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Donna Summer

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South Side woman helps HIV-poz men

BY SAMUEL WORLEY

"AIDS was my destiny," said Ida Byther-Smith, founder of Jo-Ray House, a living space for men with HIV located in Chicago's Roseland neighborhood, "but life was my choice."

Byther-Smith found out that she was infected with HIV the same day—Nov. 7, 1991—that basketball player Magic Johnson announced his own infection in a nationally-televised press conference. The result of a routine test Byther-Smith needed for a job, the infection came as a shock. She left the doctor's office "running," she said, after telling the doctor he was a liar.

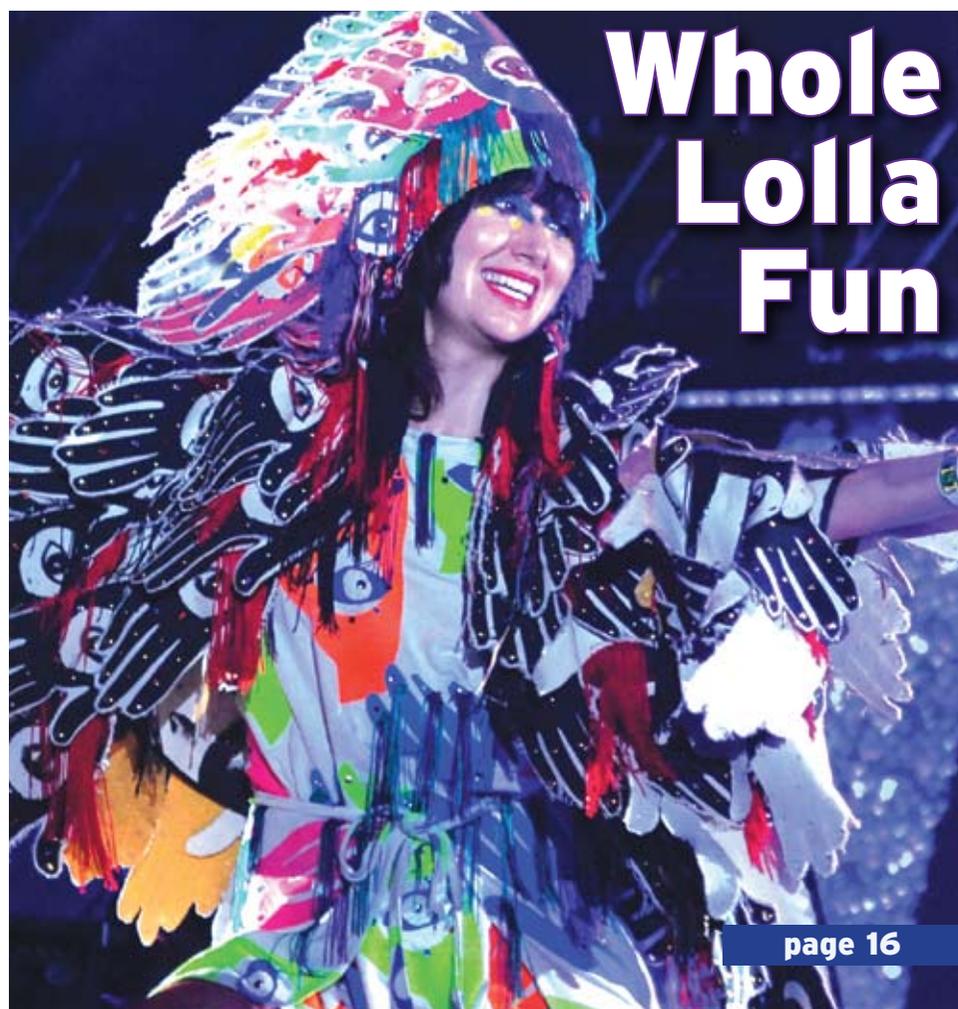


Ida Byther-Smith.

Throughout the 1990s Byther-Smith struggled with how to cope with her infection. When her husband—who had infected her and left her—showed up at her door in 1996 after being robbed, she told him, "You can have a bedroom." He lived under her care until his death in 1999.

The arc of her relationship with her husband would presage the work that has consumed her for much of the past decade. After a near-death experience on Christmas Day in 2000—when she was rushed to the hospital with a high viral load

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Whole Lolla Fun

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Lollapalooza 2009 was hot in more than one way: Not only was there an incredible line-up of musicians (such as the Yeah Yeah Yeah's Karen O, above), but temperatures hovered in the 90s for most of the weekend. Photo by Cambria Harkley; read more on page 16, and see many more photos on page 18 and at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Olson team snubs gay legal help

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Aug. 10—Controversy over conservative Ted Olson's lawsuit against Proposition 8 escalated this month, with Olson's legal team arguing against allowing gay groups to participate in the lawsuit.

In a brief filed Aug. 7, Olson's team argues against allowing a coalition of gay organizations to serve as intervenors, saying—among other things—that they have been "unwilling to say that they actually support [the] effort to vindicate their rights in this lawsuit."

The lawsuit, *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, was filed in federal court in San Francisco in May on behalf of two same-sex couples. It charges that California's Proposition 8 violates the U.S. Constitution's explicit guarantees to due process of law and equal protection of the law.

A group of gay legal and political groups initially issued a statement warning against "premature lawsuits," saying they could lead to an "ill-timed" decision from the U.S. Supreme Court that could set back the movement toward equal marriage rights for same-sex couples.

But one month later, three of those same groups—Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Lesbian & Gay Rights Project of the ACLU—filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the

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Windy City Media Group was named Best Gay News Source by The Chicago Reader.



Yasmin Nair
has fulfilled multiple roles for Windy City Times—including book reviewer, news reporter, photographer and op-ed columnist—since 1995.



Rex Wockner
has reported news for the gay press since 1985. His work has appeared in more than 300 publications in 38 countries.



Kat Fitzgerald
is a photographer and self-described “energizer.” She has been in photography for the past 25 years.



Emmanuel Garcia
has been writing for Windy City Times since 2003. He is also an editor at Windy City Media Group’s queertvnetwork.com.



Tracy Baim
started work in Chicago LGBT journalism in 1984. She co-founded Windy City Times in 1985.



Andrew Davis
is the managing editor of Windy City Times and Identity and has written for Outlines and Windy City Times since 1995.



Kirk Williamson
started with Windy City eight years ago as a sales rep and is now also managing editor of Nightspots, art director and a popular nightlife photographer.



Bob Roehr
has more than two decades of news journalism experience and is a Washington, D.C.-based correspondent focusing on politics and health issues.



Scott C. Morgan
is a freelance theater editor and has been a writer and a theater critic since 1996.



Amy Matheny
has been speaking for Chicago’s LGBT community since 1998 when she co-hosted the popular LesBiGay Radio. She founded Windy City Queercast.



Richard Knight, Jr.,
is the cinema writer for WCMG and knightatthemovies.com, and has more than two decades of experience as a cultural performer and writer.



Lisa Keen
has been covering the gay political beat for 30 years, delivering exclusives on individuals in all aspects of government, including President Barack Obama.



Mel Ferrand
has worked as a columnist and photo-journalist for Windy City Times for over a decade.



David Byrne
is the music columnist for Windy City Times: he has written the column Pop Making Sense and has interviewed various musicians for several years.



Tony Peregrin
has been a freelance entertainment/culture journalist and senior writer for Windy City Times since 1998.



Mary Shen Barnidge
has been a self-described “mercenary Chicago poet for 10 years, mercenary Chicago drama critic for 20.”



John Fenoglio
is Windy City Times’ newest addition and is a writer, reporter, new-media enthusiast and photographer who has interned at NBC.



Jonathan Abarbanel
is a member of the American Theatre Critics Assn., has reviewed for Chicago Public Radio and is an adjunct professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago.



Jen Parelo
is a long-time columnist for Nightspots and a published author.



Ryan Kolodziej
has been a nightlife photographer for six years with a special affinity for drag photography.



Jerry Nunn
has become an exciting adult film reviewer with his Nightspots column From the Booth and does star interviews in his Nunn on One column in Windy City Times.



Steve Starr
has photographed numerous celebrities and events, and has been writing his Starrlight column for over a decade.



Colman Domingo
is a series regular on the LOGO series The Big Gay Sketch Show and lends his theatrical flair to Windy City Queercast.



Catey Sullivan
is an award-winning critic who has been writing about Chicago theater since the local premiere of Angels in America in 1993.



John D’Emilio
is a pioneering historian of sexuality and the author or editor of six books, including a prize-winning biography of civil-rights leader Bayard Rustin.



Lawrence Ferber
is an entertainment and travel scribe who has contributed to Entertainment Weekly, The Advocate, New York Magazine, OUT, The Village Voice, Time Out NY and more.



Owen Keehnen
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has written about the local and national LGBT sports scene for more than five years and has also written for such publications as USA TODAY and the Chicago Tribune.



Zachary Whittenburg
is a dancer and choreographer who covers the Chicago dance scene from the inside and has written for numerous publications since 2006.



Alexandra Billings
is an actress, singer, teacher, writer, blogger, activist and former radio host whose extensive theatre work has taken her across Chicago and to Los Angeles.



Billy Masters
is a comedian, personality and award-winning gossip columnist who has been syndicating his weekly column worldwide for the past 13 years.



Marie J. Kuda
is a long-time community writer, historian and archivist. She has written articles and columns for Outlines and Windy City Times for more than 20 years.



Jean Albright
served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years, including writing for Stars & Stripes. She has worked for nearly 15 years for WCMG as an editor and Web site manager.



grayson
has been an arbiter of snark for Nightspots magazine since 2001.



Stephen Rader
has received many awards for his work in Chicago theater. He is also exec. director of Season of Concern, writes a popular blog and co-hosts Windy City Queercast.

The above people, plus dozens more, give WCMG an unequalled combination of experience, connections and continuity.

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A huge crowd showed up in Haifa, Israel, Aug. 8 to protest the recent shootings in Tel Aviv. See page 5.

Photo by Dorit Jordan Dotan



Does the rock musical Spring Awakening live up to the hype? See our critic's take on page 14.

Photo by Joan Marcus

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ONLINE INDEX

COMIC(-CON) RELIEF

Windy City Times braved the crowds, costumes and celebrities at Chicago Comic-Con. See plenty of people (ranging from "He-Man" to actress Lori Petty) online.

'TED' RECKONING

WCT's Jerry Nunn talked with out actor Jonathan Slavin about his show, Better Off Ted, and his off-screen relationship.

ZINE AND HEARD

The Queer Zine Archive Project held a reading recently at Uncle Fun. Read about the, um, fun that transpired.

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APA report warns against conversion therapy

BY YASMIN NAIR

In recent years, the ex-gay movement has been making claims that it is possible to convert gays and lesbians to heterosexuality. Those claims may be somewhat dulled now that the American Psychological Association (APA) has published a resolution explicitly stating that mental health professionals should avoid telling clients that they can change their sexual orientation through therapy or other treatments.

Released Aug. 5, the "Resolution on Appropriate Affirmative Responses to Sexual Orientation Distress and Change Efforts" should provide an essential tool in the dismantling of homophobia and heterosexism, according to Dr. Judith Glassgold, head of the task force that presented the report. Glassgold spoke with Windy City Times from Toronto, site of the APA conference.

The idea that conversion therapies should be discouraged by the medical community might seem an obvious one to LGBTs and allies, so why did the APA feel the need to release this report? Glassgold said that the APA had done a similar study in 1997, but it only "addressed ethical issues in a very neutral way." However, in the last 10-12 years, "several new studies emerged in the press, that claim to show evidence that sexual orientation could be changed." The APA, concerned about the prevalence of such reports, determined that it was time to revisit the issue.

The task force consisted of six members including Glassgold. The others were Drs. Lee Beckstead, Jack Dreshcher, Beverly Greene, Robin Lin Miller, and Roger L. Worthington. The task force did not engage in any new clinical studies but reviewed the available scientific literature to determine whether any evidence existed to support claims about the efficacy of conversion therapy or sexual-orientation change efforts (SOCE).

According to Glassgold, the "very few people" who seek SOCE usually come from religiously conservative backgrounds. The report is aimed at those religious organizations and therapists who might advocate SOCE. She said that the hope was also that the "few secular therapists who conduct this kind of therapy will stop and rethink their assumptions about homosexuality. We did a very good job of reviewing the literature and providing other options for religious organizations and therapists. We hope that religious psychologists will rethink the type of treatment and not mislead their clients. I would hope that

therapists that promise change would stop." Glassgold went on to emphasize that for some religious LGBTs, the question might be "How do you bring your religious beliefs and sexual orientations into sync? How are they to reconcile different identities?"

The APA's hope in releasing this report is that it might lead to "greater tolerance, greater support for LGBT teens, and a greater compassion on the part of religious groups." Speaking about the research process itself, Glassgold said that one of the surprising elements was finding British studies that indicated many people worked to integrate religious and gay identities.

For Glassgold, one drawback of the report was that there was not enough research done on non-Christian LGBTs: "The majority of research seems focused on Christian men who are white. We could only summarize existing research. We don't know the suffering and the resilience of a broader category of people. I hope that [future researchers] reach out to other faiths."

Glassgold also emphasized the role of children and adolescents in the research: "If a child brings up an attraction to the same sex, we recommend against the impulse to reject the child; it's most important to accept the child. We urge parents to avoid therapists that tell them their children need curing."

The report can be found at www.apa.org/pi/igbc/publications/therapeutic-response.pdf.

ENDA in Senate

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

An inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is now on the move in the U.S. Senate. Longtime sponsor Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., introduced the bill Aug. 5 along with Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Susan Collins, R-Maine.

The Human Rights Campaign has launched a lobby effort (www.passendanow.org) to muster support for the legislation, asking supporters to send e-mails to their senators urging their support. An e-mail noted that, in 29 states, there is no law to prevent an employer from firing someone because he or she is gay and, in 38 states, no law to prohibit an employer from firing someone for being transgender.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the first national gay political organization to push for a federal law to prohibit job discrimination against gays, in 1974, said it hopes the stated support of President Barack Obama will "play a role in assisting with [the bill's] swift passage in both the House and the Senate."

U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., who is the

lead sponsor of the ENDA bill introduced in the House in June, said he is optimistic about its chances of passing that chamber. But he expressed less optimism about reaching a new political threshold of 60 votes in the Senate. The bill needs only 51 votes to pass, but the Democratic majority has sought to ensure 60 votes before bringing legislation to the floor in order,

they say, to ward off any filibuster attempts.

The ENDA bills introduced in the House and Senate this year both seek to prohibit discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Current federal law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin, age and disability.

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OLSON from cover

Perry lawsuit. The three gay legal groups represent three San Francisco gay organizations and, in July, asked to participate in the lawsuit as intervenors.

In a lawsuit, an intervenor is a person or group who is not named as plaintiff or defendant but who will be significantly affected by the lawsuit's outcome. If the court approves a person or group to become an intervenor, that person or group becomes a third party to the lawsuit, supporting either the plaintiff or defendant's position. As such, they have certain rights as party to the lawsuit. (Otherwise, outside parties are limited to filing friend-of-the-court briefs expressing their personal interest or expertise on a matter within the lawsuit.)

Olson's team submitted a brief Aug. 7, opposing the gay groups' request to intervene. It also opposed, though less heartily, a similar request by the City of San Francisco, as well as a request by a group supportive of Proposition 8—the latter in favor of defendants.

Olson's team argues that the gay groups will not assert any argument that the plaintiffs' legal team is not already willing to assert. And the team suggests the gay groups submit friend-of-the-court briefs instead.

More importantly, the Olson brief argues that the gay groups have spoken out against the Perry lawsuit and have been "unwilling to say that they actually support Plaintiffs' effort to vindicate their rights in this lawsuit."

Their involvement as intervenors, says the Olson brief, will delay the case.

In its brief seeking to intervene, the gay legal groups argue that they represent "many members [who] intend to marry their same-sex partners" and that the court's ruling on Proposition 8 "may unquestionably directly impair or impede" their ability to marry as well as their options for "seeking similar relief in subsequent litigation." They also argue that their "extensive experience and expertise...in litigating the very factual issues" before the court would make them of "great assistance to the parties and the court...."

Initially, the Olson team welcomed support from the gay groups and reportedly held a number of conference calls and meetings with them. In a June 26 press release, the American Foundation for Equal Rights, a new group formed to support the Perry lawsuit, issued a statement saying it was "pleased" to have the groups' friend-of-the-court brief.

But with the request to intervene, says the Olson brief, the gay groups and attorneys

are questioning the "adequacy of [plaintiffs'] counsel"—that is, Olson and his legal team. To that, says the Olson brief: "Lawyers, no matter how experienced or well-meaning, should not be permitted to use intervention to involve themselves in litigation where the parties have chosen to retain other counsel."

