

 /nightspots

 @nightspotschicago



nightspots

weekly nightlife section in



the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Torali; Wood brunch

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The Ritz-Carlton has undergone a radical change.

Walking around the 12th floor of the hotel, the renovations are striking—for example, the opulent fountain that was present is no longer there. Another alteration is the Italian steakhouse **Torali** (160 E. Pearson St.; <http://toralichicago.com>), which combines stately elegance with the service one would expect at such a restaurant.

Unfortunately, my dining companion and I came to the conclusion that the food didn't uniformly



Spaghetti with shrimp at Torali.

Photo by Andrew Davis

meet the standards that Torali's appearance (as well as the celebrity-and-socialite crowd) set. (I'm pretty sure I saw former pro-baseball player Mike Piazza there—or maybe it was just a lookalike.)

Things seemed to start promisingly, with huge polenta fries arranged artfully in a Jenga-like pattern; however, we agreed that the fries

were exceedingly salty—not the last time that would happen during our lunch. Conversely, the meatballs (veal, lamb and mortadella, with bread crumbs and ricotta salata) were absolutely sublime.

The same went for my entree—a seemingly simple dish of spaghetti and shrimp that was accompanied by summer squash, grana padano, basil and olive oil. And my friend said that his filet mignon was incredibly tender—but, again, it was salty, sadly.

The dessert, however, elicited oohs and aahs—an apple-themed piece of artwork that arrived looking exactly like the fruit. Even more gratifyingly, it managed to taste just as good as it looked.

Also, a shout-out has to go to the server, George. Not only did he provide exquisite service, but the longtime Ritz employee (30 years!) regaled my friend and I with tales about meeting everyone from Whitney Houston to Sylvester Stallone.

I would recommend checking out Torali. While there were a couple disappointments in the menu,

the offerings are worth checking out—as are the hotel's renovations. (BTW, the dishes are more affordable than you might think, being no more expensive than those at some trendy River North spots.)

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.

'Wrapped' brunch Dec. 10

Boystown restaurant **Wood**, 3335 N. Halsted St., will host the "Wrapped in Red Drag Brunch" beginning at 11 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 10.

Guests are invited to don their most vibrant crimson ensembles as they enjoy a brunch with local drag queen Wanda Screw as emcee.

The special ho-ho-holiday menu will consist of dishes from Chef Ashlee Aubin (Alinea; Salero), like mascarpone-frosted cinnamon rolls, homemade corned-beef hash, pumpkin-spiced waffles, buttermilk biscuits and gravy, and more. There will also be a special holiday cocktail, the Wanda Screwdriver.

See WoodChicago.com.



Santa Speedo Run zips through Boystown

Thousands raised for Center on Halsted

An army of sexy Santas took advantage of the unseasonably warm weather to don red velvet hats (and not much more) for the annual Santa Speedo Run, a benefit for Center on Halsted, Saturday, December 2.

The event kicked off at Sidetrack, as the jolly participants signed up and joined together for the singing of the specialized Christmas carol, Jingle Balls. At 2 pm, they hit the streets as all

participants took part in a one-mile loop run, originating from and returning to the bar. Host Debbie Fox led the crowd for a post-run celebration and awards ceremony.

Organizers say that this year's event broke records, raking in over \$70,000. The top earner, David Roberts, brought in just over \$8,500 himself.

Photos by Jerry Nunn; see many more online.





BILLY Masters

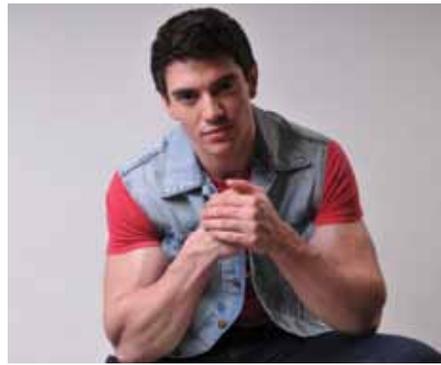
"I don't know if I'm gonna make a pitcher or catcher out of you."—**Robert Reed** to the child version of **John Travolta** in *The Boy in the Plastic Bubble*. If one believes the testimony of numerous masseurs, the answer is catcher!

Don't fuck with **Dr. Seuss**. The dearly departed doyenne of radio **Lynn Samuels** was given to reading from *Horton Hatches the Egg* on the air. That is, until she got a cease-and-desist letter from **Audrey Stone Dimond**—otherwise known as Mrs. Dr. Seuss! The cantankerous widow is wildly protective of her late husband's work. I was reminded of this story last week at the opening night of *Who's Holiday!* at the Westside Theater. This play tells the story of a grown-up **Cindy-Lou Who**, from *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*.

Playwright Matthew Lombardo tells us what happened to **Cindy-Lou** 40 years after meeting the Grinch in a one-woman show written in the style of the late Dr. Seuss. Is it a sequel? Is it a parody? Either way, last year's premiere was thwarted by a cease-and-desist letter from guess who? The tenacious Lombardo took the matter to court—and won! That meant the show was able to go on—albeit a year later—with a new advertising slogan: "See The Show Dr. Seuss Doesn't Want You To See!" It lives up to the hype—due, in no small measure, to the bravura turn of star **Lesli Margherita**. She effortlessly captures the innocence of the young **Cindy-Lou** and then slowly adds layers as the perky mask falls. Oodles of credit must go to **director Carl Andress**, who works his endless theatrical magic to never let the show feel claustrophobic. I predict this will have huge seasonal appeal for years to come.

