeton School District pushed to have her fired from her job as a school bus driver because of her pagan beliefs.

Julie Carpenter, of Princeton, has filed a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accusing the school district of religious discrimination.

Princeton superintendent Mark Sleeper on Wednesday noted that Carpenter was never an employee of the district, instead she worked for the district's private bus company.

"The charge is puzzling to us, when we were not the employer," Sleeper said. He said the matter was being reviewed by attorneys for the district.

Stephen Befort, a University of Minnesota Law School professor, said federal law protects pagans against employer discrimination, so the case will depend on whether the school district can show it had other reasons for seeking to have Carpenter fired.

Carpenter's lawyer, Samuel Glover, released a letter Tuesday from Sleeper in which he urged the school's bus company to relieve her of her duties.

"... Ms Carpenter does not serve as a role model nor is suitable to perform transportation services for the Princeton School District," the letter, dated Jan. 13, said.

The letter cited media reports about her companion, Jonathon (The Impaler) Sharkey, a self-proclaimed vampire who tried to run for governor. The letter also said Carpenter had told "other bus garage employees that she is a witch."

Carpenter later received a letter from the company informing her that she was fired, Glover said.

Befort said, "It's one thing to say you're not a proper role model because you're a vampire or a witch, and another thing to say it's really based upon a religious belief."

Carpenter denied calling herself a witch. She wore a pagan pendant, she said, but otherwise didn't display her beliefs or discuss them with children. "I believe in a god and goddesses and their names can change for any given moment," she said. "This has been my belief since 1989."

She said her job performance was beyond reproach. "I didn't even have one fight on my bus," she said.

In announcing his candidacy in January, Jonathon "The Impaler" Sharkey, called himself the leader of the "Vampyres, Witches and Pagans Party" and said he drank Carpenter's blood.

He promoted a platform that included improving education, giving tax breaks to farmers and the public impaling of terrorists, rapists and drug dealers.

Shortly after his announcement, Sharkey was jailed on an outstanding warrant from Indiana. Carpenter said she no longer sees him.

Associated Press
Star Tribune, 5 Apr.

Minnesota gubernatorial candidate arrested here

Indianapolis, April 5 - Wrestler Rocky Flash carries a stack of legal papers to fight charges stacked against him.

He's one of Minnesota's Gubernatorial Candidates.

But he faces stalking and invasion of privacy charges involving his ex girlfriend. "She got a protective order against me for harrasment. Only in Indiana is it considered harrasment when you try to get somebody help", he said.

Flash, known in Minnesota as Jonathon Sharkey, made headlines running for governor. His Resume includes military service, the wrestling, and even a PHD.

But it's his religious belief and self proclaimed life as a Vampire getting more attention.

During our interview he talked about one of his common vampire practices.

"I feed off of human blood. female blood not male blood," he said.

Vampire or not, Flash still hopes to make it big as a wrestler too, pretty much like wrestling great Jesse Ventura who successfully won his bid for governor.

Wrestler Don Basher gave Flash his first chance in the ring.

"The stalking part, who knows with him, sometimes you got to, sometimes you don't," said Basher.

After his case got continued in court, Flash is back here in the Marion County Jail. He not only hopes to get out of jail, but also out of Indiana.

"There is no reason for me to be here," he said.

Rocky Flash also promises to head back to Minnesota to campaign for governor and eventually the presidency.

Steve Jefferson/Eyewitness News
<http://www.wthr.com>, 5 Apr.

Library handed 'rare' Dracula books

A rare collection of Dracula-related books is to be handed over to Dublin City Library, it emerged today.

It includes copies of books on vampires and Transylvanian history likely to have been used by Dublin-born author Bram Stoker for his classic horror novel, foreign translations of Dracula, and first editions of some of Stoker's other books.

The Bram Stoker Society, which has organised the handover of the collection, said it contained more than 200 books in total.

"They have enormous research value and significant but not overwhelming financial value," said registrar Albert Power.

The books were collected over several decades by Englishman Leslie Shepherd, who developed a strong interest in the occult and the paranormal.

He edited books of vampire and horror stories and campaigned for recognition for Bram Stoker in Dublin, the city where the author was born in Clontarf in 1847.