In fact, the Olson team includes at least two openly gay attorneys: Sarah Piepmeier and Enrique Monagas. Both have been active in LGBT groups and both are married to same-sex spouses. Monagas has a two-year-old child.

Shannon Minter, legal director for NCLR, says it's "time to put aside any past disagreements and work together to present the very best legal arguments and the strongest possible factual record."

"We have much respect for the plaintiffs' attorneys and look forward to working with them," said Minter.

Minter said the gay groups "wholeheartedly agree with the existing plaintiffs that Prop 8 is unconstitutional, and we want to do everything we can to help win the case."

A federal district court judge in San Francisco is expected to rule on the motions to intervene Aug. 19. He will also take up the matter of holding a trial in the lawsuit. That, too, is a matter of some controversy.

The Olson team is urging the court to hold a full and public trial to create a "complete factual record" on all the relevant issues. That includes such matters as whether LGBT people are politically powerful or weak and examining the legitimacy of the motives behind denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Olson's team likens the lawsuit challenging Proposition 8 today to the lawsuit challenging Colorado's Amendment 2 in 1993. A federal district court in Denver heard three weeks of testimony in that case, *Romer v. Evans*, challenging the constitutionality of a ballot measure that sought to deny LGBT people the protection of anti-discrimination laws. The case ultimately went to the U.S. Supreme Court that rendered the landmark 1996 decision striking down initiatives based on "animus" against gays.

"Given the importance of the issues presented by this case and the likelihood that, regardless of the outcome, it will be reviewed on appeal, this Court should conduct a full trial on the merits as to all disputed facts," stated the Olson brief.

The Olson team's brief says it intends to delve into who was behind the Proposition 8 campaign, how the campaign formulated its arguments, and "the role of animus" toward "gay and lesbian individuals."

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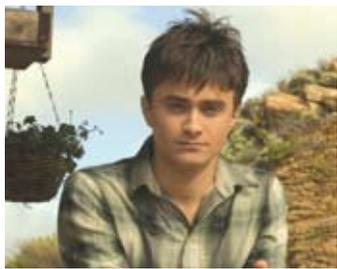


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Daniel Radcliffe.

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The Trevor Project—the nonprofit organization that operates the only nationwide, 24-hour suicide-prevention hotline for LGBTQ youth—has received a major donation from actor Daniel Radcliffe, best known for his Harry Potter movies. Radcliffe, 20, has joined the project's Circle of Hope, a community of major donors. Radcliffe said in a statement, "It's extremely distressing to consider that in 2009 suicide is a top-three killer of young people, and it's truly devastating to learn that LGBTQ youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers."

Gay-rights activist and former Bill Clinton advisor David Mixner has been hospitalized, according to an On Top Magazine item. An Aug. 1 post on Mixner's blog at DavidMixner.com read, "Mr. Mixner is sick and in the hospital. He will not be able to write his blog and is looking forward to being back and sassy in a week or so." Mixner helped raise money for Clinton's presidential bid, but parted ways with him when the chief executive proposed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" after he said he'd try to end discrimination in the military.

The Western Athletic Conference has reprimanded University of Hawaii football coach Greg McMackin, 64, for comments he recently made during a press conference, USA Today reported. McMackin's comments included anti-gay slurs he made in reference to the University of Notre Dame football team. The university has suspended McMackin for 30 days without pay, and the coach has voluntarily taken an additional 7-percent pay cut from his \$1.1 million salary.

In Florida, **news anchor Charles Perez has filed a complaint with Miami-Dade's Equal Opportunity Board against his employer, WPLG,** according to the Miami Herald. Perez, 46, is claiming that the station demoted him because of the "increasingly high profile of [his] sexual orientation." Station officials are saying that the economy forced them to ask Perez to give up his weeknight-anchor spot for a weekend position. News director Bill Pohovey—who is also gay—said that WPLG does not discriminate.

In San Francisco, Calif., **Joshua Barry said that he and his boyfriend, Sebastian Schilbe, were asked to leave the Internos Wine Cafe after they kissed each other,** according to the Bay Area Reporter. Barry claimed that after they kissed, the bar owner called them "faggots" and "perverts," and dragged him out of the bar. An entry on the bar's Web site stated that customers claimed that a male same-sex couple had engaged in "inappropriate behavior" in a restroom.

Sotomayor sworn in

Judge Sonia Sotomayor was sworn in Aug. 8 as the first Hispanic on the U.S. Supreme Court. The event happened less than two weeks after she was approved 13-6 by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

With her left hand on the Bible, Sotomayor made an oath to "administer justice without respect to persons and do equal right to the poor and to the rich," according to the Washington Post.

Sotomayor will replace retired Justice David H. Souter.

ISRAEL SHOOTINGS Banishing the darkness

ANALYSIS BY BATYA SALZMAN

There were no flashy drag queens, no thumping club music, no bump and grind. But barely six weeks after Tel Aviv's boisterous annual Pride Parade, a crowd of tens of thousands strong that gathered Aug. 8 in Rabin's Square in Tel Aviv showed a different kind of pride—that of a strong gay community, and their straight supporters and families, coming together to pay their respects to 13 young people gunned down Aug. 1.

Nir Katz, 26, a group counselor for the gay youth club, and club member Liz Trobishi, 17, were killed, and 11 others were wounded. Four are still in critical condition in Israeli hospitals. The masked gunman, who entered the basement room during the weekly meeting of the youth club, sprayed the room with automatic fire, and fled. Police have few leads in discovering his identity or current whereabouts.

The speakers were united in their condemnation of the killings. Representatives of the gov-



A protester carries a sign that reads "Thou shalt not murder" during the Aug. 8 rally. Photo by Dorit Jordan Dotan

ernment were numerous, and all of them said the "right things." They spoke about combating homophobia in the school system, in the family law system, in the military. Even elder statesman President Shimon Peres spoke, saying that the gun that had been pointed at those teenagers in the basement had also been aimed at all of us; a rare, clear message of support for equality at the highest levels of the Israeli government.

The hastily organized demonstration also boasted a long list of Israel's most well-loved

musicians who openly support the gay community, and some of whom are no less known for speaking out against homophobia and institutionalized discrimination within Israel. Sharon Ben Ezer (aka Pollyanna Franks) pulled no punches as she compared the unexpected killing of gays and such massive, public reactions as tonight's demonstration to the daily and much less remarked-upon deaths of residents of Ramlah and Gaza.

Chen Langer, a co-counselor of the group along with Katz, spoke from his wheelchair. He wept as he described this past week as "a bad week for compassion." He described crawling wounded from body to body, and having to decide who among this close-knit group was alive and who was beyond help. Ori Gil, a teenager wounded in the shooting, exhorted his age-mates to come out of the closet at any cost, as the price of silent hiding is far higher to both them as individuals and to society as a whole.

One week after this vicious killing spree, the chatter and conversations overheard make one thing clear: there are many who doubt that Saturday's massacre was a "real" hate crime.

Read the entire account online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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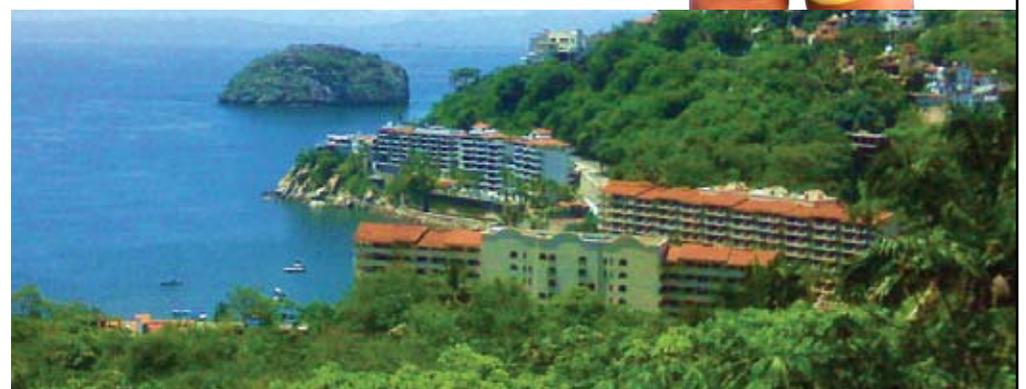
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LGBT vets recognized

BY JEAN ALBRIGHT

For the seventh year running, the City of Chicago has held a ceremony named With Liberty and Justice for all, with a mayoral proclamation recognizing the service of LGBT veterans. The proclamation was read by Dana Starks of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations ceremony in Daley Plaza on Aug. 5.

The keynote speaker was Luke Visconti, a veteran, CEO of Diversity Inc, and a member of the U.S. Navy Diversity Senior Advisory Group.

"We haven't done a good job in how we treat our shipmates and wingmen and combat buddies who are GLBT," he said. "We haven't treated them very well and so I'm eager to do a good job here today.

"We veterans have sworn to support and defend the constitution, we've put our lives on the line. We know the bond of service..."

He set forth his view of what defending the constitution means now.

"Keeping liberty is disruptive. Ending slavery was disruptive, as was winning the vote for women, desegregating the military, integrating women into the military. Liberty is fragile and needs care.

"I think it is time for veterans to come to the forefront to defend liberty. I don't mean just GLBT veterans but, I hate to tell you, it always is the oppressed ones who have to carry the water for the rest of us. Oppressed people have to bring society forward, it is the way it has always been. Emancipation of slaves didn't happen without a fight, women's suffrage didn't happen without a fight. People didn't get the civil rights act and voting rights without a fight and this isn't happening without a fight.

"The part of the constitution we have to bring forward is the part that protects us against a state religion but it also protects religion from



Left: AVER's Jim Darby (left) with Congressman Mike Quigley and a copy of the Congressional Record. Right: A color guard observes the eternal flame. Photos by Mel Ferrand (left) and Tracy Baim; see many more images at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

the state. That means that we can have openly serving members of the military and we can have gay marriage and your church never has to marry two gay men. That's what this country is about.

"I think that it is time for the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy to end. The country has moved to that point but I'm afraid that it is the LGBT veterans who are going to have to help us all get to that point.

"We deserve to have a country that allows people to serve as they are. We veterans have to be the ones to say that parsing liberties is the first step toward having a gulag, having concentration camps.

"Tell your representative. If we can get this ball rolling, we can end Don't Ask, Don't Tell this year, have the military follow the orders set forth by Congress, the president will sign it and we'll have this piece of bad history of the U.S. behind us forever.

"Thank you."

Jim Darby, president of the Chicago Chapter of the LGBT group American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) thanked the crowd, veterans and officials present for participating in a ceremony that started with a simple wreath laying seven years ago.

"Many LGBT veterans have been kicked out,"



said Darby. "Many have been told 'We don't love you.' We are here to say we love you. Maybe uncle Sam doesn't appreciate them, but we will."

Congressman Mike Quigley, D-Ill., the featured speaker, said that in his hundred days in office he has sponsored a dozen bills that work for equality for the LGBT community, including the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. He said that in a visit with military troops, he didn't see men, women, gay, lesbian and transgender, but simply a group of brave Americans.

"It is easy to see that we are fundamentally less safe with the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy," he said. "And we are fundamentally less just with the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy." He recalled President Lincoln calling on us to ask ourselves

HIV from cover

and virtually no T-cells—she resolved to help other members of her south side community who were struggling with the disease.

Taking from her savings and her 401k—she had been, at various points, a Greyhound bus driver and a dialysis technician—Byther-Smith opened Jo-Ray House in 2004. The name of the house is an amalgamation of her mother's name, Josephine, and her brother's, Ray Paul. Both died of heart attacks at a young age.

Byther-Smith said that the idea of the house came to her after talking to a man who had contracted HIV after he was raped in prison. When he told his grandmother, who he lived with after his release, she removed "everything he had touched" from the house and threw it away.

Byther-Smith was appalled at the man's experience: "You're afraid to touch your own grandchild." She opened Jo-Ray House as a space of support for Black men struggling with an array of challenges: the fact itself of living with HIV/AIDS, as well as the social stigma attached to the experience of being positive.

Byther-Smith has experienced a good deal of the stigma herself, she said, though not from her family, who have been largely accepting and supportive. When she told her family about her infection, she said, she was told by an uncle, "I don't love you know more and I don't love you no less."

Still, prejudice is pervasive; Byther-Smith has struggled with having a disease that was initially identified closely with white gay men. She has had trouble persuading others that her own experience with the virus is as legitimate as anybody else's. "You don't have a story," she said she was told by acquaintances, "You were just infected by your husband."

"HIV [has] no different levels," she told them. "HIV is HIV."

She said that the difficulty in openly discussing the virus—including the ways that it can be contracted—is troublesome especially in light of high infection rates among African-American people, and particularly youth. That parents tell their children, for instance, "I was a virgin till I was married," said Byther-Smith, is "a crock of shit."

She said that when she counsels youth, she tells them, "I did the same thing you're doing, and it didn't get me anyplace." She also worries about teenage carelessness, even vindic-

if we meant it when we wrote into our constitution that all are created equal. "Every once in a while we have to really ask ourselves if we really mean it, even if a group is unpopular in some people's minds," said Quigley.

"The Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy is a policy so fundamentally hypocritical, that it encourages people to put their lives on the line to serve a country built on freedom and democracy, but only as long as they lie about who they are."

He then read a statement which he has recently entered into the U.S. Congressional Record, recognizing Chicago AVER for its work on behalf of veterans and those still serving and recognizing Jim Darby, founder of the chapter.

"You are my friend, but you are my hero," said Quigley.

A color guard made up of veterans and members of AVER then accompanied a wreath with a pink triangle for placement by the eternal flame maintained in Daley Plaza.

Also speaking at the ceremony were Samuel Miller, chair of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council; Bill Greaves, director of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council on LGBT Issues; Steve Lorandos, former Petty Officer Second Class, U.S. Navy; and LeeAnn Bradley, a former Navy officer. Ald. Tom Tunney and Illinois State Reps. Greg Harris and Deb Mell also participated.

Jean Albright, an Air Force veteran, is a board member of AVER Chicago. Photos by Mel Ferrand and Tracy Baim

tiveness, about spreading the disease.

"Somebody gave it to me"—goes the mentality that worries Byther-Smith—"I'm going to give it to them." She said that she has experienced a particular emotional toll around the matter of confidentiality, and the occasional knowledge that teenagers know themselves to be positive but continue to practice unsafe sex.

She said, too, that in her dual role as both "a consumer and a caregiver"—that is, as somebody who is positive for HIV as well as somebody who provides services for people in the same situation—she has had an opportunity to engage with the tricky politics of HIV, both within and without specifically AIDS-oriented organizations.

In terms of Jo-Ray house, she said, she has had a stream of challenges with the city in terms of zoning and code restrictions, and challenges with the bank in terms of her mortgage. "If you tell the truth, I think you're a threat," she said.

Though the house has been in the same location, and financially stable, since 2004, she has "just now" started having problems with the bank. She said that she fears that in current economic conditions, the bank may be overconcerned about the ability of a black woman to keep up on her payments.

Jo-Ray House relies both on Byther-Smith's savings and on private fundraising. It is not, Byther-Smith said, a transitional house, but rather one where men can stay for as long as they need to feel ready to leave. The average stay is 90 days, she said, though some stay for as long as five months.

Men who live in the house are responsible for its day-to-day operation, she said, creating a space that feels closer to home than a transitional house: occupants clean the kitchen and their rooms, for instance. Though it is occasionally a place where people "dump" family members who are HIV-positive, Byther-Smith feels that the overall experience of Jo-Ray House is one that empowers people living with HIV to better deal with a largely phobic world.

"I couldn't tell my status until I met you," she said one of Jo-Ray's inhabitants told her.

The feeling, she added, is mutual. The men who live in Jo-Ray House, she said, "don't know how much I've learned from them."

For more information on Jo-Ray House, visit www.jorayhouse.com.

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Lakeview attack leads to meeting

BY ANDREW DAVIS

In an development that is similar to a series of Lincoln Park beatings, a man was attacked in the Boystown area of Lakeview in the early morning hours of Aug. 3.

Independent sources (including the victim's employer) confirmed to Windy City Times that the victim worked at a Boystown bar. CBS2Chicago.com reported that the man was walking on Halsted near Buckingham at approximately 5 a.m. when he was attacked by four men.

A News Affairs police officer said that the assailants punched the victim in the face and body, and that they took his cell phone.

The pattern of the attack was similar to at least five recent attacks in the Lincoln Park neighborhood in which a group of individuals attacked men who were walking alone. However, a police spokesman told Windy City Times that no connection has been established between the Lakeview and Lincoln Park beatings.

