

WINDY CITY TIMES

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BIG TIME

Michelle Fire reflects on Big Chicks turning 30.

Photo by Kirk Williamson

16



WINTER'S DANCE

Nutcracker's design team creates Wheeldon's dream

BY LAUREN WARNECKE

The 1893 Columbian Exposition brought the best of the best to Chicago, to share the spirit of innovation and imagination with the world, all on an impossible timeline with an impossible budget. The buzz of anticipation and the expectations of what could or might happen were felt throughout the city and the county.

This is perhaps something the Joffrey Ballet can relate to right now. With technical rehearsals and previews of Christopher Wheeldon's Nutcracker wrapping up in Iowa City, the company is headed home to prepare for one of the most highly-anticipated premieres in Chicago dance history. Wheeldon's dream team of collaborators are the best and brightest from their disciplines, with Tony-nominated set and costume designer Julian Crouch, Obie and Drama Desk award-winning puppeteer and MacArthur "Genius" Basil Twist, five-time Tony-winning lighting designer Natasha Katz and Tony-winning projection designer Ben Percy of 59 Productions.

Turn to page 26

Costume renderings from Christopher Wheeldon's world premiere of The Nutcracker. Courtesy of The Joffrey Ballet



NANCY REIFF

Former Daley staffer dies.

Nancy Reiff (left) with Mayor Daley at a heated 1989 meeting at Ann Sather on Belmont. Photo by Lisa Howe-Ebright

6



CLINIC OPENS

Howard Brown Health inaugurates Rogers Park clinic.

Photo by Hal Baim

4



WORLD OF CHOCOLATE

Annual event attracts hundreds to Revel.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

13



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INDEX

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NEWS	
Howard Brown Health clinic opens	4
OBIT: Jimmy Bissonnette	5
PASSAGES: Nancy Reiff, Bliss Frings	6
Art AIDS events	8
Paseo Boricua marks World AIDS Day	9



World of Chocolate	13
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Castillo-Pennycuff housing project discussed	14
Big Chicks turns 30	16
Views: Rudolph; letters	18

ENTERTAINMENT/EVENTS

Scottish Play Scott	19
Theater reviews	23-24
Wheeldon's Nutcracker	26
Writer Ellen Hart receives award	27
Tig Notaro; Laura Jane Grace book-signing	28
Field Museum engagement	30
Film tackles disability cliches	30
In the Life	31
Holiday gift guide, part two	32-35
NIGHTSPOTS	36

OUTLINES

Classifieds	38
Calendar Q	38

online exclusives at www.WindyCityTimes.com



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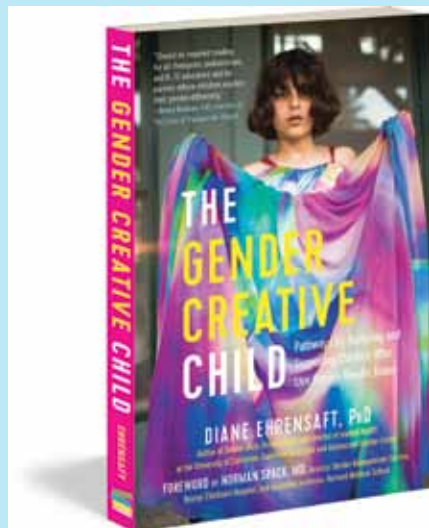
K. Rocco Shields (left) talks about her new film Love Is All You Need? PR photo

ALWAYS AMANDA



WCT talks with the ever-candid singer Amanda Palmer. Photo by Shervin Lainez

SEASON'S READINGS



Looking for the right book to get someone? WCT just may have the answer.

ON THE MARK

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'KETTLE' PROD

Jason LeClerc talks about his new novel, Black Kettle.

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Politicians alongside Howard Brown Health staff and board members at Monday's Rogers Park ribbon cutting.

Photo by Hal Baim

Howard Brown Health officially opens Rogers Park clinic

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Howard Brown Health hosted the grand opening of Howard Brown Health Clark, its Far North Side facility Dec. 5, at 6500 N. Clark St.

The event was host to several local politicians, among them U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky and Aids. Carlos Rosa, Harry Osterman, Raymond Lopez and Joe Moore.

The 15,000-square-foot facility, which officials say will serve about 6,000 patients a year. Remaining in the back portion of the second floor will be Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, which moved there in 2013. Howard Brown Health purchased the building in August, 2016; total cost of the project, including the building purchase, was about \$6 million, according to HBH President and CEO David Ernesto Munar.

The two-story building also now includes a Walgreens pharmacy on the first floor, HBH's call center, many offices and clinic rooms, and an outdoor parking lot. There are community rooms that can be used by partner agencies, including a large training room. The clinic hopes to eventually add dental services.

"So much love has been poured into this project and so much good work is going to happen here," said Munar. "People are going to remember this site for generations to come."

Board Chair Duke Alden said that the expansion was "long overdue. We serve tens of thousands of patients across the Chicagoland area," and noted that that number had increased significantly with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Durbin recalled U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders demanding that the ACA include about a billion dollars for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and said that those had "revolutionized the delivery of healthcare." Howard Brown Health received the FQHC designation last year, allowing the organization to qualify for many additional grants and funding streams.

Indeed, the new clinic is the latest in an aggressive expansion throughout 2016. The organization opened a facility on the South Side and plans a new space for its Broadway Youth Center drop-in in Uptown, scheduled to open in early 2017.

Gerber/Hart Treasurer Don Friedman said that the library, which was given an additional gallery and will curate exhibits in some of the public spaces, looks forward to "an enriching partnership of wellness and culture" with Howard Brown Health.

