

**ALICE WALKER
THE SUBJECT
OF NEW FILM**

PAGE 18

WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN,
BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

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LGBT eyes are on Sochi



BY ROSS FORMAN

The 2014 Winter Olympics will be the most high-profile Olympics ever from an LGBT perspective, regardless of how many—if any—out athletes participate in the quadrennial sporting spectacular, or if any gold, silver or bronze medals are presented to competitors also proud to wave the rainbow flag.

The Games will be held Feb. 7-23 in Sochi, Russia, and 89 countries will be participating in 98 events in 15 winter sport disciplines.

Gay rights will be center stage in these Games, without question. Last summer, Russia enacted a law that bans the distribution of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations." Worldwide leaders, including President Obama, have condemned the law. Celebrity athletes, actors, musicians and more have all spoken out against Russia's anti-gay laws.

Turn to page 8

Openly gay New Zealand speedskater Blake Skjellerup is currently the first alternate for this year's Winter Olympics. PR photo

WITH THIS RING...

Windy City Times' quarterly Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide continues with business profiles, wedding planning tips, and photos and stories sent in by our readers, such as Cally Raduenzel (left) and Polly Jones.



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Images on cover (left, from top): Photo of Alice Walker by Brenda Lawley; photo of Dan Rutherford by Kate Sosin; photo of Bob Gammie; photo of Rolling Meadows student from Paul Dombrowski



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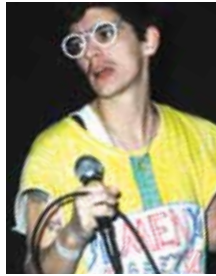
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SOCIAL MESSAGE

UIC's Dr. Beth Richie (left) lectured at Center on Halsted about race, gender and the prison nation.

Photo by Gretchen Blickensderfer



Bent Nights says that JD Samson (above) and her band Men know how to entertain.

Photo by Vern Hester



WCT sampled the goods at a carnivore's paradise: Boystown restaurant mEAT.

Photo by Jerry Nunn

LET'S DANCE

The Joffrey Ballet held a sneak preview of its piece "Contemporary Choreographers."

HOW SWEDE IT IS

Sarah Toce and wife Stephanie Brusig traveled to Stockholm, Sweden—and found out just how much the city has to offer.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Find out the latest about Elton John, Cate Blanchett and Helen Mirren.

plus DAILY BREAKING NEWS

IN MY HOUSE



The Chicago History Museum's latest "Out at CHM" forum featured house music and a look at the genre.

Photo of DJ Alan King by Gretchen Blickensderfer

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Major trans victory in Maine Supreme Court

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

In an historic first, a state high court ruled Jan. 29 that a male-to-female transgender student who was accepted by school staff and students as a girl could not be barred from using the girls' bathroom at school.

Jennifer Levi of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), which brought the lawsuit on behalf of the girl and her parents, called the decision in *Doe v. Clenchy* a "huge breakthrough" for transgender young people. GLAD also noted that the decision marks "the first time a state court has ruled that transgender students must be allowed to use the bathrooms that match who they are."

"This ruling is an important breakthrough for transgender students," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality. "Schools have a desire and responsibility to make schools safe and welcoming for all students. And this ruling helps schools meet that mission. In fact, this is consistent with what educators and human rights commissions around the country have concluded. Trans girls are girls, trans boys are boys and schools that understand that will better serve all their students."

GLAD took the appeal to the Maine Supreme Judicial Court on behalf of Nicole Maines (identified in court papers as Susan Doe) and her parents after losing in a state superior court. Their girl attended public schools whose staff and students seemed to be handling her transition well. Controversy erupted, however, after one boy—prompted by his guardian—followed Susan into the girls' bathroom, claiming that he, too, should be allowed to use the girls room. The incident garnered considerable media attention and prompted school officials to require Susan to use a unisex staff bathroom.

The Maines family filed suit, saying forcing Susan to use a separate bathroom violated the

state human-rights law against sexual-orientation discrimination.

Saying it had to enforce the law "without regard to the public's potential discomfort with the result," the six-to-one majority said that segregation or separation is a form of discrimination. Noting that another state law requires school bathrooms be segregated by sex, the court said that policies concerning the use of those bathrooms must nonetheless comply with the state non-discrimination law. Given that the school staff and Susan's parents agreed that Susan is a girl, wrote the majority, the school violated the human rights ordinance when it "treated [her] differently from other students solely because of her status as a transgender girl."

The majority decision, written by Justice Warren Silver (appointed by former Democratic Governor John Baldacci), emphasized that Susan had obtained a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and that the school staff and her friends all accepted her as a girl.

"Thus, we do not suggest that any person could demand access to any school facility or program based solely on a self-declaration of gender identity or confusion without the plans developed in cooperation with the school and the accepted and respected diagnosis that are present in this case," wrote the majority.

What bathrooms transgender people use has often been trotted out as a major concern by opponents of equal rights for transgender people.

"Eventually, the obvious trend in law and policy to protect trans youth will make that an untenable strategy for fundraising or getting attention or whatever their goal is," said Keisling. "But for now, unfortunately, this case, while decisive, probably won't end their thoughtless attacks in our kids."

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Indiana House OKs proposal to change constitution

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The Indiana House, on Jan. 28, approved a proposal to change the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage. The vote on House Joint Resolution 3 was 57-40.

The bill now goes to the state Senate.

Marriage-equality supporters scored an important victory Jan. 27, potentially thwarting the effort to put the ban on marriage for same-sex couples on the Indiana ballot this November. But during debate on the bill Jan. 28, Rep. Shelli VanDenBurgh (D-Crown Point) said she thinks the amendment to remove language that would have also banned civil unions and domestic partnerships was just a tactic to give some Republicans political cover. She predicted the state Senate would re-insert the language taken out of the House bill and the full original bill would be ultimately passed.

The Republican-dominated House voted 52-43 to remove language from the proposed ban that would have prevented same-sex couples from obtaining any form of recognition for their relationships, including civil unions and domestic partnerships. Some opponents said it could even have prevented employers from offering equal benefits to employees with same-sex partners.

During the Jan. 28 debate, Rep. Woody Burton (R-Whiteland), who described himself as a "person of faith," said gay couples can live together but "where does it stop?"

"These people want to live a lifestyle, that's their right," said Burton, "but when they force some type of an object on us, then people have a right" to vote.

VanDenBurgh (D-Crown Point) responded to that later by noting that the proposed ban was singling out one group of people. "Where does that stop?" she asked.

Rep. Linda Lawson (D-Hammond) recounted the discrimination she experienced when she sought to become the first woman on her local police force. She said she was forced to wear a man's police uniform because her supervisor told her that her trying to be on the police force was "trying to be a man."

"Discrimination is an ugly, mean thing," said Lawson.

If the Senate passes the version of the bill approved by the House, then the proposal will have to be approved by the next legislative session before going to voters.

The state's constitution requires that, before a proposed constitutional change can be put before voters, it must pass two consecutive sessions of the legislature.

If the Senate restores the original language, the House would have to agree to that original version in order to put the measure on the ballot this year.

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Open To Thinking

BY NICK PATRICCA



Valentine Day: The Saint(s) and the Legend

The Saint(s)

The historical existence of many of the saints we cherish has been called into question by modern scientific-critical methods. But, not to worry, this is not the problem with St. Valentine (Latin name: Valentinus). In his case, we have at least two, and perhaps three, candidates for the title.

The good news is that these three were all martyrs in the early years of the formation of the Christian religion. They all wrote letters and they all had the good sense to die on the same day. The bad news is that the letters they wrote were not romantic, but epistles exhorting people to be good Christians.

Our first candidate is a Christian priest named Valentinus who was martyred in Rome on the Via Flaminia near the Milvian bridge. On this bridge on 28 October 312, Constantine, with the Cross of Christ as his standard, vanquished his

The Legend

In his 700 line poem *Parlement of Foules*, Chaucer (1343 – 1400) has Scipio Africanus guide him through the spheres of the heavens to the temple of Venus to learn some 'certeyn thing' about love. Scipio leads Chaucer through her house of love, full of images of doomed lovers across the ages, to the light of Nature where the birds, on the third day of May, enter into a raucous debate to choose their mates. Like our own USA Congress, the birds cannot agree on much. The disappointed Chaucer awakens.

Even though he has failed to learn some 'certeyn thing' about love Roman-tic or other, Chaucer instigates the tradition of St. Valentine Day by penning lines in *Foules* (Fowls) exhorting humans to learn from the birds (his idealized Nature) how to discover the right mate in accordance with the principles of Christian Friendship.

Though there is scant evidence for our St Valentine Day prior to Chaucer, histories abound asserting that this custom is based in the rituals of the Lupercalia (13 – 15 February) a Roman fertility festival. In this version of history, Pope Gelasius

1 established the feast

of St. Valentine in 496 to suppress the pagan Lupercalia and to provide a Christian model for courtship. The idea that St. Valentine wrote letters to his non-existent sweetheart may be based on the possibility that St. Valentine sent letters to the jailer and/or the jailer's daughter, converting them thereby to Christianity, and that he secretly married Christian Roman soldiers, a capital offense because the emperor needed unmarried soldiers to fight his wars.

In my judgment, however, Chaucer is the clear creator of St. Valentine Day. Never underestimate the power of the poet.

The oldest extant Valentines were written from the Tower of London (c. 1417) by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife, whom he calls his 'gentle Valentine,' while he was captive after the battle of Agincourt.

The tradition of making your own 'Valentine' and sending it to your sweetheart or cherished friend flourished in 18th century England and from thence to the entire world. It has even taken root in Islamic countries, to great controversy.

I take St. Valentine Day as an opportunity to contemplate the meaning of romance, love, friendship, and marriage. And sex. And to be grateful for the wonderful friends in my life. A lot to think about on the 14th of February.

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"The tradition of making your own 'Valentine' and sending it to your sweetheart or cherished friend flourished in 18th century England and from thence to the entire world."

rivals for control of the Roman Empire. But we are getting ahead of our story. Our hero was martyred on 14 February 269 (or 270 or 273) some 40 years before the establishment of Christianity as the official state religion of Rome.

The second Valentinus was a Christian bishop of the Diocese of Terni in central Italy who was martyred on 14 February 273 on the Via Flaminia and likewise buried there. Some suggest that these two martyrs are one and the same martyr. Perhaps they are: their stories are very similar.

We know nothing about the third Valentinus, a Christian martyred in North Africa on 14 February around the year 270. So I will dismiss candidate number 3 and conflate the stories associated with Valentinus 1 and 2 to make one good story.

To assure my readers of my superior journalistic ethical standards: I must reveal that I personally paid my respects to St. Valentinus in his church built in 1960 for the Olympic games in Rome (To promote romance among athletes?). I also kissed a countess in the middle of the Milvian bridge.

While I am at the business of confessing, there is a fourth St. Valentinus, a bishop of Genoa, Italy. He died of natural causes on 03 May 307. He's important because of Chaucer. And Birds.

Nick Patricca is professor emeritus at Loyola University Chicago, president of Chicago Network and playwright emeritus at Victory Gardens Theater.

LGBTs disappointed with State of the Union speech

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

In his State of the Union address Jan. 28, President Obama spoke of a nation working on issues such as marriage equality and earning the respect of other nations "because we believe in the inherent dignity and equality of every human being, regardless of race or religion, creed or sexual orientation."

But while LGBT leaders expressed appreciation for those references, most voiced considerable disappointment over what he did not say.

Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said the president was "right to urge Congress to fix our broken immigration system this year, create more jobs, equal pay for women and the restoration of the Voting Rights Act." And she praised his announcement to sign an executive order to increase the minimum wage federal contractors must offer their employees. But, she added, "The irony is that some LGBT federal contract workers will get a pay raise but they could still be fired for who they are and who they love."

"The longer the president waits, the more damage LGBT people will face," said Carey. "Discrimination is a painful reality that is too often the lived experience of LGBT people. The president has to act when Congress won't."

Tico Almeida, founder and leader of the Freedom to Work group, also expressed frustration.

"President Obama should have challenged the House Republicans to allow a vote" on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), said Almeida. "It's disappointing that he has still not included LGBT workplace protections among the issues he will handle through executive order as part of his 'year of action,'" said Almeida. "Both ENDA and the LGBT executive order would have fit perfectly into the themes of this address."

Lorri Jean, executive director of the nation's largest LGBT community center and health facility, the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, praised Obama for saying "many important things about equality, or the lack thereof." But she, too, noted he said "nothing about the fact that no federal law protects LGBT people from employment discrimination, let alone equally harmful forms of discrimination."

The White House did issue to reporters a long supplemental statement in conjunction with the State of the Union address, and that statement did note that, "Today, federal law prohibits employment discrimination based on race, sex, religion and disability."

"It's time to add sexual orientation and gender identity to that list, so that no American worker can lose his or her job simply because of who they are or who they love," said the statement. "The Employment Non-Discrimination Act would provide strong federal protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers. Last year, a bipartisan majority of the Senate passed ENDA, and the President renews his call for the House to do the same."

But Jean said, "I'd be happier with [the supplemental statement] if it came last week or even next week" rather than in conjunction with the State of the Union address.

"It's almost as if he didn't dare to say it when the whole country was watching, but they put it out to quell any criticism from our community," said Jean. "It just seems odd."

Asked to respond, the White House said, "The State of the Union isn't a comprehensive list of all of the President's positions or priorities. The President has long supported ENDA, and its in-



President Obama. Photo by Patsy Lynch

clusion in our fact sheet reflects the President's belief that Congress needs to act. It's time to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of categories protected by federal law against employment discrimination. No American worker should lose his or her job simply because of who they are or who they love. Last year, a bipartisan majority of the Senate passed ENDA, and the President renews his call for the House to do the same."

Gregory T. Angelo, executive director of Log Cabin Republicans, was unimpressed with the president's speech, calling it "more of the same." He, too, dinged the president's speech for what it lacked.

"While the President's calls for a more equal nation are welcome," said Angelo, "there is a profound irony in the absence of any mention of [ENDA]."

LGBT activists have been, since the beginning of President Obama's first term, pressuring the White House to issue an executive order barring sexual orientation discrimination by federal contractors. Others have urged him to speak out more forcefully for ENDA.

Coincidentally, the Movement Advancement Project, in releasing its biennial assessment of the LGBT civil rights movement Tuesday, noted that the "top 50 federal government contractors (81 percent) include sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination policies."

Even the Human Rights Campaign, one of the LGBT community's strongest supporters of President Obama, could not hide its disappointment.

"The president's message tonight failed to address the needs of LGBT workers looking for a fair shake in this economy," said HRC President Chad Griffin in a statement issued after the address. "Not only was there no call for the House to pass a federal law to protect LGBT workers nationwide, President Obama also sidestepped his commitment to take action where Congress has left off, leaving out an order prohibiting discrimination by federal contractors. Unfortu-

nately, President Obama missed a real opportunity to use the State of the Union to improve the lives of LGBT people by taking immediate executive action to address anti-LGBT discrimination for the millions of Americans employed by federal contractors."

As in past years, President Obama included an openly gay person among the special guests

joining the First Lady in the House gallery during the State of the Union address. Tuesday night it was Jason Collins, the National Basketball Association player who, last year, became the first male player in a major American team sport to come out as gay.

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MAP report analyzes LGBT progress

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

An independent think tank that studies the progress of the movement on equal rights for LGBT people released its latest report Jan. 28, and the assessment is a surprising "mixed."

The Movement Advancement Project's (MAP's) "Momentum Report" acknowledges "unprecedented progress" towards marriage equality in the past two years but notes that, while 17 states allow same-sex couples to marry, 33 don't. And progress on other issues of importance to the LGBT movement, such as bullying and employment discrimination, "have slowed significantly."

"In fact, over half of U.S. states lack even the basic laws protecting LGBT people from discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations," notes MAP, a Denver-based group whose work is funded by 13 foundations and LGBT supporters, including the Gill Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the David Geffen Foundation, and James Hormel.

"The fact is, most states have passed few or no laws protecting LGBT people," states the report. "In the spirit of Charles Dickens' famous line, 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,' the remarkable progress of recent years in some states has obscured the fact that in a majority of states, LGBT people still are treated under the law as second-class citizens."

The report divides the states into three categories: "High Equality" states (20 plus D.C.), "Medium Equality" states (2-Wisconsin and Indiana), and "Low Equality" states. The "High Equality" states include California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York. The "Low Equality" states include Arizona, Florida, Michigan, and Texas.

The report said momentum favors contin-

ued progress in marriage equality, in large part because public opinion polls show a growing percentage of Americans accept the fairness of allowing same-sex couples to marry. But it noted that, despite the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision striking down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), the availability of benefits involving certain federal agencies—Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare, to name three big ones—remains "unclear."

The report also noted "real progress" in fighting discrimination through local government ordinances and major employer policies. It noted that 188 local governments in states with no sexual orientation discrimination protection now prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, as does 91 percent of Fortune 500 corporations.

Among the more interesting facts included in the report this year are:

—Every state but one has an openly LGBT elected official;

—There are more than one million LGBT veterans; 71,000 are serving in the military currently;

—There are about 140,000 transgender veterans;

—Only 21 states and D.C. have "unambiguous laws" allowing same-sex couples to adopt children;

—Twenty percent of hate crimes reported by law enforcement agencies to the FBI in 2012 involved sexual orientation bias;

—Three times as many people between the ages of 18 and 29 self-identify as LGBT compared to people 65 and older; and

—"The number of regular and recurring LGBT characters on broadcast network television reached its highest point in five years during the 2012-13 season."

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Invisible to Invincible (i2i) at the parade. Photo courtesy of Liz Thomson

i2i takes part in Lunar New Year Parade

Invisible to Invincible: Asian and Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago (i2i) participated for the second year in a row in Chinatown's Lunar New Year Parade celebrating the Year of the Horse.

Members, friends, and allies marched and were greeted with smiling faces and supportive cheers, as i2i made an additional banner this year with inclusive languages. After the parade, i2i held a social potluck to welcome in the new year together.

Founded in 2005, i2i is a multiethnic, multigender identity, and sexual orientation Asian and Pacific Islander grassroots, community organization. For more information, visit www.chicagoi2i.org.

Photo and text from Liz Thomson

Rutherford: Legal troubles won't harm campaign

BY MATT SIMONETTE

As the March 18 election determining which GOP gubernatorial candidate will square off against Pat Quinn this November draws near, Dan Rutherford finds himself in a difficult position—publicly addressing allegations of wrongdoing in his office of state treasurer without acknowledging what the allegations consist of, or even from whom the complaints originated.

Rutherford spoke with Windy City Times about the controversy Feb. 2.

On Jan. 31, Rutherford called a press conference to say a Chicago attorney told his lawyers and him that allegations being investigated in Rutherford's office would go away if they paid the originator of the complaints \$300,000. But Rutherford would not divulge who had made the allegations, or what the allegations were, at his Jan. 31 press conference, nor did he do so when he spoke to Windy City Times.

Rutherford is running against venture capitalist Bruce Rauner as well as state Sens. Bill Brady and Kirk Dillard.

Possible details emerged about the case the evening of Jan. 31, however. According to Chicago Sun-Times, a male employee in the treasurer's office was alleging sexual harassment by Rutherford. The employee planned to file both an EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) complaint and a complaint that his First Amendment rights had been violated. Chicagonow.com reported that the employee alleged he had to work on outside political activities while on the state clock.

Rutherford had been the subject of gay rumors and in August 2013 told Windy City Times, "I'm not gay." He repeated that assertion when asked again Feb. 2.

He is adamant that the allegations are mo-

tivated by politics more than anything else and said that his rival Rauner is behind them; on Jan. 31, he noted that Christine Svenson, the complainant's attorney, had done work for Rauner's campaign. Svenson said in a statement, however, that that work only entailed reviewing an office lease last April.

Rauner's campaign denies any wrongdoing in the matter. In a Jan. 31 statement, Rauner spokesman Mike Schrimpf said, "Treasurer Rutherford should spend his time answering the serious claims made against him by a state employee, rather than trying to distract attention with false claims against us," Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Rutherford said that his office was informed of the allegations shortly before his Jan. 23 debate in Peoria.

"Our in-house general counsel got an email from Christine Svenson saying the she was representing an employee from inside the Treasurer's office," said Rutherford. "...The next day, they set up a conference with her and our in-house general counsel and our outside labor counsel. Both attorneys were on the line with her in which she generally outlined the allegations. During that conversation, she said that they would be willing to 'keep it under wraps' and 'resolve it' for \$300,000."

Rutherford said he and his counsel were taken aback by Svenson allegedly volunteering to drop the matter for a pre-set dollar amount.

"I think that was the part that really caused all of us concern, when it is them saying, 'keep it under wraps,' and them saying, 'for \$300,000.'"

But in a Jan. 31 statement, Svenson characterized the discussions as being negotiations in good faith.

"Mr. Rutherford's general counsel and in-



Dan Rutherford.
Photo by
Kate Sosin

house counsel both expressed a strong interest in keeping the matter private, and also expressed an appreciation for our willingness to do so," Svenson said. "We were exchanging information and negotiating on a good-faith basis for days until as recently as yesterday [Jan. 30]. These types of negotiations are, in my experience, common with regard to the Treasurer's office and have nothing to do with politics or the gubernatorial primary."

Rutherford said that the matter would be investigated this week by an outside firm, adding, "The challenge I have is, I can't mention the name, or the allegations, or the facts that I have to refute them—that's what puts it in a politically tenuous situation just before the election."