Residents and business owners stated their opinions and concerns about the recent violent attacks as they packed the diner. However, controversy erupted as police did not allow members of the press with inside Nookie's—a development that most of the attendees disagreed with, according to ChicagoPride.com. Alderman Tom Tunney (44th Ward) came outside to talk with the reporters, and said that police evidence was different in Lakeview than in Lincoln Park.

During the meeting, residents complained about a slow response time from police, leading Brendan Chrisman to say, "The cops are on Clark, not on Halsted," ChicagoPride.com reported.

Bennett Lawson, Tunney's director of outreach, told Windy City Times that "it's good that so many people are concerned." Also, he stressed that there is no evidence that the Lakeview attack was a hate crime: "As far as we know, it was a robbery."

Lawson added that there will be a Safe and Sound Seminar Thursday, Aug. 13, at the Lincoln Park Cultural Center, 2045 N. Lincoln Park West, at 7 p.m. There will also be a community walk Friday night at 2 a.m.; participants will leave from the 7-11 parking lot at Halsted and Roscoe.

The Chicago Tribune reported Aug. 11 that a man has been arrested after someone identified the alleged assailant from a sketch. In addition, Evanston police arrested two men and a woman Aug. 11. The three are suspected in two robberies and beatings Aug. 10 in the Roscoe Village and Lakeview neighborhoods.

Cross-dressing pickpocket held

A male who was reportedly wearing a dress was apprehended by police Aug. 5 shortly after allegedly robbing a man in Lakeview, according to the Chicago Sun-Times.

Faison Hicks and another man, Semaj Jones, allegedly jumped a man visiting from Ireland near Belmont and Sheridan, stealing his wallet. A taxi driver ran after Hicks and held him until police arrived.

Hicks and Jones were held on \$300,000 bond each on Aug. 6.

Chicago to take part in kiss-in

At least two Chicago-area locations will be the sites of kiss-ins that are part of an Aug. 15 nationwide movement.

Recently, two men were arrested for allegedly kissing in Salt Lake City's Mormon-owned Main Street Plaza. There also was an incident in El Paso, Texas, where several gay men were kicked out of Chico's Tacos after two of them kissed.

According to the Facebook page "The Great Nationwide Kiss-In," David Badash and David

Mailloux—two of the event's coordinators—stated that they "believe that any person anywhere should be able to kiss whomever they want, whenever they want."

Local kiss-ins will take place at 1 p.m. at Millennium Park's "Cloud Gate" sculpture (more commonly known as "The Bean"), east of Michigan on Randolph. Another will happen in Oak Park at Scoville Park, at the northwest corner of Oak Park and Lake.

Join the Impact-Chicago (contact: Nik@JoinTheImpactChicago.com) is sponsoring the Millennium Park event; the Facebook page is www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=111579388358&ref=mf. The contact for the Oak Park kiss-in is Kathleen Carrillo (kattcarrillo@yahoo.com); the Facebook page is www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=115130357898.

Correction

In the Aug. 5 issue of Windy City Times, All Events Photography should have been credited for the photo in the article "LGBT attorneys talk of experiences." Windy City Times regrets the omission.

Madigan launches



Illinois State Senate candidate Jim Madigan officially kicked off his campaign to unseat incumbent Heather Steans Aug. 8 at his headquarters, 4802 N. Broadway. Talking with supporters, Madigan discussed his motivation for running: "For me, my values will guide my campaign—and my personal experiences will guide what kind of candidate I will be. My personal experience is to work hard; I have not had things handed to me. I want to do politics the way it should be done—working hard to meet people, to energize people [and] to inspire them to be involved. ... What makes this prospect exciting is that, if we can send this brilliant man [Barack Obama] to go change the nation, I know we have the opportunity to work hard and clean up our own backyard." If he prevails, Madigan would become the first openly gay individual to be part of that legislative body. Photos by Andrew Davis



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Bernard Cherkasov.

Talking with Equality Illinois' new CEO

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The LGBT-rights group Equality Illinois has gone through some major changes recently, including the installation of Bernard Cherkasov as its new chief executive officer. Cherkasov, 33, an attorney, brings expertise negotiating agreements with governmental authorities and elected officials and had served at the Supreme Court of Israel as international law clerk to Chief Justice Aharon Barak. (Among Equality Illinois' other changes are the elections of Jeremy Gottschalk as board president and Dalila Fridi as chair of the Capitol Club, the major donor group and financial backbone of Equality Illinois.)

Windy City Times met with an optimistic Cherkasov at a coffeehouse and talked about his own background and his vision for Equality Illinois.

Windy City Times: Tell me about your background.

Bernard Cherkasov: I've lived in Chicago for about six years now. I moved here as soon as I finished my law studies (at the University of Michigan) and work. It was always my intention to move to Chicago. My family is in Detroit, so I wanted them to be close but I wanted to be in a big city I found exciting and interesting. People here are so genuinely nice.

WCT: So how did you come to lead Equality Illinois?

BC: LGBT rights have always been central to my passions. When I moved to Chicago, I got involved in various parts of the LGBT movement right away; I served on the board of directors of AIDS Legal Council. It's funny because back in December my husband, Danny, asked me what my ideal job would be—and I said, "I'd love to run Equality Illinois!" Back in April, when he saw the opportunity [to lead the organization], he said, "This is for you." So I pursued the posi-

tion, even though I knew that amazing people were applying for this job but I said, "This is what I've got to be doing." When they offered me the position, I was so excited. I was already planning what my first steps would be, what my agenda would be for the organization.

WCT: What is your agenda?

BC: It already has a very broad agenda, but the first thing I intend to do is listen. Our community is far more diverse than just being focused on civil unions; we have so many causes, and it's important to listen to the priorities and concerns of every member of our community, and use that to fuel our agenda.

WCT: When you say "listen to the ... community," do you mean you're going to hold forums—or do you have something else in mind?

BC: That's a very good question. People who sign up for our e-newsletters [provide] the easiest way to communicate. In the coming weeks, we're going to have a survey out about the concerns and priorities of the community. Also, we'll have people attending various LGBT events throughout the state.

WCT: When people think of Equality Illinois, they think of Rick [Garcia, head of public policy for the organization] because he has, thankfully, been out there so much, interacting with the media, etc. Are you planning to get your name out there or will it be the [status quo]?

BC: Rick Garcia is one of our greatest resources. He has great relations with public officials, so it's important that he continues to be one of the faces of the LGBT-rights movement; he adds to our strength by speaking thoughtfully, intelligently and persuasively. I don't have to be on the cover of a magazine to get my job done. As long as we get the agenda done, I don't have to be out there. ... I wouldn't want our mission to be about me; it's about the community.

WCT: Complete this sentence: You'll know that you're successful as [the head] of Equality Illinois when...

BC: LGBT people in Illinois have civil equality. However, there are other benchmarks: when we develop a financial plan that grows from year to year, when we successfully communicate our mission, when we make progress to equality. There's more than way to measure success, but my goal is full equality for the LGBT citizens of Illinois. My eye is on the ball, and I'm not moving away from that goal.

For more information about Equality Illinois, visit www.eqil.org. Cherkasov talks about more—including an Addams Family benefit—at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



Jim Pickett.

Reaching the (health) summit

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The 2009 National LGBTI Health Summit will take place Friday-Tuesday, Aug. 14-18, at the Chicago Hilton and Towers, 720 S. Michigan, and will cover a multitude of topics, including activism, elder issues and even meditation. Windy City Times talked with one of the summit's main organizers, Jim Pickett, about the upcoming event.

Windy City Times: Tell me about the planning of this event. I assume it started after the previous summit ended [in Philadelphia, Penn. in 2007].

Jim Pickett: [Laughs] Actually, yeah. A number of Philadelphia people kind of cornered me one morning at the continental breakfast and [asked], "What do you think of Chicago hosting the summit next time?" I said, "That's a really great idea but I can't speak for Chicago," so I came back and worked to pull together a coalition. So we have key partners involved, like the health department [Chicago Department of Public Health], Howard Brown Health Center, AIDS Foundation [of Chicago], Test Positive Aware Network, Center on Halsted, etc. We wanted to make sure that they were on board and were willing to do some of the heavy lifting. Serious organizing for this summit began in earnest in November.

WCT: Let me get a few basics down. How many people have registered? Also, if you could talk about the workshops...

JP: Sure. We're expecting about 300 people. Workshops will [run] the gamut of LGBTI health, advocating for transgender inclusion in health insurance to [issues involving] medication to sexual racism to bisexual health issues. They'll be things that'll be very academic and things that are more experiential. The summit is designed for anyone who's interested in health.

The first day is specially about bi health...

WCT: Why is the first day specifically about bi health?

JP: There's a growing bisexual-health movement. Also, it's often one of the letters [from LGBTI] that gets less attention or is often misunderstood. A lot of people [attach] some sort of stigma to bisexuals: "Why are you on the fence?" Being bisexual is being bisexual; it's not necessarily that they're on the fence or playing a role. Bisexuals wanted a day that really focused on their issues. We planned it to be the kickoff to the whole summit. Of course, there'll be bisexual health content throughout the summit.

WCT: I was pleasantly surprised to see the bi summit because there are plenty of people who think you're one or the other. I personally believe that there's a whole spectrum [of sexuality].

JP: Oh, yes. If you look at the Kinsey scale, there are Kinsey 6's (gay, gay, gay) and 1's (het, het, het). I think I'm definitely a 6, but the majority of people are somewhere in between, and may be in different places in different times of their lives.

There was a great article called "Why are people afraid of bisexuals?" [at www.alternet.org/sex/141770/why_are_people_so_afraid_of_bisexuals/]. It's written by a bisexual woman, and she says, "That's what I am."

WCT: Aside from the fact that this is going to be in Chicago, how is this event different from previous summits?

JP: Well, we've had four summits; this will be the biggest city [hosting one]. We've learned ways to improve access and make it more interesting and entertaining for people. Hopefully, this summit will show that we've learned a few lessons. We had a broad-based group who helped pull this off, and I don't know if we've had that with every summit.

Also, it's a really significant year. It's been 40 years after the Stonewall rebellion, which kicked off gay pride and the gay-rights movement. Forty is an important number, spiritually; it's a very good year to reflect on where we've been, where we are and where we're going.

I think another critical part [involves] the serious debate going on about healthcare reform. It's at the top of the nation's agenda, and LGBTI people have very important roles to play in that discussion. We're loud, creative and fabulous—and we should be playing those roles.

See www.2009lgbtihealth.org to register and to find out about the summit's many workshops. Individuals can also register on site. Read the entire interview online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and find out even more about the summit.

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WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

Australians march for same-sex marriage

A National Day of Action for Same-Sex Marriage saw demonstrations Aug. 1 in the Australian cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra and Lismore.

According to the group Equal Love, 5,000 people marched in Melbourne in "the largest single show of support for marriage equality ever in Australia."

The rallies had no apparent effect on the national convention of the ruling Australian Labor Party, which voted the same day to support a national registry for same-sex partnerships but to oppose legalization of same-sex marriage.

"Although the decision of the ALP delegates was disappointing, I think politicians from all sides now understand that this is not an issue that's going to go away," said Equal Love co-convenor Tim Wright. "Today's rallies put it clearly on the national agenda. Marriage equality is rapidly spreading throughout the world and we're going to be back here year after year until we get it in Australia."

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd told local radio July 29 that marriage is "between a man and a woman."

At the same time, the Rudd government has altered around 100 laws to give same-sex de facto couples the rights and obligations of marriage in areas that include health care, taxation, pensions, parenting, public benefits, workplace benefits, workers' compensation, veterans' affairs, elder care and educational assistance.

Rudd said July 29 that his goal is to remove "all legal discriminations" against gay couples.

Polling has found that 60 percent of Australians think gay couples should be allowed to get married.

Eur. commissioner publishes report on transphobia

Council of Europe member states should do more to stop transphobia and discrimination against transgender people, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, Thomas Hammarberg, said July 29 in an "expert issue paper" released at the World Outgames 2nd International Conference on LGBT Human Rights in Copenhagen.

"The situation of transgender persons has long been ignored and neglected, although the problems they face are very real and often specific to this group alone," the report said. "They experience a high degree of discrimination and intol-

erance in all fields of life, as well as outright violence."

Among other things, the document asserts that transgender people should not have to undergo sterilization or other medical treatment before their revised gender identity is recognized.

Amsterdam mayor marries binational couples

Amsterdam Mayor Job Cohen married five binational gay couples on a boat during the gay pride canal parade Aug. 1.

The couples were purposefully composed of one Dutch citizen and one resident of New York state. Same-sex marriage is not allowed in New York, but New York recognizes same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

The weddings created the disconnect of the couples now being married in the Netherlands and in New York, where they would not have been allowed to get married, and also not being married in the eyes of the U.S. government, which holds the keys to more than 1,000 marriage rights and obligations, including spousal immigration rights.

"As a result, thousands of U.S. citizens are forced into exile in countries like the Netherlands, where their relationships with their foreign partners are recognized and where they enjoy equal rights in family law," said Martha McDevitt-Pugh of the Love Exiles Foundation.

On April 1, 2001, Cohen conducted the first same-sex marriages in the world, after the Netherlands became the first nation to allow them. Same-sex marriage has since been legalized in Belgium, Canada, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Spain and the U.S. states of Connecticut, Iowa and Massachusetts. It also has been legalized in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, but the laws have not yet come into effect.

More than half a million people turned out for Amsterdam's waterborne pride parade.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

AMA head: no IVF for single women, gay men

Dr. Andrew Pesce, the new head of the Australian Medical Association (AMA), has stated that single women and gay men should not be able to access in vitro fertilization, according to the Australian Herald-Sun.

Pesce, elected AMA federal president this past May, added that "[f]ertility treatment is there to treat diseases that cause infertility, it shouldn't be there as a lifestyle choice."

Pesce then contacted the newspaper and attempted to retract his earlier remarks, labeling them "clumsy." Gay-rights advocates, such as the Gay and Lesbian Group convenor Emily Gray, have called for Pesce to step down.

—Andrew Davis

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"THINGS HAVE BEEN CRAWLING ON TOP OF EACH OTHER and madly humping away for 850 million years. Sex came first, then humanity (200,000ish years ago), then religion came along tens of thousands of years after that. Which may explain why religion, when pitted against sex (really old) and human nature (pretty old), always loses." — *Gay, syndicated sex-advice columnist Dan Savage, July 16.*

"THE CHICO'S (TACOS) CASE (WHERE FIVE GAY MEN WERE EJECTED FROM THE RESTAURANT AFTER TWO OF THEM KISSED) may seem small in comparison with the struggles of John Lewis and Martin Luther King Jr., but public fallout evoked familiar imagery. A place of public accommodation. A dining room counter. Threats of boycott. A picket line. A subjugated class. City Rep. Steve Ortega went so far as to describe gay equality as 'the civil-rights issue of our time.' A lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union in Austin said negative reaction to the gay kiss was reminiscent of the era when signs posted in West Texas restaurants read 'No Mexicans, no dogs.'" — *The El Paso Times news section goes there, July 26.*

"I EXPECTED HAVING WATCHED THE PROTESTS AND THE REAL PAIN that the LGBT community had experienced that there would be some real measurable remorse in the electorate. But if you look at the poll numbers since November, they really haven't moved at all." — *Marc Solomon, marriage director for Equality California, to The New York Times, July 26.*

"SOMEDAY AT SOME POINT MY DISSENT (AGAINST UPHOLDING PROP 8) will be the majority view in California. I think that's where the law is headed. Equal protection is either equal or it's not. It's not the kind of thing you can chip away at." — *California Supreme Court Justice Carlos Moreno to The Recorder, July 27. Moreno was the lone vote against Prop 8.*

"FORGET THE SLICK PHARMACEUTICAL ADS THAT, SINCE THE MID-NINETIES, have conveyed the frequently erroneous message that living with AIDS or HIV is all about bicycling through the California Wine Country or climbing a mountain peak or enjoying an ocean cruise with your shirtless, buff buddies. For

some perhaps it is, but, for many of us living with any degree or stage of HIV infection, it is a medical, emotional and psychological roller coaster with downs you don't even want to imagine. ... [F]or many of us, it's still all about basic survival: Can I pay my rent? Will I have enough for groceries at the end of the month? If I tell him I'm positive, will he simply walk away?" — *Blogger Mike Tidmus (miketidmus.com), July 19.*

"I'M BASICALLY IN SUPPORT (OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE). ... I think all these states that do it should do it. ... I personally support people doing what they want to do. I think it's wrong for someone to stop someone else from doing that (getting married)." — *Former U.S. President Bill Clinton after he addressed the Campus Progress National Conference in Washington, D.C., July 8, according to a July 14 article at thenation.com.*



I'm basically in support (of same-sex marriage).