Mr Power said that Shepherd had founded the Bram Stoker Society in 1980 at a time when Ireland only recognised a limited number of writers.

"Back then, no one knew anything about Bram Stoker. It was not a name that was common in the minds of Irish people," he said.

Shepherd succeeded in getting a nameplate put on the house in Kildare Street in Dublin where Stoker had spent some of his youth and constantly delivered lectures about Stoker's origins around the city.

"I regard Leslie as having in his kind, persistent, friendly and encouraging way as contributing enormously to changing things," said Mr Power.

The awareness of Stoker's Irish roots was boosted by Francis Ford Coppola's film version of Dracula in 1992 - Shepherd appeared on the Pat Kenny show to talk about it and the celebrations of the centenary of the publication of Dracula in 1997.

Shepherd's book collection continued to grow in the meantime, with additions such as poet Gabriel Rosenstock's translation of Dracula into Irish. But after Shepherd's death in 2003, the collection was left without a home.

Mr Power said that Shepherd's son and daughter, who live in England and Denmark respectively, had agreed for it to be handed over to Dublin City Libraries where it could be viewed by the public.

He estimated that the books in the collection were worth less than €10,000 in total. "They're probably more valuable for their facility for research," he said.

The formal handover of the books is due to take place in Pearse Street Library on Tuesday.

<http://www.irishexaminer.com>, 9 Apr.

Indie film company options gay-themed novel Vampire Vow

Vampire Vow. Michael Schiefelbein's acclaimed novel of an ancient Roman officer falling in love with Jesus Christ before becoming a vampire, is being optioned as a film by a Chicago-based independent film company.

Shattering Paradigms Entertainment plans on developing the script internally with financing commencing immediately. The film would be shot in the Windy City.

Schiefelbein expressed excitement at seeing his conflicted main character, Victor Decimus, brought to life. "Victor's always been a larger-than-life character in my own conception of him, and he'll truly be larger than life when Vampire Vow makes its way onto film," Schiefelbein said.

<http://www.advocate.com>, 12 Apr.

Literary vein

A GHOUL that haunts Robin Hood's grave is being stalked by a vampire hunter, according to a forthcoming book.

Batley author Catherine Fearnley, secretary of the Robin Hood Society, hopes to publish *The Highgate Vampire And Me* early next year.

Many believe the outlaw was murdered by the prioress at Kirklees Priory, on the Clifton/Hartshead border, and was buried at the site.

The book follows the story of Lord Birmingham, who claims to have slain a vampire at Highgate Cemetery in London.

Catherine, of White Lee Road, said Birmingham was now hunting the vampiric prioress believed to haunt the grave of Robin Hood. For more, email Catherine at dfplcatherine@yahoo.co.uk.

<http://www.batleytoday.co.uk>, 13 Apr.

30 Days Eyes July Start

Director David Slade (*Hard Candy*) told the Zap2It Web site that his next film, an adaptation of the vampire graphic novel *30 Days of Night*, will begin production likely in July. Based on Steve Niles' comic about vampires descending on a small Alaska town at the beginning of a month of darkness, the production will shoot in New Zealand for Sam Raimi's Ghost House Pictures.

Slade said he would shoot from a new draft script by Brian Nelson, his writer on the non-genre *Candy*. Earlier drafts of the script came from Niles and from *Collateral* writer Stuart Beattie.

"There is a degree of responsibility to Ben Templesmith's artwork, which will be reflected in the production design, absolutely," Slade told the site. "There were three drafts written before I came to this project, and I believe that Brian's draft is the most faithful to Steve Niles' writing, and Steve has been in the loop."

Slade added: "We're faced with a tremendous task, which is making a scary vampire film. There aren't many of them. You can count them on two fingers," *Salem's Lot* and *Nosferatu*. "The rest of them, they fall into all kinds of traps. We're going to try to do our best to make a third one, and one of the ways we have to do it is to be more naturalistic than the graphic novel, because it's very over the top."

No casting has been done on the project, and the July 11 production start may be pushed back.

<http://www.scifi.com>, 14 Apr.