He would not say whether his office would press for legal prosecution. "I prefer not to go down that path right now. We're going to have our internal investigators go through everything. Let's just suggest we're going to keep all options open."

Rutherford maintained that the legal wrangle would not be an insurmountable hurdle for the campaign. "The campaign is going well—it's pretty obvious that it had been going so well, because now we're at that season in which you're going to try to take out your opponent and destroy them," he said.

The campaign will soon be launching television commercials; Rauner has been running television commercials for some time now, while neither Brady nor Dillard have run television advertising in their campaigns. Rutherford also said that his campaign is financially sustainable, with about 26,000 individual contributors. "I'm not a self-funder. We raise our money from people who give the \$25, \$50 [and] \$100 checks, and we're very judicious in how we spend the money," he said.

Windy City Times' August profile of Rutherford can be found at: <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/GOP-gubernatorial-candidate-talks-LGBT-support/43998.html>.



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- James Crawley is, "hardworking ... has extensive practice experience... and is well regarded for his dedication to the law and his integrity." [Source: Chicago Bar Association]
- Endorsed by Congressman Mike Quigley, State Representative Greg Harris, State Representative Sara Feigenholtz, labor unions and Democratic ward organizations.
- Has a demonstrated 30-year record supporting LGBT causes and people with HIV/AIDS.



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SOCHI from cover

And it's not just the high-profile contingent. There was, for instance, a viral campaign launched in late January titled "Fuck You Putin," which six students and their teacher spearheaded in Sweden in response to Russia's anti-gay laws—with their middle-finger salute aimed directly at Vladimir Putin, the Russian president. Organized through Facebook, the campaign calls for pro-LGBT individuals around the world to use their mobile phones to Tweet, Facebook or Instagram a picture of themselves flipping off the camera with the tag #fuckyouputin.

That campaign's goal is to bring further attention and visibility to the anti-gay laws in Russia and the plight of LGBT Russians—and countless other groups, causes and individuals also have the same goal.

"Sochi creates an interesting scenario because there has been more interest and mainstream media coverage of LGBT in sports due to the [fact that the] Winter Olympics are happening in a country with anti-gay laws," said Rob Smitherman, a former Chicago resident now living in Cleveland and part of the organizing committee for the 2014 Gay Games, to be held this August in Ohio. "When the Olympics happened in London, there was little, if any, discussion of inclusion of LGBT athletes on a widespread level. So, ironically, one of the legacies of the 2014 Winter Olympics will be a more global appreciation and understanding of the importance of welcoming everybody to the playing fields around the world."

Daniel Vaudrin, of Montreal, is the president of the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association (GLISA), the international sport and human rights organization that runs the quadrennial, multi-sport World Outgames. "I think [the Sochi Games are] an amazing opportunity for the LGBT community to really have a global discussion [on gay rights]."

Since the passage of Russia's anti-gay propaganda law, the spotlight on gays in Russia has been ever-present—and certainly eye-opening. In late January, for instance, the video of Russian protestor Pavel Lebedev made its way around the world via the Internet. Lebedev was tackled by police and then forcefully removed after waving a rainbow flag during an Olympic torch procession in his hometown of Voronezh, Russia.

"Hosting the games here contradicts the basic principles of the Olympics, which is to cultivate tolerance," Lebedev told the Associated Press, which contacted him by phone while he was at the police station.

Smitherman said the Lebedev incident was "so sad" to watch, and also "shows how lucky we are in the United States, how far we have to go, and why it is important that the Gay Games exists."

Brian Kupersmit, president of the predominantly gay Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA), expressed hope that "issues," gay or others, would not cast a further shadow over the 2014 Sochi Games, "especially at a time when the world is coming together to celebrate athletes, many who have trained their whole lives for these Games," he said. "But unfortunately, my gut tells me that there will be [more issues]. The entire world will be watching and I suspect visitors and athletes will show their support through the use of the rainbow flag. We all will have to wait and see how the Russian government and the [International Olympic Committee] IOC handle whatever arises."

President Obama sent a loud message to Putin and the entire country of Russia that he does not support their anti-gay ways. He opted out of the official U.S. delegation to the Sochi Olympics and, instead, is sending a group featuring three high-profile gays: tennis legend Billie Jean King, three-time Olympic figure skater Brian Boitano and former Olympic hockey player Caitlin Cahow.

Obama will not be attending, nor will a member of the president's family or an active Cabinet secretary, marking the first time in at least 20 years that no U.S. president, vice president, one of their wives or a current cabinet secretary will be in a U.S. Olympic delegation.

The highest-ranking official will be former Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano.

"The inclusion of LGBT athletes in the U.S. delegation shows the world that the United States is willing to stand up for what's right in the face of something so wrong as Russia's anti-gay laws," Smitherman said. "More importantly, the delegation represents the diversity in sport, signaling to all the LGBT competitors—those who are openly gay and those who are still closeted—that their world-class talent is appreciated and welcomed."

Kupersmit added, "Sending openly gay athletes to represent the U.S. sends a clear message to the Russian government and the world that we are proud of all of our athletes, both straight and gay, and will not allow the ignorance of world leaders to push anyone into the closet or off the world stage."

Cyd Zeigler, the co-founder of gay sports website Outsports.com, said Obama's inclusion of Cahow "was the most powerful selection, because she is there clearly to include LGBT athletes."

Hayley Wickenheiser, meanwhile, was named Canada's flag-bearer for the opening ceremonies at the Sochi Olympics, it was announced in late January.

A women's hockey legend who has led her Canadian team to three consecutive Olympic gold medals, Wickenheiser, 35, is making her fifth Olympic appearance. She also has long been outspoken against Russia's anti-gay legislation and the right of athletes to compete at the Olympics no matter what their sexual orientation.

Cries for a boycott of the Sochi Games, based on Russia's anti-gay stance, have reverberated worldwide since moments after that country passed the laws.

Others, meanwhile, have been just as adamant that any boycott would do nothing whatsoever to advance gay-rights.

Smitherman, Kupersmit and Zeigler all opposed a boycott.

"The 2014 Gay Games does not support a boycott," Smitherman said. "While we certainly do not support Russia's anti-gay laws, this is about the athletes. We support all of the athletes competing. We also think the Winter Olympics in Russia offers an excellent opportunity to further the discussion of the LGBT community in sports, and the value of welcoming and inclusive playing fields around the world."

Kupersmit said that a boycott of the Games hurts the athletes more than anything.

Think back to 1936, Kupersmit said. Jesse Owens went to Berlin to compete for the U.S. Adolf Hitler was using those Games, held in Germany, as a way to push "Nazi propaganda, promoting concepts of 'Aryan racial superiority' and depicted ethnic Africans as inferior," Kupersmit said.

Owens, an African-American track-and-field sensation, won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Games—and was the most successful athlete at those Summer Olympics.

"The fact that we did not boycott the Games in 1936 allowed one athlete, Owens, to take hold of history and turn a dark period of time into something much brighter that, to this day, continues to inspire athletes from all walks of life," Kupersmit said. "I really hope that the openly gay athletes competing in the 2014 Games achieve the same results."

Zeigler added, "From day one I said a boycott was a terrible idea. It punished the wrong people. Plus, no boycott of the Olympic Games has ever accomplished a thing. You don't win by sitting on the sidelines; you win by participating to your fullest."

GLISA's Vaudrin said by phone in late January that GLISA also has never, ever supported a



Openly gay figure-skating legend Brian Boitano is part of the U.S. delegation to the Sochi Winter Olympics.

boycott of the Winter Olympics.

A boycott "would have been the wrong message, especially since, if you're not present, you're not able to talk about anything," Vaudrin said.

The Federation of Gay Games (FGG) opposed an athlete or a country boycott, but it does support a political boycott. "The intention of Vladimir Putin is to use these Olympics as a stage to promote himself and his regime," said Marc Naimark, Vice President, External Affairs for the Federation of Gay Games (FGG). "By refusing to attend, world leaders deprive him of this opportunity and show their opposition to the host country's policies without harming athletes."

NBC will broadcast the Sochi Games, and the network's most high-profile announcer, Bob Costas, has made it clear in pre-Olympic interviews that he will address Russia's anti-gay stance—and he wants to talk about it face-to-face with Putin himself.

"If Putin doesn't drag his butt into the studio, then we'll talk about [Russian anti-gay laws] without him," Costas told the press in early January. "But if he shows up, we'd rather talk to him."

Bernard Cherkasov, the CEO of Equality Illinois, said the 2014 Sochi Games are taking place at a time when the world has made tremendous progress toward LGBT equality—and yet the Games are being hosted "by a regime that is not just unfriendly, but has taken affirmative steps to marginalize and oppress its LGBT citizens," he said.

The response of the democratic countries to recent Russian actions has not been strong enough, Cherkasov added. "Sending a U.S. delegation that [features] openly LGBT athletes is symbolic, but it doesn't show Russia that there are consequences to their bad actions."

"If there is a silver lining to this, it is that fair-minded people all over the world are looking at Russia's homophobic actions and are having conversations [about] LGBT equality and oppression."

Smitherman said that the 2014 Gay Games (Aug. 9-16 in Northeast Ohio) is supporting the Russian LGBT Sports Federation, and have a special offer for Gay Games participants. Anyone who uses the code "Sochi" through the end of March will receive \$10 off general registration and have \$20 of their registration fee donated to the Russian LGBT Sports Federation. "[Gay Games] participants can save [money] and donate to support the athletes who face Russia's anti-gay laws year-round," he said.

Vaudrin speculated that, "for sure—it's al-

most inevitable" that something major is going to happen during the Sochi Games for a gay, or anti-gay, forefront.

"I would not be surprised if [a major gay incident occurs], but would be extremely disappointed if it turned to violence because the LGBT community has never been about violence; it's about being there in the street, in your face, discussing, shouting, screaming ... but it's never been about guns or violence, explosions, or killing other people," he said.

FGG's Naimark said the first "gay issue" is the fear instilled by the Russian government and the IOC. "For athletes who are gay, any concerns they may have about their safety in general or in the case of any demonstration of their sexual orientation, for example, embracing a partner, can interfere with their performance," Naimark said. "The IOC needed to make clear what behavior was acceptable, rather than hiding behind Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter. Thomas Bach has just now made clear something we encouraged him to announce at our meeting on Nov. 30: that athletes are free to respond to journalists' questions as they see fit."

Blake Skjellerup, a speed skater from New Zealand, came out as gay after competing in the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, where he finished 16th. He was poised to compete as an out and proud gay Olympian in Sochi, and even promised to wear an official Olympic rainbow pin on his uniform—and he would have been the first publicly out male athlete to ever compete in a Winter Olympics. But Skjellerup finished 33rd in qualifying for the 500-meter short track speed skating event, which was one spot out of automatic qualification.

Russian Olympic organizers denied a request to host a Pride House at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Pride House, which was first organized for the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games in Vancouver, is a welcoming venue for LGBT athletes, fans, allies, and others during international sporting events.

But officials with Pride House International didn't stop when told "No" for Sochi.

Instead, in late January, Pride House International (PHI) announced that almost 30 communities around the world would be hosting a Remote Pride House.

Chicago is scheduled to have a Remote Pride House, according to the PHI website.

Les Johnson is promoting remote Pride Houses in the U.S., where about 10 are scheduled.

The hosts of future Pride Houses are jumping on the Remote Pride House bandwagon, including Glasgow (2014 Commonwealth Games), Brazil (2014 FIFA World Cup), and Toronto (2015 Pan Am Games), as well as the organizing committees for the 2014 Gay Games in Cleveland and the next World Outgames in Miami (2017).

Another campaign aimed at showing support for the LGBT community is the Same-Sex Hand-Holding Initiative (SSHHI), which is asking attendees at the 2014 Sochi Olympic and Paralympic Games to take every opportunity to hold hands in public with a person of the same sex to denounce the anti-gay laws in Russia and to call the IOC to action to end discrimination in sport, according to its website.

SSHHI has an ongoing photo campaign, featuring same-sex individuals. Photos for the campaign, including photos taken in mid-January at the Sin City Shootout, a multi-sport LGBT event held in Las Vegas, and elsewhere. Smitherman has been photographed for the SSHHI, as well as trans mixed martial-arts fighter Fallon Fox, and Kurt Dahl, the president of FGG and a Chicago area resident.

"It will be a strong signal that there are LGBT people in Sochi," Vaudrin said.



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Bob Gammie (right) with then-Mayor Richard Daley.

Longtime leader and activist Bob Gammie dies

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Bob Gammie, 88, a longtime community leader and activist, died January 30 due to cardiac arrest. For the past few years he battled bilateral lung cancer, COPD and heart failure.

Lori Cannon, longtime community HIV/AIDS activist and co-founder of Vital Bridges Center on Chronic Care of Heartland Health Outreach, relayed his death to Windy City Times.

Gammie was born Oct. 19, 1925 in Oak Park, Ill., and he was raised in Riverside, Ill. He served in both the Army and Air Force during World War II. Prior to his retirement, Gammie managed the unemployment office in Evanston, Ill., for many years.

Gammie is survived by two devoted friends,

William R. North and Frank McManigal; brother of Helen (B.J.) Johnson of Lake Geneva, Wis., and Mary (Mark) Anderson of Bailey, Colo.; and uncle of Christine Johnson and Robert Johnson. He was preceded in death by another devoted friend, Paul Moore.

Known as "Ma" or "Gammie" among many of his friends, he was active in the community for more than 60 years, most recently with the group Chicago Prime Timers and the SAGE program at the Center on Halsted. Gammie moved to Chicago in 1949, and during the 1950s and 1960s he organized social gatherings—including weekly Tuesday night barbecues, softball games that later morphed into Chicago's gay softball leagues, bowling and volleyball games—that evolved into the Lincoln Park

Lagooners, Chicagoland's first gay and lesbian social organization.

He was also known for his Halloween and New Year's Eve parties as well as the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners he hosted for members of the community, including many of whom had no place to go.

As a community leader and activist, Gammie helped a number of local LGBT organizations including the Howard Brown Memorial Clinic by combining fun with fundraising. He held many fundraising events in the 1980s at his home and at the Aragon Ballroom as well as other locations around Chicago. These events drew thousands of people with the profits going to support Howard Brown Health Center, Horizons Community Service (now the Center on Halsted) and other LGBT charities.

Gammie was inducted in the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2010 and also served as a board member of Chicago Prime Timers for 12 years.

"I will remember him as the person who always said let's go and where's the next party," said North. "Bob told me that being inducted into the Hall of Fame was the highlight of his life."

"I was one of many of the hundreds of people who attended his annual New Year's Eve bash at his historic address 5333 North Lakewood. These were parties of the highest order and by that I mean old school. It was an end-of-the-year celebration for all and the house was packed with members of the community; however, in the early to mid-'80s the party stopped for me with the burgeoning HIV/AIDS epidemic," said Cannon.

"While we organized volunteers to deliver meals to homebound people living with AIDS, Bob continued his association and contributions to community organizations like the Lincoln Park Lagooners and the Prime Timers," Cannon added. "As somebody who respected the mission of feeding people, many of whom were his young friends whom he lost, Bob became a donor and a support when we opened our pantry in the early '90s. Bob also became a regular visitor to our center in Edgewater. As a well known and longtime member of the senior LGBT community, I appreciated the kindness and support Bob offered my program, our low-income clients, and volunteers."

One person who benefitted from Gammie's generosity was Albert Prieto. "Bob had a Victorian home in Edgewater and he took in borders over the years including Albert who lived with Bob for two and a half years," said Prieto's partner, Joseph Zanoni. "Bob supported people who needed a place to stay because they couldn't afford an apartment on their

own and/or wanted companionship/support. That is where the den-mother side of Bob's life came into play, as he welcomed people into his home. They became his family.

"I met Bob through Albert and one year Bob invited us to Thanksgiving and both of us ended up at the kids' table since we are so much younger than Bob and his other friends. He was so welcoming and loving to everyone as well as a very unique person. We are sad to see him go."

Prieto continued, "I had barely come out to my family but Bob made it a point to throw a big bash for my 30th birthday. This was before I met Joseph. I didn't want a party but Bob didn't listen and it ended up being so much fun. Bob also made a point to invite my family to the party. That night meant so much to me and I will remember Bob as a very generous and heartwarming person."

"Bob always said life is a party and he was the hostess with the mostest. He had so much energy and we all fed off of it. It was contagious," said his longtime friend and former roommate, Greg Neil. "He acquired the nickname 'Ma' because he was a den mother to so many younger gay men like myself. I also lived in his home which he called The 'Winter Palace.' It was so refreshing for me to see Bob live as an openly gay man long before anyone was talking about gay rights."

A memorial service/celebration of Gammie's life is in the planning stages and will be held in April.

LGBT bar association to honor Allstate lawyer

The National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Bar Association announced it has selected Elliot Stultz—senior vice president, assistant secretary and deputy general counsel of Allstate Insurance Company—to receive its Out & Proud Corporate Counsel Award during a Feb. 6 reception at Chicago's Metropolitan Club, according to a press release.

Stultz is the executive sponsor of Allstate's LGBT resource group, ANGLES (Allstate Network of Gay and Lesbian Employees and Supporters), which includes approximately 200 members from Allstate's offices across the country.

Email Kelly@LGBTbar.org for additional information.

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2014 Planning Calendar

Windy City Times presents here some highlights of the second half of the 2014 calendar year in Chicago. See full details and many more events in the online calendar for Windy City Times, posted here: www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/chicago/events/upcoming.php.

Make sure to send your calendar listings to this email as soon as you have events: calendar@windycitymediagroup.com.

Groups can also post their own events here:

www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/chicago/events/postanevent.php.

Friday, July 4 —Independence Day	—Windy City Times 29th Anniversary; Windy City Times was founded in 1985.
Wednesday, July 9 —Taste of Chicago 2014 Annual City of Chicago food festival begins	Saturday, Oct. 4 —AIDS Run & Walk Chicago: Date tentative —Yom Kippur
Saturday, July 12 —Ride For AIDS Chicago (through July 13)	Saturday, Oct. 11 —Coming Out Day
Saturday, July 19 —11th Annual Disability Pride Parade	Monday, Oct. 13 —Columbus Day
Friday, Aug. 1 —Lollapalooza 3-day music festival	Thursday, Oct. 16 —Spirit Day: Go purple against bullying
Saturday, Aug. 9 —North Halsted Market Days —Gay Games (Aug. 9 through 16 in Ohio)	Friday, Oct. 31 —Halloween
Sunday, Aug. 10 —North Halsted Market Days	Tuesday, Nov. 4 —General elections
Saturday, Aug. 16 —Dance for Life Chicago	Tuesday, Nov. 11 —Veterans Day
Sunday, Aug. 17 —Air & Water Show	Thursday, Nov. 20 —Transgender Day of Remembrance
Thursday, Aug. 21 —National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association Convention and 10th LGBT Media Summit, 4 days in Chicago	Thursday, Nov. 27 —Thanksgiving
Friday, Aug. 29 —Mr Continental Pageant through Aug. 30	Monday, Dec. 1 —World AIDS Day
Sunday, Aug. 31 —Miss Continental Pageant through Sept. 1.	Thursday, Dec. 4 —AIDS Foundation of Chicago: World of Chocolate
Monday, Sept. 1 —Labor Day	Wednesday, Dec. 17 —Chanukah (first day; through Dec. 24)
Tuesday, Sept. 23 —Bi Visibility Day	Thursday, Dec. 25 —Christmas
Thursday, Sept. 25 —Rosh Hashanah	Friday, Dec. 26 —Kwanzaa (until Jan. 1)
	Wednesday, Dec. 31 —New Year's Eve

Springfield bishop: Gay marriage is 'basically a lie'

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Bishop Thomas Paprocki of the Springfield Diocese—who, last November, held a mass exorcism that coincided with gay marriage being signed into law by Gov. Pat Quinn—has compared supporters of same-sex marriage to children in need of punishment by their parents, Rawstory.com reported.

In an interview posted Jan. 27 on Lifesite-News.com, a website containing primarily anti-abortion content, Paprocki also said that gay marriage emanated from a "lie" but that his opposition was intended as a loving gesture.

"You have to understand what love is all about," Paprocki said. "Love is really to seek the best for people, and by being opposed to the redefinition of marriage, and being opposed to the things that are sinful—that's actually a very loving thing."

He added, "Perhaps it's the permissiveness of our society, that when you don't give someone something they want, you're being hateful, but any good parent will tell you that sometimes you have to disappoint your child. Sometimes you have to say 'no' and sometimes you have to punish. When a parent does these things, they're not being hateful to their children, they're showing them the loving way of doing things."

He also explained that the ritual in No-

vember was a "minor exorcism," comparable to an exorcism that would be performed at a child's baptism.

Paprocki said that he has received support from both Catholics and non-Catholics "who believe in the proper understanding of marriage and in God's divine plan." He characterized his opposition as coming from "secular media" and politicians pushing a "stridently secular agenda."

He denounced much of what's reported in the media as "a lot of lies, [and] dishonest things being said—for example, the claim that children being brought up in homes with same-sex couples have no adverse effects. There are statistics and studies that show that's simply not the case. The whole idea that two people who love each other and should be able to get married, even if they are the same sex—that's basically a lie."

Paprocki added that he was going to continue his struggle. "We are facing a lot of untruths out there. We just have to be persistent and courageous, and stand up to that."

Paprocki's interview was recorded at the March for Life in Washington D.C.