Four exam rooms have been in operation since December 2015. Megan Drilling, who was Howard Brown Health's owner's representative during the construction, said that a number of considerations were made with respect for the ages of potential patients, which are expected to skew slightly higher in the new location. Those considerations included wheel-



Above: The outside of the new HBH clinic in Rogers Park, a building shared with Gerber/Hart Library and Archives. Below: Howard Brown Health President and CEO David Ernesto Munar (right) with U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky and U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin at Monday's Rogers Park ribbon cutting.

Photos by Hal Baim



chair scales and barrier-free exam rooms, for example.

"We did those with the older generations in mind," Drilling said.

Howard Brown Health owes much of its expansion to the implementation of the ACA, setting the organization up for numerous hurdles in the months ahead as the law's tenets are sure to be challenged by hostile politicians looking to dismantle ACA and its accompanying Medicaid expansion. Munar said in a Nov. 28 public meeting that about 7,000 Howard Brown patients have benefitted from that expansion.

Both Durbin and Schakowsky pledged to keep fighting for the ACA at the Dec. 5 opening.

"We reduced the uninsured in Illinois by 49 percent under Obamacare," Durbin said. "Every single American is entitled to an opportunity for quality healthcare."

Schakowsky added, "I am enlisting you as part of the resistance to make sure that this [dismantling] doesn't happen."

Munar noted that the Rogers Park clinic represented a continuing effort to take the organization beyond the boundaries of Lakeview, an effort characterized by a holistic concern for the patient. "We want to embrace the 'whole person,' he said.

Before the ceremonial ribbon was cut, Dr. Magda Houlberg, Chief Clinical Officer at HBH, also addressed the crowd, which included dozens of staff, HBH board, and community leaders.

Open To Thinking

BY NICK PATRICCA



Religion and violence against women

In the early 1960s, when I was in pastoral training in Oil City and in Elwood City, Pennsylvania, I met a woman who changed my world.

My task was to conduct in-depth interviews with families in the area to determine their religious affiliations and their spiritual needs. After some preliminary chit-chat, she asked me if it was true that Catholic doctrine taught that a wife had to submit to the sexual demands of her husband under any and all circumstances whether she wanted to have sex or not. I was stunned. I had never in all my years

who are perceived to bring shame on the family), Sati (the duty of the widow to throw herself on the funeral pyre of her husband), Patriarchy (unconstrained male domination of women and children), for examples, are cultural values made sacred by religious authority.

Violence against women, often sanctioned by religion, is a worldwide pandemic, systematic rather than episodic, structural rather than incidental. The statistics are overwhelming and hard to absorb: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_against_women.

Two hundred million women have undergone female genital mutilation; 700 million women were married as children and/or forced into marriages; women and girls constitute 70% of human traffic victims; at least 35% of women have endured sexual and physical abuse. (SEE: United Nations: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.)

"His affirmation of my opinion was small consolation because I realized I could not really help this woman. There was no way I could offer her any real support through the Catholic Church or any other agency available to me at that time."

of theological training encountered this question. Almost without thinking, I reactively said: "That is not sex; it is RAPE." She replied: "My confessor says that I must have sex with my husband whenever he wants it."

I took this question to my supervisor, an old Irish priest, who affirmed my judgment on the matter. But, he added: "Unfortunately, too many priests believe and teach this justification of sexual abuse."

His affirmation of my opinion was small consolation because I realized I could not really help this woman. There was no way I could offer her any real support through the Catholic Church or any other agency available to me at that time.

In the following weeks, I came to understand that this woman's story was not exceptional: many women suffered sexual abuse because of this perverse understanding of marriage in Christian traditions, in some cases based on an interpretation of the thinking of Paul as stated in Corinthians 7:3-6. These understandings had been codified into our legal system under the rubrics of 'spousal exemptions' and 'marital rights,' and other legal formulations of the issue of sexual violence in marriage which seemed to preclude the possibility of rape in marriage.

My encounter with this woman set me off on my own journey into the meaning of human sexuality and sexual freedom.

Religion has three essential functions in society: 1) to conserve and protect the traditional morals and customs; 2) to critique and reform the traditional morals and customs; and 3) to break open traditional forms for creating new morals and customs. In practice, the first function of religion—to conserve and protect the traditional mores—usually dominates.

Honor Killings (the right of male members of a family to kill female members

In Pakistan, honor killings are epidemic (BBC 01 April 2016 <https://goo.gl/GYZakm>), official data indicates 1,100 such murders in 2015. In Mexico, sexual violence is used by civil and military authorities to socially control women (Amnesty International 28 June 2016 <https://goo.gl/BKI7vW>).

Violence against women is a political tool to silence women writers and activists.

Nov. 25, 2016, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women began a 16-day focus on initiatives to stop violence against women (through Dec. 10). Violence—especially sexual violence—against women is used as a political tool to keep women writers and activists silent. Every year outstanding women are murdered to silence their voices. This year the Honduran indigenous environmental activist Berta Caceres was assassinated in her home after years of threats on her life. Many people and organizations knew that the life of Berta Caceres was in jeopardy but could not find a way to save her. The same was true for Anna Politkovskaya, the great Russian journalist. These women knew that their murders were only a matter of time. It seems that the only way to save such heroic women is for them to silence themselves.

Particular cases can be overwhelming and statistics can be mind-numbing. We must keep in mind that each single number is one human person. We must not fail to act. In our own country, we must work to make our religious traditions resources for the education, liberation, and empowerment of women.

Each woman or girl has her story to tell. We must learn to listen.

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

LGBTQ, HIV/AIDS activist Jimmy Bissonnette dies

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Jimmy Bissonnette, 58, died Dec. 1 of brain injuries after falling down a flight of stairs at his home.

Lori Cannon, longtime community HIV/AIDS activist and founder of Open Hand Chicago now a division of the Heartland Health Outreach, relayed Bissonnette's death to Windy City Times.