—Bill Clinton

"I THINK IT (THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH) WILL HOLD (TOGETHER). Now that we've done the, quote, unthinkable, the church won't look much different than before. Opponents of marriage equality predict the end of Western civilization as we know it if gay couples are allowed to marry. And then when it comes, there's no big whoop." — *Gay New Hampshire Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson to The New York Times, July 16. In mid-July, the church decided that open gays and lesbians—celibate or not—can be priests and bishops, granted local dioceses the option to bless same-sex marriages and civil unions, and launched a project to create official liturgies for the blessings.*

"DOES IT SOUND CAMPY to say I love gay men?" — *Meghan McCain, John's daughter, to Out.com, July 20.*

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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**MIKE
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Marriage in Iowa

Back in early April, Iowa surprised the nation when our state's Supreme Court unanimously ruled to extend civil marriage to all couples. A few weeks later, civil marriage became a reality for committed, same sex couples across Iowa. After two months of same-sex couples marrying in Iowa we're happy to report that life is going along much as it always has.

Centered in the heartland of America, many folks have wondered, "Why Iowa?" For us, there really was no wondering. As lifelong Iowans, we know our state has always led the nation in fairness and protecting individual rights and liberties. Iowa freed a slave named Ralph 26 years before the end of the Civil War. We ended segregation in our schools 85 years before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the same way. Back

in 1873, the Iowa high court ruled against racial discrimination in public accommodations 91 years before the U.S. Supreme Court reached the same conclusion. Iowa was also the first state in the nation to allow women to practice law.

In the case of recognizing loving relationships between two adults, the Iowa Supreme Court once again took a leadership position on civil rights. Perhaps the only surprise was the unanimous ruling from a diverse Iowa high court made up of both Democratic and Republican appointees. The court was unequivocal in its opinion that a state law which only allows marriage between a man and a woman has "excluded a historically disfavored class of persons from a supremely important civil institution without a constitutionally sufficient justification."

The court clearly stated their ruling has no impact on any religious institution; it simply means that a county recorder cannot deny a marriage license to a same-sex couple. No church or religious institution will be forced to conduct a marriage ceremony for a same-sex couple.

The week the unanimous court ruling came down, you may remember the popularity of Sen. Gronstal's statements in the Legislature gained through a YouTube video. In it, Gronstal stated: "I see people who simply want to profess

their love for each other and want state law to recognize that. Is that so wrong? I don't think that's so wrong." Though we never expected those statements to get heard by so many, we're thankful they were.

The more people look at this issue as simply an extension of fairness to all loving, committed couples, the more people will understand why marriage equality is just another part of Iowa's long-standing commitment to fairness.

While we do realize some Iowans have a different view, we don't think we should be in the business of writing discrimination into the Iowa Constitution. It's a document that argues for equal protection and tolerance that has withstood the test of time.

Since the ruling in Iowa just last month, three other states have already expanded civil marriage to same sex couples. While we are deeply proud of our state's history granting equal rights to all decades before other states, we're glad the rest of the country isn't taking so long to catch up this time.

Democratic State Sen. Mike Gronstal is the Iowa Senate majority leader; Democratic State Rep. Pat Murphy is the Iowa House Speaker. The photo is an official headshot of Gronstal.



LETTERS

Race time

Dear Editor:

I did not expect much when I picked up the July 22 issue of the WCT on the way home from work. Lisa Keen surprised me with your article "Race to Equality." I read with great interest. I am not sure which impressed me more—the style or the content.

Regarding the style, it gave substance to my vague ideas about how to write well. I mean that I quite liked your lead paragraph, "The shocker at the Kentucky Derby..." My first reaction was, "What the heck does the Kentucky Derby have to do with being gay in Chicago?" So I read on, expecting to hear more about the relationship between horse races and litigation. And I was not disappointed.

Regarding the substance, I think we are all tired of hearing about states giving and taking away marriage rights. You had the perspicacity to recognize a new approach when you saw one, namely suing for specific benefits at the federal level. It seems more precise or focused than simply demanding the word "marriage" and thus gaining all the rights in one fell swoop.

So thanks for your example and for the good news.

Sincerely,
Gene Naden
Chicago

Black is, Black ain't

Dear Editor:

In reply to the editorial headlined "Gay is not the new Black" (in WCT's July 29 issue): LZ Granderson made a few valid points regarding the racial divisions within the queer communities. However, there are things I don't agree with. I feel that criticism concerning President Barack Obama's lack of action and backpedaling pertaining to the queer community not only has merit but is strongly legitimate. I think Obama will treat queer social issues similarly to the way President John Kennedy handled the African-American civil rights matters in the early 1960s: with caution, avoidance and expediency. I just think the White House reception for some mainstream LGBT figures is more window-dressing, similar to the days when Kennedy met with civil-

rights activists in the '60s, with little substance or action.

Granderson fails to realize that a great number of queers who fought the police at Stonewall were people of color and the working class, contrary to revisionist history of the event. There are African Americans, both straight and queer, who feel Obama has compromised the African-American civil-rights agenda. Contrary to Granderson's belief, the African-American population is not monolithic. He also fails to take the matter of class into consideration when addressing the African-American community, as there are divisions within it based on class, just as in other communities. Some African Americans feel Obama has short-changed the community in such matters as police brutality, the ongoing war in Iraq and education, to name a few examples.

I agree, unfortunately, that African Americans became the scapegoat around the Proposition 8 vote in California, which continued to promote the myth that African-American heterosexuals are more bigoted toward queers than white society is. Unfortunately, some African Americans internalize this myth, and it feeds white racism among white LGBT leadership. I agree that relationships between white queers and queers of color need to be built in order to respect differences in culture and in consciousness. I think it's necessary to hold Obama accountable for the aforementioned issues, even though personally I don't expect much from him and our liberation will not come from him, nor any public official, but from us.

Darrell Gordon
Chicago

To Venezuela

Dear friends:

As a co-founder of the Gay Liberation Network (GLN) in Chicago, I wish to express my warm thanks to Venezuelan Chicago Consul General Jesus Rodriguez Espinoza and his consular staff for participating in GLN's contingent in our city's recent Gay Pride Parade before over 450,000 people. In doing so, they made many friends for the Venezuelan people.

While the modern movement for LGBT freedom began in the United States decades ago, this fact has yet to see even a single reflection in

nationwide LGBT-rights legislation in the United States.

I am therefore especially gratified to learn that Venezuela's proposed "Organic Law for Gender Equity and Equality," which establishes legal cohabitation rights for same-sex couples, is about to go to a second reading in its national assembly. I am hopeful that this law passes with the broadest possible measures for LGBT equality and, in so doing, affirms the courageous Chicago Consul's participation in Chicago's Gay Pride Parade.

Again, I enthusiastically thank your Chicago representatives. They are a credit to your country and deserve the fullest support by believers in human equality everywhere.

Yours sincerely,
Andy Thayer
Chicago

Opera's on

Dear Editor:

You are so far off the beat and track [in "Patti Lupone's Weill ride" in WCT's Aug. 5, 2009, issue] that it isn't even funny—poking fun at the only supervisor who had sense. If this were just a little "opera" festival as you so think it is, then L.A. Opera should have total jurisdiction over it. But this festival is *not* a little L.A. Opera festival. It is the largest "arts" festival L.A. has had since the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival. The politicians got involved from the get-go. Los Angeles County Supervisors Zev Yaroslavsky and Gloria Molina's names were featured prominently at the opening press announcement. Los Angeles County owns the Music Center. This is a "cultural" festival, not an opera festival, and it involves the entire city and county. And as for the token seminars on Wagner's anti-Semitism, there was only one until people protested.

And as for "Recovered Voices," that is a wonderful program, but it has absolutely nothing to do with this Wagner festival. One cannot balance out the other. It just doesn't work that way. We do not honor racists in America. It is just that simple.

Carie Delmar
Opera critic, www.OperaOnline.us
Los Angeles, Calif.

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GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo courtesy of Christopher Sanew

'FAMILY' TIES

Director Faith Trimmel returns Friday with the movie *Family*. See film notes on page 15.

EVENTS

Whatever Lolla wants...
Page 16.

Photo by Matthew Taplinger



MUSIC

Summer time.
Page 16.



SPORTS

Let the
Games begin.
Page 22.

Photo by Mel Ferrand



Dancin' Feats

BY ZACHARY WHITTENBURG

This is the slowest month Chicago dance will have all year, and it isn't all that slow. The Bill T. Jones/Duncan Sheik Broadway project **Spring Awakening** enters its last weekend of a short run at the Ford Oriental, 24 W. Randolph. Reviews have been mixed but suggestions that Jones' work is a spiritual inheritor of Golden Age choreography by the likes of Jerome Robbins and Agnes de Mille should be enough to pack the house with procrastinators like myself. See www.broadwayinchicago.com.

Nineteenth-century story ballet **Coppélia** is a breezy three-act comedy with a great Delibes score and no shortage of the hijinks and implausibility typical to the form; its particular flavor of imagination-stretching plot points generally revolve around believing a plucky young woman could convincingly approximate a robot using only mid-Industrial Revolution technology. Still, it can be a blast and, under the wings of Hanover Park's Faubourg School of Ballet, 40 dancers will bring the doll to life for two special performances dedicated to autism awareness. Visit www.autismillinois.com/happenings.

Next Tuesday, the **Chicago Dancing Festival** drops for nearly a week of wall-to-wall dance performances downtown. Two Harris shows and a discussion/demonstration at the Museum of Contemporary Art filled up in a flash in June but Saturday, Aug. 22, remains full of free fun for those that stop by. At half-past noon in Wrigley Square, 3 p.m. at "The Bean" and 5 p.m. on the Pritzker's lawn, DanceWorks Chicago will appear around Millennium Park in Twyla Tharp's *The One Hundreds*. The 1970 audience-involvement piece, "appropriate for all ages and ability levels," is a package of 100 11-count mini-dances simple and easy to learn that strip context away from pedestrianism to create an anti-formance statement as mysterious as it is wholesome. DanceWorks has a sizeable chunk of the series selected and its dancers will welcome the public.



Houston Ballet's Emily Bowen. Photo by Amitava Sarkar

At 7:30 p.m., the Pritzker stage will host the festival's closing event, a behemoth free show rewarding packing an early dinner and staking out a spot. Chicago Human Rhythm Project featuring Step Afrika! will open with a stompy bang, likely supplying a copious amounts of syn-copated energy and good vibes. Houston Ballet, which hasn't been here since who-knows-when, will massacre a few pairs of pointe shoes for William Forsythe's *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company will dance the piece *Ulysses Dove* made for it in 1986, *Vespers*. Lubovitch's company will preview Coltrane's *Favorite Things*, Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell from Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs Ailey's solo-as-religious-experience *Cry*, and Hee Seo and Cory Stearns from ABT will dance *Le Corsaire*. Interestingly, the program also includes Les Ballets Grandiva, who will presumably projectile-radiate patriotism en travesti in Marcus Galante's *Star Spangled Ballerina*. Get details on both, and excited, at www.chicago-dancingfestival.com.

Unrelated to but concurrent with these will be

Argentina Tango Onstage, going on underneath the Pritzker at the Harris. Two performances, at 4 and 8 p.m., feature an array of tango artists including Alberto Podestá, whose stardom in the field began six decades ago. The larger festival, hosted by the Palmer House, the Cultural Center and Merle-Reskin, has more details on its Web site at www.chicagotangofest.com.

One of the constantly booked Pritzker's summer series is **On Stage at Noon**, providing some culture for your alfresco lunch. Katha (Legends), choreographed by Natya Dance Theatre founder Hema Rajagopalan, will surely introduce the company and Bharatanatyam, the traditional form on which Rajagopalan's contemporary work is based, to new audiences when it takes its turn Wed.-Thursday, Aug. 19-20. Culled from the more modern end of Indian culture but also incorporating Bharatanatyam, *Masala Bollywood* is Kalapriya Dance Company's new stage-and-cinema work showing two nights only (Friday-Saturday, Aug. 21-22, at 7:30 p.m.) at Noble Square's Vit-tum Theater. See www.natya.com and www.kalapriya.org.

If you've attended a dance performance at Links Hall, the Galaxie, the Athenaeum, Hamlin Park or Ruth Page (not to mention a healthy assortment of Northside playhouses), you've seen the lighting design of Josh Weckesser. This go-to chameleon—the variety among his designs consistently surprises—also sporadically produces a **Josh Weckesser Dance Spectacular**. This time it's an interpretation of Peter Gabriel's sardonic 1986 hit about movin' on up, "Big Time," promising a tall man in a tweed jacket but no psychedelic stop-motion clay avatars. It's at The Building Stage Friday-Saturday, Aug. 21-22, at 8 p.m. "So much larger than life" and such a reasonable \$11—get tickets at www.ticketweb.com.

The next full evening of work by Dim Sum Dance, including new and old pieces by founder/director Julie Mayo and guest dancemaker Tiffany Rhynard, **Fever Drift** is in four parts and will be a must-see for fans of modern dance. I've sung Mayo's praises before but it's because she's on such a different plane from what anyone else is working on at the moment; if a pinball machine were held perfectly horizontal, its chrome ball would move around much the same as Dim Sum's dancers, slowly and unpredictably, and periodically being shot through space by flashing traps with odd sounds. The performance is at Hamlin Park Thursday-Friday, Aug. 27-28, at 7:30 p.m.; absorb further information at www.dimsundance.org.

Closing out the month is annual benefit **Dance for Life**, which, if you've somehow never heard of it, is a terrific gala performance at the Harris that benefits five—count 'em—charities supporting those living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. The dancing is peerless and the occasion, while solemn, is usually presented with good humor, heaps of great spirit and premiere choreography (this year by Harrison McEldowney and Randy Duncan). Paying \$75 buys you 12 months of good karma and a ticket to the 7:30 p.m. show; double that or more adds cocktails at a pre-performance soiree and other perks. Details are at www.danceforlifechicago.com.

THEATER REVIEWS

Studs Terkel's Not Working

Playwright: Christina Anthony, Amanda Blake Davis, Tom Flanigan, Beth Melewski, Timothy Edward Mason, Andy St. Clair

At: Second City e.t.c., 1608 N. Wells
Phone: 312-337-3992; \$20-\$25
Runs through: Open run

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

"I know it's a stereotype you've heard a thousand times," shares a taciturn, salt-of-the-earth American Gothic type midway through Second City e.t.c.'s new revue, Studs Terkel's Not Working. "But them California lesbians can start fires with their eyes."

No doubt the bit loses a lot in translation—sketch comedy is not funny when the sketch is sitting flat on a sheet of paper (or confined to a computer screen.) But believe us when we say that the epic tale of California gays thundering over purple mountain's fruited planes to get to Iowa to get married is an inspired bit of business.

Of course, some jokes all but write themselves

("California said 'No.' Iowa said 'Yes.'" Long, incredulous pause. "Iowa U.S.A.") but few can deliver them with the bullseye accuracy of e.t.c. As the Iowa-California role reversal indicates, these are strange days indeed. Thankfully, Second City is here to put them in perspective: Kim Jong-Il is like the TV show *The Hills*. Taiwan is to China as Alec Baldwin is. *Funnyuns*. The *non-sequituriest* of *non-sequiturs* work thanks to e.t.c.'s author/performers—Christina Anthony, Amanda Blake Davis, Tom Flanigan, Beth Melewski, Andy St. Clair and Cayne Collier (filling in for Tim Mason the night we attended).

In all, *Not Working* shows Second City sallying forth in its 50th year as a comedic superpower. Directed by Matt Hovde, *Not Working* is polished, hilarious and alternately mensa-level smart and 10-year-old-boy stupid—both extremes being equally amusing. If Daley II is emperor-in-chief, Second City is the invaluable court jester who can criticize with the venom of a scorpion and get away with it simply because: a) in the end, there's no arguing with truth and b) the wit is so infectious you can't help but laugh even when the joke is oh so very clearly on you.

In under two hours, the cast skewers multicultural adoptions, female date-rapists, Eleanor Roosevelt (who, BTW, could start fires with her eyes), unemployed Andersonville gays and an



Studs Terkel's Not Working. Photo by Bob Knuth

entire busload of miscreant tourists including but not limited to drunken-unto-puking bachelorettes, tongue-lolling paraplegics with mechanical larynxes, staggeringly stupid Germans and one truly moronic African-American woman with a distractingly lazy eye. All of it is profane. All of it is hilarious.

The improv portion of the evening is similarly fine, as one lucky audience member is pulled into an elaborate potboiler noir about a detec-

tive, a dame and (the night we were there) a stolen eggplant. A daisy-chain sketch explaining the recession—wherein one person's small economies mushroom into the cause for global economic meltdown—offers a primer in lighting comedic reflexes.