Data released in October from a Quinnipiac University poll suggested that 60 percent of U.S. Catholics support same-sex marriage, while 31 percent are opposed.

Lesbian judicial candidate withdraws

Linda Pael has withdrawn her candidacy for judge of the circuit court of Cook County, Tenth Subcircuit.

Pael actually withdrew in December. A post on her Facebook page reads, "I'm announcing the withdrawal of my candidacy for Circuit Court Judge in the 10th subcircuit and throwing my support behind the slated candidate, Judge Anthony Kyriakopoulos."

"This was a very difficult decision to make but, ultimately, the right one. Judge Tony was slated by the 10th subcircuit committee on Friday. I was slated as the alternate and look forward to running should another vacancy become available. My ultimate goal is to make it to the bench but I am happy to continue serving the community through my work at the City's law department and through my other volunteer activities."

"I could not have gotten this far without the support and encouragement of so many wonderful people including my endorsers, volunteers, contributors, friends and my amazing family. Please know that I am extremely grateful to you all."

"In the words of Hillary Clinton, 'Life is too short, time is too precious, and the stakes are too high to dwell on what might have been. We have to work together for what still can be.'"

In an interview with Windy City Times that ran last August (<http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/ELECTIONS-14-Linda-Pael-Lesbian-judicial-candidate-stages-her-comeback/44221.html>), Pael discussed everything from why she was running for judge to having former political candidate Ed Mullen as her press liaison.

When contacted about anything else she wished to say, Pael responded to Windy City Times that she felt nothing additional was needed.



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NEXT LECTURE



SAT., MAR. 1, 2014, 11AM-1PM

LOURDES TORRESS

Making Familia from Scratch: Towards a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago

Lourdes Torres is Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at DePaul University. Since the scholarship that exists on lesbian organizing in the Midwest neglects to engage with the history of Latina lesbian organizing, this project constitutes an effort to name Latina lesbians as agents of change and active subjects of a multiracial history of grassroots organizing. Torres writes: "I explore the history of two organizations in Chicago—Amigas Latinas and LENA. I discuss the efforts of the organizations to create Latina lesbian visibility in both the 'Latino and 'lesbian' social and political cultures of Chicago, and their successful and unsuccessful efforts to negotiate divergent national and ethnic histories, class and linguistic differences, and the diverse political stances of their membership."

UPCOMING LECTURES

SAT., 4/5/14

Anne Balay
Steel Closets: Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Steelworkers

SAT., 5/3/14

Timothy Stewart-Winter
From Civil Rights to Gay Rights in Chicago

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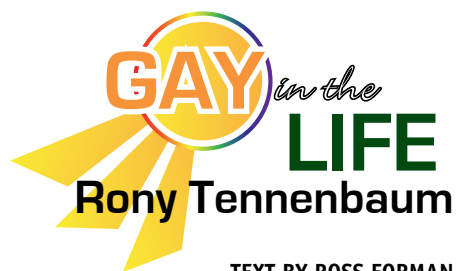
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TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF TENNENBAUM

Age
49

Neighborhood
Andersonville

Relationship status
Partnered 20 years

Job title
Jewelry designer at Rony Tennenbaum

Favorite movie
The Women (1939)

Hobbies
Reading, hiking, bird watching and going to the beach

Favorite TV show
Downton Abbey

Favorite pizza toppings
Mushrooms and black olives

Dream vacation destination
Australia

Little-known fact
"I love rainy days."

Rony Tennenbaum has worked in jewelry manufacturing for more than 25 years after having done just about every stage of jewelry production—casting, polishing, setting, sourcing and more.

About six years ago, he started a jewelry line, focused on same-sex couples' engagement, wedding and anniversary rings. "One element within the industry that hooked me was the wedding portion," Tennenbaum said. "I am a romantic, and love the idea of being a part of a couple's very intimate moment of exchanging wedding vows and commitment, through symbols made of gold or platinum. I felt I could be a part of a couple's ceremony without intruding on their personal moment."

Tennenbaum starts most days at 6 a.m., and no two days are alike, he said. He answers emails, then sets out on errands to collect castings, diamonds, drop offs, pickups and anything else for rings that may be on order. Then he often creates ads for Facebook and magazines, answers customer inquiries, write columns and articles, and more. "There is always an interview or a training session that needs to be done, or prepared for," he said. "And among all these routines, I am always creating new collections and campaigns for upcoming seasons."

Tennenbaum said building a new collection, and bringing it from sketch to life, "is always thrilling to me," he said. Tennenbaum also cherishes the love stories he often hears. "Their rings always play such an important role, and listening to their needs and desires, being a part of their journey, excites me," he said.

The worst part of his job is "when rings don't turn out the way I want, or on time," he said.

"One of my favorite stories was a male couple [that] came to my store [after driving] almost two hours because they felt comfortable and at ease discussing their ring selection with me," he said. "After their visit, they each knew what the other liked and wanted, and shortly thereafter, each contacted me in secret to start work on the other's ring. For

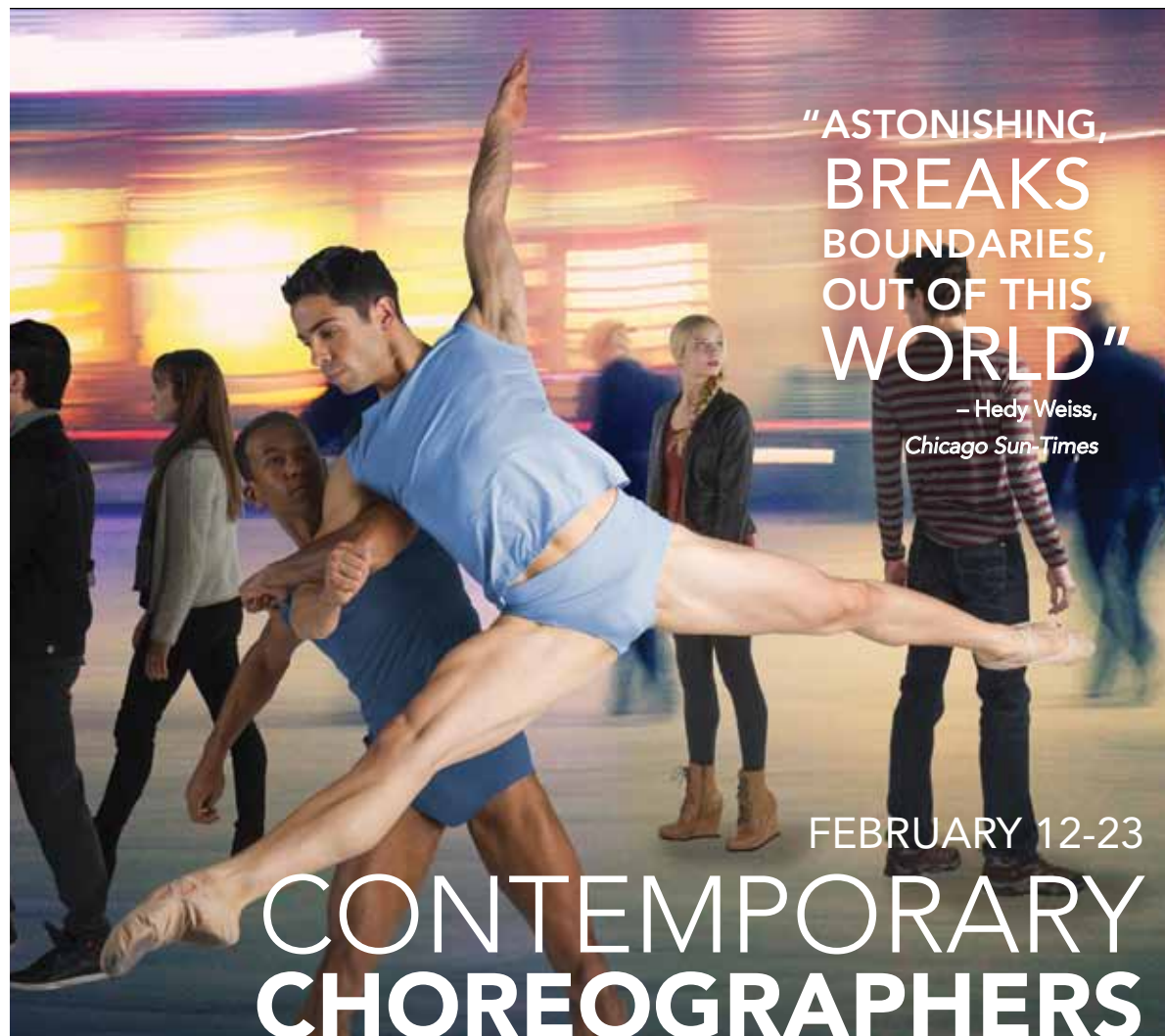


three weeks I was creating these two beautiful rings, without the other knowing. The first ring was ready and about two days later, he proposed through teary eyes and a speech on one knee while walking along the beach. The second ring was ready a couple of days later, and the other partner surprised the first with a proposal of his own."

Tennenbaum was at their wedding last October.

"Rings to me represent a commitment between two people," he said. "They are a symbol of love, devotion and a commitment to be united in love for one another. I don't think sexual orientation has anything to do with bringing two people in love together."

Tennenbaum said his long-term goal is to be a part of as many same-sex weddings as possible—through his rings, his well-wishes, or simply his thoughts.



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BREAKS
BOUNDARIES,
OUT OF THIS
WORLD"

— Hedy Weiss,
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TIM
DILLINGER

Remembering Gwen Avery (1943-2014)

Gwen Avery's voice was like a roll of thunder. A long, low rumble that exploded into a body-shaking crackle. It unearthed all that was not exposed and anyone in the vicinity could not help but feel it. She was a force of nature.

Voices like hers are not nurtured on American Idol or The Voice. No. They spend years gestating in the uncomfortable beauty of real life, soaking in hard pains and simple joys. They are often overlooked, dismissed or ignored—but most of the time, they keep on singing for those who have ears to hear.

Gwen's voice started forming at a young age, growing up in her grandmother's juke joint in Verona, Pennsylvania. She saw it all at an early age: the fighting, the sex, the fellowship and the music. By the age of four, she was singing along with the jukebox on table top. The sounds of the blues, soul and gospel were whirling around and inside of her, helping her find her voice. Her grandmother, Miss Clara Benson, also sang and played guitar. Gwen told the San Francisco Gate in 2002, "When she opened her mouth, your hair stood on end. It was raw. I'm still searching for that within myself." Her grandfather loved and recited poetry, further expanding the art of storytelling that she was absorbing from the blues and gospel music that surrounded her.

"I came from a house where my grandma sold beer and whiskey to make a living. That's how I was raised—in this house of ill repute. And gospel music flowed in that house with whiskey and beer as frequently as there were church services."—Gwen Avery, San Francisco Bay Times

The first time we heard Gwen on wax was on a live album (with other featured artists) titled Any Woman's Blues, recorded live inside the Women's Jail at San Bruno, California on December 31, 1975. Her two songs were revival fire and gutbucket blues, Black power and woman power all rolled into one line-blurring presentation. She took us back to what she felt in that juke joint and told the world who Gwen Avery was.

Olivia Records was at the forefront of the burgeoning women's music movement. Founded in 1973, the Olivia collective was producing music by women and for women. Their first release was a 45 of collective member Meg Christian on one side and Cris Williamson on the other. They made \$12,000 with that 45 and used that money to release Meg Christian's debut album, and right after, the groundbreaking Changer & The Changed by Cris Williamson. Changer became the best-selling independent album of its time, going on to sell over 500,000 copies.

While women's music had certainly been radical, it hadn't yet put the spotlight on women of color. Linda Tillery was producing an album on BeBe K'Roche, an Olivia-signed band. Simultaneously, Gwen was introduced to the Olivia collective by visual artist Marianne Boers. Mary Watkins began working with Olivia around the same time. Linda, Gwen and Mary were featured on the landmark collection, Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianology of Songs & Poems in 1977.

It is safe to say that "Sugar Mama" was the

break-out tune on the collection. Rich, maple syrup in sound. An unabashed declaration of love and passion: "I wanna love you up and down and all over, just like I said...I wanna be your sugar mama..." It was inviting, endearing, romantic music for women loving women, with Gwen, this time, starring as the crooner. This was music that very well could have been on the jukebox that she sang to as a child. Her vision was crystal clear. Listeners immediately related to this sound. Gwen had invited the world in—and those who heard, saw her and loved her. She had produced the sound of something that was innate, yet spoken so rarely, the gift of hearing it was immediately treasured.

"She was a tough, fragile woman ... an open book in a way, with such tender passion for music and life. Vulnerable, flawed, capable of singing all that complex, powerful feeling. Not easy for her, and what she gave us was unique."—Rhiannon, jazz vocalist

In 1978, Olivia coordinated the Varied Voices of Black Women tour for Gwen, Linda Tillery, Mary Watkins and Pat Parker. In Songs in Black and Lavender: Race, Sexual Politics and Women's Music, Eileen M. Hayes writes, "The tour demonstrated that white lesbians were not the only ones creating a new women's culture.



Gwen Avery.
Photo from
the archives
of Jana Leal

Though the concert [tour] was first and foremost a celebration of Black lesbian feminist identity and culture, it was also an attempt to broaden the white feminist community's understanding of feminist and lesbian identity."

"Gwen was an unstoppable powerhouse ... from the moment she hit the stage. If you weren't prepared ... she just took you there, anyway!"—Jana Leal, women's music producer

"A better way to explain [Avery's performance] is to borrow a word she used quite often: freedom. Free to shout to Avery during and between songs, Free to demonstrate one's own feelings without the slightest thought of what others are thinking. Free for Avery to strip parts of her suit and toss them into the screaming crowd."—Aztec Campus News, concert review

Gwen stood apart on the tour. She is quoted as saying: "I dressed differently. I would wear satin suits and platform shoes with an Afro with neckties and beautiful silk shirts. They were wearing plaid shirts and blue jeans." She was set to release an album on Olivia in 1978, but that release never came to be. She told J.D. Doyle in a 2011 interview that she was "pitched out because I would move my hips, or lick my lips on stage and it was too much for the women's community. They thought that was too much. It's so insulting when I think of it, to defy my culture, that's what they wanted me to do, and I guess, sit there with my legs crossed and my arms folded."

"Gwen was a real CHARACTER," said feminist activist Toni Armstrong Jr., former publisher of HOT WIRE: The Journal of Women's Music and Culture. "Most of her official bios and obits will feature her musical and political contributions as a foremother of lesbian women's music—and rightly so. It shouldn't be lost that she also brought us joy, outrageousness, and

a commitment to telling it like it is; she challenged us all. At a time when most musicians were still afraid to fully come out, Gwen busted through with an explicitly sexy song. Whether it was butch pride, race relations, or personal matters, she was often hilarious and dead-on in her observations. The world is a much less lively and less interesting place without Gwen Avery in it."

In an interview with the San Francisco Gate in 2002, she maintained that "the same issues of race and classism that confounded the early feminist and gay rights movements also infected the women's music scene. I've always felt like a warrior or soldier. I've learned to deal with separation, isolation in the crowd, rejection in the abandonment."

Gwen continued performing through the 1980s and '90s, but struggled. A job was hard to hold down, and gigs were sporadic. June Millington recorded one of Gwen's performances at her Institute For The Musical Arts and it was released in cassette-only format in 1993. It wasn't until 2001, however, that things began to take a turn.

Gwen was reunited with Linda Tillery and Mary Watkins for an interview for Radical Harmonies, a documentary that told the story of the Women's Music movement. It was during that time that the seeds for Gwen's official solo debut took shape. Linda Tillery, now a Grammy-nominated artist, took charge of production duties and Gwen's manager Emily Tinchler launched a successful publicity campaign to make her audience aware of Gwen's debut album, appropriately titled Sugar Mama. It won the Out Music Award for Outstanding New Recording in 2001. She did a successful run of performances across the country in promotion of the work.

A lack of Internet presence via a website and social media hindered the progression of this phase of Gwen's resurgence. Sugar Mama never made it onto iTunes or any of the electronic music stores, making it virtually impossible for the global audience that loved Gwen to keep up with what she was doing or even book her for performances. But maybe that wasn't the point. "It's a slow crank, but I like it that way," said Avery to Berkeley's Daily Planet. "I never craved the big excitement like—what's her name? ... Britney."

She spent the last decade of her life performing in the Bay Area's Russian River region, bridging the gap between the blues and gospel, continuing to thrill audiences with her distinct interpretation of the rich heritage of Black music. She appeared at a local venue, Main Street Station, regularly and was beloved by the community there. Perhaps it became another version of her grandmother's juke joint—a safe place for her and others.

She bridged worlds and blurred lines—and sometimes that made people uncomfortable. That's what great artists do. She saw the importance of race, gender, culture and sexuality and transcended the boxes that we are trained to try to fit inside of—even in our differentness. Her life is certainly quite a signpost for any of us who have ever felt 'different' even amongst the 'different'. May we continue to listen to the magic she made and try to catch up to the woman she was.

A very special thanks to everyone who contributed quotes to this article. An extra special thanks to Toni Armstrong Jr. and Jana Leal for their kindness, resources and connecting powers. Photos from the archives of Jana Leal.

Tim Dillinger is an award-winning singer-songwriter, producer, poet, speaker and activist whose career spans almost 20 years. His most recent album, The Baton: 1985, was released in June 2013 on Suxcess Records.

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by
Dan Rest/
Lyric Opera
of Chicago

A HAIRY SITUATION

Out director-choreographer Rob Ashford talks about helping the Lyric Opera's *The Barber of Seville*. See below.

THEATER

The 'Plain' event.

Page 14

Photo from *From White Plains*
by Charley Rae Bressler



DISH

Doing the tango.

Page 30

Photo of dish at ARTango



MOVIES

About Alice.

Page 18

Photo of Alice Walker and Pratibha
Parmar by Shaheen Haz



SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Esteemed Ashford tackles opera

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

In her book *Patti LuPone: A Memoir*, the Tony Award-winning Broadway star had some unpleasant things to say about the supporting ensemble that backed her up in the 1987 Lincoln Center Theater revival of *Anything Goes*. Yet LuPone specifically went out of her way to say nice things about *Anything Goes* chorus member Rob Ashford.

"Whew!" said Ashford when asked about LuPone's name-check of him, grateful not to have been on the strong-willed diva's shit list. But in the grand scheme of show biz, LuPone most likely didn't want to get on the bad side of Ashford, who has gone from being a tap-dancing chorus boy to one of the most respected and sought-after director-choreographers in the United States and the United Kingdom.

A look at Ashford's recent credits is astonishing due to the high-profile projects he's collaborated on, many with high-voltage celebrities attached.

On stage, Ashford has directed celebrities like Scarlett Johansson, Daniel Radcliffe and Sir Kenneth Branagh, respectively, in New York productions of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and a forthcoming *Macbeth* that originated last year in Manchester, England. And for TV, Ashford recently staged NBC's *The Sound of Music Live!* starring Carrie Underwood and he's set to return to stage numbers for the Academy Awards again this year.

The director-choreographer, recently named to *OUT* magazine's 2013 *OUT 100* list, was in the *Windy City* for his first crack at directing opera with a new production of Rossini's com-

edy *The Barber of Seville* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. After the Academy Awards, Ashford will head to Houston to stage his second opera, a new production of Bizet's tragedy *Carmen*.

"The thing is that I just want to keep growing and I want to keep pushing myself," said Ashford when asked about adding his opera direction to his expansive resume of musicals and serious drama. "And I find sometimes when it's scary you dig deeper and you find something else inside your kind of 'creative wells.'"

Ashford was exposed to opera first as a dancer for companies like the Pittsburgh Opera while he was attending college, and later for a season dancing with the Metropolitan Opera when he moved to New York.

"I thought it was a lot of fun and so large and so expansive and so hectic," Ashford said. "I've always loved the scale of opera."

Although Ashford has choreographed for opera companies before, notably director Robert Carsen's 2007 production of Leonard Bernstein's operetta *Candide* that played Paris, Milan and London, he didn't think of directing opera until he saw former Donmar Warehouse colleague Michael Grandage direct his first opera, Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd*, in 2010 for the Gynedebourne Festival in the U.K.

"It was stunning. It was so beautiful, and what he had done was he had taken exactly what we had done in making theater, and kind of applied it to opera, but on this grand and absolutely riveting scale," Ashford said. "It made me think that I'd love to try that."

The invitation for Ashford to direct at the Lyric Opera of Chicago came from general director Anthony Freud, who had seen Ashford's



Rob Ashford. Photo by Andrew Cioffi/Lyric Opera of Chicago

London productions of *A Streetcar Named Desire* starring Rachel Weisz and Anna Christie starring Jude Law. What has resulted is a very traditional production filled with a very photogenic cast that includes baritone Nathan Gunn, mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard and tenor Alex Shrader.

"I know how lucky I've been on my first time out," said Ashford, noting that opera directors often don't have any say in how productions are cast. "They are so good and so flexible. Though they've played these parts before, they're so open to doing it my way and for us to create a new way... They're all great actors."

Ashford's connection to the Lyric Opera of Chicago will continue to next year, since he was recently named to direct a 70th anniversary production of *Carousel* in 2015. Ashford named Rodgers and Hammerstein's most-operatic work as his favorite, so he jumped at the chance to direct it.