At the time of his death, Bissonnette was one of the receptionist's at the Center on Halsted (the Center). He previously was the general manager at Buck's Saloon (Buck's) for 25 years and was most recently a bartender at Little Jim's.

Bissonnette was born Jan. 25, 1958, in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, where he spent his childhood. He graduated from Chelmsford High School and attended the University of Massachusetts Lowell for two years. He moved to Chicago in 1980 when he accepted the flight attendant position at American Airlines and worked there for 12 years. Bissonnette left American Airlines to become a bank manager at First Commercial Bank of Chicago and then he accepted the position at Buck's.

He is survived by his ex-partner Everett "Rexx" Shane; his mother; Elaine; his father, Ralph; siblings Janet, John, Jerry, Jay and Joel; a host of nephews and nieces; and many cousins.

Bissonnette also ran DIRECT AID for over 25 years to help those who had HIV/AIDS with financial assistance.

"Jimmy and Buck's lead bartender Robin Schleyer were the primary people who distributed the DIRECT AID funds for things like rent and utility bills to those who came in with documentation of their HIV/AIDS diagnosis," said Cannon. "He would have entertaining and hugely successful fundraisers at Buck's and the proceeds would fill the coffers of DIRECT AID. Both Jimmy and Robin took a class on how to run a nonprofit so it would be a successful endeavor and satisfy the city's requirements.

"Jimmy and his staff accommodated the people who came to them for help beautifully, the best they could, with what they had so they could remain in their own homes and not be forced to live in a nursing home. At the very end of their lives, this assistance gave them the privilege of dying at home. DIRECT AID was a lifeline to so many. The program was grass roots and community based at its finest—for me, this will be Jimmy's lasting legacy."

"Today, the Bissonnette family and I bid farewell to the most amazing son, man, friend confidant scholar, uncle, godfather, boss, comic, critic, cherub, soothsayer, mentor, bartender extraordinaire, peacemaker, armchair analyst and many more superlatives," said Shane. "I will miss and love you eternally. See you later, Jim."

"When anyone was having a hard time, including myself, he was always there for us," said his friend and Center on Halsted Director of Operations Johnny Engelbreit. "I met him when I worked as a bartender at Gentry and he was part of the reason why I joined the Buck's family. At first, I didn't have a lot of shifts at Buck's but whenever I needed anything Jimmy was there for me with an extra shift, personal loan or just an ear to lend to me when I needed someone to talk to. My experience with him wasn't unique. Jimmy was the type of person that if you were in his life he would do anything for you. The relationships he built with myself and many other people who are mourning his death are a testament to the person he was."

"Jimmy was one of the sweetest men I've ever known," said long-time friend and former

American Airlines colleague Joe Della Monica. "He would go out of his way to make everyone happy in every circumstance including when they came into Buck's, where he created a comfortable, welcoming neighborhood bar vibe. He sponsored two softball teams for many years—Buck's Shots and the Buck U's (that I played on)—for the CMSA league. Both teams would come to the bar after our games for cook-out's and I'll always remember those days and the good times he helped create. Win or lose he was always there to support and celebrate us. I will miss his kind-hearted spirit and the joy he spread to so many people."

"He always wanted to make everyone's flight a great experience," said long-time friend and former American Airlines colleague Julie Daley. "Jimmy was the ultimate giver. I could call



Jimmy Bissonnette.
Photo from Everett Shane

him with any request and he wouldn't blink an eye. He always made you feel like you were the most important person in the room. That was his gift. It was always easy to reconnect with him, even if we hadn't spoken for some time. He made me a part of his family from early on and even now I can call his mom to chat about many things. I'll miss his selflessness and insight the most."

"Jimmy was a hero to many in the community and at the Center," said the Center's CEO Modesto "Tico" Valle. "During his tenure at Buck's Saloon he led the DIRECT AID project that paid for rent, food, utilities, medications and so much more for those living with AIDS. We lost so many friends during the AIDS crisis but together we held each other up during those tough times—that's what friends do, that is what community is and that's who Jimmy was. He would give the shirt off his back to help a stranger and someone in need. At the Center, he was family and you never knew if Jimmy was on the clock or volunteering because he gave so much of himself. You're already missed my friend."

The Center will be holding a memorial service to celebrate his life the week of Jan. 25, when Bissonnette would have turned 59. Details will be announced at a later date.

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PASSAGES

Former Daley staffer Nancy Reiff

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND
AND TRACY BAIM

In writing of the warrior, Morihei Ueshiba observed “when life is victorious, there is birth; when it is thwarted, there is death. A warrior is always engaged in a life-and-death struggle for peace.”

Nancy Reiff passed away Nov. 30 after a lifetime of victories as an activist as, in her own words “a warrior doing battle one moment at a time.” Her caretaker Agnes was with her.

Reiff was born on New Year’s Eve 1949.

An alumni of Harper High School in Englewood and the Richard J. Daley College, she grew up with Chicago in her blood and was thus the kind of fighter not only inherent to the city but exemplified by the Chicago Cubs, of whom she was a life-long fan.

In a 2008 survey for ChicagoGayHistory.org, Reiff said that in 1968, one year before Stonewall, at the age of 18, “I found myself very much attracted to a woman and sexually acting on it. ... It was as natural as breathing. ... Right after my first sexual experience, I came out to a friend who was a priest and made my last confession. His words to me were remarkable: ‘Be grateful you love someone. Some people go through life never having loved or having been in love. There is nothing wrong with you being in love with a woman.’ ... Ahhh—good old Catholic guilt.”

A gifted artist, Reiff received numerous city awards for her work even as a teenager, telling Windy City Times that she believed “creativity and spirituality are one.”