The production captures the zeitgeist of a city that's edgy from economic woes but instilled with the kind of unshakable optimism that defines baseball season. And at \$20-\$25 a ticket, *Not Working* is one of the most recession-friendly shows in town.

history in the heartland

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One Iowa Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to supporting full equality for LGBT individuals living in Iowa through grassroots efforts and education. Contributions to One Iowa Education Fund are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Bailiwick makes changes

Bailiwick Repertory Theatre has made changes to its 2009 Pride Series at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre at the Center on Halsted. The gay marriage comedy *Two Spoons* has been cancelled and replaced with the musical comedy *Bombs Away!*, which previously played in June and July at Mary's Attic above Hamburger Mary's.

"We just weren't getting the audiences we hoped for," said Bailiwick artistic director David Zak. "[We] hope to regain some of the momentum we had for *Bombs Away!* when it was at Hamburger Mary's."

Bombs Away! plays in repertory with *The Cousins Grimm* at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, through Aug. 23. Call 773-883-1090 or visit www.bailiwick.org.

CRITICS' PICS

Waiting for Godot, Redtwist Theatre, through Aug. 23. Samuel Beckett's legendary clown play receives a clear reading from director Jimmy McDermott and a strong cast who find the balance between Beckett's humor and despair in intimate surroundings. JA

The Ruby Sunrise, Gift Theatre, through Aug. 30. Why the Jeff committee snubbed this populist romance about the dawn of television is a mystery—especially since it stars Brenda Barrie and John Patrick Thornton as the most charismatic pair of lovers currently appearing in Chicago. MSB

Sodomites!!! A Musical of Biblical Proportions, Annoyance Theatre, extended through Sept. 11. A charmingly sacrilegious show that sharply (and hilariously) questions why an arcane and bizarre Biblical story holds so much sway in justifying discrimination against the LGBTQ community. SCM

Susan Werner: Classics, Auditorium Theatre, Aug. 13. The acoustically perfect Auditorium stage becomes a cabaret, with audience members clustered around cocktail tables while Werner performs cuts from her latest album. These including pop classics by: Paul Simon, Marvin Gaye, Paul McCartney and the ever-luminous America. CS

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge,
Morgan and Sullivan



Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Photo by Bob Knuth

THEATER REVIEW

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Playwright: Tennessee Williams

At: Circle Theatre, 7300 W.

Madison, Forest Park

Tickets: 708-771-0700;

www.circle-theatre.org

Runs through: Oct. 4

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

An avaricious woman rapes her drunken husband in order to become pregnant, thereby ingratiating herself to her dying father-in-law and securing a hefty inheritance. *Cat* most definitely is about Maggie—voluptuous wife of sodden but sexy Brick—and her maneuvers in a property struggle with her in-laws. The sub-conflict between Brick and his father, Big Daddy, merely is a distraction. It's theme of repressed homosexuality is central to Tennessee Williams's writing, but it's purpose is to reveal how far Maggie will go to make Brick and the family fortune hers. She outs Brick's best bud and helps drive him to suicide. Is Brick himself gay? In director Jim Schneider's reading the answer is no. Does he loathe himself and Maggie for complicity in his friend's death? Definitely yes.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof is a great actors' play and remains powerful, but it has weaknesses. It's far too long, filled with unnecessary minor characters and repetitive dialogue and actions. How many times must the children—"no-neck monsters"—interrupt things? They are properly comical in this production, but surely two or three times would be enough. How often must we hear "spastic colon?" Editing was not Tennessee's strong suit.

For all its faults, however, *Cat* is a pungent stew of comedy, vulgarity and frank sexuality that must have shocked when new in 1955. Williams softened his original ending for Broadway while Hollywood all but eviscerated it. Brick and Big Daddy condemn "mendacity," yet the play's denouement depends on Maggie's lie which they both let stand; the final irony in Williams's poetic but unsubtle drama.

Circle Theatre calls its staging "a voyeuristic production" that "highlights the original intentions of the playwright." Voyeurism seems to mean a set with see-through walls and a tremendously claustrophobic feeling in a house where no secrets can be kept, while original intentions seems to mean adding "fuck," "sissy" and "queer" to the play's vocabulary. Schneider and scenic designer Bob Knuth also place all three acts in Maggie and Brick's bedroom, which isn't as written.

None of this adds anything but neither does it detract as Schneider *has* found the comedy,

vulgarity and sexuality of the piece through lively pace and cartoon-like exaggeration. With Deanna Norman (an engaging Big Momma) and K. D. O'Hair (calculating Mae, mother of the no-necks) padded front-and-back, the shapely and self-aware Maggie of Kimberly Logan is the only woman who appears real. Ditto Brick among the men, since Big Daddy (somewhat too affable Jim Farrell) is a parody figure from the get-go. Dark Michael Borgmann's Brick chiefly is stoical. He shows Brick's sullen coldness and occasional physical explosiveness but doesn't quite capture all the subtext. Still, there's more than enough heat to make this *Cat* dance.

THEATER REVIEW

Savage/Love

Playwright: Sam Shepard & Joseph Chaikin

At: Two Lights Theatre Company

at the Viaduct, 3111 N. Western

Phone: 773-296-6024; \$10

Runs through: Aug. 16

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Savage/Love is precisely the kind of play that appeals to students and recently-graduated students. For one thing, it's all about sex. Oh, the authors—late 20th-century icons Sam Shepard and Joseph Chaikin—claim that it's about romantic love but that concept, by its very nature, invites PG-13 erotic expression of the sort that fledgling actors relish. For another, it has no linear plot, but is instead a series of free-verse soliloquies with titles based solely on subject, so that characters—"Virgin," "Escort," "Drag Queen," etc.—can be freely assigned to the various speaking voices, of which there are enough to guarantee every company member a solo moment in the spotlight. Finally, the open-form structure of the script permits each performer to embellish the text according to their individual interpretation.

Upon entering the auditorium, we see, on one side of the stage, a vaguely western-styled tavern with tables, stools and a staircase that will later facilitate personnel climbing onto the roof (often while wearing high heels). The other side is dominated by a pair of floor-to-ceiling white shutters concealing a large, rolling bed, when not serving as a projection screen. The dramatic action occurs in and around the locales suggested thereby: a young man and woman contemplate the significance of their meeting, a miniskirted coquette parades atop the bar, a transvestite seduces a nervous youth ("Which presentation of myself would make you cross the border?"), a wife laments the absence of her unfaithful spouse—and a lone woman, identified in this production as "Aphrodite," circulates among these and other would-be lovers, dispensing advice, comfort and a *cappella* serenades.

The language is lush and lyrical, as befits its theme ("I want to strangle your dreams inside me/I want to know I'll die before we aren't lovers anymore"), but lest it reduces what purports to be a theatrical event to a round-robin Poetry Slam, the relentlessly verbal content is alleviated by such visual and aural elements as a score of classic pop tunes, a wardrobe of likewise vintage garb, quasi-psychedelic videos and orchestrated-movement exercises. For all the imagination and energy reflected in the efforts of the Two Lights ensemble for the show's ninety minutes' duration, however, the results at this time cannot help but emerge a schoolroom project more to be enjoyed by the participants (and their immediate adherents) than by spectators.

Kushner receives Tribune award

Openly gay playwright Tony Kushner—best known for *Angels in America*—has been named the recipient of the 2009 Chicago Tribune Literary Prize for lifetime achievement.

Kushner will receive the award Sunday, Nov. 8, at 10 a.m. at the Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan. (The event will be part of the Chicago Humanities Festival.) Tickets are \$15 each, and go on sale Sept. 8 for festival members and Sept. 21 to the general public. See www.chfestival.org or call 312-494-9509.

SPOTLIGHT



The late gay composer Cole Porter is still esteemed as one of the most elegant and sophisticated lyricists of American pop music in the 20th century. Hear Porter get his due in the Ravinia Festival concert **Night & Day: A Cole Porter Evening**. Twisting their tongues around Porter's lyrics are Tony Award winners David Hyde Pierce (TV's *Frasier*; *Curtains*) and Victoria Clark (*The Light in the Piazza*, *Titanic*). Rob Fisher, former music director of New York City Center Encores!, is the accompanist. **Night & Day: A Cole Porter Evening** is 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 16, at the Ravinia Festival, 418 Sheridan, Highland Park. Tickets are \$35-\$75 (\$20 for lawn seating). Call 847-266-5100 or visit www.ravinia.org. Photo of Pierce courtesy of Ravinia Festival

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Spring Awakening. Photo by Paul Kolnik

THEATER REVIEW

Spring Awakening

Playwright: Steven Sater;
Composer: Duncan Sheik;
after Frank Wedekind

At: Ford Center for the Performing Arts,
Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph
Phone: 800-775-2000; \$25-\$95
Runs through: Aug. 16

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There's a danger that comes when critics lavish and effusive praise on a new musical. By the time you see it, the show doesn't live up to the hype.

That's how some people might feel about the critically acclaimed eight-time Tony Award-winning musical Spring Awakening.

For Spring Awakening to be truly effective, it should have played in a smaller Chicago venue (an extended run at the Drury Lane Theatre Wa-

ter Tower Place would have been ideal). In the cavernous Ford Center for the Performing Arts Oriental Theatre, the intimate power of Spring Awakening gets dissipated.

That's a pity, since the creative team of Spring Awakening have hit upon an interesting concept to musicalizing Frank Wedekind's oft-banned 1891 play about German youths discovering their budding sexuality. Although dressed in turn-of-the-19th-century clothes, the teenagers express their emotions by singing modern-day rock songs.

It's composer Duncan Sheik and librettist Steven Sater's way of showing that teenage angst from back then is probably not that different from teenage angst of today. So we get school-boys singing "The Bitch of Living" about their unfulfilled sexual cravings (to Bill T. Jones' oddly spastic and angular choreography), while teenage girls express their cute-guy crushes in "My Junk."

Director Michael Mayer extends this concept further into the staging, which features audience members seated on the stage. Strategically placed cast members in modern clothing often arise from that crowd to offer vocal support to remind you that teenagers today still don't get much help from adults when it comes to dealing with topics like abuse, suicide or birth control.

Mayer's use of the same two actors to portray all the male and female authority figures is not only economical (very effective turns by Henry Stram and Angela Reed), but it also shows how unfeeling adults can all appear to be alike to struggling teens.

Though many of the characters are sketchily drawn, actors like Blake Bashoff as the hyper-stressed Moritz, Jake Epstein as the intellectual Melchoir, Christy Altomare as the curious Wendla and Matt Shingledecker as the self-absorbed Georg all find memorable ways to flesh out their roles.

The rest of the cast is also proficient, as is the

deceptively simple production design (featuring great saturated color by lighting designer Kevin Adams) and the rocking onstage band led by music director Jared Stein.

If you buy into all of Spring Awakening's staging and writing concepts, you'll love it as a piece of youthful and daring theater. If not, the show will feel heavy-handed and pretentious.

I find myself somewhere in the middle on Spring Awakening. I admire a lot of its energy, but I could do without all of its self-important attitude.

THEATER REVIEW

The Wonder:
A Woman Keeps
Her Secret

Playwright: Susanna Centlivre

At: Point of Contention Productions
at the Heartland Studio, 7016 N. Glenwood
Phone: 312-326-3631; \$15

Runs through: Aug. 26

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Susanna Centlivre was a restoration-era playwright who took advantage of the newly-lifted restrictions on women in show business—they even appeared onstage!—to write a series of extremely successful comedies featuring feisty (often cross-dressing) chicks like herself. Better known nowadays in scholarly circles for *The Gamester*, her 1714 romantic farce entitled *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps A Secret* nevertheless provides the perfect vehicle for summer viewing.

Indeed, the sultry Aug. climate puts us in just the mood for this tale of intrigue set, in this Point of Contention adaptation, amid the expatriate European gentry during the carnival

season in Rio de Janeiro circa 1810, where the beautiful Isabella flees her father's home rather than marry the rich suitor chosen for her, taking refuge with her BFF Violante, whose dad wants her to join a convent. Stir into this crisis a pair of hunky Señor Rights—Isabella's brother, the obsessively jealous Felix, and the horn-dogging English soldier, Britton—along with assorted mischievous servants, and what you get is, well, the usual deck of cards waiting to be shuffled in ingenious, if not wholly original, ways.

For despite centuries of real-life social advancement, certain plots and the values they reflect have proven to be timeless. Bachelors are still assumed to balk at the prospect of monogamy, however attractive the terms of surrender, while maidens continue to regard matrimony as the key to spiritual, not merely economical, happiness. And though, as the homily says, "love is sweeter with bread," the promptings of the heart still trump material comfort as the proper foundation for a good marriage. (Lest our modern sensibilities render us skeptical, Centlivre has both patriarchs concerned more for their own superfluous profit than for the welfare of their offspring.)

The vocal energy and athletic stamina of a cast dominated by alumni of the Rascal Children's Theatre corps lends itself to a fast-paced romp under the direction of Margo Gray. The uncredited scenic design—imposed on that of the other production sharing its quarters—guarantees the numerous doors mandatory to this genre, while Brandon Baisden's sound design is a delightful blend of traditional and contemporary ethnic musical styles. For all its symmetric satisfaction, however, the script leaves a narrative thread curiously unresolved. Is it an oversight on Centlivre's part that best-buddy Frederick is forced to give up the girl he loves? Or does his sacrifice herald a sequel to the adventures of Isabella and Violante? Stay tuned.

CULTURE CLUB

EDWARD ALBEE'S
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Illustration: "The Three of Them" by www.davidchessney.co.uk



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MOVIES

Hannah Free to
debut in Chicago
Sept. 25-Oct. 1

Star Sharon Gless to
attend gala Sept. 26

CHICAGO—Sharon Gless, (*Queer as Folk*, *Burn Notice*, *Cagney & Lacey*) stars in the passionate lesbian drama *Hannah Free*, a new film about a lifelong love affair between an independent spirit and the woman she calls home. The film will have a one-week limited engagement in Chicago Sept. 25-Oct. 1 at the Gene Siskel Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 164 N. State.

The independent film, shot entirely in the Chicago area last November, also stars Taylor Miller (*All My Children*), Maureen Gallagher, Ann Hagemann, Kelli Strickland and Jacqui Jackson. *Hannah Free* is directed by Wendy Jo Carlton and written by Claudia Allen (based on her acclaimed stage play).

Hannah Free had its world premiere in San Francisco in June, and has been playing to mostly sold-out audiences since that time. It received the Audience Award for Best Feature at the Philadelphia QFest in July. It is already booked around the world, including in Ireland, France, Germany and Norway, with dozens of major festival dates being set monthly.

The film will have 14 screenings at the Gene Siskel Film Center. One special screening, Saturday, Sept. 26, at 7 p.m. will feature a Q&A with Sharon Gless and other key cast and crew, as well as a gala benefit following the screening. Those tickets will be sold separately through Ripe Fruit Films, producers of *Hannah Free*. All other tickets are available from the theater.

Executive Producers of *Hannah Free* are

Tracy Baim, Claudia Allen and Sharon Zurek (also the film's editor, from Black Cat Films). The producers are Sharon Gless, Martie Marro (also the film's music composer) and Wendy Jo Carlton. Director of photography was Gretchen Warthen.

Tickets are on sale, and are \$10/general admission. Other ticket prices are \$7/student and \$5/Film Center members. All tickets (except for Sept. 26, 7 p.m. show) may be purchased at the Film Center Box Office, 164 N. State. Both general admission and Film Center member tickets are available through Ticketmaster, 800-982-2787, www.ticketmaster.com, and all Ticketmaster outlets. The Film Center and its Box Office are open 5-9 p.m., Monday-Friday; 2-9 p.m., Saturday; and 2-6 p.m., Sunday. For more information about the Film Center, call 312-846-2800 (24-hour movie hotline) or 312-846-2600 (general information, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday), or visit www.siskelfilmcenter.org.

Discounted parking is available for \$14 for nine hours at the InterPark SELF-PARK at 20 E. Randolph. A rebate ticket can be obtained from the Film Center Box Office.

Sept. 26 gala info: Sharon Gless and the cast of *Hannah Free*, along with director Wendy Jo Carlton, writer Claudia Allen and the producers and crew, will attend a special benefit screening and gala Saturday, Sept. 26, 7 p.m. at the Gene Siskel Film Center. After the screening, there will be a Q&A at the Film Center. Then, guests will walk one block north to the Renaissance Chicago Hotel, One West Wacker, for a gala featuring hors d'oeuvres and wine, beer and soda, all part of the \$100 ticket price for the evening. Mix and mingle with the stars of *Hannah Free*, and benefit the production of a feature film made in Chicago. For more information, call 773-387-2394, e-mail info@hannahfree.com, see www.hannahfree.com, www.twitter.com/hannahfree or see the *Hannah Free* fan page on Facebook.

KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

Bandslam; film notes

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Even with the addition of two (count 'em) Disney Channel starlets (Alyson Michalka and Vanessa Hudgens), **Bandslam**—from out writer-director Todd Graff—isn't really High School Music 4: The Guitar Hero Edition. The film is too scruffy and respectful of the messy musical roots of punk and glam rock to be fall neatly into Disney territory. But it's not exactly Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist (a superb teenage film) or Camp (Graff's own delightful look at musical theatre camp) either. Neither rock nor roll, Bandslam falls neatly in between.

The familiar story centers on Will Burton (welcome newcomer Gaelan Connell), a put-upon teenage loner with a cleft chin, a mass of curly hair and a permanent pout. But Will is a loner by choice who lives and dies for music, hilariously judges others by their taste in the same and vents his frustrations with the musical illiterates around him in a series of letters to his idol, David Bowie (who has a fun cameo). Will acridly describes high school to his single mother (the sadly underused Lisa Kudrow) as "Novocaine for the soul" but perks up a bit when she announces a move from Cincinnati to Lodi, N.J., and the promise of a fresh start.

At first, things seem to be the same but then Will falls under the speechless spell of Charlotte (Michalka), one of those impossibly stunning blonde popular girls who plays guitar. This one fronts a band of musical misfits (which, surprisingly, doesn't feature a gay kid) and Charlotte & Co. intend to go head to head with a band headed by her ex-boyfriend Ben (heartthrob Scott Porter) in the hotly competitive statewide battle of the bands contest called Bandslam. She and Will bond over an old Velvet Underground tune (who wouldn't fall for the ethereal vocal stylings of Nico?) and she recruits him to shape up the band. At the same time, Will is working on a class project with the dark-haired, gorgeous but acerbic Sa5m ("the 5 is silent") played by Hudgens. The character of Sam (I'm dispensing with the "5"—sorry kids) is basically the same shy but lovable kook played by Ally Sheedy from The Breakfast Club (which, in light of the recent, sudden death of '80s teen-movie director John Hughes, is a rather bittersweet, serendipitous tribute to him). Sam and Will are meant to be together but it will take a lot of teenage angst—and a slam-bang rockin' finish—for him to realize that.

Graff (working from an original script by Josh A. Cagan) has a keen ear for dialogue (to be expected from a man who has written everything from the blissful Used People to The Vanishing) and the teenspeak sounds about right and certainly helps overcome the less-than-fresh situations. (The wonderful scene in which Will and Sam make a pilgrimage to the now shuttered legendary punk club CBGB's is an exception.) And not only does the movie get close to the inherent melodrama of the teen years, the last half with its myriad of plot reversals seems to have been envisioned by a teenager caught up

in the primal drama of the high school years.

That's a backhanded compliment at best as the picture, familiar but energetic up to that point, doesn't know when to unplug the amplifiers. One other problem dissipated the movie's goodwill for me: Though the two leading ladies both have competent voices, neither has the Janis Joplin-Grace Slick-Stevie Nicks vocal chops the genre calls for. Hudgens, especially, could have used a lot more in the vocal area when called upon to put across the obligatory Star Is Born moment (and the song chosen is a dud, too). Gorgeous and competent the ladies are (and Michalka plays a mean guitar), but both come closer to Nancy rather than Ann Wilson in the vocal department. There's nothing here as enthralling as the truly exultant "The Want of a Nail" that the musical theatre kids belted out at the conclusion of Camp and, given Graff's sophisticated musical sensibilities, that's a disappointment.

Although Bandslam wears out its welcome as it teeters rather than rocks toward the finish line, there is something inherently enticing in the old "let's put on a show" formula it utilizes—even one that rocks at 125 decibels.

Film notes:

—Faith Trimel, the director of Black Aura On An Angel, returns with a new dramedy titled **Family**. The film focuses on six lesbian friends (a doctor, hair-salon owner, personal trainer, etc.) living "on the down low" in image-conscious L.A. as each slowly comes out of the closet. The movie will be shown as part of the Gene Siskel Film Center's 15th annual Black Harvest International Festival of Film and Video on Friday, Aug. 14, at 8:15 p.m. and on Wed., Aug., 19 at 8:15pm. Trimel, a Chicago native, will be present at the Friday, Aug. 14, screening for a Q&A with audience members and will also partake in a panel titled "How to Get a Movie Made" on Saturday, Aug. 15 at 5 p.m. See www.siskelfilmcenter.org.

—DVDs of interest: I've been re-watching all of **Mad Men: Season 2** (Sony) in preparation for the show's long awaited return Sunday, Aug. 16. The four-disc set includes a cool batch of featurettes focusing on the fashions, history and cultural mores of the 1960s time period of the show. As much as I'm enjoying the second season of HBO's **True Blood**, it has yet to match the high hunk content rate of the first season, which is out in a nice five-disc set complete with mockumentaries created for the show about the controversial "fangbangers," aka vampires. And though **A Haunting in Connecticut** (Lionsgate), which stars Winnetka native Virginia Madsen, didn't exactly scare up big numbers at the box office, it's still an enjoyable haunted-house thriller, and the unedited DVD version will make goremongers a tad happier. Finally, the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, as seen through the eyes of survivor and amateur filmmaker Kimberly Rivers Roberts and her husband Scott (and captured by them on video as it was happening), is tremendously moving. Kimberly's footage is incorporated into Carl Deal and Tia Lessin's Oscar-nominated documentary **Trouble the Water**, now out from Zeitgeist.

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitytimes.com or www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site.



A Haunting in Connecticut.



Annie Leibovitz. Photo by Mel Ferrand

Entertainment news

Photographer Annie Leibovitz has been hit with a lawsuit alleging she reneged on a \$24-million loan agreement, IMDB.com reported. After receiving the loan, Leibovitz was reportedly expected to sell her art collection and homes in Greenwich Village and Rhinebeck, N.Y., as part of the deal. The company's attorneys claim she "will not cooperate" and has ignored bills totalling hundreds of thousands of dollars; Leibovitz called the claims baseless.

The New York City Gay Men's Chorus may fold as the economy threatens the organization's 30th anniversary, according to Advocate.com. Rick Clodfelter, chairman of the Board of Big Apple Performing Arts, said in a statement that "[d]ecreasing donations, limited resources, and the rising costs of production make it more difficult than ever for a community arts organization to survive." The chorus was the first gay singing group to perform in Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center, and the first to record with a major label.

Former American Idol judge Paula Abdul is reportedly seriously considering a role on the reality-TV show **So You Think You Can Dance**, because choreography is her first love, according to IMDB.com. The show's lead judge, Nigel Lythgoe, recently said that the show would take her "without question."

Actor T.R. Knight said he left **Grey's Anatomy** because of a "breakdown in communication" with show creator Shonda Rhimes, according to TVGuide.com. Knight also claimed that Rhimes tried to stop him from coming out soon after former co-star Isaiah Washington used an anti-gay slur. However, Rhimes responded, "I said [to T.R.], 'If you want to come out, that's awesome.'" Knight said it might seem crazy to leave a hit show and \$14-million contract, "[b]ut in the end, I need to be fulfilled in my work—that's more important than the money."

Movie director Hughes dies

John Hughes—best known for directing such '80s films as **Sixteen Candles** and **The Breakfast Club** and **Ferrid Bueller's Day Off**—died of a heart attack in Manhattan while taking a morning walk, according to CNN.com. He was 59.

Hughes' '80s films "depicted teen angst on the North Shore," according to the Chicago Tribune.

A statement from Hughes' publicist said, in part, "His films helped launch countless careers and revealed to a global audience the humor, sensitivity and nuances of everyday people in the suburbs of Chicago."

Hughes is survived by his wife of 39 years, Nancy; two sons and four grandchildren.

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A sweaty pilgrimage: Lollapalooza 2009

BY KHYENTSE JAMES & ALLISON EIR JENKS

Despite the tipsy economy, more than 225,000 fervent fans rocked out in Chicago's Grant Park through the rain and scorching heat this past weekend. Lollapaloozians hit seven sold-out stages in ponchos and rain boots, wrestling in puddles of mud and pouring beer over their heads to cool off. In addition to balloons, glow sticks and fluorescent wigs, a naked man darted through the crowd chasing women and security guards zoomed by on go carts heckling obscenities at a crowd of teens who snuck in over the fence.

Lollapalooza had more than 130 acts with headliners such as Tool, Ben Harper, Depeche Mode, Kings of Leon and The Killers. There was even a Kidzapalooza where kids took dance lessons, played instruments, got punk-rock haircuts while listening to LeAnn Rimes perform covers of songs like The Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun."

One of the more bizarre events of the weekend was the helicopter that began swarming overhead with its searchlights on the crowd during the Janes Addiction set. At first sight you thought something really troublesome was going down but then realized this was an atmospheric scene-enhancer plotted by the organizers. Lou Reed's set ended like an English soccer match, carrying on 15 minutes overtime as anger churned amongst a younger crowd of "Band of Horses" fans waiting on the opposite end of the field. In an effort to boot "Uncle Lou" off the stage, they broke out into overwrought episodes of applause.

As programmers for the Decibelle/Estrojam festival for the past seven years, we of course really appreciated some of the stellar female-fronted acts. Smart, sassy Santigold delivered an incredible high energy, socially conscious set of new-wave rock and reggae including a Cure cover of 'Killing an Arab' to a massive crowd. Lykke Li's dazzling, electro-funk infused pop was a breath of fresh air and definitely stirred up the fatigued crowd. Pakistani singer, "Bat For Lashes" transitioned us into a more mellow, yet fierce set of compelling ambient, tribal, electro

beats. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs, who replaced the Beastie Boys at the last minute, delivered an epic show with Karen O dressed in a neon Indian headdress, delivering a stunning, acoustic version of maps that she dedicated to artists, "TV on the Radio" and "Deerhunter" as well as the band's family who were present at the festival.

Her first time in Chicago, the remorselessly intoxicating Norwegian pop diva, Ida Maria was wickedly hot. Like a burlesque Janis Joplin, she upped the ante on her light-hearted, male-objectifying hit, 'I Like You So Much Better When You're Naked,' strip-teasing the crowd with her fiery pink bra and matching knickers. Ida said in our interview yesterday, "There are still so many things in the world in the image of women that makes us not free." She has felt the pressure to focus on image "before you can challenge yourself to do greater things—to get your voice heard." She "loves guys" but also points out that they don't get the same amount of scrutiny about their looks. "Am I pretty enough? takes away from the time we could have spent on being great ... without stilettos ... without make-up."

It's no surprise that she admires the debauchorous poet Charles Bukowski, who she referred to as "a loud, dirty genius." At past shows she's split her head open and broken a couple ribs—but carried on singing—unaware of the blood and sealing the chaos with an innocent, girlish laugh. Ida's raw, effortless beauty and ferocious confidence are no act, making her show as dangerously sexy as her music. Spin Magazine stamped her debut album, *Fortress Around My Heart*, as one of the 20 Best Albums of 2009 so far.

For the scorching heat throughout the remainder of the weekend (which hit 107 on Sunday, Aug. 9), festival organizers provided mobile ventilator units as the Chicago Fire Department began misting crowds. Despite herds of cooling buses, medic tents and paramedic staffers, a man actually died on the festival grounds for the first time in Lollapalooza history due to cardiac arrest. Unfortunate events aside, things seemed to go pretty smoothly for the organizers and festivalgoers were generally elated by the weekend's "activities". The only complaints we heard, were of course, no BYOB.

See many more photos online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



Lollapalooza 2009.
Photo by Jack Edginer

"HENRY JAGLOM'S BEST FILM! TANNA FREDERICK REALLY SHINES IN IRENE IN TIME WITH THE ALACRITY OF A SOLO JAZZ ARTIST WHO DOESN'T JUST HIT THE NOTES BUT INTUITS THE THROUGH LINE AND SOUL OF THE PIECE!"
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Donna Summer.

NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Cool Summer

BY JERRY NUNN

Donna Summer's career has spanned decades and crossed musical genres. Incorporating R&B, rock, gospel and, let's not forget, disco, this artist was the first to have three consecutive double albums hit #1 on the Billboard charts. "Heaven knows" that *Windy City Times* had to talk to the original bad girl.

Windy City Times: Hello, Donna. I have been studying up on your career and you originally started in musicals such as *Godspell* and *Show Boat*. Have you thought of doing any recently?

Donna Summer: I did write a musical about my life called "Ordinary Girl," and it's been going around and around for close to 10 years now. Last time it was going into production it literally blew apart because of 9/11. I just put it sleep for a while because it was very frustrating.

It's like having a baby and it doesn't come out. It's like, "I am pregnant, give me birth!" After a while, you just have to get over it. As of late, I have another group of people that are interested in putting it on.

WCT: "Love to Love You Baby" was your first hit and then your career took off. Did you always want to be a singer?

DS: I wanted to be an actress and then singing came along. That's the thing that opened the door for me. I went from singing in church to singing in a rock band. After that I went from New York to Europe, where I was acting. I got to do both sing and act in a musical called "Hair" which is now popular again. I was in the first German cast of that. From there I did four or five other musicals in Germany and then had my first hit record.

WCT: "I Feel Love" was so ahead of its time. Is there any musical genre that have wanted to try but haven't?

DS: I would love to do an opera. I had written one with a friend, Nathan, and been kicking it around for a long time. [It is] a combination of real opera, rock and roll and every other kind of voice that you can imagine, all within the structure of this one musical piece. I think young people don't like to go to the opera because they don't like the way people sing, but it's all the same. We should learn to teach our children to appreciate all of it as opposed to one thing or the other.

WCT: Were you able to attend Michael Jackson's memorial?

DS: I was supposed to go but, unfortunately, I had a show in Paris. It was originally scheduled for the Thursday before but they kept shifting the date and it was impossible for me to go. The show had been sold out for so long I couldn't cancel.

WCT: You recorded with him before on "State of Independence." Any thoughts on Michael?

DS: I am heartbroken. For the first two weeks my brain was not even able to grasp the concept of no Michael. I was constantly breaking

down crying and my husband was like, "Don't go there." I couldn't fathom the thought of Michael being gone. I think it hit everyone the same way. It hit in waves. People couldn't cope with the idea of his absence.

WCT: I like the fact that you have stuck to your guns as an artist over the years, sometimes disagreeing with music labels. It has been nice to not see you get pigeonholed.

DS: A lot of people think so because they go, "Here's the queen of disco!" What I want to say is no. I am actually the first woman—not Black woman—but woman, period, to get a rock-and-roll Grammy. I don't take it as an insult but I am still working and there are fields that I haven't conquered yet. I won't stop until someone says, "It's over." I am not going to say it, so I am going to keep going until I get there.

WCT: Talk about working hard for the money! So you never plan on retiring?

DS: I don't think as a singer you need to retire unless you have health issues that prohibit you from performing at your max. I think if you are able to take care of yourself, you could probably sing for the rest of your life. It's a joy.

WCT: Is there anyone you want to work with but haven't?

DS: There are so many young and old musicians that are talented. I would like to work with James Taylor, John Mayer and Beyoncé. I can't even name them all that I would like to work with, there's just too many.

WCT: I just saw Beyoncé in concert.

DS: I sure the show was fantastic. She's quite the diva.

WCT: What I like about Crayons is that it sounds fresh and doesn't sound like you are trying to do any of your older tunes. It sounds like you are stepping it up.

DS: Well, I am trying to. I have kids and I have ears and I see where music is going. I don't want to stay back there. What's the point? You have to try to be as current as you can be. Obviously the music industry has changed tremendously. It isn't nearly as easy to have a hit record as it used to be. In my day they didn't have the Internet and people weren't downloading your songs for free. Now to have a hit is extremely difficult. For people to manage to do that is a bigger feather in their cap.

"Stamp your feet" for Donna Summer when she plays at The Venue, Horseshoe Casino (11999 Casino Center Drive SE, Elizabeth, Ind.) Sunday, Aug. 23, at 7 p.m. For tickets, visit www.horseshoehammond.com.