And, of course, Ashford's performing work can regularly be seen at Chicago's Sidetrack video bar whenever they show the Tony Awards TV clip of LuPone singing the title song from *Anything Goes* (which is also available on volume two of the DVD set *Broadway's Lost Treasures*). When asked if he was in any way embarrassed about this, Ashford said no.

"Are you kidding? When I first moved to New York City, all I wanted to do was dance in a Broadway show," Ashford said about the luck of landing *Anything*

Goes. "That was my first job in New York and it was so thrilling. When I was a performer, I've been in hits and I've been in flops and I think one should have both, but to start out that way with a piece like that and cast like that and being able to do so much great dancing and learn so, so much. Patti was a great supporter of me being in my first Broadway show and she was very complimentary and encouraging of me."

The Lyric Opera of Chicago's new production of *The Barber of Seville* continues through Friday, Feb. 28, at the Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Drive. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 15, 18, 21, 25, with 2 p.m. matinees on Feb. 6, 9, 12 and 28. Tickets are \$20-\$284; call 312-332-2244 or visit www.lyricopera.org.



Luna Gale. Photo by Liz Lauren

THEATER REVIEW

Luna Gale

Playwright: Rebecca Gilman

At: Goodman Theatre, 140 N. Dearborn St.

Tickets: 1-312-443-3800;

www.GoodmanTheatre.org/Luna; \$25-\$81

Runs through: Feb. 23

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Luna Gale is the first hit of 2014. Playwright Rebecca Gilman stepped out of her comfort zone several years ago with *A True History of the Johnstown Flood*, an ambitious historical pageant which wasn't entirely successful, but she's firmly back in the saddle with this world premiere. For her fourth collaboration with director Robert Falls, Gilman returns to the model of her earlier Goodman successes, *Spinning Into Butter* and *Boy Gets Girl*, which I call situation drama.

As in typical situation comedy, situation drama is slice-of-life realism with vivid characters drawn in bold words and actions. They are color-bloc characters, quickly familiar and therefore easily believable even though they often represent points-of-view rather than fully-fleshed individuals. In "situation" plays, the characters serve the story and not the other way around, and so it is with *Luna Gale*. With its crisp, taught structure and rapidly-rising conflict, *Luna Gale* may be Gilman's most technically-assured work, told with wit and twists.

As with her previous successes, *Luna Gale* tackles a social issue, with newborn baby Luna at the center, although we never see her. Instead, the story focuses on Caroline (Mary Beth Fisher), a veteran family-services case worker in Iowa, who separates Luna from her meth-addicted young parents (Reyna de Courcy and Colin Sphar), and assigns custody to her grandmother (Jordan Baker). The baby poop hits the fan when long-simmering disagreements between grannie and her daughter emerge, and grannie sues for permanent custody of Luna, supported by her pastor (Richard Thieriot). In the primary subplot, Caroline is in conflict with her boss (Erik Hellman), who supports grannie's agenda because both are born-again Christians. Their conflict pushes Caroline and her boss into an ethical and legal swamp, which is vintage Gilman. The play's emotional center is the value or power of Caroline's intuition and "gut instinct" in determining what's best for baby, vs. "the system" and books of regulations. The welfare bureaucracy is no better than those interpreting it, and those interpreting it are imperfect and often-conflicted individuals just like us, Gilman sharply reminds us.

Under Falls' direction, *Luna Gale* simply crackles with exciting performances from all while Falls himself—eschewing high concept and overt showmanship—skillfully disappears into the characters and story. Even the smaller roles carry sincerity and weight, Thieriot's soft-spoken but steely pastor and Melissa DuPrey insecure young adult "graduate" of foster care.

Luna Gale may cause some to accuse Gilman of being anti-Christian, but that's not at all what it's about. Gilman may not approve of the "Here-Comes-The-Rapture" Christianity she portrays, but many other value systems or philosophies could be inserted instead without changing the basic conflicts and premises of the play, and that's the real test.

CRITICS' PICKS

A Day in the Death of Joe Egg, Stage Left Theatre at Theater Wit, through Feb. 16. Vance Smith and Kendra Thulin deliver performances of heartbreaking poignancy in Peter Nichols' brutally unsentimental look at parents struggling to raise their severely-crippled child. MSB

The Little Prince, Lookingglass Theatre, through March 16. There's lots of theatrical spectacle to marvel at in Rick Cummings and John Scouliar's creative adaptation of Antoine de Saint-Exupery's beloved children's book about an otherworldly child who meets a stranded aviator. SCM

Port Authority, Writers Theatre, through Feb. 16. Exquisite acting, and commonplace speech elevated to poetry, infuse this tender and introspective piece about three Irishmen of different generations who bare their rueful souls about the women who got away. JA

Queenie Pie, Chicago Opera Theater at Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Feb. 15-March 5. There's no horned helmets or swan boats in jazz maestro Duke Ellington's opera, just Harlem Renaissance-era swing music and dueling divas—in short, a perfect Valentine's Day date. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

From White Plains

Playwright: Michael Perlman

At: Broken Nose Theatre at the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: 773-404-7336;

www.greenhousetheater.org; \$15-\$25

Runs through: Feb. 23

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Michael Perlman has written a very smart play, about very smart people, asking very smart questions on a topic too often reduced to simplistic melodrama or hijacked in the service of other, extraneous, agendas. He does it all in 90 minutes, too.

What we learn at the outset is that 15 years earlier, at White Plains High School, a gay student named Mitchell Cole committed suicide—a death that his likewise gay best friend, Dennis Sullivan, believes to have resulted from persistent verbal bullying by classmates. Seeking justice for his fallen comrade, Dennis documents the incident in a film that wins him an academy award. In his acceptance speech, he identifies the ringleader of the long-ago persecution as one Ethan Rice.

If this were classical tragedy, Ethan's offense would affect whole kingdoms, and his self-inflicted punishment entail blood sacrifice, or at least, banishment by the gods. Ah, but even if proliferation of social media on the internet hadn't rendered exile nearly impossible nowa-

days, this isn't the story that Perlman wants to tell. As Ethan, despite his protestations of ignorance and remorse, finds himself increasingly shunned by his peers, while Dennis continues relentless in his excoriation, we are forced to distinguish between the threat posed by dehumanized ideological conspirators and that of a lone adolescent jerk-turned-thirtysomething loser, as well as to ask ourselves just what degree of retribution *would* satisfy our thirst for reparation—or revenge.

There's an answer, of course—an untidy and patently inadequate one, but the only solution we can accept after Perlman has steered us through the alternatives. (Ethan's chum and Dennis' consort also weigh in on the course of their companions' lives as the vendetta escalates.) Director Spenser Davis never allows the characters—played with quiet dignity by Adam Soule, David Weiss, Ben Burke and John Overton Lewis III—to slip into easy stereotypes, but keeps the emotions always rooted in a fundamental rationality, enabling us to absorb the lessons associated with the pain of adult males gradually forging solitary methods of coping with uneasy memories of youthful transgressions (and who *doesn't* have a few of those hidden away?).

"If we focus on the future, the past won't matter as much," someone says at one point, the magic words being "as much." If moving on can't make everything all right—what can?—it can still be the first step to making it better.

THEATER REVIEW

Gidion's Knot

Playwright: Johnna Adams

At: Profiles Theatre at the Alley, 4147 N. Broadway

Tickets: 773-549-1815;

www.profiles theatre.org; \$35-\$40

Runs through: March 19

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The play's title leads us to anticipate a procedural: we learn early in the play that Gideon Gibson, following his suspension from school, appeared before his mother with a bloodied face and a note from his teacher requesting a conference—and that same night, committed suicide. The dramatic action revolves around the efforts of his mom and his instructor to discover the circumstances behind his desperate act—a tangled web involving a girl called Seneca, a boy called Jake and a fantasy-fiction fable of a student uprising, with the slaughter of adults described in terms as graphically gory as—well, the ancient myths that Gideon's fifth-grade class is studying.

Was the 11-year-old author of these grisly images a perverse corrupter of innocence, as spinster-schoolmarm Heather insists? Or were his accounts of battle trophies fashioned from the entrails of butchered enemies intended to mimic the epic poems recited to him by Mama Corryn, herself a professor of Medieval literature? We can argue that eye-gougings and throat-slittings are no more

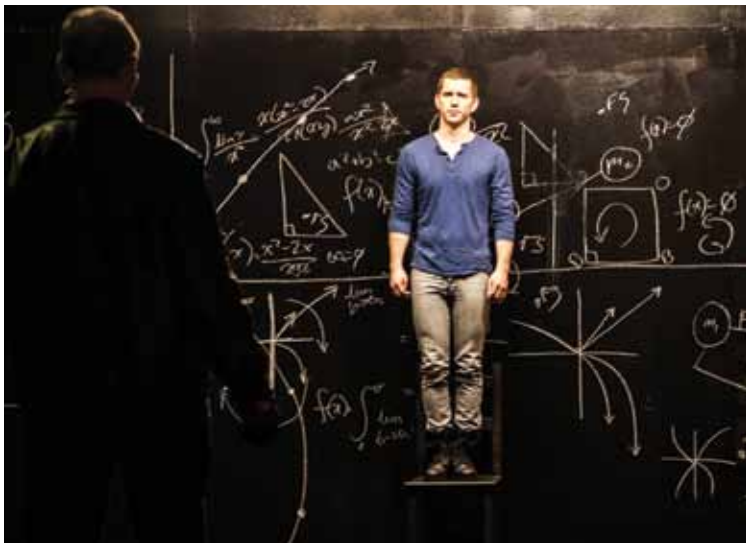
horrific than what youngsters nowadays encounter in zombie-wars video games—or prayer-books in certain churches, for that matter—but we also understand why a mentor to preteens might declare such material unsuitable reading for her charges.

It's a provocative question, and one that is never answered, since playwright Johnna Adams seems less interested in solving mysteries than in discussing them, shoveling in a profusion of sidebars, op-eds and red herrings: Heather's previous career in advertising, a hushed-up pedophilia scandal six months previous, a shout-out to the Marquis de Sade (presumably inserted for the benefit of us yahoos ignorant of Gilgamesh, Beowulf or the significance of Gideon's name), the stifling of creative imagination, the conspicuous absence of the school principal (but not parents in Lake Forest, Ill., who christen their daughters "Seneca"—as if this were Los Angeles).

The confrontational dynamic's progress is further protracted by Adams' propensity for inserting serial tacits into her written text (published in *American Theatre* magazine), so that a dozen "speeches" may be voiced with less than five words. Under Joe Jahraus' direction, Amy J. Carle and Laura Hooper retain their gravity with admirable aplomb—even after Heather's diabetic cat joins the list of disclosures—for the 80 minutes necessary to bring it all to catharsis, but when Corryn huffs, "I would think that the reasons for [my son's] suspension would have come up in the first half hour of conversation," we share her impatience.



Gidion's Knot. Photo by Michael Brosilow



hamlet is dead. no gravity. Photo by Austin D. Oie

THEATER REVIEW
hamlet is dead. no gravity

Playwright: Ewald Palmetshofer;
Translator: Neil Blackadder
At: Red Tape Theatre at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 621 W. Belmont Ave.
Tickets: www.redtapetheatre.org; \$25
Runs through: Feb. 22

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

On opening night, Red Tape Theatre artistic director Brandon Ray regretfully announced that Neil Blackadder's world premiere English-language translation of Austrian playwright Ewald Palmetshofer's 2007 drama hamlet is dead. no gravity would be the company's last production at St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Though it's sad that Red Tape and other theaters apparently won't have access to this very versatile theater space in the future, at least Red Tape exits it with an assured artistic bang.

hamlet is dead. no gravity doesn't feature any characters from Shakespeare's famous tragedy.

Yet it does share a high body count at the end and quite a few characters puzzling over matters of life and death.

The production focuses on two siblings, Dani (Amanda Drinkall) and Mani (Alex Stage), who return to visit their hometown for a school friend's funeral that coincides with their grandmother's 95th birthday. While there, Dani and Mani become greatly unsettled by not only a chance encounter with former friends who are now married, Bine (Sarah Grant) and Oli (Black Russell), but by their unhappy parents, Kurt (John Fenner Mays) and Caro (Iona Livingston).

Presented after the fact, each of the characters grapples to explain his or her side of the story and to reason with themselves in light of the impending/past family horror that is revealed. This all leads to a very fragmentary storytelling structure that forces you to piece it together like a puzzle. Don't be surprised if you still have a few questions knocking about by the end.

To depict Palmetshofer's tragic family implosion, director Seth Bockley and set designer Shawn Ketchum Johnson have created a clinically

SPOTLIGHT



Polarity Ensemble Theatre continues its 10th-anniversary season celebrations by returning to its roots by reviving **Macbeth**, which was the company's first production. Shakespeare's tragic "Scottish Play" is made over in what is described as a purifying and ritualistic production by director Richard Engling. Macbeth continues through March 2 at the Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. Performances are at 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays with 3 p.m. matinees Sundays. Tickets are \$20, \$15 for seniors and \$10 for students. Call 773-404-7336 or visit www.petheatre.com for more information. Photo by Richard Engling

cally dark and spare world akin to a laboratory. With harsh florescent lighting by designer Julie Mack, Bockley arranges his actors in artsy patterning that falls somewhere between brilliant and pretentious symbolism.

The performances are uniformly strong in the ensemble, with each actor rightfully trying to edge out the others. Particularly good is the annoyingly ingratiating pleasantries by Grant as Bine and Russell's wry and nonchalant nature as Oli.

Drinkall does a fine job at showing Dani's self-aware shock of her bottled-up feelings of love, while Stage could do a bit more to make the over-thought philosophized rants of Mani more spontaneous.

Livingston's exhaustion is palpably felt as mother Caro, while May's dark mysterious moodiness certainly proves sinister for his take on Kurt.

So what is meant to be taken away from hamlet is dead. no gravity? That chance encounters could set off murderous impulses that have been simmering away for years? That life can be shockingly snuffed out despite one's professed weariness with it all?

Really, the conclusion is up to the individual audience member to make of what they will from the artfully arranged pieces set up by Red Tape Theatre's assured artistic forces.

-TimeOut Chicago

"DELECTABLE"
-Chicago Sun-Times

"DELICIOUS"
-Pioneer Press

Tom Jones
adapted by **JON JORY**
from the novel by **HENRY FIELDING**

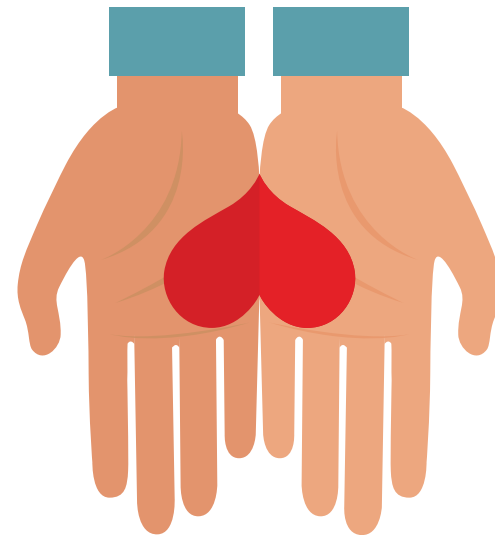
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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT JR.

Pit Stop; film notes

It's early morning in a rural, small town in Texas. As usual, Gabe (Bill Heck) is stopping by the local convenience mart/gas station in his red pick-up to fill his coffee thermos before heading off to work. As Gabe leaves, he doesn't take notice of Ernesto (Marcus DeAnda), who is pulling next to him in the parking lot in his silver pick-up, intent on doing the same thing. For the bulk of the next 80 minutes, these two lonely gay men approaching middle age will inadvertently bypass each other at that gas station in their search for love as the audience patiently waits for them to get together.

The wait will be worth it. In **Pit Stop**, out director Yen Tan's slow-moving but insightfully observed film, it's all about trying to mend the fractured connections that life throws at us



Pit Stop.

and the importance of small details that audiences recognize from their own lives. The movie, which won raves on the gay film-festival circuit last year (including Reeling), is just out from Wolfe Releasing.

This isn't the cinema of scenery-chewing in a family drama like August: Osage County, or a gay variation on the urban-based dishfest of Sex and the City and its ilk. Nor is it one of those guilty gay-themed indies featuring plea-

surable guys with no shirts or pants—not that there's anything remotely wrong with those movies (all of which I love).

What I find refreshing about **Pit Stop**, which Tan and David Lowery co-wrote, is not just its naturalistic approach (which is nice but hardly novel), or that it's so well-written, acted and directed (rarer, but still not an anomaly). No, the movie's great rarity is that it has been so carefully constructed that not a moment of it feels false. We are given characters and situations so recognizable that a sense of emotional déjà vu envelops the movie from beginning to end (heightened by the judicious editing of Don Swaynos and the subtle, dream-like music of Curtis Glenn Heath on the soundtrack). Who hasn't had setbacks like these in the search for meaningful connection?

Gabe—with his long, thin, bearded, kindly face and lithe body—is a closeted construction worker living with his ex-wife, Shannon (Amy Seimetz), and their young daughter. After a liaison with a married man has fallen through, he's quietly pursuing a male relationship on the side. So, although he's furious when Shannon reveals he's gay to a teacher at the high school, Gabe agrees to a movie date in nearby Dallas because, well, you never know...

On the other side of town Ernesto—a Latino with sensual lips; a compact, muscular frame; and eyes that can't disguise a great deal of torment—nightly visits to a previous lover who is in a coma in the hospital, reading to him selections from his favorite advice magazines.

Ernesto has been allowing Luis (Alfredo Maduro), another ex-lover (this one much younger), to stay with him until he can make other arrangements. But one night after coming home from the hospital, Ernesto loses his patience and insists that Luis needs to go.

While the focus is on Gabe and Ernesto, who are separately pursuing romance, the movie gives each of the supporting characters—no matter how small (some with only one scene)—a chance to make their mark with the audience. (It shares this rarely achieved ability with *The Kids Are All Right*.) Each of these actors memorably shines in his brief screen time and there's not a wasted frame in the picture (yet another rarity). And Heck and DeAnda give luminous performances as Gabe and Luis, with their unstated but strong yearning for love and connection so palpable from the outset. When the two finally meet (back at that all-important convenience store/gas station) the ensuing scenes unfold like a delicious payoff and the exaltation of Gabe and Ernesto—each quietly elated and hopeful at his unexpected good fortune—is achingly poignant. **Pit Stop** is one of those small miracles that cinemaphiles justly revel in and it's a supreme addition to the queer-cinema canon. <http://pitstopthemovie.com/>

Film notes:

—**Jobriath A.D.**—the fascinating documentary examination of glamrock's self-proclaimed "rock 'n' roll fairy," the talented and tragic gender-bending Jobriath (Bruce Wane Campbell)—is playing at Facets Cinematheque, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave., until Thursday, Feb. 6. Kieran Turner's extraordinary movie was one of my favorite films of 2012 and this Chicago theatrical run is long overdue. Don't miss it. <http://www.facets.org/pages/cinematheque/films/feb2014/jobriath.php>

—African-American LGBTQ filmmaker and actress Cheryl Dunye, renowned for her groundbreaking 1996 film *Watermelon Woman*, will be present for a reception, screening and audience Q&A of the movie on Thursday, Feb. 13, at the University of Illinois at Chicago/Gallery 400, 400 S. Peoria St., beginning at 6:20 p.m. UIC's Gender and Sexuality Center and Team 101 Chicago are presenting the evening. <http://gallery400.uic.edu/>

On Friday, Feb. 14, Dunye's 2001 TV movie *Stranger Inside* will screen along with a sneak preview of her newest film, the forthcoming *Black Is Blue*. The screenings will take place at 7:30 p.m. at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St. <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/>

—**G.B.F.**, the delightful queer-themed high school Mean Girls-meets-Glee comedy and the AIDS drama *Dallas Buyers Club*, with Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto (both frontrunners for this year's Oscar race), are both just out on DVD, and are essential adds to your collection.

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Britten Film Festival at Columbia College

The Benjamin Britten Film Festival, presented by The Chicago Chamber Musicians (CCM), continues its 2013/2014 centennial birthday celebration for the composer on Thursday, Feb. 6, with a free showing of *Moonrise Kingdom* at 7 p.m. at the Columbia College Film Row Cinema, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., on the eighth floor.

Often considered the most prominent British composer of the 20th century, Britten (1913-1976), who was gay, is widely known for his operas and orchestral works.

Other events will include “Let's Make An Opera” (Feb. 8 at the Music Institute of Chicago, 1702 Sherman Ave., Evanston, at 4 p.m.), “Benjamin Britten: A Time There Was...” (Feb. 8 at 7 p.m. at the Music Institute), and *The Hidden Heart: A Life of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears* (Feb. 22 at 1

p.m. at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.; April 17 at Columbia College Film Row Cinema, 1104 S. Wabash Ave.).

See www.chicagochambermusic.org.

'Easy Abby' has IndieGogo campaign

The producing team behind the award-winning lesbian Web series *Easy Abby* has launched an IndieGogo campaign to fund *Easy Abby* the show's second season.

“We are intending to raise close to \$100K for the second season of *Easy Abby* and we are extending our seven-minute web episodes to 22-minute episodes,” said writer/director Wendy Jo Carlton (Hannah Free, *Jamie & Jessie Are Not Together*) and actor/producer Lisa Cordileone (Abby) in a statement. The campaign ends Feb. 9.

See <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/easy-abby-season-2> and <http://easyabby.com/>.

Suburban high school stages 'Laramie Project,' raises discussion

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Rolling Meadows High School is using its own production of *The Laramie Project*, running Feb. 6-8, as an educational resource and discussion piece for its students and the community.