In the 1970s, she began to work in the local bar scene. Her first job was at the famed theater bar PUNCHINELLO’S. There she worked with a man who would become a dear friend, promoter

David Aaron. The two shared an apartment together.

Recalling those days, she told Windy City Times writer Sukie de la Croix, “All the entertainers who were appearing at the different theaters would come into PUNCHINELLO’S. They had entertainment in the bar; a gentlemen by the name of Bruce Robbins was the piano player. It was spontaneous; if Carol Channing was there, she’d get up and do a song, if Della Reese was there, she would get up and do a song. Barry Manilow would come in, Bette Midler would come in. It was a wonderful, wonderful time.”

Reiff eventually moved on to manage Marilyn’s bar and joined the Tavern Guild in 1974.

Although a staunch community activist, Reiff admitted to de la Croix that there were differences between her work and that of the more radical lesbian separatists who frequented the North Side restaurant Mama Peaches.

“I got on OK with them. Just OK,” she recalled. “When I had Marilyn’s, I was always trying to do things, to get community involvement, get the women involved, and when I would do dance contests, the feminists would be up in arms, ‘Who was I to try and judge my sisters?’ They were always upset about dance contests, so I was never really involved with them. Their politics and mine were completely different.”

In 1980, Reiff spent three years as a columnist for Gay Chicago Magazine. Also in the 1980s, she owned Balloons To You, a Lake View business.

In 1985 she fought a tough battle with substance abuse, something which had haunted her since she was a teenager. As with each of the battles she fought, Reiff prevailed and, in June 1989, Reiff was picked by then-mayor



Jon Simmons, Mayor Daley and Nancy Reiff in an early 1990s Pride Parade. Photo by Mike Carter

Richard M. Daley as his special assistant on gay and lesbian affairs.

Her political activism had started at age 10, campaigning for John F. Kennedy. “The ward committeeman sent me out with campaign fliers and buttons and door to door I went,” Reiff said to ChicagoGayHistory. “Over the years I have been involved in numerous campaigns. For many years I was very active with the 44th Ward Democratic Organization. The most memorable that of Richard M. Daley in 1989, in which I volunteered and after the primary was in a paid position on his campaign staff.” She was the first open lesbian appointed to the mayor’s staff.

Five months into her new job, there was a contentious meeting between Daley and gay and lesbian activists at Ann Sather restaurant in Lake View. The meeting was supposed to address a better response by the city to the AIDS crisis and the dearth of LGBT representatives in Daley’s administration. But it got so heated that Daley stormed out to a cascade of jeers.

But Reiff kept her head up despite accusations that she was working with Daley to diminish the influence of the Committee on Gay and Lesbian Issues (COGLI) which had been formed during the Harold Washington administration.

She was also at the receiving end of attacks from Gay Chicago cartoonist and AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) member Daniel Sotomayor.

She left the mayor’s assistant role in 1992 and moved on to open the Mambo Mambo espresso bar and gallery in Lake View the same year. On its walls, Reiff made sure the work of local artists was highlighted.

In 1996, she opened the Icon club in River North.

“I thought it was a great time to open up a new place—a place for women who work in the Loop and want to relax afterwards, a place for sophisticated women, women who love salsa and other dance music like tribal and house,” Reiff told the Chicago Tribune. “It just felt so right, like it was meant to be.”



Nancy Reiff with Mayor Richard M. Daley at a heated 1989 meeting at Ann Sather on Belmont Avenue. Photo by Lisa Howe-Ebright

PASSAGES

Bliss Frings

BY PHYLANE L. NORMAN

Writer and LGBT advocate Bliss “Frontiere” Frings, passed away in her home in Bisbee, Arizona, on Oct. 23 from respiratory failure. She was 55.

Bliss was pre-deceased by her father, Manfred S. Frings and survived by her mother, Emma J. Broussard, step-mother, Karin M. Frings and by her partner of 6 years, Phylane L. Norman.

Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1961, Bliss spent her early childhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Cologne, Germany, the latter of which she maintained a special attachment throughout her life, returning there for extended stays periodically.

Bliss moved to Chicago at age 5, where she lived until 1998.

Bright, charming, and enigmatic, she was loved by many and known by few. Her quick wit, strong opinions, commitment to social justice and her uproarious laugh were signatures of her character.

In 1981, Bliss co-founded the first LGBT student association at a Catholic University in the United States, today known as DePaul University’s Center for Identity, Inclusion and Social Change.

She received her bachelor’s degree from DePaul University in 1986.

Politically active in the Chicago LGBT community, Bliss participated in national marches on Washington (for Gay Rights) in 1987 and in 1993 with ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), an advocacy group fighting to increase medical research and treatment, and to change policies affecting persons



Bliss Frings. Photo courtesy of Phylane L. Norman

with AIDS. She continued the fight for LGBT rights and justice in Chicago, Illinois, and in Bisbee, Arizona, where she resided for the last 18 years of her life.

During the 1990s, Bliss wrote a column for Outlines Magazine, one of two LGBT publications in Chicago founded by Tracy Baim, publisher of both Outlines and Windy City Times.

Her column, written under the nom de plume, The Commander, was replete with her witty and satirical observations of LGBT life.

She eschewed her career in corporate finance to pursue an avocation in body adornment and piercing, training at The Gauntlet with Paul King and becoming a certified master piercer.

