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# CAUGHT! WITH THEIR PANTS DOWN

## Milwaukee Gay Arts Center Files

## \$600k Lawsuit After Milwaukee Vice Squad

## Shutters 'Naked Boys Singing!'

By William Attewell

**"N**aked Boys Singing!" went silent in Milwaukee on Aug. 18 after the Vice Squad of the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) shut down the production because of what it said was a license violation. The City of Milwaukee has now determined that the nonprofit status of the Milwaukee Gay Arts Center exempts the unclothed boys from needing such paperwork and a new production of the show is now in the works.

"Naked Boys Singing!" is a musical-comedy revue featuring a cast of men performing in the nude. Productions of the show are currently playing in New York and Chicago. The play has run into trouble with authorities before, in such cities as Provincetown, Mass.; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Atlanta. Eventually, all three cities held

performances of the show.

The Milwaukee Gay Arts Center has filed suit over the incident and claims the closure of the play was discriminatory, selective and unlawful. The claim also notes that the center was exempt from the permit requirement as a charitable organization.

The claim seeks \$500,000 in punitive damages, \$100,000 for anticipated legal fees, \$27,720 for loss of ticket revenue, \$3,000 for loss of advertisement revenue, \$1,700 for the cost of rights for the play and \$2,000 for legal fees to date.

"It appears that they have censored a constitutionally protected theater production on the pretext that the producers did not have the proper permits," said Chris Ahmuty, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin.

"When the police and the city start closing theaters, censoring performances and discriminating against groups because of their sexual orientation or the content of the show, civil rights are being violated and art is being subjected to censorship," said Mark Hooker, director of the Milwaukee production

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