The *Laramie Project* is based on the reactions surrounding the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student in Laramie, Wyo. The murder was classified as a hate crime and, as a result, brought attention to the lack of hate-crimes laws in various states. Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project's original play centers on hundreds of interviews the theater company conducted with the town's residents, company members' journal entries and published news reports.

"I think it's very eye-opening for the community," said Rolling Meadows High School tech director Paul Dombrowski. "It affects everyone. Matthew Shepard, he was a victim of a terrible crime and they targeted him because he was gay, but the character of Matthew Shepard could have been a straight student, a Jewish student, a Muslim student, a Christian student. It's about someone hating something that's different than they are."

Since its premiere in February 2000, *The Laramie Project*'s cast typically consists of eight actors portraying more than 60 characters in a series of short scenes. In the school's upcoming winter production, 18 students were cast to tell the story of those 60-plus people. While the high school selects from a gamut of shows three times a year, this pick, Dombrowski insisted, provides an educational component.

"I think the earlier kids get introduced to these subjects, the smarter they are about it," said Dombrowski. "I think Matthew's murder, he was the boy next door. He was your brother, he was your cousin, he was your classmate, and it opened up a lot of peoples' eyes and helped them see if it happened there it could happen here. I think it's important for LGBT students to see this. I think it's important for straight students to see this and see these are the things that happen and this is part of LGBT history."

High-profile visitors added an educational component for the show's young cast, crew and Rolling Meadows' gay-straight alliance (GSA). Tectonic Theater Project company member and *Laramie Project* original co-creator Kelli Simpkins visited Jan. 16 to talk to the students about her own experience in creating and performing in the original play 14 years ago.

"Who can ask for a better educational experience than talking to someone who was actually involved in writing this piece of theater? She gave such a gift to our cast by coming and

talking," said Dombrowski.

Laramie Project Specialist from the Matthew Shepard Foundation Susan Burk will also be traveling from Casper, Wyo. to host talk-backs with the cast and audiences directly after the Friday and Saturday performances.

"I love doing talkbacks after the shows," Burk said. "Each company, each cast in each production brings a fresh perspective and a fresh voice to this work, so you see differences and nuances and they have a personalization to it. I don't preach and I facilitate, so that people can talk about what they have felt, what the cast felt about doing this production, how people in the community feel about seeing it, how they feel about what is the nature of these issues within their own community."

At the time of Shepard's murder, funeral and killers' trials, Burk was the executive producer and senior anchor for the evening news at statewide NBC affiliate KTWO Television in Casper. In her position, Burk arranged and reported all of the events surrounding the tragedy and the community's reactions and responses. In addition to covering the murder, Burk produced an award-winning news series on the filming of HBO's film *The Laramie Project*.

"High schools these days also, they don't know Matt's story," said Burk. "These kids were just toddlers when Matthew was murdered and the story that was a watershed moment in history for a lot of us, may be only a line in a history book or lost forever, so this is sort of a new thing. It resonates, I believe, with young people because there is so much bullying out there, there's so much hate, there's discrimination, and I truly believe that the young people are our hope, our biggest hope for ending, erasing hate in the world."

Burk, on behalf of the foundation, supports productions of "Laramie" throughout the United States and overseas. She listed to Windy City Times numerous groups that produce the show such as high schools, community theaters, professional theaters, regional theaters, church groups, PFLAG groups, LGBT groups and anyone else who licenses the show.

"It really speaks to a lot of people and it speaks to a lot of young people who have been harassed, or discriminated against, or tossed out of their family for coming out," said Burk. "I love to see this done in the high schools because young people, I think, are less hesitant to stand up at a certain point and say, 'enough is enough, we're not going to put up with this anymore.'"

Burk—who attended Chicago's Goodman School of Drama, now known as the Theatre School at DePaul University—said her pro-



Rolling Meadows High School cast in *The Laramie Project*. Photo from Paul Dombrowski

fessional theater background, on top of her journalism experience, deepens her connection with Shepard and his case, as she has performed "Laramie" with the same theater group he acted with as a child. She also had a role with one of the acting companies that participated in the international webcast premiere of "The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later."

"I've been touched through the years in a number of different ways by this story and by these people," she said, expressing how much Shepard's story has touched her life.

The Rolling Meadows GSA, with Links PRIDE Youth Group, will also be inviting GSAs from other local high schools to the performances and will host a post show social event for all high school students. An LGBT information and resource table with pamphlets and brochures will be available following each show. Dombrowski said it is common to provide resources for LGBT students.

"I come from that background where I like to make it a learning experience and Rolling Meadows was letting me do that," said Dombrowski. "Our goal is to start discussions in the community. If people come to see this and discuss it, we're in better shape than before we did it. With each of these experiences, whether it's Kelli Simpkins or Susan Burk, or our play, we're going to affect people, we're going to educate people—and that's what schools are all about."

The Laramie Project will take place Feb. 6-8 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5, and are available at the door or by calling 847-718-5615. The performances will be at Rolling Meadows High School's Gilbert Theater, 2901 Central Ave., Rolling Meadows.

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MOVIES

Pratibah Parmar discusses Alice Walker's 'Truth'

BY YASMIN NAIR

Pratibha Parmar is an acclaimed filmmaker, among the first of a generation of queer British filmmakers who were also people of color. Among her many noteworthy films are Reframing AIDS (1987) and Khush (1991). In 1993, she made Warrior Marks, a film about female genital mutilation, based on a book by Alice Walker and Parmar. Warrior Marks was controversial amongst many who opposed Walker and Parmar's political stance against FGM, but cemented a long-standing collaboration and friendship between the two women.

Parmar has now recently completed a biographical film, six years in the making (four of them mostly preoccupied with fundraising, according to her) about Walker. Beauty in Truth, to make its PBS premiere Feb. 7 at 9 p.m. Windy City Times spoke with Parmar about the film, her collaborative relationship with Walker and her own career.

Windy City Times: What compelled you to make a film about Alice Walker?

Pratibha Parmar: My partner and I were watching a bunch of DVDs one Christmas, documentaries about Americans who had made a big impact; musicians, writers, and so on. All of them were men, and white. So I wondered, where are the women? Women shape and make history, so where were the women public intellectuals who have created debates and shaped how we discuss things, in the literary canon and public discourse? Why hadn't someone made a film on Alice Walker when she has contributed so much to the American literary canon and has fundamentally changed literary paradigms, in terms of looking at southern Black women's experiences? She was the first to take us into the intimate, intricate landscape of southern Black women's lives in a way that had not been done before, and that was a very foundational literary gesture from her which had not been acknowledged in any significant way.

WCT: As the film points out, a lot of people don't even know she had produced 10 books before The Color Purple, and a lot of people still identify her with that book.

PP: When I was making the film and would tell people that I was making a film about Alice Walker, the only way they knew her was as the writer of the Color Purple and yet, yes, that was her tenth book, and she's gone on to write over 30 books, including novels and poems.

As a feminist and as a filmmaker, I'm really aware of the way in which historical amnesia has operated to wipe out women's contributions. It's an international phenomenon, unfortunately. It's fundamentally important that we not only restore but rescue women's stories and inspirational stories so they are documented.

WCT: In terms of queerness: She's very resistant to being codified in any way, and simply responds to any attempt to label her with the response, "I'm very curious." As a queer filmmaker, was that particularly important for you to get in?

PP: I wanted to address every part of Alice's life, so her sexuality was definitely an area I wanted her to talk about. Obviously—for me, as somebody defined as a queer filmmaker—I'm always interested to know more about people's sexuality, the choices they make and why. And having known Alice over so many decades, I know she's had relationships with both men and women, and I've known many of those people in her life as well.

I think that Alice is very open about it in the



Alice Walker. Photo by Ana Elena

film, the relationships she's had with women. But it's not just in the area of sexuality, it's in every single thing. She won't be confined or constrained by any particular label, and she feels that it doesn't allow for change and for her that's what's so important. It's her curiosity about life that makes her open to all kinds of relationships.

The film's been shown at quite a few LGBT film festivals and quite a few people have come up to me and said, "That was just fantastic that she said that," and I could see that they were freed by it.

WCT: A lot of people will be interested in the two sections about her daughter. [Rebecca Walker has written often about her estrangement from her mother.] Did you seek any response from Rebecca Walker to participate in the film?

PP: I asked her for an interview for the film and she declined.

WCT: What was that like, to incorporate those sections into the film? Alice Walker has not spoken much about this in public, has she?

PP: It's probably the first time she's speaking in a comprehensive way about it on camera about the estrangement, and its personal and emotional impact on her.

It was one of the most difficult moments to film. Many people advised me against it and said to leave it alone, but I felt a duty as a filmmaker to broach the topic. It's a story of her life, and she talks about the birth of her life, so then it's natural to ask, what happened [to the daughter]? It's a very significant event and trauma in the way that her shooting of her eye was. [Walker was blinded in one eye as a child.] I think the loss of her daughter was traumatic for her. I witnessed that as a friend, and so I was reluctant to go there as a filmmaker, but felt I needed to, as a filmmaker. She was very giving. She makes herself vulnerable.

WCT: You entered this project not as a beginning filmmaker, but as someone with a very distinguished career, as someone who has had a historical relationship to queer narrative and representation, and also as friends with someone who is herself a significant figure in American literature. What

was it like to work with someone like her, given that complex relationship?

PP: When we actually started to make the film, we didn't even have a legal contractual agreement at that stage and the only thing she said to me was, "Pratibha, I know you will be honorable." And that, to me, is significant of a couple of decades of friendship that has been forged in the spirit of sisterhood, and a friendship which has come very similar ways in which we engage with the world—we're both Aquarians! I have often been on the firing line for saying things people don't want to hear and so has Alice, on a much bigger scale.

I think we recognise each other as kindred spirits, have shorthand ways of saying things to each other; there is that gift of an equal friendship. As you say, it's not about me being this beginning filmmaker but someone who's coming in with her own body of work which Alice has seen over the last many years.

WCT: You touch upon the controversial elements of her work, including that of FGM (female genital mutilation), and you also document the many criticisms she has faced for her representation of the Black family, especially following The Color Purple. But in

terms of the fact that you are close friends, is there a possibility of this being too hagiographic? How do you balance it out?

PP: I think I have balanced it out by broaching all the controversial aspects of her life. I don't think I would have been doing Alice Walker any favours by making a film of her life if it had been purely a hagiographic profile of her. One of the things that she said after watching the finished film was, "It's a very honest film." I actually approached some of the people who've been openly critical of her, for interviews, and not one single person, would appear on screen.

I sent a number of emails I sent to all the critics of her work on FGM, etc. and they ignored my emails. Why can't people put their faces with their words?

WCT: What would you like people to take away from this film?

PP: I'd like them to take away what I have [gotten] from Alice over the years: to have the courage to stand up for your own truth no matter what people are saying about you, so that you remain consistently true to how you see the world and how you would like to see it changed.



Philip Seymour Hoffman in the film Jack Goes Boating. Photo by K.C. Bailey

Philip Seymour Hoffman dies

Philip Seymour Hoffman, one of the most versatile and talented actors of his generation, has died of an apparent drug overdose. He was 46.

He won the Academy Award and numerous other honors for his portrayal of gay writer Truman Capote in the 2005 film Capote. He received Oscar nominations for best supporting actor for three films: Charlie Wilson's War, Doubt and The Master.

He received acclaim for his portrayal of Rusty Zimmerman in 1999's Flawless, opposite Robert De Niro. As Rusty, Hoffman gave dignity to his portrayal of a transgender woman who helps De Niro recover from a stroke.

Hoffman's range of roles is impressive, from pop culture hits like Hunger Games to the documentary The Party's Over about the 2000 presidential elections.

The actor discussed his drug addiction, but had been clean for 23 years, until 2013. He was found with a drug needle in his arm, and heroin nearby. He is survived by three children and his longtime girlfriend.

GLAAD Media Award nominations announced

GLAAD has announced its nominations for its annual Media Awards.

According to the website, nominations are based on four criteria: fair, accurate and inclusive representations; boldness and originality; impact; and overall quality.

Among the many nominees are TV shows The Fosters, Shameless, Pretty Little Liars, Orange Is the New Black, Orphan Black and Modern Family; movies Blue Is the Warmest Color, Dallas Buyers Club and Philomena; and

The Advocate, Black Enterprise and Rolling Stone magazines.

Following are a few facts about this year's nominees:

—Several GLAAD Media Award nominees have received other nominations this season from the Academy Awards (Philomena, Dallas Buyers Club) and the Golden Globe Awards (Philomena, Dallas Buyers Club, Orange Is the New Black, Orphan Black, Brooklyn Nine-Nine, Modern Family, Behind the Candelabra), among others.

—Both Netflix (Orange Is the New Black) and the new cable channel Pivot (Please Like Me and Raising McCain) garnered first-time nominations this year.

—The transgender community is represented in several nominees, including Dallas Buyers Club, Orange Is the New Black, Glee, the "Snow Angels" episode of Elementary (CBS) and Dream School (Sundance Channel).

—Orange Is the New Black (Netflix), Grey's Anatomy (ABC), Glee (Fox), "Why Bisexuals Stay in the Closet" by Emily Alpert (Los Angeles Times), and "Bisexuals Get Their Turn in the White House" by Alyona Minkovski (Live.HuffingtonPost.com) include representations of the bisexual community.

—Among the networks receiving multiple nominations are MSNBC, ABC, CNN, Univision and HBO (in the world of television); The Advocate, The New Yorker and Live.HuffingtonPost.com (print/digital journalism); and Sony Pictures, The Weinstein Company and Breaking Glass Pictures (film).

The award ceremonies will take place in Los Angeles on April 12 and New York City on May 3. See www.glaad.org/mediaawards.

'Dallas Buyers Club' on DVD, Blu-Ray out

The film Dallas Buyers Club—which features Golden Globe winners Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto—is out on Blu-ray™ Combo Pack including Blu-ray™, DVD, DIGITAL HD with UltraViolet™ and On Demand, courtesy of Universal Studios Home Entertainment.

In the movie (based on a real-life situation), Texas cowboy Ron Woodroof (McConaughey) sees his life overturned when he's diagnosed as HIV-positive and given 30 days to live. Woodroof decides to take matters in his own hands by tracking down alternative treatments from all over the world. After his journey to find a cure leads him to an unlikely ally in drag queen Rayon (Leto), he establishes a successful "buyers' club."

The movie also stars Jennifer Garner, Denis O'Hare and Steve Zahn.

A SPECIAL QUARTERLY WEDDING FEATURE FOR 2014

WINDY CITY TIMES

Gay and Lesbian

Wedding Guide

Civil union or marriage? You decide

BY ROCHELLE GRIMBAU

What is the difference between same-sex marriage and civil unions in Illinois?

The Civil Union Act (Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act) went into effect in Illinois on June 1, 2011.

Civil unions may be established between opposite-sex couples as well as same-sex couples provided the parties are more than 18 years old, neither party is currently married, party to a civil union, or are closely related.

Generally, the act provides a “party to a civil union” with “the same legal obligations, responsibilities, protections, and benefits” as are afforded or recognized by the law of Illinois to spouses, however, parties to civil unions do not receive any federal recognition. It is important to distinguish between federally derived rights and those provided by the state.

The act explicitly incorporates those provisions contained in the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act concerning dis-

solution and declaration of invalidity. The act does not, however, explicitly incorporate those provisions concerning property, support, maintenance, attorney’s fees, or custody, although such rights and obligations are presumably among those afforded to spouses under the law.

Benefits available to parties to a civil union include state inheritance, pension, medical decision-making and health insurance rights.

Same-sex marriage: The bill known as the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act was signed into law by Gov. Pat Quinn Nov. 20, 2013 and shall take legal effect on June 1, 2014. The act both amends Illinois’ definition of marriage and clarifies how marriages and civil unions entered into elsewhere will be treated by Illinois law. Specifically, the Act provides that:

—All laws of this State applicable to marriage ... shall apply equally to marriages of same-sex and different-sex couples and their children.

—Parties to a marriage and their children, regardless of whether the marriage consists of a same-sex or different-sex couple, shall have all the same benefits, protections, and responsibilities under law...

—A civil union, or a substantially similar legal relationship ... legally entered into in another jurisdiction, shall be recognized in Illinois as a civil union. A Marriage, whether of the same sex or different sexes and providing that it is not a common law marriage, legally entered into in another jurisdiction, shall be recognized in this State as a marriage

—The act does not repeal Illinois’ existing civil union laws. Same-sex and opposite-sex couples can continue to enter into civil unions in Illinois. Same-sex couples who want to convert their existing civil union into a marriage can do so after the marriage law takes effect on June 1, 2014.

Civil-union couples will not have their civil union automatically converted into a marriage. Those who wish to convert their civil unions to

marriages will have two options:

1. Apply for a marriage license and have a marriage ceremony to convert their civil union into a marriage without a fee;

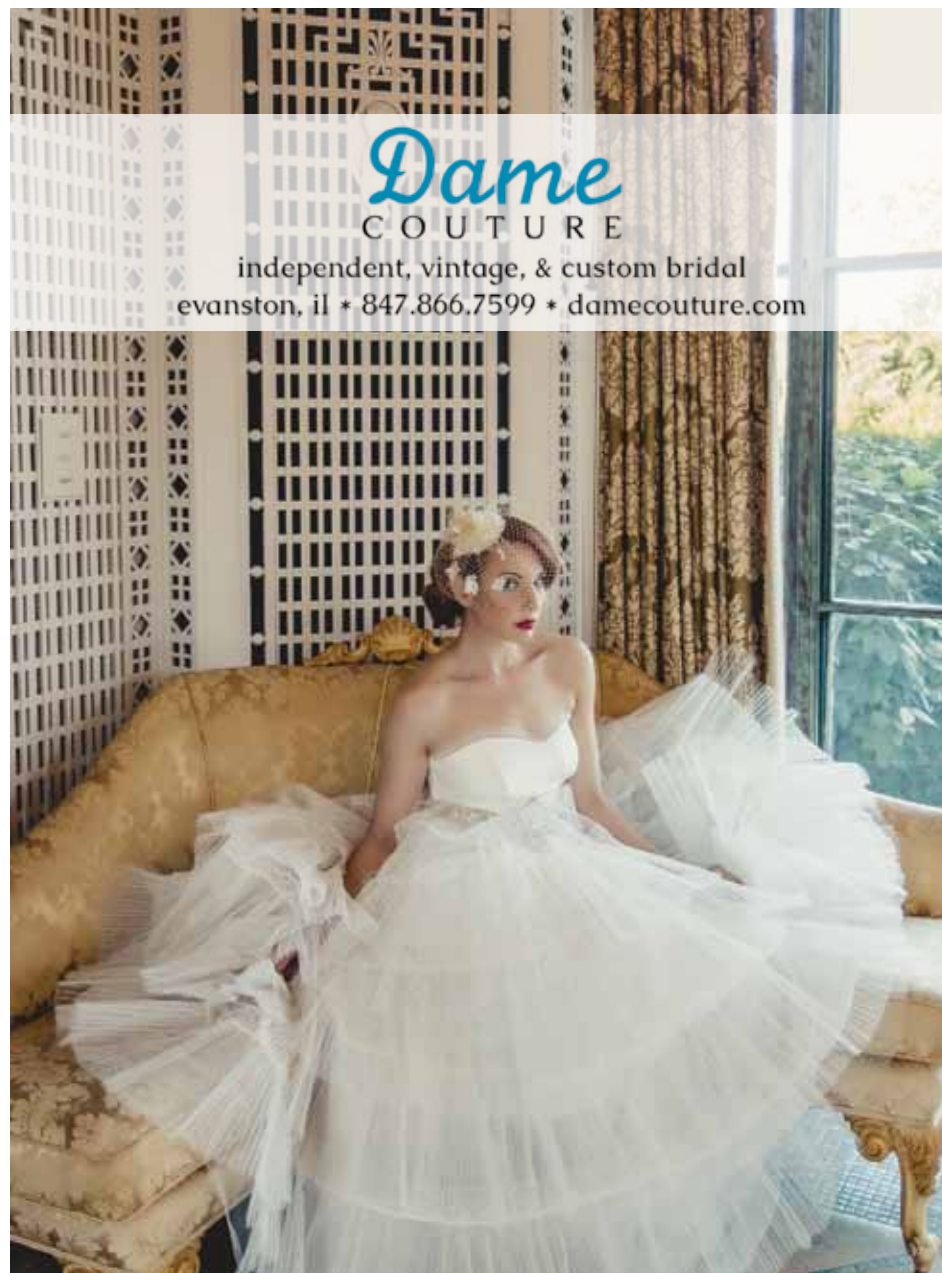
2. During the first year following June 1, 2014, the couple may apply to a county clerk for a marriage certificate which will reflect they were married as of the date they entered into their civil union. The certificate must be signed and returned; no fee.

Married same-sex couples living in Illinois are eligible for all of the protections, responsibilities, and access to federal programs afforded to different-sex married couples. There are more than 1,100 instances in federal law where a protection or responsibility is based on marital status. By way of example only: access to Social Security survivors’ benefits; the option to use family medical leave to care for a spouse; access to veterans’ spousal benefits.