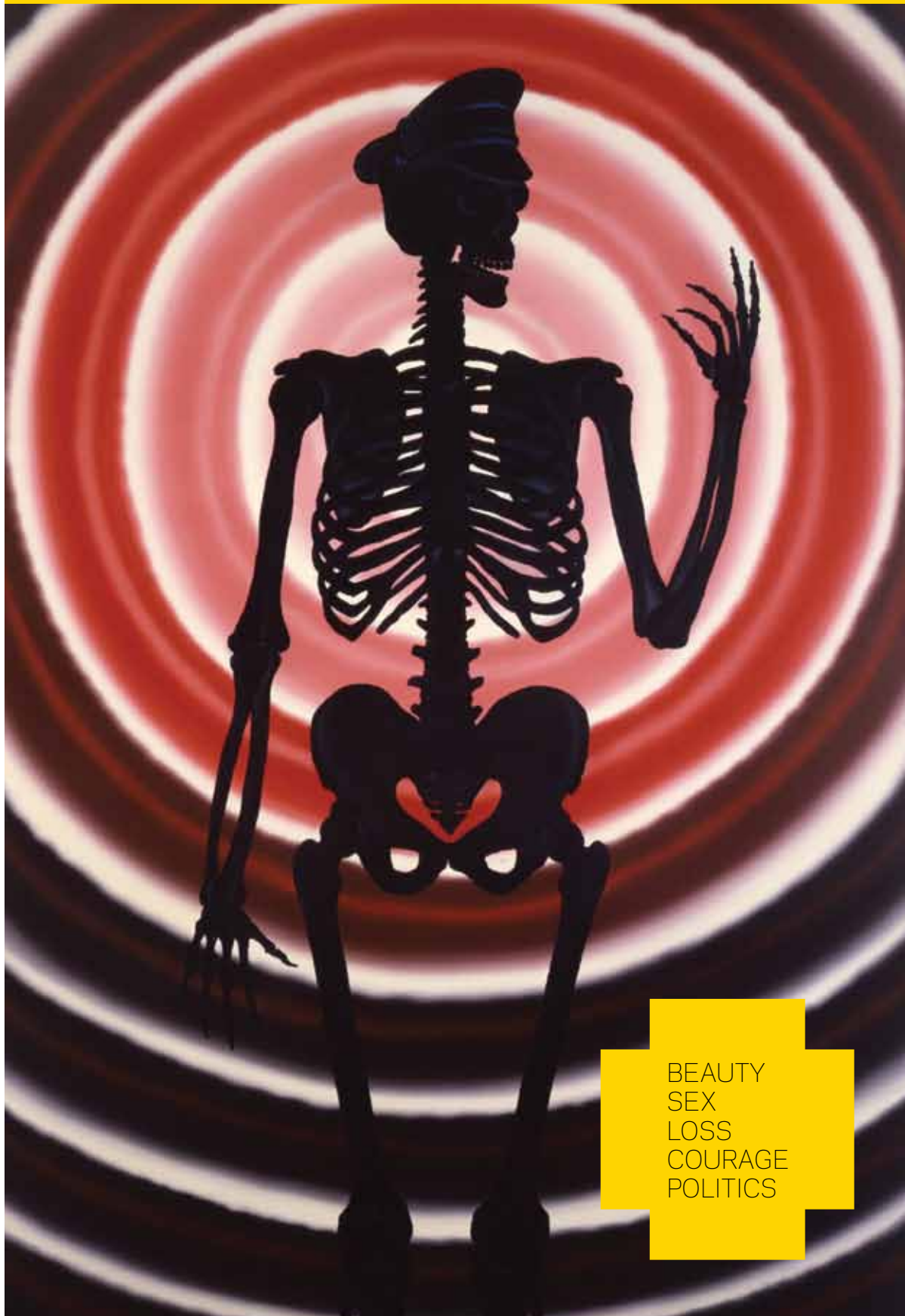
Bliss was one of the early members of the Association of Professional Piercers and helped advance opportunities for women in this field.

She practiced at Tatu Tattoo in Chicago, Illinois and at Piercing Ear to There in Bisbee, Arizona.

Bliss was a Bisbee Transit board member and most recently volunteered with The Bisbee Coalition for the Homeless.

She was always right, never wrong and forever outspoken. She will be missed.

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Roger Brown, *Peach Light*, 1983, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 1/2 in., Photo: James Connolly. Kavi Gupta and the Roger Brown Estate, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Timed admission passes may be reserved online.

ArtAIDS America Chicago.org

2401 North Halsted Street | Chicago, Illinois 60614

Art AIDS America was organized by Tacoma Art Museum in partnership with The Bronx Museum of the Arts.

In Chicago, this exhibition is made possible by the Alphawood Foundation, a Chicago-based, grant-making private foundation working for an equitable, just and humane society.





Alphawood Foundation's Christopher Audain at Center on Halsted event.
Photo by Hal Baim

Center joins forces with arts groups at World AIDS Day event

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

On the eve of World AIDS Day and the opening of the groundbreaking Art AIDS America exhibit at Chicago's Alphawood Gallery, the Center on Halsted, Victory Gardens Theater, Art AIDS America Chicago and Queer, ILL + OKAY joined forces Nov. 30 at the Center to declare We're Still Here and to look at HIV/AIDS Then and Now.

The evening not only examined the cultural impact of HIV/AIDS with a panel discussion but illustrated it through a series of contemporary performances.

The panel included Victory Gardens Theater Director of New Play Development Isaac Gomez, First Floor Theatre Artistic Director Hutch

Pimentel, celebrated Chicago artist and Art AIDS America curatorial consultant John Neff and Alphawood Gallery Director of Exhibitions Tony Hirschel. Alphawood Foundation program officer Christopher M.M. Audain served as moderator.

Meanwhile, the Center's HIV staff was on hand to conduct HIV Testing while offering attendees red ribbons commemorating World AIDS Day.

QUEER, ILL, + OKAY followed up the panel with performances by Phillip Lambert X Black-nbrilliant and Joseph Varisco as well as a short film by Xena Ellison + Elizabeth Mputu.

For more information about HIV testing at the Center on Halsted, visit CenterOnHalsted.org/HIV.html.