Summer talks about her own concert and more topics at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

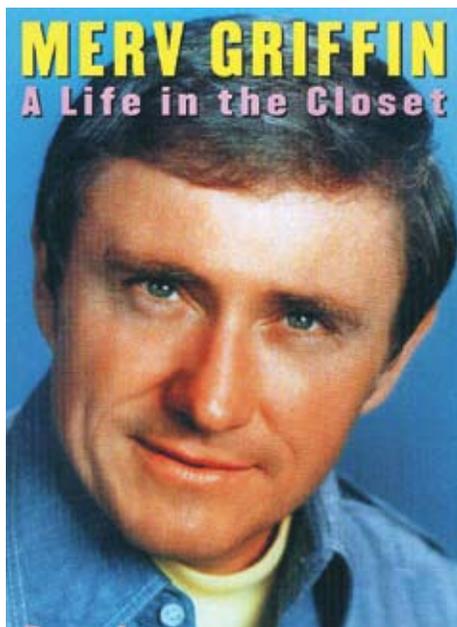
Sidebar: Donna and the LGBTs

Singer Donna Summer has been an LGBT icon for well over two decades, but the relationship has been bumpy.

In the 1980s, it was alleged that Summer made anti-gay comments, saying that AIDS was God's punishment for homosexuality. The reaction by the gay community was overwhelmingly negative, with many individuals returning her records.

However, Summer has always denied making such statements. According to a 1999 issue of *Gay Times*, Summer issued a press statement years earlier, stating: "It is a source of great concern to me that anything I may have said has cast me as homophobic. ... All I can ask is for is understanding as I believe my true feelings have been misinterpreted." Summer even sued *New Yorker* magazine when it reprinted the rumors, according to Wikipedia. According to A&E, Summer settled for an undisclosed amount.

Summer has performed for numerous gay- and AIDS-related events.



BOOK REVIEW

Merv Griffin:
A Life in the Closet
Written by Darwin Porter
\$26.95; Blood Moon; 560 pages
REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHMEYER

You just can't help it.

Much as you try, you can't help picking up one of those tabloids while you're waiting in line at the grocery store. This star divorced that one after he had an affair with this one over there because she split up another star's marriage and...

It's just way too much fun to stargaze.

Read the new book *Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet* by Darwin Porter, and you'll get an eyeful. Just remember—you've been warned.

One of the most powerful memories Merv Griffin ever had was when his parents were forced out of their home, their belongings confiscated, when young Merv was just five years old. Even at that tender age, he vowed to his mother that he would build her a mansion someday.

Though his father didn't want him to be a performer, talented Merv loved "putting on shows" for neighbors in his aunt's house. That same aunt taught the boy to play piano and, in short order, he was a better pianist than she.

Long before he was a teenager, Porter says, Merv knew he was attracted to boys. That attraction, though his father tried early-on to quash it, strengthened during Merv's adolescence.

Because his uncle was a tennis pro who owned a club and gave lessons to Hollywood's elite, young Merv was able to meet and spend time with stars such as Errol Flynn, Johnny Weissmuller and others. Though Porter said much of that time was spent ogling men in the locker room, Merv became close friends with people—both men and women—who quickly furthered his budding career. Soon, he was singing for and with some of Hollywood's brightest stars.

Never one to miss an opportunity, Merv manipulated his career at every turn by pouncing on every opportunity he found. Porter indicates that, by the time Merv was called for an audition with Mark Goodson and Bill Todman, he was well-known and had an established fan base.

And he had quite a reputation in Hollywood... for more than just his singing.

Reading like a *Naked Who's Who of Hollywood*, *Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet* is, on one hand, a delightful guilty pleasure.

On the other hand, it's a bit overwhelming because names are tossed out like fastballs and chronology seems to be merely a suggestion.

Author Darwin Porter said in his acknowledgments that he spoke to "hundreds of people associated with the entertainment industry," and not just about Merv. His research, though staggering, is nothing if not thorough. Astute readers, however, will notice a lot of direct quotes and entire conversations that purportedly happened decades ago, which makes for an en-

gaging read but eventually feels tabloid-fakey. While it's true that this book fits with others in the tell-all genre, I would've been happier with just the facts, ma'am.

Still, if you're a hopeless tab junkie and you can't get enough scandal, pick up this book. For you, Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet will have you hung up and hooked.

Want more? Look for *Hollywood Babylon—It's Back* by Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince, or *Merv: Making the Good Life Last* by Merv Griffin and David Bender.

BOOK REVIEW

My Judy Garland Life
Written by Susie Boyt
\$25; Bloomsbury USA; 320 pages
REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHMEYER

You weren't stalking. Really, you weren't.

And you'd like to think of yourself as a nice, normal adult human being who's got it together. But when you had a chance, random encounter with your favorite celebrity, your mouth suddenly stopped working and you could barely remember your name. Acting like a gushing 13-year-old, you asked for an autograph.

Embarrassing, maybe. But you've got a piece of ink-and-paper to prove that you had a brush with celebrity, and that's pretty great.

Author Susie Boyt never had a chance to ask for an autograph from her favorite star because that star died five months after Boyt was born. Still, in the new book *My Judy Garland Life*, Boyt explains why she will always love Judy.

When you understand that her beloved mother had a penchant for dramatic adventure—once, she bought a ship and sailed the entire family to Trinidad—it's not hard to see why Susie Boyt became fascinated with Judy Garland.

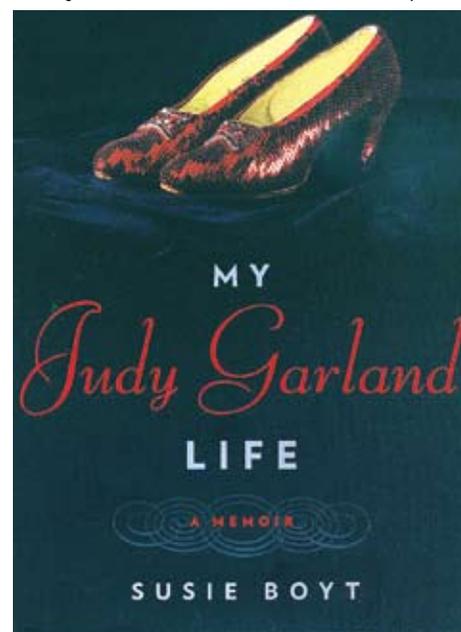
"Matters of life and death hang in the balance when Judy Garland sings," Boyt said.

Boyt wasn't born during the high-seas adventure but she said she never tired of the ship story, and begged for details. Neither did she tire of her father's memory of meeting with Judy Garland: Boyt's dad started to shake hands with Garland, and one of Garland's fingers was "missed" in the clasp.

"I feel for that finger sometimes," Boyt writes wistfully.

Hero worship doesn't preclude an acknowledgement of flaws, of course, and although Boyt admits she has contemplated violence when someone said something negative about Judy Garland, she's willing to see the (few) bad things. Garland was known to have pulled knives on people. She was reportedly careless with extravagances. She took drugs, to which Boyt admits there is no heroism.

Decades after her death, though, Judy Garland continues to gain fans. Some "crazy-good fans," as Boyt calls some admirers, want to keep Gar-



land to themselves, fearing that Garland's popularity in the gay community does her memory a "great disservice." And the "bad fans?"

"Oh! The tension this creates," said Boyt.

Oh! Where do I begin?

Aside from the gigantic "So What?" factor that runs rampant in this book, reading *My Judy Garland Life* made me feel a little creepy. Author Susie Boyt muses about doing Judy Garland's ironing and she admits that she would have "loved to watch Judy sleep..." She gives meaning to many mous and motions from movie and TV, and she claims to think about Garland in so

many everyday situations that the word "obsession" strongly came to my mind.

Mixed in with the author's Judy Garland worship are lots of stories that I thought were mostly rather unexciting. I believe the best thing I can say about this book is that there are plenty of pictures in it, but not enough to warrant its purchase.

If you're looking for a book about Judy Garland, there are other, better ones out there. Find one of them instead and heave *My Judy Garland Life* somewhere over the rainbow.



Maya Angelou.
Photo by Dwight Carter

Maya Angelou coming to Chicago

Legendary writer and activist Maya Angelou will be the featured speaker at the Chicago Foundation for Women's 24th annual luncheon Thursday, Sept. 17, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

The event "celebrates the achievements of women and girls by bringing together a di-

verse audience of more than 2,000 guests who represent business, philanthropy, government, nonprofit, media and other Foundation supporters," the organization stated.

Only tables and sponsorships are available, and individual tickets will only go on sale if tables do not sell out. E-mail or call Mariah Pearl Cunnick at mcunnick@cfw.org or 312-577-2827.

Verraros to release 2nd CD

Jim Verraros—the openly gay American Idol Finalist from season one, and a former *Windy City Times* 30 Under 30 honoree—will release his second album, *Do Not Disturb*, this summer, according to a press release.

Do Not Disturb, a follow-up to 2005's *Rollercoaster*, features songs such as the Justin Timberlake-esque lead-off singles, "Touch (Don't U Want 2)" and "Electric Love" as well as the club-banger "Overload."

In addition to singing, Verraros has also acted, taking part in such films as *Eating Out* and *Eating Out 2: Sloppy Seconds*.

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WHAT TO DO?

Wednesday, Aug. 12

A Little Touch of Coward in the Night. with Jeff-nominated actress and singer Suzanne Petri, part of Play On Cabaret Series. 7 p.m. reception, 7:30 pm show \$25 Reservations required 312-742-8497 or www.maximchicago.org In the dining room of Maxim's: The Nancy Goldberg International Center, 24 E. Goethe St

Book signing for Everything Changes. The Insider's Guide to Cancer in Your 20s and 30s, with exclusive "Out" Patient LGBT resources, by Chicago author Kairol Rosenthal. Complimentary cocktails and gourmet hors d'oeuvres. 7:30 p.m. Info 773-769-9299. Women and Children First Bookstore, 5233 N. Clark St.

Storytime Special Guest Ilene Fine 10:30 a.m. author of Brandy and Val: Real Dogs with Real Tales. Val and Brandy survived Katrina and were adopted through Fortunate Lab Rescue in Fox Lake, IL. Proceeds benefit Fortunate LR. Women & Children First Bookstore, 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299 www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Thursday, Aug. 13

Gaelic Storm, 8 p.m. \$45 (first four rows), \$40 rest of house. Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th St. (at Western Ave.) 773-445-3838 www.beverlyart-center.org.

Poetry Reading, two local poets: Jenene Ravesloot (Loot: Stolen Memories and Tales Out of School), Lucia Blinn (Passing for Normal and Navigating the Night). 7:30 p.m. Women & Children First Bookstore, 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299 www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Prose, Poetry and Pints at the Pug A queer-focused, straight friendly open mic reading Stephanie Kuehnert (Ballads of Suburbia) and Robert McDonald (A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago); Hosted by Tavern Boy Craig and Drew Ferguson (The Screwed-Up Life of Charlie the Second). Sign-up 7:30 p.m. Readings 8: p.m. Wild Pug, 4810 N. Broadway; 773-784-4811

Sister Outlaw, dramedy about love, friendship and immigration in its many splendored and gendered things. A high spirited dyke who's set to move heaven and earth so a "femme Filipina" can stay in the country. Through Sept. 6. \$10-18. 312-353-0138 or 773-931-6122 or email us: circaheater@yahoo.com or www.brownpapertickets.com/event/77147. More at www.circapintig.org Dream Theater on 556 W. 18th St.

Friday, Aug. 14

2009 National LGBT Health Summit Through Tuesday Aug. 18. Chicago Hil-

ton and Towers., 720 South Michigan Ave www.2009lgbtihealth.org

"Family" screening with director Faith Trimel in person. Sexy, savvy comedy-drama about coming out of the closet in image-conscious L.A. 8:15 p.m. and Wed., Aug. 19, 8:15 pm Gene Siskel Film Center. www.siskelfilmcenter.org

Flesh Hungry Dog Show Special Event "defiantly nerdy and spazzy" Detholz! followed by the 30-piece circus marching punk band Mucca Pazza. Show starts. 9 p.m. \$8. Over 21 only. Jackhammer (773-743-5772), 6406 N.Clark St

National Queer API Alliance through Sunday, August 16, 2009, Seattle, WA www.nqapia.org/nc-2009.html

Hamburger Mary's Grand Opening party for Mary's Rec Room, 8 - 10 p.m. 5402 N Clark St., hamburgermaryschicago.com

Sunday in the Park with George, Sondheim classic, through Sept. 20 \$28/\$22 Village Players Performing Arts Center 1010 Madison St., Oak Park, 866-764-1010 or www.village-players.org

Saturday, Aug. 15

Be The Change: network, socialize, activate. 6 -10 p.m. \$10, benefits local not-for-profits. www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=7312848

Spin, 800 W. Belmont. Info at: www.lgbtchange.org

GLBT "Great Nationwide Kiss-In" is planned for 1 p.m. local time in response to San Antonio, El Paso, and Salt Lake City incidents where gay/lesbian couples were harassed or detained for the simple act of kissing in a public place. Oak Park Ave. and Lake St. Oak Park. www.tinyurl.com/no8h7q

Also the Cloudgate Sculpture/The Bean in Millennium Park, sponsored by Join the Impact Chicago, Nik Maciejewski, nik@jointheimpactchicago.com, www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=111579388358&ref=mf

Queen of the Night drag show, conclusion of Better Existence with HIV's (BEHIV) 60-Day Drive Fundraiser. @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark 773-293-4740 ericnelson@behiv.org

1812 Battle of Fort Dearborn Site will be dedicated and the park renamed. Native Americans, battle descendants, War of 1812 reenactors, historians, National Guardsmen, Park District representatives, residents of the Prairie District Neighborhood Alliance and 2nd Ward Ald. Robert W. Fioretti will assemble at 10-11 a.m. the new Battle of Fort Dearborn Park, 18th St. and Calumet

Sunday, Aug. 16

Fronrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago

Chicago annual picnic, noon to 3 p.m. The tip of Montrose Harbor 312-409-2790 | www.firfwchicago.org

The Judy Garland Duets with cabaret favorites Rob Dorn and Laura Freeman. Retrospective of Garland's career and celebration of Garland's influence on performers. Skokie Theater Music Foundation www.threecatproductions.com

Tuesday, Aug. 18

Homolatte: Queer Words and Music hosted by Scott Free. y madrone/ Elena Krell. Free. 7:30 p.m. Big Chicks/Tweet, 5024 N Sheridan 773-728-5511 www.homolatte.com

History in the Heartland reception, Iowa's largest LGBT advocacy group hosts Chicago reception to protect marriage equality in Iowa. 6 to 9 p.m. Giving Levels \$25 to \$2500 Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted. Reservations Jeremy@oneiow.org 515-288-4019 ext. 207, www.eqfed.org/oneiowa/events/history_in_the_heartland_chicago/details.tcl

Wednesday, Aug. 19

"Family" screening. Sexy, savvy comedy-drama about coming out of the closet in image-conscious L.A. 8:15 p.m. Gene Siskel Film Center. www.siskelfilmcenter.org

Live at Maxim's with Rick Kogan, featuring Gilmary Doyle-Andrews, actress/singer 6 p.m. reception, 6:30 pm show. \$25.. Reservations 312-742-8497 or www.maximchicago.org

Thursday, Aug. 20

Networking on the Rocks: Charitable Chicago, ongoing business networking series for young professionals 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. \$20 www.LaunchEvents.com or 312-327-5311. Standard Club, 320 S. Plymouth Ct.

Plays from the archives of Too Much Light Makes The Baby Go Blind originally created by Greg Allen, Thursday nights at 9:30 p.m. through Sept.10. \$15. The Neo-Futurarium, 5153 N. Ashland. Tix \$15 or \$20 773-275-5255 or www.neofuturists.org

Friday, Aug. 21

Center on Halsted's danceOUT series, in collaboration with Chicago Dancing Festival, will present Les Ballets Grandiva, ll-male comedy ballet company currently in its 11th season, 7-8:00 p.m. Jeffrey Tower, 10 E. Randolph St.

Glamorama 2009, Jady Maria, Ne-Yo and The New Standards. Benefits Ronald McDonald House Charities. \$50-\$1,000. 800-982-2787 or ticketmaster.com or Chicago Theatre box office. 8 p.m. The Chicago Theatre 175 North State St. Post-party to follow at Macy's on State St.

2009 Windy City Rodeo, hosted by the

Illinois Gay Rodeo Association and through Aug. 23 in Crete. Buses available 10 a.m. from Charlies, Touche, Cattle Call, \$25 includes an admission ticket to the Rodeo, and leave the grounds around 7 p.m. www.ilgra.com

Saturday, Aug. 22

Sappho's Salon, featuring legendary Chicago slam poet cin salach, emerging lesbian poet DeDe, and special guest DJ SpinNikki. 7:30 p.m. \$7-\$10 sliding scale includes food and wine. Women & Children First Bookstore, 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299 www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Sunday, Aug. 23

Suburban Home Tour with Austin Lucas, Two Cow Garage and Jon Snodgrass. \$8. Show 21+ only. Schubas Tavern, 3159 N. Southport Ave

Cavalta, spectacular equestrian odyssey extended through Sunday, Aug. 23. \$50.50 - \$108.50. 866-999-8111 or www.cavalta.net

Monday, Aug. 24

CENTERscreen LGBT film program, "Queer Cinema 102 - Offbeat Camp," five-week film series on little seen camp "classics," horrible, perverse, hilarious, fabulously bad! "Desperate Living", "The Lonely Lady", "The Ritz", "Adam & Steve" and "Barbarella". Weekly through Monday, Sept. 28. 7 p.m. \$5. Hoover-Leppen Theatre, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted Ave.