In addition to federal benefits and protections, married same-sex couples will also be afforded many rights (and responsibilities) in Illinois, to name a few:

—Dissolution of marriage by a domestic relations court, including access to equitable divi-

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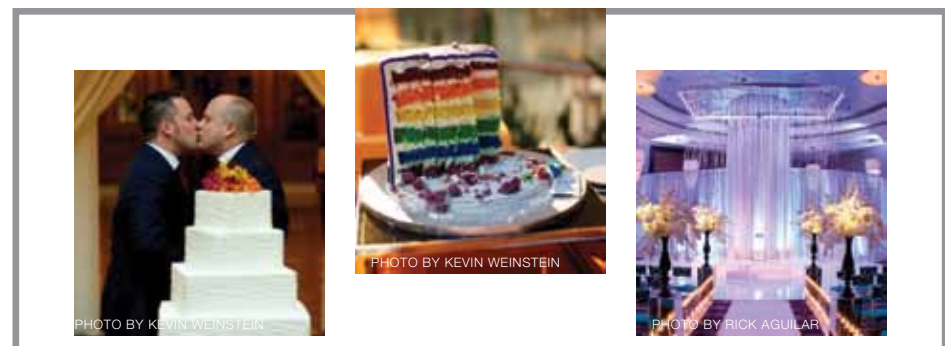


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WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP *Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide*

Snapshots of Love

We asked readers to send in photos of their weddings/civil unions to share with the community. What we received was a collection of beautiful stories of love and commitment. All photo courtesy of subjects except where otherwise indicated.



Diane Martino and Tina Kachold joined together in a civil-union ceremony in June 2011, followed by a celebration with friends and family the following month. The couple plan to "upgrade" to marriage in June.



Craig Harzinski and Ken Mertes travelled north to Victoria, British Columbia, July 12, 2005, to tie the knot. They also celebrated with a kiss at the recent signing of SB-10, legalizing same-sex marriage in Illinois.



Partners Drew Bauhs (left) and Olin Eargle seal the deal at their civil union ceremony.



Partners Cally Raduenzel (left) and Polly Jones wed at Herring Cove, Provincetown, Mass. on August 17, 2013.

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Frankly speaking...

Expert tips to plan your wedding expertly



BY FRANK J. ANDONOPLAS

The first thing most newly engaged couples ask is "Where do I start?" My advice is to first decide on two key elements: the number of guests you want to invite (actually make a list), and what you would like to spend on the wedding. Both are vital to have decided on before you start any of the planning.

From here you might want to consider hiring a wedding consultant to design, plan. Even if you cannot afford to engage a planner for the entire experience, I actually offer hourly consultations to guide the couple while they do all the legwork with creative ideas, etiquette information as well as vendor referrals. Either will save you time, and help you from making some expensive mistakes.

The first and most important is selecting the reception and ceremony sites, if they are not the same. You would need to check availability on the date you selected, make sure they can comfortably accommodate your guest count, and find out the minimum in food and beverage (which is usually exclusive of tax and tip, so don't forget to add that in) that they require to hold the wedding there.

Other larger venues will charge a rental fee, and then you need to hire a caterer to prepare, cook and serve the food. In addition with this type of venue you will need to rent every fork, glass, table and chair as well a myriad of other items that will be needed. This will probably be the biggest part of your budget. If the ceremony is not in the space, you will need to search for the perfect place to exchange your vows. This can be a garden, church, chapel or synagogue, or any other place you feel is the perfect place to make this commitment. When searching, find out the rental cost, the number of hours you can use the site for, as well as restrictions.

From here you would then move into the other "fixed costs," which would include officiant, entertainment/music, photographer and videographer/filmmaker. My advice for this is to make sure the things you are viewing are the work of who is going to actually be there that

day. Bands switch out singers, and make sure the photos and video are taken by the person who will actually be at your wedding.

The remaining things to think about add to the variable costs, and a multitude of choices and designs come in. Save the dates, invitations, your menu of what is being served, flowers, linen, lighting, upgraded chairs and dinnerware are just a few of the many things that are truly design elements and set your wedding apart from others. But this also is where costs can go out of control, so if you do not have an unlimited budget, this is where a consultant can guide you in choosing the things that are the most meaningful to you, and will make the biggest impact.

Frank J. Andonoplas has designed social and corporate events all over the country since 1992. Frank is an active member of the Association of Bridal Consultants, and in 1995 was appointed state coordinator. He has also earned the designation of professional bridal consultant in 1993.

In 1996, he received the designation of accredited bridal consultant, and master bridal consultant in 1999, then making Andonoplas the 19th in the world to earn that distinction. He is also a member of the International Special

GRIMBAU from page 19

sion of relationship assets and debts;

—Right to seek financial support upon breakup; and

—All state law rights and responsibilities spouses receive through marriage, including many others too numerous to list in this article.

This is an exciting, long overdue time, replete with fabulous choices. It should be known, however, that this is a dynamic, evolving area of law which has not yet been legally tested. There are bound to be many questions and uncertainties ... but really, aren't they always the harbingers of choice.

Contact the Law Offices Rochelle Grimbau, 205 W. Randolph St., Suite 1640, Chicago, Ill., 60606; at 312-781-0193; or at rgrimbau@grimbau.com or grimbau.com.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Grimbau has specialized in family law since 1983 with an emphasis on dissolution of marriage, same sex relationships, domestic partnerships and civil unions; custody; child support; parentage in traditional and non-traditional families or situations; and post-decree issues.



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WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP *Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide*

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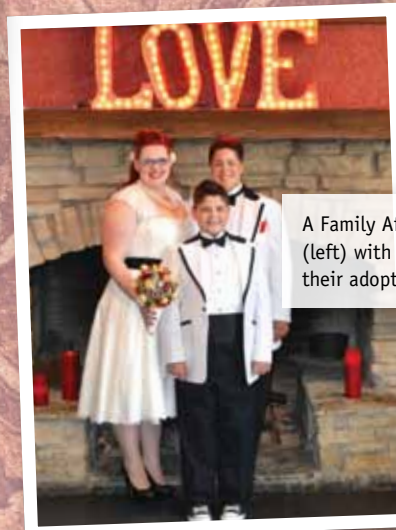
Partners **Blake Ryan Howard** (with glasses) and **Keeton Chamberlain** met at their local neighborhood bar and have been inseparable ever since. After celebrating their civil union, Dec. 11, 2013, at Armand's Pizzeria, they spent their honeymoon in Asheville, NC. At the Illinois marriage bill-signing ceremony, their image was part of the big Powerpoint presentation.



Couple **Michelle Thomas** and **Jan Ferguson** from their civil (and spiritual) union, Sept. 8, 2012. They plan to convert their union to a "real" marriage at City Hall June 1.



Partners **Brian Fallon** and **Fred Mahaffey** exchanged vows in a commitment ceremony on Sept. 6, 2003 (left). 10 years later to the date, they had their civil union at the same church (right).



A Family Affair: **Kate Lindberg-Vazquez** (left) with **Myrna Vazquez** (right) and their adopted son Matheos.

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Lesbian officiant adding meaning to celebrations

BY ROSS FORMAN

Marguerite H. Griffin has long been interested in rituals and ceremonies—and for the past seven years has turned her passion into her part-time profession.

She is a certified celebrant and non-denominational minister who was born and raised in Chicago, and she now calls the Chatham neighborhood home. Her business celebrates meaningful life moments and, naturally, her website is: www.meaningfulmarguerite.com

Griffin is a certified wedding and funeral celebrant who strives for authentic, meaningful and unique ceremonies to mark important life transitions, including anniversaries, memorials, baby blessings and more.

"We tend to move from one significant moment to another without really taking time to celebrate it, or truly understand how we've been moved by the occasion," Griffin said. "I heard about celebrants on NPR, an opportunity for individuals to create ceremonies—unique, hand-written to that event and the people involved."

Griffin, 47, who is lesbian, is a motivational speaker and writer, able to create the perfect mood for any ceremony—from sophisticated to intimate and sacred, from light and casual to overly flamboyant.

"I can suggest meaningful ways to personalize your ceremony using music, readings from secular, religious, spiritual or mythical traditions, and rituals that reflect your needs, your beliefs, your cultural, and your religious/spiritual background, and your values," she said.

"Your ceremony will express the great expectations and intense emotions that characterize the moments that have changed your life."

Griffin said the celebrant role has its roots in Australia, where it is most common.

"Things are going well," with the business,

said Griffin, who, during the day, works at Northern Trust Bank. "This is something I do because I enjoy it. It is not full-time, and I don't ever expect it will be. It's a way for me to create value in the world, a way for me to give back, a way for me to be part of special moments for individuals and families, and use my skills as a creative writer and public speaker. That's what draws me to it."

Griffin has married about 15 couples per year, a total that no doubt will rise this year when gay weddings begin in June. She also has done baby blessings and house-warming celebrations. Plus, she has officiated memorial services for pets.

"I've enjoyed it, and really enjoy marrying gay couples," she said.

"I'm looking forward to what will be, hopefully, a busy wedding season [in 2014], which will include gay and straight couples. Now, gay couples can have a ceremony, mark the occasion, invite family and friends, have them learn more about each other, about their love, their hopes and dreams and more—just like a straight couple."

Griffin once performed a civil-union cer-



Marguerite H. Griffin.

emony for two men who had been together for 40 years—and there was not a dry eye in the place, she said. "It was just so meaningful for them."

"For me, as a gay woman, to be able to marry a gay couple, it's very exciting; it's very hopeful and it just feels right," she said.

Griffin has performed countless memorial services over the years, such as the one she did for a terminally ill woman after being hired by the woman's children.

Griffin spent a couple of afternoons with the ill woman, to hear exactly what she had accomplished in her life, what she regretted, what she had wanted for her children, and much more. The woman passed away about four months later, and Griffin presented a perfect celebration of her life.

"For me, it was special to be a part of her journey, and also very meaningful to me that I was able to assist her children, so they didn't really have to spend the time wondering what their mom would have wanted," Griffin said. "It's wonderful work, a truly meaningful connection I have with the world."

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Food for Thought offers hassle-free options

BY ROSS FORMAN

They don't always cater extra-large events, but they have. Food For Thought was the caterer for the University of Chicago commencement—with 12,000 guests.

But with 350 employees and nearly 30 years of experience, the Lincolnwood-based company is the perfect choice for events of any size.

And that definitely includes gay weddings. "We cater all events, from small house parties to large galas, corporate and social events," said David Bunte, the senior sales consultant for Food For Thought. "We offer a boutique style of service for all of our clients, no matter what the size and scope of their event. Our menus are diverse, offering all different cuisines and our style is more reflective of contemporary restaurants in preparation and pre-



A sampling of culinary choices from Food For Thought. Photos from Karen Monckton

sentation. We consider ourselves trendsetters in the catering industry and our reputation is highly regarded in our diverse client base. We know that each event's goal and feel is different and work with each client to create customized plans to achieve those visions."

Bunte, 54, who lives in the Gold Coast, has worked at Food For Thought for 19 years. Some

of the major annual events catered over the years by Food For Thought include the Celestial Ball at the Adler Planetarium, Lincoln Park Zoo Ball, Brookfield Zoo Ball, Ravinia Gala, Women's Board of the Field Museum Gala, and more.

Bunte said Food For Thought strives for "personalized commitment in planning, menu development, customization [and] flawless ex-

ecution." He added that the company is driven to "making sure you achieve your vision."

"We pride ourselves on working with each client individually," he said. "It's so much different than walking into a restaurant and ordering off the menu. We need to get to know you and your needs before suggesting a culinary and

Turn to page 25

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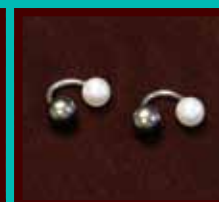
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Wedding arrangements in bloom at upcoming show

BY ROSS FORMAN

The annual Chicago Flower & Garden Show blooms March 15-23 at Navy Pier, and show organizer Tony Abruscato said the event certainly will answer countless questions for one of the most trendy wedding tops: DIY floral.

As in, do-it-yourself floral, often as part of a DIY wedding. "Couples are getting bulk floral, and then creating their own centerpieces, their own bouquets. It's a big, popular trend—for the last 18 months or so, and I see it continuing," Abruscato said.

At the show, there will be free demonstrations on how to make hand-tied European floral bouquets, and how to make table center pieces, among other wedding floral options. "People can come to the show and just watch these classes and demonstrations," Abruscato said.

This year's show also features the American Institute of Floral Designers, which is holding its regional conference at the event. The institute will have 12 different exhibits, showing the hot trends for 2014 and 2015.

Abruscato said popular colors and flowers this year tend to be a bit more sustainable.

"It's expensive to get married, so many couples are finding ways to do DIY floral arrangements," he said.

That list of soon-to-be-married couples certainly includes a load of LGBTers. And Abruscato said "there are a tremendous amount of LGBT-friendly floral designers." Abruscato noted that smaller, compact floral arrangements are more trendy this year as opposed to the big, over-the-



Chicago Flower & Garden Show organizer Tony Abruscato (above) and Abruscato with Bob Mariano of Mariano's. Photos courtesy of Abruscato



top, tall arrangements.

Several couples, including LGBT, have inquired about getting married at the show. "It's something that we think we can accommodate, but haven't done anything final on that," he said.

Abruscato said that a new, wide variety of flowers will be available throughout Chicago this year, including flowers that last longer. At Mariano's, for instance, the floral options will be expanding over the coming months, Abruscato said.

But still, the most popular flower remains the rose. And with a wide variety of options, red roses are no longer the lone must-have flower.

The 2014 Chicago Flower & Garden Show, presented by Mariano's, is March 15-23 at Navy Pier. See www.chicagoflower.com.



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FOOD from page 24

service direction. We do pride ourselves on being a chameleon for our clients as the food that day or night represents them. Whether a dish with roots in traditional preparations or molecular gastronomy, our specials change daily."

Food For Thought has a sales team of 17 and a culinary team of more than 40.

The Food For Thought "Hospitality Group" offers daily food service solutions for a number of different applications, Bunte said. For instance:

- Subsidized corporate dining programs.
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"Food plays an integral role in defining the brand of an entity," Bunte said. "Our commitment to creating higher end programs that define a brand people want differentiates us. Our size allows us both the resources to provide these services and be nimble enough to be both flexible and creative."

Food For Thought also has a delivered catering division.

"As with the other services we offer, we understand that food and the experience it provides is integral to getting results," Bunte said. "Our delivered product line provides a more cost-effective solution [than] fully catered meetings and events. Our menus have just recently been overhauled to reflect a more creative and contemporary approach to these events."

Those new menus will launch April 1.

Bunte said Food For Thought has "always been proud supporters of the gay community and are thrilled with their inclusion [in weddings], something that should have occurred a long time ago."

"We do not see any difference in how the gay community approaches their wedding day from our current clients. Will it impact the volume of weddings we produce? We definitely feel it will, but remain committed to our history of excellence in catering, whether the client is straight or gay."

So why go the Food For Thought route?

"Aside from being a staunch supporter of the community over the years, our customized approach toward special events allow each couple to create and [an] experience that defines them on one of the most special days of their lives, and make it worry free."



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Premarital agreements: Protect your property rights

BY ROGER V. MCCAFFREY-BOSS

On June 1, Illinois LGBT couples will be able to apply for a marriage license, get married the following day, and enjoy all the benefits and legal obligations that married spouses have enjoyed for years.

LGBT couples where someone has a terminal illness, however, can get married now with a supporting letter from their physician.

Although madly in love today, divorce lawyers know that love does not conquer all and that love can sour and turn to conflict. In the world of heterosexual marriage there is an established history of divorce terms, experience with breakup rights and duties that are different from the rules that LGBT couples have lived by.

Divorce clients know the trials and tribulations of a best friend's divorce, the property settlement they got, what their lawyer could or could not do for them and their responsibilities

for payment of maintenance and child support. Unfortunately, these rules are new to LGBT couples planning marriage. They are important and everyone who plans to "tie the knot" should be aware of them.

Whatever you thought was your sole property before marriage changes. When married, spouses have rights as to the marital property of the couple. Marital property is any property acquired by the parties during their marriage except for property which is specifically excluded as non-marital property. The burden is on the party claiming non-marital property to prove it.

If you get married, and split from your spouse, you may have to pay for maintenance. The amount and duration of maintenance is determined based upon relevant factors including age, income and property of each party, education, length of the marriage, whether the recipient's ability to earn income has been impaired

due to absence from the workforce to attend to domestic duties, and lifestyle of the parties.

If you divorce, you may have to pay attorneys' fees for yourself and you may have to pay the legal fees of your spouse. The law says that attorney's fees are the primary responsibility of the party incurring fees. However, if your spouse does not have any money, you may be required to pay his/her fees. Contribution of attorneys' fees from one party to the other is available where the payment of attorneys' fees would undermine a partner's economic stability.

Illinois is an equitable distribution state which means property is not necessarily divided 50/50—there is no guarantee that either spouse will get half. The Court considers relevant factors in determining how assets are to be divided, such as length of the marriage, age, health and employability of the spouses, contribution, both financial and non-financial, to the acquisition of property, the parties' respective abilities to generate capital assets in the future and other factors.

And if you die, your spouse has legal rights to certain retirement accounts you have regardless of who you named as the beneficiary.

Instead of letting a judge decide these issues in case you divorce, you should have a premarital agreement to establish your own financial agreements. Premarital agreements clarify the rights and expectations in the marriage and can reduce the expenses and stress in a divorce by eliminating the issues to be determined.

Premarital agreements must be in writing and signed by both parties. They must be entered into freely and voluntarily. And they require fair and reasonable financial disclosures. They also require each spouse to have their own attorney represent them and be signed well before the marriage so no claim can be made that the Agreement was forced onto one of the spouses.

I have always advocated for all parties in an LGBT couple to create their own property agreements and decide what issues should be covered. Doing that before marriage is the time.

Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss, Esq., Law Offices of Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss & Associates, P.C., 33 North Dearborn Street, Suite 800, Chicago, Illinois 60602, Phone 312 263 8800, email: RVMLawyer@aol.com

Gay and Lesbian
Wedding Guide **Snapshots of Love**

Episcopal Bishop blesses marriage of priest and spouse

The Rev. Ms. Shawn M. Schreiner (pictured at right), Rector, Grace Episcopal Church in Oak Park married Victoria Garvey in a ceremony in 2013. They were married legally in Baltimore, Md., and then had the blessing at Grace Episcopal Church. More than 400 people attended the service, led by Bishop Jeffrey Lee. Photos by Jonathon Lee






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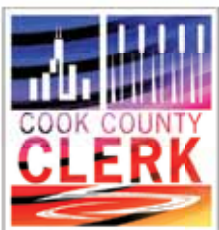
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- Couples have 2 options for converting a civil union to a marriage:
 1. Apply for a marriage license and have a ceremony within 60 days
 2. Apply for a marriage license and request to use your civil union date as the date of your marriage
- Marriage certificates are not automatically sent to couples
- About a week after your ceremony, certificates will be available for purchase in person, online, by phone, or by mail request
- There are 3 types of marriage certificates: standard (\$15), a set of two wallet-sized (\$15), or a commemorative on canvas (\$65)



For more information, visit cookcountyclerk.com/vitalrecords/MarriageEquality.



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ARTango Bistro

BY MEGHAN STREET

ARTango, a longtime Ravenswood dance studio and event space, recently expanded its offerings to include a South American bistro. Initially, I was skeptical about the addition of a restaurant. I wondered whether the food would be an afterthought to the tango lessons. So, I was pleasantly surprised to discover the food is inspired, expertly prepared and, frankly, delicious.

The owners brought on former Bistro Margot chef Isaak Reyes, whose transition from preparing French cuisine to cooking South American food appears to be seamless. The menu incorporates flavors and favorite dishes from Argentina, Venezuela and Peru, and it is chock-full of fresh ingredients.

The trio of ceviche is an ample platter of nicely marinated mahi-mahi, scallops and shrimp, which was my favorite of the three. The shrimp is bathed in lots of tangy lime juice with plenty of bright cilantro notes. The empanadas are another must-order appetizer. The pastry is buttery and flaky, and you can take your pick from among beef, veggie or ham and cheese filling. All of them are good, but next time I'll forgo the sampler platter and order all ham and cheese empanadas. They are by far the



Image from ARTango Bistro. PR photo

best of the three.

The appetizer I was most excited to try was the arroz bomba tostado, a risotto cake with tiger shrimp and lobster sauce. It sounds tantalizing, but doesn't quite deliver. The risotto, while flavorful, isn't crispy as the menu promises it will be. It's really just a scoop of decent risotto topped with three plump shrimp. It's certainly not bad, but it's also not very special, especially when compared to the outstanding renditions of classics like ceviche and empanadas.

Beef features prominently on the entree menu. If you're in the mood for a steak, the etrana is an excellent option. Chimichurri sauce gives the skirt steak plenty of garlicky flavor, and if you order it medium rare, it will be tender and juicy. The steak is sliced and served stylishly on a long rectangular platter. The portion is huge; most people will be hard pressed to finish it. The steak is the star of the show, but scoops of mashed potatoes and guacamole both make nice creamy additions to bites of meat. ARTango is BYOB, so be sure to

bring a bottle of full-bodied red to accompany your steak.

One of the most impressive entrees is the gnocchi, a dish I don't typically associate with South American cuisine. The doughy pasta is crazy soft and fluffy. It could easily rival the gnocchi served at some of my favorite Italian joints. It's topped with a generous serving of rich shredded lamb meat and mixed with a zesty red pepper cream sauce. The sauce adds some South American heat to the dish, but it doesn't render it unnecessarily spicy. Paella lovers will be pleased with ARTango's version, which is packed with plenty of shrimp, octopus and scallops.