Art AIDS America recalls changes and a new threat

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

There was a powerful mosaic of sound that echoed through Chicago's Alphawood Gallery in Lincoln Park on Dec. 3.

Between the deep resonance of a bell sounded every 10 minutes (audio art originally created by Robert Farber signifying the rate of AIDS-related deaths in 1991), performance artist Joseph Ravens was followed by an ensemble of five all dressed in bright crimson chanted the words "condom cloud" in a hauntingly Gregorian manner as they paced through the museum carrying with balloons of dark gray inflated condoms above them.

"Some things are not allowed beneath the shadow of a condom cloud," Ravens recited with subtle power as the others slowly embraced and fell at his side. "The condom cloud keeps chasing me, something like an enemy and promising protection inside its rubber walls."

In his own spoken-word performance, Alphawood Foundation Program Officer Christopher M.M. Audain said, "I'm sick of being an endangered species, sick of being a statistic. I'm dying twice as fast as any other American."

And still the bell tolled—a constant reminder that HIV/AIDS is not to be dismissed now any more than those occupying the highest offices

in the land did so in the 1980's.

Organizations like ACT-UP refused to let them.

It was therefore only fitting that ACT-UP founding members Mary Patton and Jeanne Kracher were part of a panel discussing how AIDS changed America.

They were joined by University of Chicago Professor of Medicine Dr. Renslow Sherer; Columbia College Chicago dance/theater chair Peter Carpenter; artist and member of New York City-based AIDS activist artist collective Gran Fury Robert Vazquez-Pacheco; and Tacoma Art Museum (TAM) Executive Director Stephanie Stebich. Public health administrator, educator and 2001 LGBT Hall of Fame inductee Lora Branch served as moderator.

In all the discussion of AIDS past and present, one consistent theme seemed to emerge—that the fight, particularly on the part of activists, had to begin anew. According to Vazquez-Pacheco, there is even talk among Gran Fury of starting up again.

With the threat of devastating cuts to the health care and civil rights of LGBTQ people and HIV/AIDS sufferers looming under an Electoral College win of Donald Trump, there was a sobering consensus that the plight of those living with HIV/AIDS may become even worse than it was under President Ronald Reagan, that the bell which tolls for them even today will only become louder, perhaps more frequent but never silenced.

For more information on Art AIDS America, visit ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org.

Exhibit curator talks AIDS representation in the art world

BY MATT SIMONETTE

AIDS, according to Jonathan Katz, co-curator of Art AIDS America, which opened Dec. 1 at the Alphawood Gallery, "is sadly still the 'third rail' of American art."

Katz spoke Dec. 3 at a presentation that contextualized the exhibit, which will be open through April. Much of the work there, he noted, was created at a time when right-wing elements were aggressively surveilling arts organizations for work that normalized HIV/AIDS, homosexuality or intravenous drug use. The mainstream arts world—which is normally quite conservative and staid—was at best apathetic to the plague, he said.

"No wonder so much AIDS art doesn't look like AIDS art," Katz said.

He made the further argument that so much of the art on display at the exhibition did not represent tangential modes of representation; rather, he said it constituted a historical mode of development in the arts.

The artists, Katz added, "were thinking about representational forces strategically, [thus performing] a complicated calculus about socio-political readings."

Acknowledgement that these works constituted a significant point in the evolution of the art world was one of Katz's key goals in mounting the exhibition, he said, adding that similar strategies might be called for if the current government takes a more reactionary turn. He noted, however, that whatever political art is created in the years ahead needs to have its own distinctive voices.

"We need new thoughts for activism calculated to our historical circumstances," he added. "If ever we needed to do it, it's now."

Katz's talk was preceded by a spoken-word performance from avery r. young.



Art AIDS America curator Jonathan Katz.
Photo by Matt Simonette

New CDPH data: 921 new HIV infections in 2015

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago is seeing a downward trend in new HIV infections and late diagnoses, according to a new Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) report.

CDPH's annual HIV/STI Surveillance Report was released Dec. 1 to coincide with World AIDS Day at a conference held in the Alphawood Gallery in Lincoln Park; the exhibition Art AIDS America opened there that day.

According to officials, infection and diagnosis patterns in Chicago are consistent with those seen in the rest of the country, with some key rates dropping, but numerous disparities still exist.

"By having this timely and accurate data, we can ensure that decisions we make as a department, and decisions [stakeholders] make as our partners, we'll assure that those with the greatest need will get the help they need," said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita.

CDPH Deputy Commissioner Dave Kern said that the new report aligns the city's work with the National HIV/AIDS Strategy as well as the four-year Healthy Chicago 2.0 strategy, and that CDPH's long-term goal is reaching a point of zero new infections.

In 2015, there were 921 new HIV infections in Chicago, according to Kern. "We noticed that, over time, the number of new HIV infections hadn't climbed significantly

and we're very proud and happy that that has happened. But we're measured with our pride because we've seemed to have reached a plateau in the last five years. ...That leads us to believe that we need to be accelerating our work to drive down infections once again."

Of the new infections, about 83 percent were male, about 76 percent were men who have sex with men (MSM), and 54 percent were Black. About 79 percent of those newly infected individuals can get on a continuum of care within 30 days of their diagnosis, while 90 percent are on a continuum within a year. But retaining those people there has been problematic, Kern said. Only 40 percent of those living with HIV were retained in care in 2015, while only 48 percent of those people were virally suppressed.

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy asks participants to ensure that 90 percent of individuals with HIV are retained in care, and that 80 percent are virally suppressed.

Kern said that CDPH would focus on helping persons with HIV suppress the viral load and increase the use of PrEP among populations that are vulnerable to HIV.

"These are strategies that many other jurisdictions across the country are embracing," he added, noting that the zero new infections-initiative would begin in the next few months, as well as alliances with non-traditional partners.

