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BY ROBERT GERTLER

Singer-songwriter Danielle Ponder plays the Toulouse Theatre on May 13.

Soul antidote

Singer finds solace in music

BY JAKE CLAPP
Gambit Weekly

Danielle Ponder has had some major moments in the last few years since leaving her job at the Rochester, New York, public defender's office to pursue music full time. The soulful songwriter and powerhouse vocalist released her debut full-length album, played "Late Night with Seth Meyers" and "Jimmy Kimmel Live," and toured with Marcus Mumford on his solo venture.

One of the biggest moments, though: Appearing on "General Hospital." Ponder made her acting debut on the long-running soap in April, performing her epic groove "Someone Like You."

"That's where I was like, 'Oh man, I'm really on TV, TV.' This isn't 'Tune in, I'm on Jimmy Kimmel.' I'm entering other people's worlds," Ponder says from the car on her way to New Orleans.

Ponder last week joined Karl Denson's Tiny Universe at the Orpheum for a tribute to Amy Winehouse, and she returns this week for a headlining show on Saturday, May 13, at the Toulouse Theatre.

The "General Hospital" appearance put Ponder in front of a wider audience — for good and bad. Ponder has been playing music for more than two decades, fronting the soul band Black August and R&B group The Tomorrow People, and is a beloved part of the Rochester music community.

She's seen her share of comments worthy of cocking an eyebrow over, but a larger platform has come with more exposure.

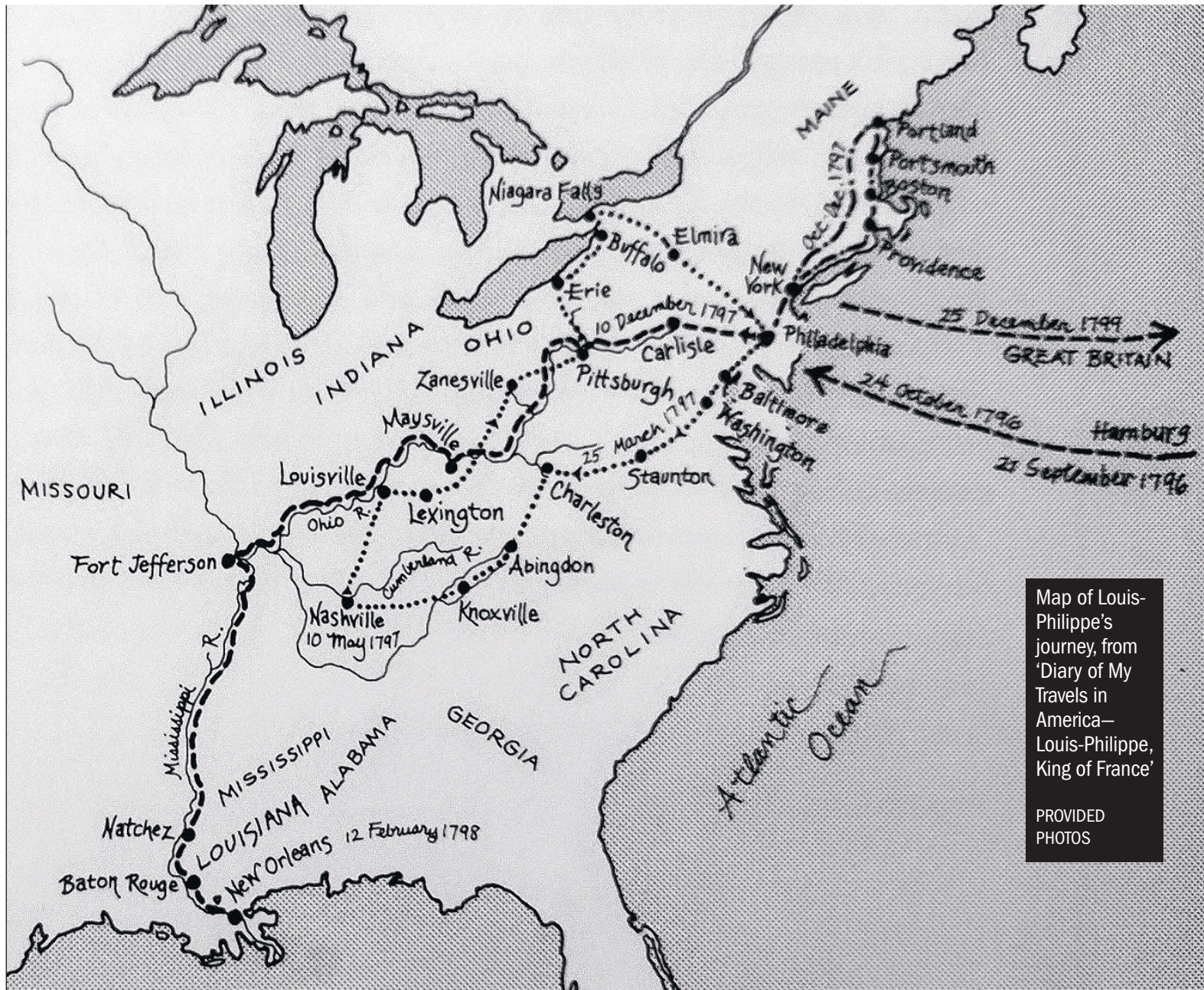
"I come from a very supportive city, and I still am getting 90% supportive feedback, but you just open up the flood work for all types of people to start commenting on your content," she says. "That's been something I've been like, 'Huh, OK this is a little bit of an adjustment.'"