After such an unexpectedly delightful meal, I didn't want to skip dessert. Unfortunately, the final course didn't stand up to all of the lovely dishes that came before it. The mango flan was perfectly fine and well-executed. It just wasn't memorable enough for me. The flourless chocolate cake was dry and seemed too ordinary for a menu as thoughtful as ARTango's. If you'd rather burn some calories after dinner than waste them on lackluster desserts, bring your dancing shoes. Midway through the evening, professional tango dancers emerge in the dining room to put on a fun performance. Afterwards, diners (who I suspect have had a few lessons at the dance studio) are welcome to join them on the dance floor. The mid-meal tango feels a bit gimmicky at first, but it's actually quite entertaining and makes for a quirky and unique dining experience.

ARTango is at 4217 N. Ravenswood Ave.; call 773-697-7479 or visit www.artangocenterchicago.com.

THE Q LIST

Katie Vota pushes boundaries of art

BY NICO LANG

When you think about art, what do you picture?

For many of us, the word "art" conjures an image of a painting on a wall, but Katie Vota is one of a movement of contemporary artists who are thinking about genre differently. A graduate student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and an emerging artist, Vota's work specifically challenges the divide between arts and crafts through the use of textiles. What draws Vota to textiles is that it's "art that you live in," the artist said.

"Textiles are omnipresent in our lives," Vota added. "You wear them, you see them. Think about how you have a favorite chair to read in. Someone designed that. Someone designed the fabric in your car. It's art you interact with every day."

As a child, Vota recalled that she grew up constantly immersed in textiles. Vota comes from a long generation of quilters. Fabric is a part of her history. "It was all over [my Nana's] house," Vota said. "There were always quilt squares to be embroidered, fabric pieces. The garage was full. It was her sewing room. She lived with it. It wasn't something that she did and put away."

Until recently, Vota didn't recognize that what her grandmother was doing would influence her career as an artist, the creative lens through which she saw the world. "I didn't even acknowledge it as an art form," Vota explained. "It's a social art because of the community it builds around the labor of the work." Vota said that when we don't focus on the hand as part of the process, we lose something.

Thinking about labor as a material has been important to Vota's own process, which is just as much tied to the narrative of textiles and labor as her own personal story. Her art speaks of a social conscience. "There's so much history that backs up where we find ourselves now, a history of colonization and imperialism," Vota said. "I feel like people think we're past all that, and we're not. If we knew anything about what we're wearing, maybe we'd choose to support different ways of making what we wear in our lives." Much of her own work has been a reaction to what she sees as wastefulness within the art industry, particularly textiles. "Seventy percent of landfill waste is textile-based," Vota said. "I don't want to be a part of that."

In her art, Vota commonly repurposes materials such as tires or rubber to look like leather, which often gives her work a dark, almost S&M feel. By giving discarded materials a second life, a medieval sex dungeon vibe isn't necessarily what she's going for, although she's open to that interpretation. For Vota, it's about letting the materials express themselves. "Other people wanted to talk about my work as an anthropological study, as tools or shamanistic objects," Vota said, "but I'm letting the work guide me in a more visual way."

However, Vota did confess that she has a weakness for making art that pushes the boundaries of bad taste. "I'm finding tastefulness to be a hilarious idea. I want to make the opposite of what is tasteful, like curtains with leather fringe on them," Vota said. "Every time someone gives me a 'What the hell are you doing?' look, it's an encouragement. I push it further."

Although Vota has long resisted the "queer"



One of Katie Vota's works. Photo courtesy of Vota

label in her art, she admitted that there's a "queering" element in what she's doing, repurposing materials for her own ends. "The work that I'm making right now is the first time anyone has ever talked about queerness in relation to my work," Vota said. "That makes me uncomfortable, because I don't want to just be a queer artist. I don't want to be pigeonholed." But in her own life, Vota feels an increasing need to be outspoken about sexuality and queerness, as an out bisexual woman. "There's a discomfort within the queer community around bisexuals," Vota said. "It's a really hard place to be in. There's so much erasure that goes into other peoples assumptions of you." Facing that stigma, Vota believes it's "important to count yourself amongst the queer community in an overt way."

As an artist, this need for visibility in the community also shines through in her politics. By challenging the divide between arts and crafts, Vota hopes to find a place for textile artists and craft makers in the larger art world, where they are often marginalized or left out. "Why can't a craft object be an art object?" Vota asked, saying that she believes that crafts

are threatening to the art scene because they "break down high art divide between the wall and the viewer."

"I love it when something begs viewer interaction, that they just want to play with it and touch it," she added. "It's one of the reasons that I gravitate toward installation work. The viewer gets to be immersed in the work instead of it just being a thing on the wall."

Vota said that these restrictions can be particularly limiting for craft artists, who are "disrespected," but those divides drive her to keep pushing. "Having outside limitations is really helpful to me as a way generating more interesting ideas," Vota remarked. "I want to poke at these arbitrary conceptions that we have in order break down these hierarchies that exist within art. We shouldn't have all these preconceived notions."

Her new show, "Off the Mark," will be doing exactly that. Although her work is already on display, the official reception will be held Feb. 6 at Intelligentsia Coffee, 53 E. Randolph St. Vota's work is also at SAIC's Sharp Building on the eighth floor, or at Katie Vota.com.

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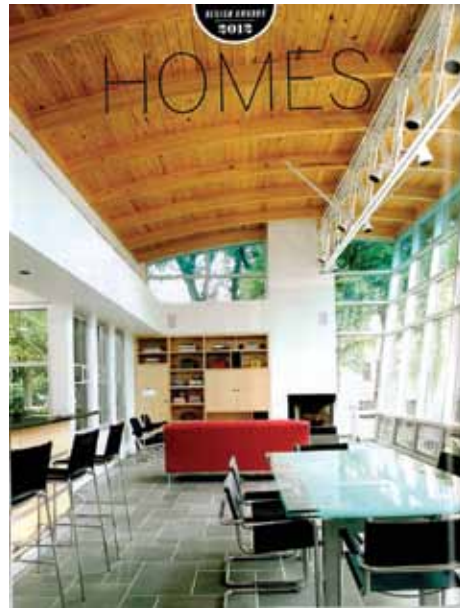
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CALENDAR

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Wed., Feb. 5

Dealing with Dementia: A Support and Resource Group Chicagoland Methodist Senior Services is the most extensive senior services network on Chicago's north side. For over 115 years, CMSS has faithfully served older adults in Chicago by continuing to develop new programming that meets the changing needs of the population. CMSS' key services include assisted and supportive living, dementia care, rehabilitation services and senior home care. The organization also offers home repair services, subsidized housing and outpatient wellness services to Chicago area seniors. Learn more at www.cmsschicago.org 5:00pm - 6:00pm 5520 N. Paulina St., Chicago <http://www.cms-schicago.org/events.aspx>

Pride Films and Plays LGBT filmmakers discussion Pride Films and Plays invites Chicago LGBT filmmakers for an informal gathering and discussion. RSVP online 7:00pm Location, 1411 W. Wilson Ave., Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/265874480231175/>

Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago meeting and elections Everyone is welcome. Make a difference in the local bisexual community and around the world. 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Gay Liberation Network Join Chicago's multi-issue direct action LGBTIQ group. Plan methods to bring justice to LGBTs through legal rights, immigration, anti-war, and labor solidarity. Bring your ideas to the meeting and work with others to bring social change. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Berger Park Cultural Center 6205 N. Sheridan Rd <http://www.gayliberation.net>

Thursday, Feb. 6

Men's Speed Dating Center on Halsted and Get On The Floor Dance Co. present Men's Speed Dating. Light hors d'oeuvres and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Shea Coulee will be the Drag Queen MC. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Chicago Chamber Musicians' Britten Film Festival Features Moonrise Kingdom Professor Ron Falzone of Cinema Art and Science at Columbia College will lead a discussion with the audience immediately following the film showing. The most prominent British composer of the 20th century, Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) is widely known for his operas and orches-

tral works. 7:00pm Film Row Cinema of Columbia College Chicago 1104 S Wabash 8th Floor <http://www.chicagochamber-music.org>

Friday, Feb. 7

That's So Gay! An LGBT trivia night That's So Gay! is a new game of LGBTQ discovery, looking at history with a twist, having fun in a bingo-style game, with 2,400 questions. Hosts: 'KWizmaster' Kirk Williamson and Tracy Baim. Chance to win prizes. 7:00pm Bountiful Eatery, 3312 N. Broadway, www.facebook.com/ThatsSoGayGame

Violinist Gidon Kremer and chamber orchestra Kremerata Baltica Features a seldom-heard cantata by Shostakovich called Antiformalist Rayok, a piece composed by Shostakovich in response to the Soviet Union's oppressive regime of the 20th century. Kremer is a staunch advocate of human rights and an outspoken critic of Russia's recently passed anti-gay laws. 7:30pm The Harris Theater Millennium Park, 205 E. Randolph St., <http://www.harristheaterchicago.org>

Chicago Foundation for Women LGBT Giving Council February Frolic 2014 Old-school dance party will take you back to a time when doing the Bus Stop meant dancing. When 'Gingermans', 'Poets', 'Bananas' and 'Coconuts' were places you could do a Spanish Hustle or the Bump. When going to 'Paris' meant catching the Red Line and didn't need a plane ticket. When a 'Brickhouse' had nothing to do with real estate and everything to do with having a good time. 9:00pm - 2:00am Sunset Cafe, 5726 N. Western Ave., https://www.cfw.org/februaryfrolic_LTBO

69 by sketch duo Pinque Pony Sketch duo Pinque Pony returns with a long-lost comedy show from the summer of 1969, weaving a tapestry of twisted, winning Chicagoans all on the cusp of major transformation. Fridays through Feb. 28. Tickets \$15 by phone. 10:00pm Donny's Skybox Theatre 1608 N Wells St 4th Flr 312-337-3992

Saturday, Feb. 8

Auto show Admire new vehicles at the Chicago Auto Show, where exhibits are spectacular due to the large size of McCormick Place convention center. 9:00am McCormick Place West Building 2301 S. Indiana Ave. <http://www.chicagoautoshow.com>

Frontrunners/ Frontwalkers Chicago Fun Run/Walk A club for lesbians, gay men,

bisexuals, transexuals and friends who are interested in running and walking together along Chicago's great open lakefront, meeting twice weekly, on Saturdays at 9am and Tuesdays at 6:30pm 9:00am Totem Pole in Lincoln Park <https://www.facebook.com/groups/52950773133/>

Chicago Foundation for Women Young Women's Giving Council Pop Up Shop Spice up your mid-winter wardrobe at a pop-up shop. All proceeds go to benefit organizations supported by the Chicago Foundation for Women. The shop features new and gently used tops, dresses, pants, coats & accessories Prices range from \$2-\$20; Final prices are TBD. Donations can be dropped off at various locations about Chicago two weeks prior to event. Accessibility questions to Rhiannon at rossi@cfw.org 12:00pm - 3:00pm Private Residence <https://www.cfw.org/popup>

Capoeira Workshop for Beginners Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art that incorporates music, self-defense, and dance. It involves some degree of physical prowess but engages the mind as much as the body. Developed in Brazil by descendants of African slaves, capoeira emerged as a form of resistance to oppression. Today, capoeira is practiced worldwide and serves to empower its practitioners with tools applicable in every day life. 2:00pm - 4:00pm second floor of 2940 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60657, (773) 248-1667, <http://gatchicago.com> Tickets: <https://clients.mindbodyonline.com/ASP/home.asp?studioid=31486>

Equality Illinois Gala, annual Freedom Awards Hosted by Colonel (IL) Jennifer Pritzker, IL ARNG (Ret.). Transgender Chicago filmmaker Lana Wachowski, Sen. Mark Kirk and Chicago Urban League will be honored. The evening begins at 6pm with the Silent Auction Cocktail Party and ends at Midnight with the post-dinner dance. 6:00pm Chicago Hilton and Towers 720 S Michigan Ave Tickets: <http://www.eqil.org/Gala2/gala2.html>

Congregation Or Chadash Congregational Dinner Havdala followed by dinner, followed by games and entertainment with trivia contests, other activities. Dinner by the Pita Inn at a cost of \$15 per person. 6:30pm Congregation Or Chadash at Emanuel Congregation 5959 N Sheridan Rd <http://www.orchadash.org>

Sunday, Feb. 9

Be My Valentine Family Event Lynn Sage Cancer Research Foundation hosts 7th annual event. Family brunch buffet, Valentine's activities for children, a special concert by award-winning children's musician Justin Roberts & the Not Ready for Naptime Players and many more activities. \$100 for adults and \$80 for children at the door. 10:00am - 1:00pm The Ritz-Carlton Chicago Hotel 160 E Pearson St 312-926-7133 Tickets: <http://www.lynnstage.org>

Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago Meet-



FREEDOM NOW

Saturday, Feb. 8

The Equality Illinois gala and annual Freedom Awards will take place at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan Ave.

Photo from 2012 by Steve Starr

ing every Sunday from 10:30 to noon, featuring a speaker on a variety of topics—personal ethics, education, psychology, politics, philosophy, medical care, equal rights, the environment, etc., followed by a coffee hour. Free and open to the public. Also Sunday School, weddings, service projects, book group, film group. 10:30am - 12:00pm Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago 7574 N. Lincoln Ave. Skokie, Ill., <http://www.ethicalhuman.org>

Scott Duff hosts LGBT radio talk show LGBT-specific talk show "Out Chicago" on politics, entertainment, celebrity gossip 11:00am - 1:00pm WCPT 820 AM

Coffee Hour with Rep. Kelly Cassidy Representative Cassidy will provide an update on last year's legislative action and priorities for this year. Come with questions or comments. 1:00pm - 2:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore, 5233 N Clark St www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Living Trust and Estate Planning Presented by Patrick Price, Director of Development and Marketing, North Shore Senior Center. He is passionate about the importance of life and estate planning for LGBTQ people. 1:30pm Broadway United Methodist Church, 3338 N Broadway, <http://www.broadwaychurchchicago.com>

Chicago Prime Timers Second Sunday of each month open social. Prime Timers are older gay or bisexual men (and younger men who admire mature men). Our members are men who choose to have their social lives enriched by the diverse activities in which our members engage. Those wishing to enjoy alcoholic beverages are asked to bring their own bottle. Set-ups are \$1. Social hour is followed by a din-

ner and a program at 7pm. \$20 for members or non-members. Non-members and guests are always most welcome. 6:00pm Ann Sather - Belmont 909 W Belmont Ave <http://www.chicagoprimitimers.org>

Chicago Her HRC Presents: Va ~ Va ~ Vaudeville! Human Rights Campaign's 3rd annual Vaudeville extravaganza with titillating comedy, burlesque beauties, and fabulous entertainment by Chicago's best. Tickets include an annual HRC membership. Must be 18+ to attend, 21+ to drink. VIP 6 p.m. General 6:30 p.m. Performances 7 p.m. \$20. VIP \$35 includes early entry, premium floor seating, free 50/50 raffle ticket. 6:00pm - 10:00pm Mayne Stage 1328 W Morse Ave Tickets: <http://action.hrc.org/site/Calendar?view=Detail&id=116501&autologin=true>

Monday, Feb. 10

Kick-Off to Wonka Ball 2014 Celebrate the kick-off of this year's Wonka Ball. Come join the fun with specialty cocktails, exclusive access to free video games, and be among the first to find out what this year's Wonka theme will be. Cash bar. RSVP: Biz Wells at biz@aboutfacetheatre.com or by phone 6:00pm - 8:00pm Replay Beer & Bourbon 3439 N Halsted St 773-784-8565 <http://www.aboutfacetheatre.com>

Tuesday, Feb. 11

Chicago Theatre Week Celebration of Chicago's world-class theatre scene with more than 75 productions sampling range of theatrical offerings in Chicago. Through Feb. 16. \$15 and \$30 tickets (or less!) 7:00pm Various theaters <http://www.chicagoeatreweek.com>

Frontrunners/ Frontwalkers Chicago A club for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transexuals and friends who are interested in running and walking together along Chicago's great open lakefront, meeting twice weekly, on Saturdays at 9am and Tuesdays at 6:30pm 6:30pm Totem Pole in Lincoln Park <https://www.facebook.com/groups/52950773133/>

Wed., Feb. 12

"Lipstick and Dynamite, Piss and Vinegar: The First Ladies of Wrestling" Screening 11th Annual Dyke Delicious presents Lipstick and Dynamite profiles the amazing and often excruciating history of female wrestling from its origins as a circus sideshow in the 1930s (banned in many states due to indecency), to its "hey-day" in the 1950s and 60s, when it soared in popularity. Director Ruth Leitman will be in attendance to host a post-screening Q&A with the audience. 6:30pm screening time // \$10 admission & FREE for CCC students, faculty & staff 6:30pm - 8:30pm Columbia College Chicago, Hokin Hall, 623 S. Wabash, Chicago, IL, (773) 293-1447, <http://events.colum.edu>

Leslie and LY's at Empty Bottle Feb. 7

Satirical pop/hip-hop act Leslie and the LY's will appear at The Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western Ave., on Friday, Feb. 7, at 9:30 p.m.

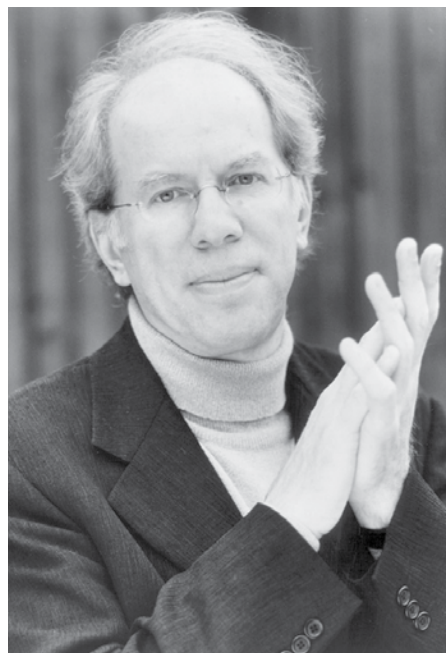
The band will be touring nationally throughout February and March in support of Leslie Hall's new album, Songs in the Key of Gold. This album is Leslie's sixth self-released album and the first release on the band's own label, Yarn House Records.

Other acts on the bill include Dean and the Delilahs and Boone County Comedy Troupe. See www.leslieandthelys.com.

Orchestra, pro-gay violinist at Harris Theater Feb. 7

The Grammy-winning chamber orchestra Kremerata Baltica—led by violinist and Artistic Director Gidon Kremer—returns to the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph St., on Friday, Feb. 7, at 7:30 p.m.

The orchestra will perform works by Benjamin Britten, Mieczyslaw Weinberg, and Dmitri



Gidon Kremer. Photo by Michael Benabib

Shostakovich, including Shostakovich's provocative and seldom-heard comic opera Antiformalist Rayok.

Kremer's advocacy for human rights and social justice has been well-documented in recent months, including speaking out against Russia's anti-gay law.

Tickets for the performance are \$15-\$30; visit www.HarrisTheaterChicago.org or call 312-334-7777.

Chicago House unveiling 'The Tease'

Chicago House will unveil "The Tease"—a combination of "burlesque, cirque and Vegas," a press release touted—on Saturday, March 1, at Moonlight Studios, 1446 W. Kinzie St., at 7:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

The event fills a hole created when HIV/AIDS agency Test Positive Aware Network decided not to hold its "Chicago Takes Off" event this year.

Creators Keith Elliott and Todd Kiech (Dance For Life; Chicago Takes Off) are planning a night of aerial acts, striptease and more. Side-track is sponsoring an open bar.

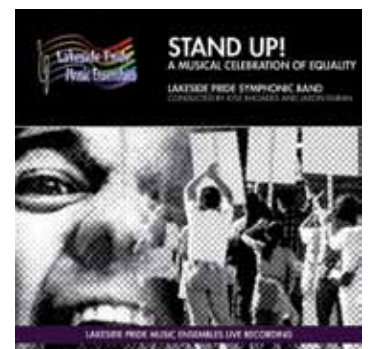
Seating ranges from standing room only (\$65) to club seating (\$100) to front-row VIP (\$300). Visit www.chicagohouse.org or call 773-248-5200 ext. 304.

Lakeside Pride releasing recording of equality show

Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles announced its first digital album release, Stand Up! A Musical Celebration of Equality, featuring the Lakeside Pride Symphonic Band with conductors Kyle Rhoades and Jason Duran.

This special commemorative download was recorded live during a one-night-only concert Nov. 9, 2013, in the auditorium of Nettelhorst School in Lakeview following the news that Illinois would become the 15th state to grant same-sex couples the freedom to marry.

See www.LakesidePride.org.



BILLY MASTERS

"Who sits down at the table but Glenn [Close] right next to me. Oh, fuck... Then all of a sudden she hugs me. She says, 'You know what this is for.' I say, 'I do.' She says, 'I had nothing to do with it.' And, poof, it's gone. Get rid of that crap. It's over."—Patti LuPone tells author Eddie Shapiro about her encounter with Glenn Close after the 2011 Kennedy Center Honors. Close was letting LuPone know that she didn't personally have anything to do with replacing her in Sunset Boulevard on Broadway. She may not have called, but Glenn went one better—she reached out and touched ... in person.