"I can see an end to the AIDS era in sight," Morita said. "By using data to engage our partners, we can create the policies and programs that are necessary to stop the epidemic once and for all."

World AIDS Day marked on Paseo Boricua

BY ED NEGRON

The Puerto Rican Cultural Center's (PRCC) Vida/SIDA held its 28th annual World AIDS Day event.

The event started with a candlelight vigil and offerings to an altar at La Casita de Don Pedro, a tribute replica of a single-room, traditional Puerto Rican-style house celebrating the Puerto Rican nationalist leader Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, after whom it is named.

According to the organizers, World AIDS Day on Paseo Boricua began in 1988 as a way for Chicago's Puerto Rican community to celebrate the lives of those affected by HIV/AIDS. Also, it was a reminder that there is still much work to do if we are to live an AIDS-free world.

The vigil procession—led by Maritxa Vidal, Chicago co-chair of TransLatina Coalition and director of health education and community marketing and outreach at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center's VIDA/SIDA—proceeded down Division Street, also known as Paseo Boricua

(loosely translated as "Boricua (Puerto Rican Walkway"), to the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture.

Ricardo Jimenez, director of VIDA/SIDA, welcomed the attendees and introduced the speakers of the evening. They included Esther Morales, case manager at Erie Family Health; Sanford E. Gaylord, regional resource consultant, HIV/AIDS Regional Resource Network Program, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and keynote speaker Dr. Tahseen J. Siddiqui, M.D., an infectious disease specialist at Norwegian American Hospital.

Siddiqui presented "The Odyssey of HIV-epidemic: From Despair & Death to Longevity & Life." Janeida Rivera, program coordinator at PRCC-VIDA/SIDA, emceed the event, and there were special performances by Milani Ninja and Naomi Ninga.

For more information about the work of Vida/SIDA, visit Facebook.com/vidasida. For more information about the PRCC, visit PRCC-chgo.org.



Left (from left): Sanford E. Gaylord, Ricardo Jimenez, Janeida Rivera and Dr. Roberto Sanabria. Above: Altar at vigil. Photos by Ed Negron



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DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS.

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DESCOVY may cause serious side effects:

- **Buildup of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large and fatty. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turning yellow (jaundice); dark "tea-colored" urine; light-colored bowel movements (stools); loss of appetite; nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY for a long time. In some cases, lactic acidosis and serious liver problems have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV and stop taking DESCOVY, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

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Serious side effects of DESCOVY may also include:

- **Changes in body fat**, which can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.
- **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking DESCOVY.
- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. Your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking DESCOVY if you develop new or worse kidney problems.
- **Bone problems**, such as bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don't go away.

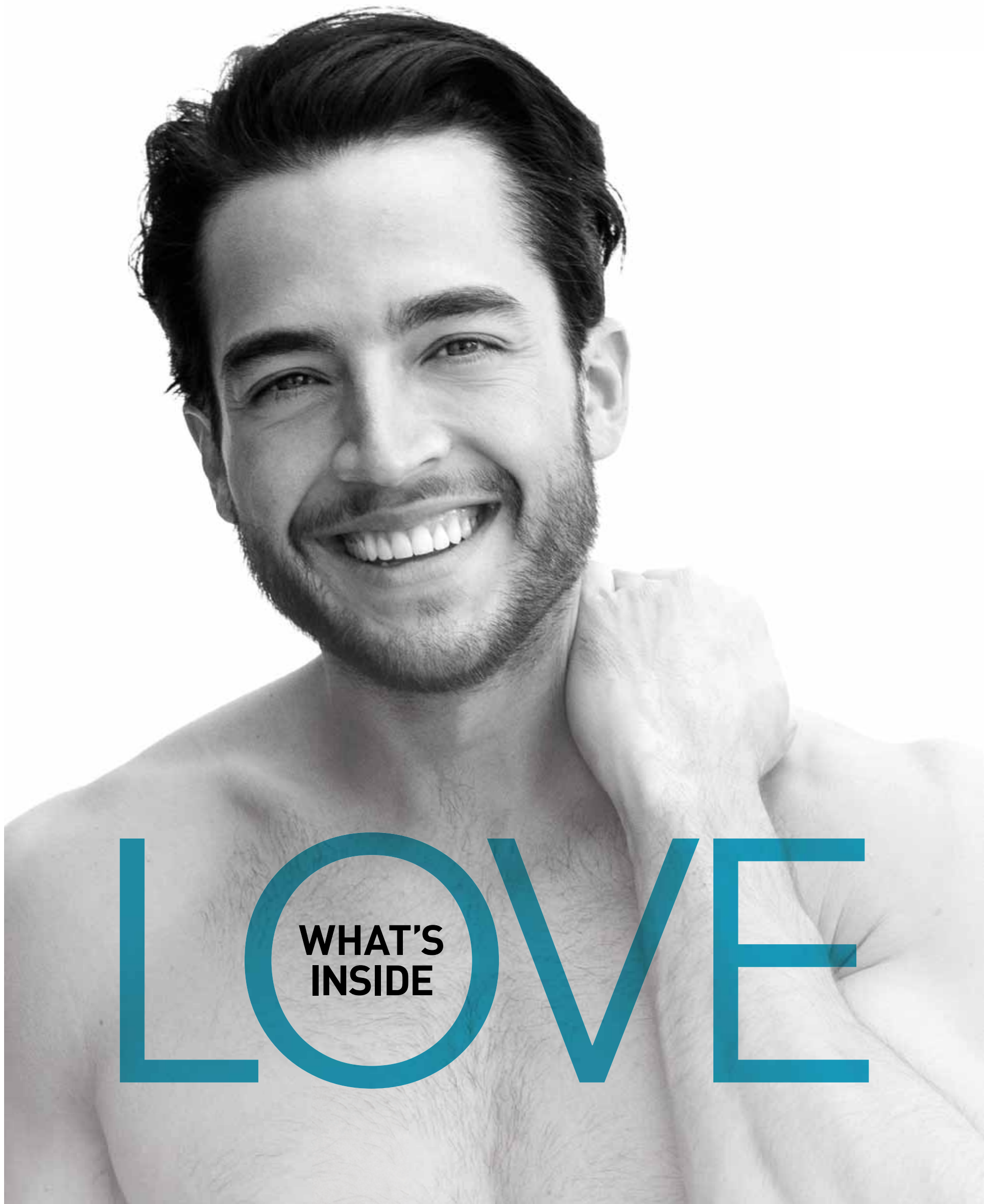
What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking DESCOVY?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how DESCOVY works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Ask your healthcare provider if it is safe to take DESCOVY with all of your other medicines.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if DESCOVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking DESCOVY.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about DESCOVY, including important warnings, on the following page.