"Lestat" the latest toothless vampire musical

NEW YORK (Hollywood Reporter) - One would think that, after the expensive debacles that were "Dance of the Vampires" and "Dracula, the Musical," lessons would have been learned about the unsuitability of singing bloodsuckers on the Great White Way. But the folks at Warner Bros., apparently under the impression that the association of Elton John and novelist Anne Rice would make all the difference, have bravely charged ahead with "Lestat," inspired by Rice's "The Vampire Chronicles." The result is a third entry in an unholy theatrical trinity that should hopefully discourage any future such attempts.

Depicting the travails of its title character, first seen in "Interview With the Vampire," this laughable musical extravaganza unfortunately lacks the campy excess that made its predecessors so much unintentional fun, and is for the most part deadly dull. John's score, written with his longtime lyricist Bernie Taupin, has a decidedly tossed-off feel; Linda Woolverton's book veers uneasily from melodrama to lowbrow humor; and director Robert Jess Roth's staging feels more than a little skimpy.

The show attempts to pack in as much of the Lestat saga as it can, featuring such other characters as Gabrielle (Carolee Carmello), his incest-minded mother; Louis (Jim Stanek), his youthful partner and bloodsucking protege; Claudia (Allison Fischer), their precocious vampire child; and Armand (Drew Sarich), the 300-year-old vampire leader. Beginning with Lestat's introduction to his new way of life thanks to a group of wolves, the episodic and disjointed book is unlikely to satisfy either newcomers to the saga or

Rice's fervent fans. John's score, the most tepid he has yet written for the theater, features nary a distinguished tune, with only the occasional glimmer of a vivid melody. The few exceptions, such as the over-the-top "Crimson Kiss" (sung powerfully by Carmello) and Claudia's comic diatribe "I Want More." are memorable for only the wrong reasons.

The actors dive into the material with gusto, with Panaro -- a veteran of such affairs as this, having played both Raoul and the Phantom in "Phantom of the Opera" -- delivering a full-blooded (pardon the pun) turn as Lestat and Carmello offering an intense and beautifully sung performance as Gabrielle.

Roth's solo previous Broadway credit is "Beauty and the Beast," so it comes as no surprise that his work here has a distinctly cartoonish quality. Visually, the expensive production is no great shakes to look at, either, with the now ubiquitous series of projections substituting for detailed scenery.

At several points, the main action is interrupted by scenes featuring the ragtag "Theater of the Vampires" troupe, with interpretive dance, no less. "If this makes you uneasy, feel free to leave (the) theater now," warns their leader. It is advice well worth taking.

Cast:

Lestat: Hugh Panaro; Gabrielle: Carolee Carmello; Armand: Drew Sarich; Louis: Jim Stanek; Nicolas: Roderick Hill; Marius: Michael Genet; Claudia: Allison Fischer; Music by: Elton John; Lyrics by: Bernie Taupin; Book by: Linda Woolverton; Director: Robert Jess Roth; Musical staging by: Matt West; Set designer: Derek McLane; Costume designer: Susan Hilferty; Lighting designer: Kenneth Posner; Sound designer: Jonathan Deans.

Frank Scheck

Reuters/Hollywood Reporter, 25 Apr.

Critics drive stake through heart of Elton's vampire epic

Even before America's drama critics settled in their seats at the Palace Theatre on Broadway this week for the opening of Lestat, a musical based on the madly popular Vampire Chronicles of Anne Rice, they smelt blood. With tunes written by Sir Elton John, the show's word of mouth had already been dismal.

But the alacrity with which the arbiters of American theatre proceeded to sink their fangs into the 160-minute extravaganza - it has already cost its producers at Warner Brothers a stunning \$12m (£6.7m)- has surprised everyone. If a dog ever wandered on to the Great White Way, this, apparently, is it.

And unhappily for all those involved in Lestat, the critic's lexicon is brimming with clichés lending themselves to the lambasting of a show about blood-sucking and eternal life. Vampires, as you probably know, are meant to live for eternity. Lestat, it would seem, will hardly be so lucky.

The unkind epithets scrawled across America's newspapers range from "bloody awful", to "sucked of life" and the "kiss of death". And there is no escape from the tides of

opprobrium for Sir Elton or for his long-time collaborator Bernie Taupin, who is responsible for the lyrics.

"Elton John's music lacks a single winner." lamented a writer for the Bloomberg news wire, "and it is further impoverished by Bernie Taupin's lyrics." Other commentaries on the John tunes included "shockingly banal" and "laughably simplistic".