One of the advantages of convalescing in Boston is the close proximity to New York. So last week I spent a whirlwind 48 hours in the Big Apple with my *bon ami*, attorney to the stars Mark Sendroff. Our first stop was The Tribute Artist, the new play by Charles Busch at Primary Stages. Normally, one wouldn't review a show still in previews, but I've never been one to stand on ceremony. Any time one gets



Patti LuPone (above) revealed what happened when she met Glenn Close a few years ago. Photo by Brigitte LaCombe

the chance to see the Divine Busch working alongside his muse Julie Halston is a reason to celebrate.

This new play is about a female impersonator (aka a "tribute artist") who takes on the persona of a recently departed wealthy woman in order to remain in her sumptuous brownstone. It's chock full of laughs, zany situations and touching twists (including a transgender teen, played to perfection by Keira Keeley). While the entire cast could not be bettered, I must give special kudos to the incandescent Cynthia Harris—known throughout my childhood as "Mrs. B" from Bradlees Department Store, and more recently as Paul Reiser's mother on *Mad About You*. Harris not only gets to spar with Halston but also virtually mirrors Busch's mannerisms and voice. What's not to love? Throw in one of the most gorgeous sets to ever grace an off-Broadway show, and you have a hit. Catch it if you're in New York—it closes March 16.

By the way, after the show we were joined by Tony Sheldon (who was so heartbreakingly touching in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*) and the ageless Sondra Lee (you know, she really has slept with everybody). Photos of our visit can be found on BillyMasters.com.

Later that night, it was off to Broadway Bares' "Winter Burlesque" at XL Nightclub. For the past 24 years, Broadway Bares has raised money for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. This event kicked off their fundraising season and they launched it with aplomb. Led by the multitasking Christopher Sieber (dancing and singing despite a nasty cold), the evening raised more than \$30,000. I am guessing that at least \$5K was found in the various crevices of the lovely Patrick Boyd, who proves that real beauty is ageless.

The main purpose of my jaunt was to cele-

brate the release of a new book on Broadway. Nothing Like a Dame: Conversations with the Great Women of Musical Theatre has been a labor of love for author and pal Eddie Shapiro (he also runs GayDaysAnaheim.com). Of course, the fact that he got to spend years chatting with these 20 legendary leading ladies was no hardship. His passion for Broadway is readily apparent in this deliciously detailed, dishy, diva-licious discourse. The soiree also served as a fundraiser for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, and was attended by several of the stars. Laura Benanti, Judy Kaye, Karen Ziemba, Debra Monk, and Lillias White were on hand to celebrate, autograph, and chat with the revelers.

I had invited a handful of special friends to the fete. It was great to spend time with Hunter Ryan Herdlicka (from *A Little Night Music*). And when I saw the first line of a text message a half-hour into the party from John Wesley Shipp (*Safe Sex*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*), I was sure he was canceling ... a gain. So imagine my shock when I heard him call my name from across the room five minutes later! I wasn't the only one glad to see "The Flash"—Norm Lewis welcomed JWS back to NYC and urged him to return to Broadway tout suite! From your lips....

Meanwhile on the Left Coast, Gloria Gaynor caused quite a kerfuffle at the *tres* gay nightclub, The Abbey. Apparently, the singer was booked to perform at the venue last Thursday, and made an odd request. She asked that there be no shirtless men in her immediate vicinity. In fact, if she saw so much as a fleeting nipple, she was out the door. For a club known for its gorgeous go-go boys, this could prove to be problematic. When asked if this was homophobia rearing its ugly head, her management reiterated the no-nudity clause. Apparently, the singer (who hasn't had a hit this century) is allegedly "protecting her image." In fact, her management claims that shirtless men and provocatively dressed women are denied photostops with Gaynor. I mean, come on. Her name says it all.

This week's "Ask Billy" question comes from Gary in Vancouver: "Have you watched *Baby Daddy*? The two brothers are mega-hot. The lead guy was just naked. And last week, Matt Dallas was on ... shirtless!"

The ABC Family show *Baby Daddy* has landed in this column before when we ran some sexy stills of the aforementioned baby daddy, Jean Luc Bilodeau, and his onscreen brother, Derek Theler (who is almost ridiculously hot). Throw in the occasional guest star Matt Dallas and you have a hot boy-a-palooza! Of course, even without them, the show is worth watching for the outrageous Melissa Peterman, who should team with Jennifer Coolidge and Jennifer Lewis to teach a class on how to steal a scene without saying a word. In the third-season premiere, Jean Luc was indeed naked. And he made sure he looked good by going on a strict diet and amping up his workouts for three weeks: "I binged on everything at craft service as soon as I was finished shooting, so I probably gained all the weight I lost right back." Of course, he was even more naked in "Piranha 3DD"—where a piranha attached itself to his penis. How on Earth did we miss that? All those pics and clips will turn up on BillyMasters.com—uncut!

When we're turning to ABC Family for hot men, it's time to end yet another column. We ran a bit long, so let me just remind you to check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that never worries about size. And have I mentioned that someone's birthday is coming up in a matter of days? Shop early, shop often, or simply drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Gloria Gaynor sings "I Will Survive" at Broadway Bares! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

Dan Savage's porn fest in Chicago Feb. 15

Gay activist Dan Savage—known as the writer of internationally syndicated relationship/sex advice column *Savage Love* and as the co-creator of the *It Gets Better* Project—is taking the HUMP! Festival (which features amateur porn) on the road.

The festival started in 2005; this year, the 18 shorts consist of Savage's personal favorites, mixed with some of the most popular audience picks from throughout the years.

The HUMP! Tour begins Saturday, Feb. 15, in Chicago at the Music Box Theater with Savage hosting. For an overview of each film and the full list of tour dates, check out www.humptour.com.

Bowie tribute to benefit Crib

Stardust The David Bowie Tribute Band will perform Friday, Feb. 14, at 8 p.m. at the Underground Lounge, 954 W. Newport Ave.

Now in its 16th year of production, Stardust features vocalist, Lair Scott, as Ziggy 2000 and includes *Tooth_Eye*, Alex James and Ross Markers. Appearing along with Stardust will be *Queer Fest America* comix Darren Marshall and Kate Cullen as well as Matt Duhaime from the band *Moxie Motive*, *Psycho Sister*, *Spizzarri*, *Tutu* and the *Pirates* and a solo performance by *Tooth_Eye*.

Queer Fest America is sponsoring the 21-and-over event. The cover charge is \$5; proceeds will benefit *The Crib*, a homeless youth shelter.

Orchid show in Glencoe Feb. 15-March 16

The Orchid Show will take place at the Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Rd., Glencoe, from Saturday, Feb. 15, through Sunday, March 16.

Among other things, there will be classes, hula dances (Feb. 15-16), a weekend marketplace and a rare-book exhibition.

See www.ChicagoBotanic.org.

James Franco at NU School of Law Feb. 19

The Poetry Foundation and the Chicago Humanities Festival will present "James Franco and Frank Bidart: Off the Shelf" at Thorne Auditorium, Northwestern University School of Law, 375 E. Chicago Ave., on Wed., Feb. 19, at 8 p.m.

Poetry Foundation president Robert Polito will moderate a discussion on film and poetry with Bidart and Franco. The program will focus on Franco's short film *Herbert White*, which is based on Bidart's poem of the same title.

Tickets are \$10-\$15; visit www.chicagohumanities.org or call 312-494-9509. See www.poetryfoundation.org/programs/event/3087.

BOOK REVIEW

In the Frightened Heart of Me: Tennessee Williams's Last Year

by Tony Narducci
\$21.95; iUniverse, Inc.;
302 pages

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

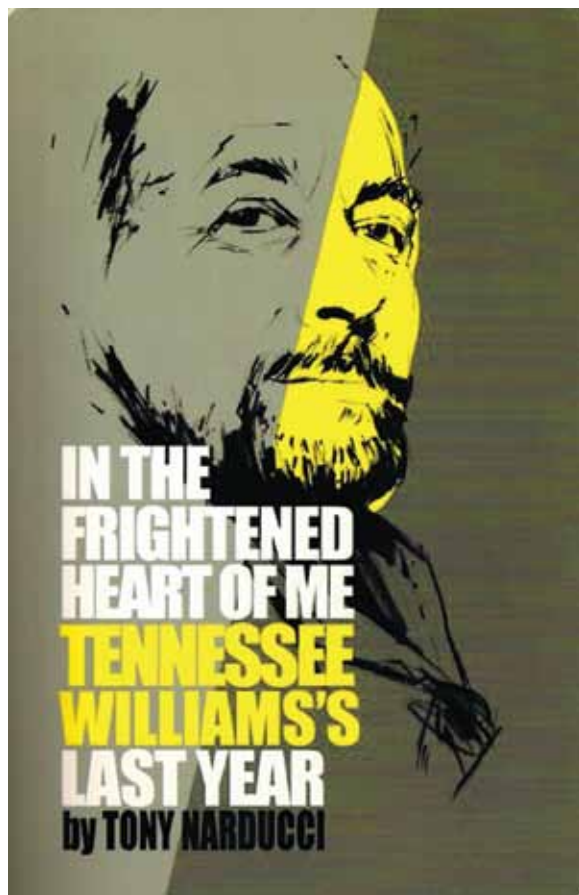
"Would you like a kind stranger to help?"

The year that defined Tony Narducci's life started with words he borrowed from his literary hero's work when he spotted Tennessee Williams stumbling on the stairs at a nightclub in Key West, Fla. in February 1982 and offered him an arm.

Narducci's memoir, titled *In the Frightened Heart of Me: Tennessee Williams's Last Year*, narrates the significant and complex friendship he and Williams had until the playwright's untimely death a year after they met. It is a story with what seems to have lasting impacts for the author according to what the author writes.

At 14, Narducci fell in love with Williams' poetry; 20 years later the famous 71-year-old poet fell in love with him. Narducci was drawn in as the playwright's confidant providing him with platonic friendship and assistance through his declining health, while Williams constantly craved companionship and love, often addressing the author endearingly as "baby."

The famous playwright came to relish the young man's company so much so that he proposed Narducci be his live-in companion and accompany him abroad. However, Narducci faced the ongoing pressure of wanting to follow his own artistic aspirations as opposed to feeding off Williams' celebrity and accomplishments and completely devoting his life to him.



"Like Blanche in 'Streetcar,' he was wrapping us in illusion," Narducci writes in relation to his and Williams' differing expectations.

Together, the two men viewed Williams' last plays together, allowing Narducci to witness his dramatic reactions and hear his strong opinions on the various actors portraying roles he created. Off the stage and throughout the book, Narducci insightfully recognizes fictional characters that come to existence through Williams' emotions and actions. Play references are scattered throughout the novel.

Other adventures include traveling together in Florida, Boston, New York and Narducci's hometown of Chicago; attending events such as an honorary doctorate degree ceremony at Harvard University; and being at a performance Williams and Vanessa Redgrave staged in Boston during which Williams read an essay, garbling his words due to his loose denture bridge. Their outings also included wining and dining with others including Narducci's friends.

Narducci's debut book is based off his journal from that particular time in his life with the title taken from the last scene of Williams' "The Night of the Iguana." He provides readers with detail of his own perceptions surrounding the time period.

The heart becomes even more frightened when Narducci writes about gay life that year in which little was known about the AIDS epidemic and unprotected sex was rampant, resulting in numerous deaths among his close friends.

The authenticity of the memoir is furthered with reproduced letters Williams sent Narducci as they corresponded when apart. The author illustrates Williams' unfiltered qualities including needy, demanding, dedicated to writing, tearful over his fear of dying alone and loveless, gracious, flirtatious and lustful.

Toward the book's end, the tension is rather high as Williams' and Narducci's relationship dwindles and he eventually passes. Narducci further experiences fear of relationships and losing friends to AIDS. Written with great detail and raw emotions on close friendships, readers will get a more colorful image of the literary icon beyond the plays, poetry and press.

CGMC concerts Feb. 25, March 8

Chicago Gay Men's Chorus (CGMC) will present its second winter cabaret show, "Let's Do It!" Feb. 25 at the Laugh Factory, 3175 N. Broadway, and March 8 at Mayslake Peabody Estate, 1717 W. 31st St., Oak Brook.

Song selections include the show's title "Let's Do It," "Meadowlark," "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" and many other classic standards from songbooks of these prolific artists.

Tickets are sale for \$35 for general admission and \$55 for VIP seating, both with a two-drink minimum. For tickets and more information, visit cgmc.org.

'Tennessee Williams' running through March 2

The Hypocrites is running The Tennessee Williams Project through Sunday, March 2, at Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St.

The event is a night of three one-act plays, directed and devised by Matt Hawkins, winner of the Jeff Award for Best Director and Musical for The Hypocrites' 2010 production of Cabaret.

Ticket prices are \$28 and can be purchased by visiting the-hypocrites.com or by calling 773-525-5991.

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Ray is a legal authority on all of his practice areas, which include probate, trusts, guardianship, estate planning, and elder law, including the litigation of those areas. He is a longtime advocate for and member of the LGBT community, and is involved in several charitable groups, community associations, and professional organizations. Ray is a member of Clark Hill PLC, a full-service law firm consisting of a diverse team of attorneys and professionals committed to our clients and our communities.

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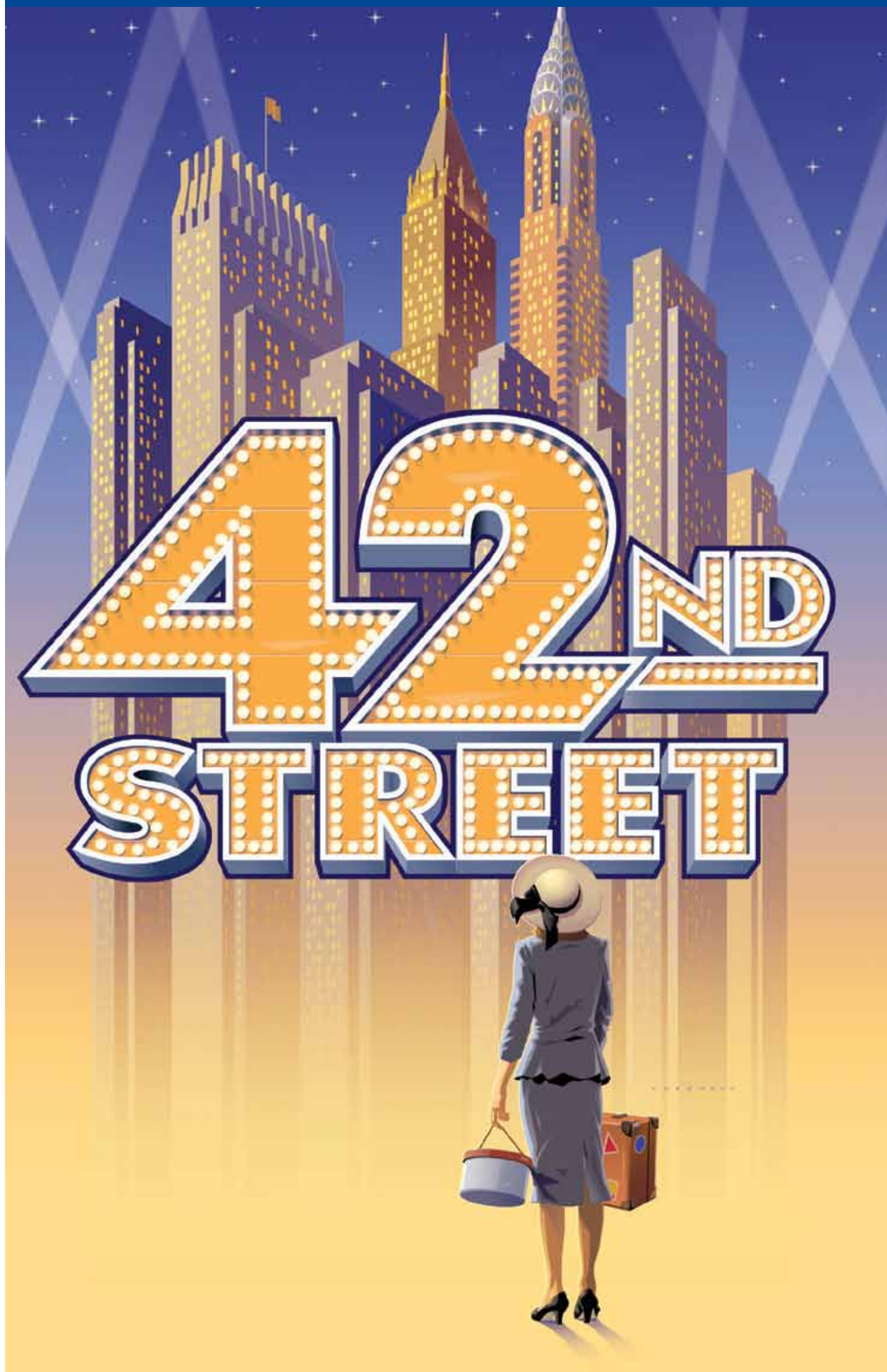
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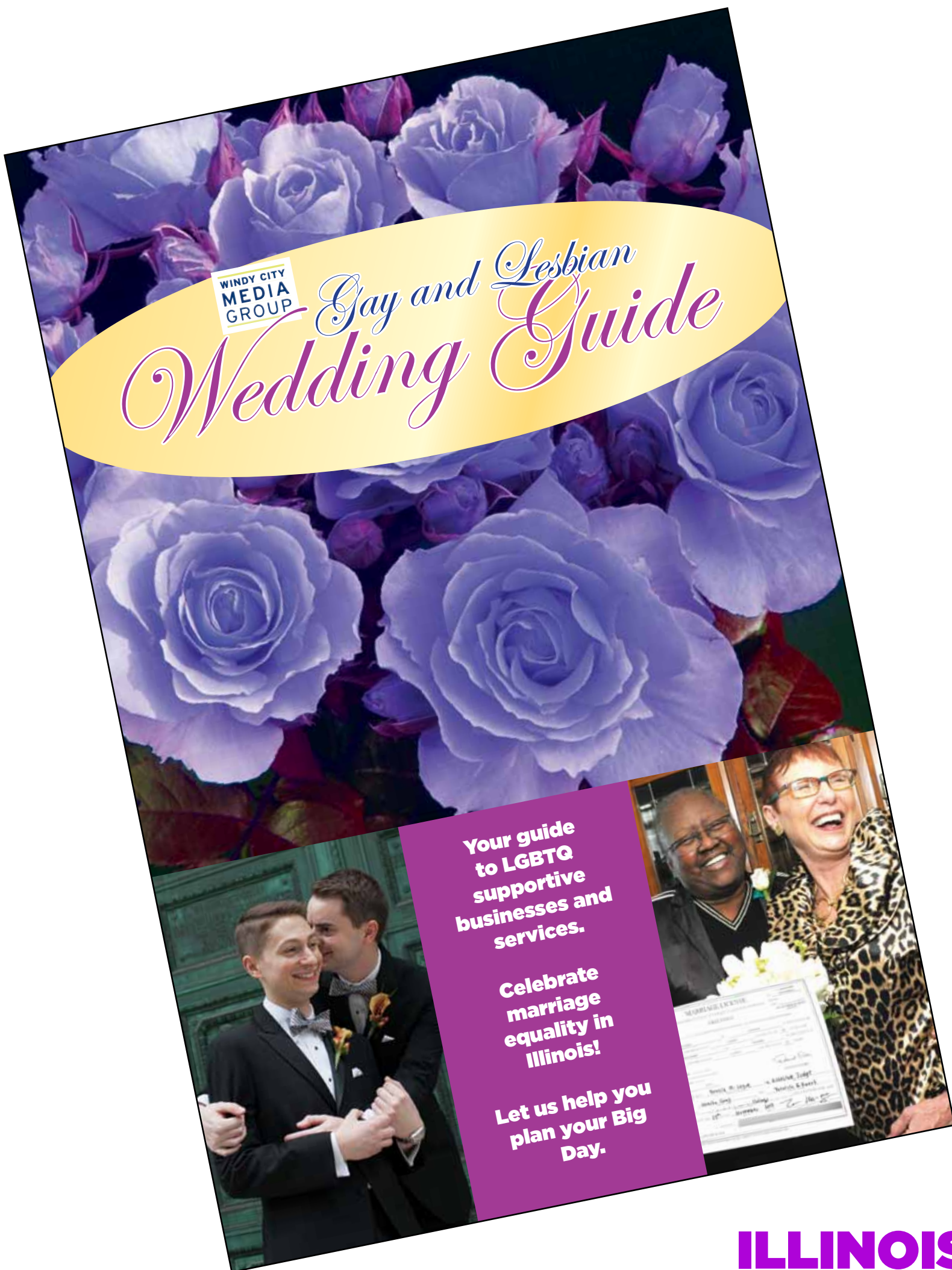
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The image shows the cover of a 'Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide' booklet. The background is a close-up of purple and white roses. A yellow banner across the top contains the 'WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP' logo and the title 'Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide' in a purple script font. Below the banner, there are three photographs: a couple in formal wear, a couple holding a marriage license, and a couple smiling. A purple text box in the center contains promotional text.

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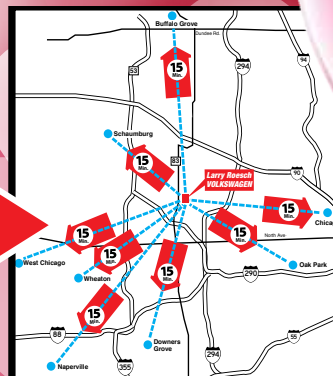
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