

TRANSCRIPT
Onomatopoeia
A Teacher by Day, A Drag Queen by Night

Devon DiComo: By day, Jacob is a preschool teacher.

But at night, Jacob moves on to another passion of his - performing in drag as “Boxa Crayonz.”

[TAPE] “Elevator Time”, theme music by Lee Feldman

I’m Devon DiComo and this is Onomatopoeia- a podcast about the people and places of New York City.

In this episode,
A TEACHER BY DAY, A DRAG QUEEN BY NIGHT

DD: In this episode, I will be referring to Jacob by his preferred name and pronouns out of drag. Jacob doesn’t want his last name used because he has not come out at work about his trans identity.

[TAPE] “Contestant number 3, please give it up for...Boxa Crayonz!”
(applause)

DD: Jacob stands on stage. He wears a brunette wig and an orange, Princess Daisy dress. He pretends to play Mario Kart.

Then - Jacob erupts in a dance number.

[TAPE] Music from Jacob’s performance at the drag bar plays.

Jacob: Boxa Crayons comes from the fact that I love visual art, and drawing and painting so it’s a reflection of both my teaching and my art background.

DD: Jacob also teaches art and dance to elementary students and he’s pursuing a degree in art education.

Jacob: Drag is an outlet for me to perform. But just something about connecting with an audience by just doing what I love. I think the goal is to always tell a story.

[TAPE] More music from one of Jacob’s performances plays in the background.

DD: On this night, Jacob performed in a drag competition- where queens from around New York City come to compete to see who can get the most applause.

Jacob: I look over and some of my drag sisters are screaming, cheering. And I was like, oh, my God, that support alone, that was amazing.

[TAPE] Performance tape fades out.

DD: Out of drag, Jacob's brown hair is cut short and he wears clear framed glasses. When I meet up with him during the day, he's wearing a black and yellow trench coat over a hoodie.

For Jacob, it took some time to figure out how drag would play a part in his life. He had fallen in love with it because he liked performing, but found that he could learn more about himself through it.

Jacob: This year when I decided to come out as trans male, I personally went through a phase where I'm like, I'm only going to present as masculine.

Drag is able to offer me a space to feel like I don't have to project a personality that has to fit within the binary.

This is where I can express my femininity in a way that I feel comfortable. And then I can feel like, I'm Jacob, like, during the day, because I was having a lot of problems with, you know, working and constantly being misgendered. Because nobody knew, and nobody still knows.

DD: Only Jacob's close friends know about his trans identity. He came out to them earlier this year.

Hannah Ferguson: He came out to us as a trans man and I think I could see the relief in his face a lot.

DD: That's Jacob's childhood friend, Hannah Ferguson.

HF: It hasn't been easy for him in the slightest. We came from a really white-washed town, very conservative. There wasn't a lot of diversity.

Jacob is the most resilient person I've ever known. I think there have been so many opportunities for him to have been knocked down and stay down. He really just gets back up.

DD: Even though Jacob can't fully express who he is at work right now, he has hopes for how schools will change in the future.

Jacob: The goal is to one day have my own class, because I'd love to be as open as possible with them about that stuff.

I think that's where the problem lies, is that these not a lot of children have the literacy in queer language, or just about the LGBTQI plus community to even speak about it or understand it.

I do pronouns with my elementary school kids, even if they can't even conceptualize, just making it a habit for them. So that if someone ever differs from that, then it's not stigmatized in any way.

[TAPE] The music from Jacob's drag performance continues playing.

DD: Jacob won the drag competition that night. A first for him.

Jacob: My legs gave out. And I mean, not only because I was standing in these heels that are like, two sizes too small for me.

DD: As Jacob accepted the award, he decided to make a speech...

[TAPE] "This means so much because it's Trans Awareness Week and we need to give so much love to our trans sisters, brothers, everyone in between. I don't, I've never said this, I'm a trans man and I'm so proud to be representing. (applause)

Jacob: I'm clearly supported by everyone and just was like, and you know, what, I'm a trans guy. And just saying that as opposed to on the down low, like when I'm with my drag peers and stuff, like that was just so cool.

[TAPE] "Elevator Time", theme music by Lee Feldman

DD: This episode of Onomatopoeia- was created by me, Devon DiComo. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Our graphic was created by Sunni Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Digital Librarian Michelle Wilson.