Flip Flop Pop: The '70s are back. Produced by About Face Artistic Associate Amy Matheny and directed by About Face Artistic Associate Scott Ferguson. Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted. Check for times: www.sidetrackchicago.com

Tuesday, Aug. 25

OUTmusic Queer Open Mic, Mostly Acoustic original queer music, all welcome. Host: Lars von Keitz. 7:30 p.m. Urban Café, 1467 W. Irving Park 773-327-9427 www.urbancafechicago.com

Wednesday, Aug. 26

Center on Halsted's danceOUT, an intimate evening of dance rehearsal and conversation with River North Chicago Dance Co. 7 p.m. Hoover-Leppen Theatre at Center on Halsted, located at 3656 N. Halsted Ave.

Saturday, Aug. 29

Dance for Life 5p.m.: Gala reception Millennium Park Rooftop Terrace, 7:30 p.m. performance at Harris Theater for Music and Dance. \$75-\$500. 312-922-5812 or www.danceforlifechicago.com

Friday, Aug. 21



GLAM SLAM

Glamorama 2009 will entertain hundreds at the Chicago Theatre, 175 N State.

Photo of Sanaa Lathan from Glamorama 2008 by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)

Monday, Aug. 24



'FLOP' LIFE

Flip Flop Pop brings the '70s to Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted.

Photo from the 2007 event by Tracy Baim

See our online calendar: www.windycitymediagroup.com/calendar

More Lolla



Among the sights to behold at Lollapalooza 2009 were musical acts such as The Killers (left) and Neko Case (center), and incredible nighttime views. See more Lolla images online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com; left photo by Cambria Harkley, center photo by Dave Mead and right image by Jack Edginer.

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BILLY MASTERS

"People don't say, 'Oh, you were cute giving that Oscar speech.' They are interested in marriage equality, and we start engaging in [political] conversation. It's great, but all of a sudden it's 1:30 a.m., you've had two more vodka-and-sodas, and you've spent your whole night talking to these cool lesbians about relationship rights. That's why I don't get laid."—Dustin Lance Black claims to not have much of a sex life—unless he has his credit card handy.

Last week, Oscar winner Dustin Lance Black filed a \$3 million lawsuit against a Web site that ran photos of him sharing an intimate (and unsafe) encounter with a guy who does web porn to pay his tuition bill. According to Black's attorneys, on or about Nov. 11, 2006—which I'm guessing was the date on his credit-card statement—Lance and one Jeff Delancy did indeed share some "private intimate moments" (with DLB on the receiving end, by the by). In the suit, it is alleged that Delancy was "holding a small camera and taking photographs of the two of them. [DLB] posed for what he understood to be some photos of their heads and upper torsos. Plaintiff and Delancy expressly agreed and un-

According to the scenario presented in these papers, no one but Delancy knew about the photos and videos that were housed on his password-protected computer. Sometime later, he moved in with a boyfriend who sold used cars in Costa Mesa. We are expected to believe that this used car salesman, who must have also been a computer whiz, got into Jeff's password-protected computer, and copied all sorts of photos and video. Then he told Delancy to delete any images of any other men he'd slept with—out of jealousy! You see what's happening, right? According to this set-up, the only person who had possession of the questionable material is the used car salesman.

A few years later, DLB won an Oscar and the used car salesman somehow recognized him from the oodles of photos he copied three years ago. Being an industrious type, he and a friend allegedly formed a phantom company and contacted a Web site about buying the illicit materials. That's why the lawsuit is going after the used car salesman, his friend, and the owners of the Web site. What about Jeff Delancy? After all, he'd have just as much right to the material as DLB. Surprise, surprise—webcam boy has provided sworn testimony that he had nothing to do with the dissemination of the photos and video, and he signed over SOLE RIGHTS to DLB. I'm guessing this was in exchange for amnesty from any legal action (and perhaps a check). Since, obviously we don't want to be dragged into this matter, we will not, I repeat NOT, run the photos on BillyMasters.com. But, in the grand tradition of other legal proceedings, we think that artistic renderings of the "intimate moments" created by our esteemed court sketch artist will make for some interesting viewing. We have the sole rights to those, buddy.



Some in the media are milking this Dustin Lance Black controversy for all it's worth. Photo by Phil Bray.

derstood that any such photos captured at that time of them were to remain private and were for their own personal use only."

At this point, Judge Judy would demand proof of said agreement, but this ain't Judge Judy! The complaint further alleges that later during this "intimate moment," DLB became aware that Delancy was still taking pictures and requested that he delete them from his camera. At no time did he consent to the photos—although in the ones that show his face, he is clearly smiling in that drunken-sort-of-way for the camera. You'd also think that since two people are in most of these photos, both of them could claim ownership. Remember that.

We finally have a reason to watch the new Melrose Place. Does the name Victor Webster ring a bell with you? He's one of the most gorgeous men on the planet. You might have seen him on Days of our Lives, Charmed, Mutant X, Sex and the City, or any other project that required a stunning guy with an amazing body who has no problem with nudity. The fact that he's heading to Melrose Place would be good enough news. But what if I told you his character is gay? Caleb Brewer appears in episode two and is described as being openly gay, smokes cigars, likes the Lakers, collects sports memorabilia, drinks Scotch and loves sex. A hot daddy sex whore? Sure sounds that way to moi! In doing our research, we found a tantalizing clip of Webster sporting an erection on Mutant X. Definitely worth checking out on BillyMasters.com.

Victor's Mutant X co-star was the equally hot

Turn to page 21

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BILLY from page 20

Forbes March. Forbes recently played gay in the film Manhattanites. And he's returning to those familiar stomping grounds on As the World Turns, where he's taken on the role of a hot film teacher who gets between "Noah" and "Luke". Gay whores day and night. Now *that's* progress!

This week's "Ask Billy" question comes from a million of you with one thing on your mind: "Is Paula really leaving American Idol?"

I doubt it. I believe FOX wouldn't budge in their financial offer, and Paula made a calculated risk—she walked away from the bargaining table. It's now up to FOX and AI to decide if they want to reopen talks with a sweeter deal. It's a risky negotiating technique, but it is not without precedent. A few years back, "The X Factor" (UK's version of AI) dumped popular judge Louis Walsh. A few weeks into the auditions, Simon (who produces that show) realized there was a BIG problem. "I hate to admit this, but we need Louis back." And,

just like that, the money issues resolved and Walsh returned—and has stayed. Since the AI auditions began this past weekend in Denver, I think it's safe to say that this isn't over...not by a longshot.

BTW, don't worry about Paula. Two days after announcing she wouldn't be returning to Idol, she was filming a second guest spot on Lifetime's Drop Dead Diva, which has been a huge hit for the network. The next day, former Idol producer Nigel Lythgoe invited Paula to the So You Think You Can Dance finale—and he's been publicly toying with the idea of adding her to that show next year. Don't touch that dial.

When Paula's got options, it's definitely time to end yet another column. We ran long this week, so let me just remind you to check out www.BillyMasters.com. If you've got a question, feel free to write me at Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before we hear more details from that Oscar Weiner...er, winner! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Whitney: album pushed up, takes over for MJ

Whitney Houston could contend for this year's Grammy Awards now that her newest album, I Look to You, is being released Aug. 31 instead of Sept. 1, according to the Los Angeles Times. Aug. 31 is the last day of eligibility for next year's Grammys. Great buzz is building around the album, her last non-holiday CD since 2002's Just Whitney.

In other Houston-related news, the diva and singer Robbie Williams are reportedly slated to take over some of the late Michael Jackson's scheduled concert dates at London's O2 arena, Ireland Online has reported. Houston and Williams—who has his own album, Reality Killed the Video Star, coming out in October—may perform 23 concerts during the first three months of next year; Jackson had been slated to perform 50 concerts.

Biagio Antonacci to release 1st U.S. CD

Biagio Antonacci, one of the biggest stars of the Italian European music scene, will release *Il Cielo Ha Una Porta Sola* ("Heaven Has Only One Door") Aug. 18.

In Italy—where his 20-year career includes a long string of multi-platinum albums, chart-topping hits, and sold-out soccer stadiums—Antonacci is considered a national treasure.

In *Il Cielo*, Antonacci has redone some of his past hits because he "didn't want them to sound so produced," according to a press release. As for his fans, "I love all of my fans, so I don't necessarily separate gay from straight. I love to hear that gay people are fans of mine. I know that gay people are generally very sensitive, and I want all sensitive people to love my music. Gay people have an honest, open, emotional sensibility, which really pleases me."



Biagio Antonacci.

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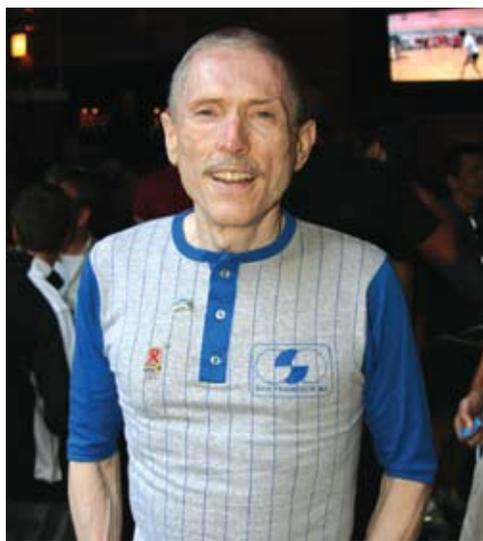
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Scenes from the Aug. 5 Gay Games party. Left photo of Dick Uyvari by Ross Forman and right photo of Judith Markowitz and Susan Franz by Mel Ferrand; see many more photos online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

Gay Games party draws 200

BY ROSS FORMAN

They came with medals. They came with memories. They came to celebrate the one-year-to-go-until-Cologne party for the 2010 Gay Games and, naturally, highlights from the 2006 Games in Chicago were ever-present at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, Aug. 5.

About 200 attended the event and about 15 registered on-site for the 2010 Cologne Games.

"I thought it was a great event; I was very happy with the turnout," said Kurt Dahl of Joliet, who is the male co-president for the Federation of Gay Games, the governing body of the quadrennial sports and cultural event bound for Germany next July.

"There was great energy and a great turnout," Dahl said. "It was nice meeting new people and

getting back together with so many people who had such an integral role in the 2006 Games."

Dahl was so pleased with Chicago's party that he has issued a challenge to the 17 other members of the FGG's board of directors: for each to hold a similar, as successful, event in his or her respective cities. There are FGG board members in San Francisco, Seattle, Paris, Sydney and Berlin, among other places.

The Cologne Games will be held July 31-Aug. 7, and Dahl said organizers are forecasting 12,000 participants. Hopefully, Chicago will send 200 or more participants, he said. "The U.S. will have a big presence," in Cologne, Dahl said.

The eight-day 2009 World Outgames ended Aug. 2 in Copenhagen, Denmark, with about 5,500 participants (about 4,500 for sporting events and 1,000 for the human-rights conference). Organizers for the Outgames had hoped for 8,000 participants.

Will the worldwide economic crisis also impact the Gay Games?

Some who attended the Outgames won't be able to attend the Gay Games, Dahl acknowledged.

But, he added, going to the Gay Games "is an investment in yourself."

"If someone really wants to participate in their sport or cultural event, going to the Gay Games is really the way to do it."

Dahl participated in swimming and softball at the 2006 Games, alongside executive-level duties. He was selling Cologne souvenirs at the Sidetrack party.

Many attended wearing their medals from Chicago, and Dick Uyvari was even wearing a vintage shirt from the inaugural 1982 Games in San Francisco.

CMSA's Schmit: A Jackie-of-all-trades

BY ROSS FORMAN

It's probably easier to list the sports that Jackie Schmit does not play than those she does.

Actually, you can start and stop with basketball. She doesn't like to play or even watch basketball.

"I can't shoot to save my life, and any sport that involves that much running isn't for me," she said. "I also have no desire to play any contact sport—I prefer a net or field between me and my opponent."

But there's plenty of sporting blood in this 33-year-old who lives in Port Washington, Wis., who is as much a part of the Chicago gay sports scene as Sidetrack is part of the gay bar scene.

She plays softball, volleyball, badminton and dodgeball, and also has played kickball and tennis in the past.

Schmit plays in the outfield for the Hamburger Mary's Breeze in the women's softball division. This past winter, she played on a Spin Orange Crush women's volleyball team as a setter. She captained an indoor dodgeball team this past winter, which took second place for the season and second in playoffs in the open division.

Oh yeah, Schmit also is an integral part of the board of directors for the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA). She is the group's treasurer for the third year.

"I'm the CMSA treasurer, which means I review budgets with our numerous sports, help with registrations, gather reports using our online registration system, and pay our bills," she said. "I also have a finance committee which reviews each sport budget when the season is done to make recommendations for the next year."

Ironically, though, when Schmit ran for the post she had little to no accounting background.

"There was a rough transition when I came on board three years ago, but with the support of the other board members, as well as previous ones, I've made it work," she said. "Despite no formal training, I always thought that if I couldn't find the right path to my current job, accounting would have been my second choice. I'm a numbers and math geek."

So what does Schmit do away from sports?

She's a licensed prosthetist, meaning she fits prosthetic limbs to people after an amputation. "Just the title usually gets me funny looks if someone's not familiar with it," she admitted.

Schmit and partner Marcela Haber-Bishop have been together for almost 11 years. They

got married in Toronto to celebrate their 10-year anniversary during the fall of 2008.

Naturally, they play on some of the same sports teams.

"Marcela and I work pretty well together. It's what keeps us close and it's great to see the other person succeed or have a good game," Schmit said. "Sometimes we differ on how things should be run, but Marcela does most of the managing and she's very organized and fair. Put us against each other, though, and watch out. We're ruthless in badminton when we've played each other; I think I got floor burn from diving a couple seasons back going after the shuttlecock [she hit]."

"We're both very competitive players and both strive to give 100 percent each time we play. We don't really overlap in positions; she's a pitcher and I'm an outfielder for softball, so it's hard to compare. But, I do know that I couldn't pitch and she doesn't have much experience in the outfield. We both set in volleyball; I think she's got the stronger serve but I might set more consistently."

Said CMSA President Marcia Hill: "Jackie was elected to the board of directors in the summer of 2006. Her and her partner, Marcela, had come to the nomination meeting because Marcela was interested in running for the board. We were still taking nominations and someone nominated Jackie. Ultimately, Marcela and Jackie became two of the three women elected to the board."

"Jackie kind of volunteered to be treasurer by default. She did not have much of an accounting background, but dug in and learned how to use QuickBooks on the fly and has now been treasurer for three plus years and has done a great job. I have seen her grow as a board member and she has also branched out to helping to set up and take down softball fields and she became a dodgeball official besides being an athlete and playing softball, volleyball, badminton, kickball and dodgeball."

Windy City Times: I've heard your role within CMSA is underrated as far as value to the group. Thoughts?

Jackie Schmit: When it comes to money, people love to complain! We're by far the lowest cost sports group in the city as far as our team and player fees are concerned, and I feel that, as an organization, we're really good about acknowledging and giving back to our sponsors.

We run predominantly on volunteers, and you start to see the same faces stepping up in our leagues to organize things. It's great when we have new people willing to try the administrative side of the leagues, but I think most people just want to have fun and play sports or use CMSA as a social outlet. Any time you're dealing with over 3,000 people—the size of our organization last fiscal year—you're going to find some people unhappy about one thing or another. The important thing is that CMSA is a fiscally healthy organization that provides a wide variety of sporting events for Chicago's GLBT community.

WCT: What are your goals within CMSA?

JS: My goal has been, from the start, to get CMSA to become more like a business or to become more professional in its business practices. That's from the treasurer's standpoint. As an athlete, I want to play in CMSA to the best of my ability for as long as I can.

WCT: What are the biggest strengths of CMSA?

JS: We provide nine sports, from a recreational level to competitive level. We have the largest gay softball leagues in the country, hosting over 40 open (open is mostly men but some women or transgender members play here) and 40 women's teams each summer. Just in the last couple of years, we have had volunteers step up and create dodgeball, badminton and soccer leagues for our organization. If there is a sport enough people want to play, and they take the time to find a facility and create a budget, CMSA will consider hosting the sport.

Read the entire interview online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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