

** Will print automatically! If it doesn't, click [here](#). **

CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS

Arts festival scrambling for space after archdiocese nixes LGBT performances

Theater company was renting basement of St. Mary's Church when Cardinal Dolan balked

[Miriam Kreinin Souccar](#)



Flickr/New Women New Yorkers

The slate included two performances, "Accidental Trans Anthems" and "Thank You for Coming Out," which the church objected to.

production if the LGBTQ performances, "Accidental Trans Anthems" and "Thank You for Coming Out," were cut.

Tom Block, founding producer of the festival, said the whole mission of his organization is inclusion, so he never would cut certain productions from a show.

"This is the 21st century," Block said. "It never crossed our minds that we would be banned or asked not to present certain things."

Block said he had been getting offers to help from other arts organizations and was confident he would find a new space for Sunday's performance.

Published: October 13, 2017 - 2:50 pm

The fledgling International Human Rights Art Festival is in a scramble to find a new venue for a Sunday evening production after St. Mary's Church backed out at the last minute due to a dispute over the subject matter.

The Oct. 15 program—which features nine acts, headlined by actress Kathleen Turner—was to be a joint production with Culture Project, a theater company that recently began renting space in the church's Grand Street basement on the Lower East Side. Plans for the show were finalized in late August, but after Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop, saw the final slate, the church canceled on Thursday evening. The bill includes two LGBTQ performances.

"We cannot have this kind of work in the Catholic Church," a church spokesman said. The church offered to hold the

"The New York City arts community does not take kindly to censorship, especially now under the current political situation," he said.

Block, a painter and playwright, launched the festival in March in a 120-seat theater at Dixon Place on the Lower East Side. That initial festival, with a \$25,000 budget, featured 45 events with 150 artists on one weekend. Approximately 700 people attended. Block is working to receive 501(c)(3) status for the organization so he can attract more funding, and he is planning another festival for next year. He said he hopes eventually to hold programming year-round.

CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS

Entire contents ©2018 Crain Communications Inc.
