



Catholic Church Refuses to Host International Human Rights Art Festival Event Featuring Kathleen Turner

by [BWW News Desk](#) Oct. 13, 2017



The International Human Rights Art Festival (www.IHRAF.org), slated to premiere a new body of activist work at Saint Mary's Church in NYC on Sunday, October 15th, headlined by Oscar- and Tony Award-nominated actress, activist and film icon Kathleen Turner, was censored by Archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan and Saint Mary's Church last evening, just 72 hours before the show was supposed to go up.

"We cannot have this kind of work in the Catholic Church," said a spokesman, referring specifically to the two LGBTQ performances that were part of the nine-performance evening. The Church offered to hold the event if these two acts were rejected.

Tom Block, Producer of the International Human Rights Art Festival, stated: "I feel fortunate in that I am not beholden to a spiritual structure that tells me who is worthy of a voice and protection, and who is not. We believe that all people share this right -- we will not pick and choose among our acts or our issues, allowing some while rejecting others."

Kathleen Turner was to perform a monologue from the one-woman play *Red Hot Patriot* about journalist Molly Ivins. Some of the other artists scheduled to perform include Maybe Burke who would perform a selection from their cabaret *Accidental Trans Anthems and Thank You for Coming Out*, based on the details of a vulnerable and heartfelt coming-out story performed by celebrated improvisers Alex Song (The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon), Michael Hartney (School of Rock), Kelsey Bailey (UCB) & Kelley Quinn (UCB).

The International Human Rights Art Festival is based in inclusion, honesty and sincerity - and brings together artists who will stand proudly before an audience and open their hearts, exposing their struggle in whatever arena they feel most challenged. "The idea that some of us would go forward while others were rejected is antithetical to our mission, our belief and frankly, our faith - respect does not stop at the doorway to one or another segment of the population."

The event, slated for Sunday at 7:30 pm, is now in search of a venue for the same time period - a venue that is open, inclusive and rejects all forms of segregation and oppression. The show will go on - despite Cardinal Dolan and St. Mary's recension of their invitation - it is just a matter of where.

In conjunction with Culture Project, the special event was to inaugurate their new space in New York's Lower East Side, with an evening of dance, music, comedy, storytelling & theatre, raising social concerns and offering positive solutions with humor, insight & incredible artistic talent. The evening was to also initiate a partnership between two of New York's powerful arts-activism organizations, engaging with artists, community, politicians & social leaders to effect social change through beauty, passion & talent.

The International Human Rights Art Festival is an ongoing series of art-activist events, festivals, workshops, and community programs at the intersection of art, activism, and society. At each of our events, we bring together artists with social and political leaders, and the general public to imagine and implement a better, more caring world. The International Human Rights Art Festival inaugurated at Dixon Place in March 2017, with the involvement of more than 150 artists presenting 50 art-advocacy events.

In addition to the roster of presenting artists, it included honorary co-sponsors and speakers such as National Medal of the Arts winner Norman Lear; Senator Charles E. Schumer (NY); Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY); Senator Bernie Sanders (VT); Congressman and Civil Rights Hero John Lewis (GA); Nigerian human rights activist and founder of Sahara Reporters Sowore Omoyele; Chinese human rights activist and recipient of the Sakharov Prize, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, and others Wei Jingsheng; NYC Commissioner of Human Rights Carmelyn Malalis and many other politicians and social leaders.

Culture Project: Since its founding in 1996, Culture Project is dedicated to addressing critical human rights issues by creating and supporting artistic work that amplifies marginalized voices. By fostering innovative collaboration between human rights organizations and artists, we aim to inspire and impact public dialogue and policy, encouraging democratic participation in the most urgent matters of our time. Culture Project's productions have garnered an array of Drama Desk, OBIE, and Outer Critics Circle Awards. But they have also won unprecedented awards outside the sphere of theatrical production including the Champion of Justice Award and the PASS award from the National Association of Criminal Defenders. This recognition reignites Culture Project's passion for its goal, and reinforces its commitment to hard-hitting and provocative theater as a powerful ingredient in shaping our nation's values and debates.

A venue for acclaimed, prize-winning performance, Culture Project is also a magnet for the best talent including Meryl Streep, Danny Glover, Mary J. Blige, Robin Williams, Marisa Tomei, Bob Balaban, Rinde Eckert, Montel Williams, Frank McCourt, Staceyann Chin, Lynn Redgrave, Sarah Silverman, and other artists who share a passion for theater and public justice.