Ponder grew up in Rochester as the sixth of seven kids, and her father is a pastor who sang and played piano. Ponder didn't perform music in church, but she also learned to play the piano and sing at home and found early influence in gospel singer Shirley Caesar. As she grew older, she took in a wide range of music, from Big Mama Thornton, Aretha Franklin and Nina Simone to Portishead and East Coast hip-hop.

When she was 16, Ponder joined her cousins in a family band, playing guitar.

But that same year, her brother was sentenced to a 20-year prison term, an event that sent her down a path of criminal justice advocacy. Ponder earned her law degree, and she has been a tireless activist in Rochester — a

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Map of Louis-Philippe's journey, from 'Diary of My Travels in America—Louis-Philippe, King of France'

PROVIDED PHOTOS

A ROYAL ROAD TRIP

1790s journey of 'Mr. Orleans' and his brothers brought France's last king to Spanish New Orleans



Louis-Philippe in 1795, two years after he was forced to flee France. He eventually made his way to America, where he met up with his two brothers and went on an exploratory trip.

BY RICHARD CAMPANELLA
Contributing writer



The French royal namesakes of our city and state — Philippe II, the Duke of Orleans, and King Louis XV — never set foot in what would become New Orleans or Louisiana.

But a great-grandson of Philippe II — Louis-Philippe, who was born in 1773 and became king of the French in 1830 — did both, during a circuitous tour in the late 1790s.

His travels bring to mind those of other French aristocrats who toured and assessed the new American nation in this era. But Louis-Phillipe's visit began not as an inquiry but an exile, and in retrospect, he was biding his time as much as being inquisitive.

As a royal, Louis-Phillipe found himself in a precarious position at the outbreak of the French Revolu-

tion. Historian Henry Steele Commager wrote that the young prince "had tried, briefly, to accommodate himself to the Revolution," joining the Jacobins and serving as a lieutenant general.

But he stridently opposed the Republic's decision to execute King Louis XVI in 1793, a policy that eventually sent his own father to the guillotine, at which point the title of Duke of Orleans — held two generations earlier by the namesake of New Orleans — passed to Louis-Phillipe.

Unsure of his own fate, Louis-Phillipe fled to Switzerland, Germany, Denmark and Norway.

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Affirming picture book celebrates gender diversity

BookTrib.com (TNS)

Juno Dawson — the bestselling author known for her groundbreaking YA title "This Book is Gay" — is back with her picture book debut, "You Need to Chill!" (Sourcebooks Jabberwocky) on sale May 2 and geared for ages 4 to 8.

In "You Need to Chill!," no one can find Bill. Is he lost in the park? Has he been eaten by a shark? Is he on vacation in Barbados or Brazil? No!

As Bill's sister shares, "The truth

is that my brother Bill is now my sister Lily ... She's still clever and funny and kind and cool. She's one in a mil, and if people have a problem, we shout YOU NEED TO CHILL!"

"The discourse around trans children was getting poisonous and weaponized politically," said Juno, remembering when she first decided to write the book. "And it felt like with a lot of these arguments, the best response is to chill! Meet a trans person!"

According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center, just half

of one percent (0.5%) of children's and YA books had a trans protagonist in 2019.

Of the 1,648 books tracked in Pen America's banned book index, 674 titles (41%) explicitly address LGBTQIA+ themes/feature primary or secondary LGBTQIA+ characters. This includes the 145 titles — 9% — that include transgender content.

According to the Washington Post, "more legislation has been filed to restrict the lives of trans people so far in 2022 than at any other point in the nation's history,

with trans youth being the most frequent target of lawmakers." In 2022 alone, 155 new bills have been filed.

Juno's ultimate hope for "You Need to Chill!" is that it finds its way to the kids who need it, including trans children and allies.

"I think in the next 10 years, there won't be many classrooms in America where there isn't a gender-diverse child, and how do you manage that? You manage it like the child in the book does: with kindness and humor and inclusion and with playfulness."