True, it is not pre-ordained that the "terribly undercooked rice pudding" will necessarily close within weeks as sometimes happens when a show attracts a consensus of critical venom. Ill-reviewed productions very occasionally survive and even flourish.

The folks at Warner, who were counting on Lestat to challenge Disney's domination of the staged musical - think *Aida* and *The Lion King*, both with songs by Sir Elton - perhaps saw this coming. Two earlier Broadway attempts at vampire-themed musicals similarly went splat, and a try-out run of Lestat in San Francisco in December drew intense critical disgust.

But if the saviour of Lestat is to appear in the form of tourists (because Lord knows the Broadway elite will now stay away) it may not help that it is replete with elements hardly designed to endear it to the American heartland.

Lestat, after all, is a member of the undead whose sexual entanglements, if not with his mother, are with other men. The poster boy of the Christian right he will not be. The family audience are unlikely to flock to a show which, as USA Today pointed out, has plot twists on family values that "threaten to make Lestat ... the religious right's worst nightmare".

The plot follows the 18th-century Frenchman Lestat, who is bitten by a vampire. The books were made into a successful film starring Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt in 1994.

Dark eroticism was part of what made the Rice books compelling, of course, but not, the critics concluded, when set to jaunty pop music. "The only thing distinguishing this musical from its late, unlamented predecessors is that the lead vampires play for the, er, other team," said The Washington Post.

"Lestat's contribution to art and equality is demonstrating that a gay vampire with a two-octave range can be just as dull as a straight one."

Sir Elton confessed to reporters that he had been obliged to rewrite about "80 per cent" of the songs since the show's crash-landing in San Francisco last year. "I think the result is fantastic," he added. Or should that be "fangtastic"?

David Usborne
The Independent, 28 Apr.

Man busted in teen 'tryst' at graveyard

An accused rapist who hoped to have sex with a girl he met on the Web site vampirefreaks.com was nabbed when he showed up for an illicit rendezvous at a Long Island graveyard, police said yesterday.

Goth ghoul Eric Fischer, 23, allegedly began exchanging lewd messages Wednesday afternoon with someone he believed to be a 13-year-old girl. He wasted no time propositioning the girl and made plans to meet her after work at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Coram, authorities charged.

But unbeknownst to Fischer, a temp worker who lives with his mother in Sayville, L.I., the "teen" turned out to be an undercover sex crimes detective.

"He said he'd like to meet her at a tombstone in the middle of the cemetery and that he'd find her," Suffolk County Police Deputy Inspector Mark Griffiths said.

Fischer was arrested last month for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl in his home. He was later released on bail.

He had met the girl he's accused of raping on vampirefreaks.com and police were investigating whether he may have raped another girl.

Using the screen name "xxmoonmelodyxx," Fischer allegedly contacted at least two dozen girls, ages 12 to 17, chatting with them on computers at his home, work and girlfriend's house. Cops were investigating whether he had sexual contact with any of the unidentified girls.

Detectives said Fischer got excited Wednesday when the undercover cop suggested they meet in a graveyard.

"He said, 'Cool!' He liked it," Suffolk County Police Commissioner Richard Dorner said.

Griffiths said vampire freaks.com attracts people who "are on the fringe."

"They're lonely and they're depressed," he said.

Fischer was charged with an attempted criminal sex act, child endangerment and attempting to disseminate indecent material to a minor. He was arraigned and being held in an Islip jail yesterday.

Dorner said cops were eager to notify the public about the arrest so parents would be more alert.

"Be aware of the Web sites your kids are going to," Dorner said. "Parents wouldn't let their kids go into a dangerous community, but they let them go on the computer and there are predators online."

Lisa Muñoz
New York Daily News, 28 Apr.

Staking the Park

According to an article in Nine O'Clock (an English-language Romanian newspaper). The Dracula Park is history. After several fitful starts and interruptions, it appears that the Romanian government is moving to annul existing contracts for the project.

Plans for the Park have been under dispute since the decisions a few years ago to locate it near the historic town of Sighisoara, birthplace of Vlad Tepes. Strong opposition resulted in a change of locale - to Lake Snagov. But enthusiasm for the project at the government level has apparently waned

The Borgo Post, Vol 11, Issue 2, spring 2006