My matinee the next day was *The Parisian Woman*, a new play starring **Uma Thurman**. It has enormous relevance since it's set in present-day Washington, D.C., and written by **Beau Willimon**, who created *House of Cards*. What was curious was that **Miss Thurman** chose a strange mid-Atlantic accent—kinda a cross between **Madonna** and **Mrs. Howell!** And not being a natural stage animal, she was prone to wild gesticulation of her limitless limbs, which looked even odder in unflattering clothing. The show is saved by **Blair Brown**, who is incapable of giving a bad performance. She's so good, in fact, she magnifies the deficits of the play's star. Then again, reports were that **Uma's** name alone was selling tickets. So, what do I know?

That night, I saw *Once On This Island*, which, like *The Parisian Woman*, is a one-act, 90-minute show—my favorite kind! The production is as magical and enchanting as the story, and the cast (including our own **Alex Newell**) is uniformly superb. That said, I'm still trying to figure out what



A calendar featuring **Steve Grand** is among **Billy's** gift-giving suggestions.

Photo by Joem C. Bayawa

Lea Salonga was doing there. Not that she isn't good—she sounds as bright and brilliant as ever. But she has one number and spends most of the show walking up and down the stairs as if she were just crowned **Miss Filipina!** If you like the musical, you'll love this revival. If you don't know it, you'll still love it. And if you love **Lea Salonga**, you'll long for a helicopter.

In a rarity, I then went to my third show of the day! The spot *54 Below* hosted an all-star concert presentation of the **Lauren Bacall** vehicle *Woman of the Year*. Also beside the point—did anyone think to invite **Raquel Welch**? Not that she was missed alongside such luminaries as **Joyce DeWitt**, **Eve Plumb** and **Lypsinka** battling for honors next to such bona fide Broadway babes as **Julia Murney**, **Luba Mason** and **Christine Pedi**. There were also some great men, including **Robert Cuccioli**, **Brad Oscar** and my new discovery, the dashing and sexy **Kevin Zak**. The show's 11 o'clock number, "The Grass Is Always Greener," was expertly handled by **Dee Hoty** and the indomitable **Anita Gillette**. Of all the shows I saw, this was the best of the bunch.

The reboot of *Dynasty* has announced the new incarnation of **Alexis**. Drum roll, please—it will be **Nicollette Sheridan**. Well, she was a vampy bitch on *Desperate Housewives* before her unceremonious ouster, so perhaps it'll work out. And, you know, she is British. No, not British like **Uma Thurman**—but actually born in England.

Time for more of **Billy's** Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions. Each year, **Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS** honors one of our beloved divas as a holiday ornament. This year, it's **Carol Burnett**—fortuitous timing given her recent anniversary special. You can deck your halls with **Burnett** as **Princess Winnifred** from *Once Upon a Mattress* by going to BroadwayCares.org.

Two of my favorite performers are raising money for a good cause. I ran into **Julia Murney** and **Max von Essen** at *Who's Holiday!* and learned that they recorded a duet of "O Holy Night," with all proceeds going to **Covenant House**, an organization that helps homeless and runaway youth. You can get the single on Amazon or iTunes.

Thursday, December 14 **SIDETRACK**

HOLIDAY PARTY 2017

AT THE LODGE

6PM-2AM

ENJOY!

Complimentary Food from Yoshi's, Wrigley BBQ and Amazing Edibles

CHEERS!

\$2 Well Drinks & Beer
\$2.50 Frozen's & All Other Cocktails

COOL PRIZES!

Drawings at 8pm & 11pm

GIVE!

BRING A DONATION
Paper products, coffee, grooming items or cleaning supplies
OR
MAKE A DONATION at the door to support Heartland Alliance

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE

3349 NORTH HALSTED SIDETRACKCHICAGO.COM
@SIDETRACKBAR 21+ W/ID NO COVER

I know you love **Steve Grand** and sexy calendars. So, why not pick up his 2018 calendar—shot on location this past summer in Provincetown. You still want more? You're in luck. "I just had to make two calendars' worth of images. So yes, both calendars have their own unique set of photos," said **Grand**. I don't believe these are benefiting anyone other than **Grand** himself, but that's OK by me. Still, it's a curious choice for someone who previously bemoaned the fact that people focus on his phenomenal physique instead of his music. Eh, who am I to judge? You can pick him up at SteveGrand.com.

When I'm not judging (but I'm judging), it's time to end yet another column. While we may have avoided sex scandals this week (boy, could **Renata Scotto** tell stories), you can't avoid **BillyMasters.com**, the site **Dr. Seuss** probably doesn't want you to see, either! For all your other needs, write to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before "Once Upon a Mattress" is the name of a CNN special report! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

THE WINDOW DISPLAY + FOOD DRIVE

Santa Overload

Bring a Santa figurine for our window or donate to our food drive and get \$5 in L64TEN bucks!*

*5 L64TEN Bucks valid for regular priced purchase over \$30.

LEATHER64TEN CHICAGO

6410 N. CLARK, CHICAGO, IL 773-508-0900
WWW.LEATHER64TEN.COM



@windycitytimes1



/windycitymediagroup



@windycitytimes

www.windycitymediagroup.com