Ask your healthcare provider if an HIV-1 treatment that contains DESCOVY® is right for you.



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IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY® and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DESCOVY

DESCOVY may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems**, which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark “tea-colored” urine; loss of appetite; light-colored bowel movements (stools); nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking DESCOVY. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY or a similar medicine for a long time.

ABOUT DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older. DESCOVY is **not** for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- **DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

HOW TO TAKE DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a one pill, once a day HIV-1 medicine that is taken with other HIV-1 medicines.
- Take DESCOVY with or without food.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF DESCOVY

DESCOVY can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the “Most Important Information About DESCOVY” section.
- Changes in body fat.
- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of DESCOVY. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking DESCOVY.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with DESCOVY.

BEFORE TAKING DESCOVY

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical condition.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with DESCOVY.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- Go to DESCOVY.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit DESCOVY.com for program information.



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World of Chocolate draws hundreds

BY MATT SIMONETTE

About a thousand supporters of AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) gathered at Revel Fulton Market for AFC's annual World of Chocolate celebration Dec. 1.

Twenty-one vendors offered their chocolate wares at the celebration. Some indulged celebrants' taste for the savory as well as the sweet, for example. Hotel Intercontinental Chicago offered its "Dinky Duck burger, a Kobe beef and duck burger with foie gras pate on brioche bun, served with bittersweet chocolate aioli, while La Taberna Tapas featured dates wrapped in bacon, stuffed with dark chocolate and topped with a white chocolate ganache. LondonHouse Chicago served a rabbit terrine, topped with dark chocolate and pistachio sauce with carrot jus.

But chocolate fans looking for dessert weren't disappointed, either. Hotel Intercontinental Chicago prepared its own malted-milk chocolate ice cream along with a triple chocolate tart. LaGrange-based restaurant prasino offered a new interpretation of S'mores, while Wow Bao served a chocolate-filled bao. ZED451, meanwhile, served a chocolate hazelnut roulade, chocolate red velvet twinkies and a chocolate avocado mousse.

DJ Marc "Moose" Moder spun the tunes for the evening.



Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com). See many more online.



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Robert Castillo (far left) and 1st Ward Ald. Proco "Joe" Moreno (second from right) were among those at the housing meeting.

Photo by Michael Oboza

Castillo speaks on progress of LGBT residences

BY MATT SIMONETTE

According to activist Robert Castillo, having the new LGBT-friendly residential development that carries both his name, and the name of his late husband, John Pennycuff, will ultimately be like "planting a flag on the moon."

"It says, 'We've been here,'" said Castillo. "There are many LGBTQs that are active in non-LGBTQ community organizations in Logan Square, and while they may not fly a rainbow flag, their contributions to the Logan Square area are vast."

Castillo and Pennycuff were involved in both LGBT-rights activism as well as fair-housing activism for several years. The John Pennycuff Memorial Apartments at Castillo Plaza were first announced in May and will be located at the site of Congress Pizzeria, 2033 N. Milwaukee Ave. The project, the second of its kind in the city, would be seven stories and include about 88 units.

"This project addresses two common myths about the LGBT community head on," said Castillo. "The first being that members of the LGBT community are all well off and the second [is] that we have made such strides that housing discrimination is no longer an issue. ... This project will [also] provide a means for people who have been displaced by rising rents to return to the community, including friends of mine. Gentrification affects low income LGBTQs and I think that the need exists for affordable housing both within Logan Square and across the city."

He added that he was grateful for the support of Ald. Joe Moreno, who has shepherded the project, which is pending city approval.

A community meeting was held about the project Nov. 29. Prior to that meeting, "The developers met with community organizations to hear their concerns with the building and the developers have made some changes which were discussed at the community meeting," Castillo said. "Going forward, I feel that the LGBT community needs to be vocal and fight for both this project and greater affordable housing access across the city."

Castillo hopes the project will also be a venue for LGBTs and others to more easily receive

needed services, not just improved accommodations access.

"Ideally, I'd like to see LGBTQ organizations use The Pennycuff Memorial Apartments for meetings or host drop-in clinics," he said. "Can you imagine having Gerber-Hart in the space, or a Howard Brown Health or CALOR, to address LGBT health needs? The possibilities are exciting and it would be amazing to have a mural of John in the lobby or colors of the rainbow incorporated into both the building's interior and exterior."

At the Nov. 29 meeting, Castillo elaborated in his remarks on how the building will become an asset to the community.

"There have been many gains by the LGBT community but for many low income LGBTQs, finding affordable, let alone LGBT friendly, housing is nearly impossible," said Castillo. "Add to that the fact that there is still strong bi-phobia and trans-phobia that permeates both the LGBT community and larger population, and it makes the need for this type of development that much more pressing."

He added that, "Rents have risen and many long time residents have been forced to leave this great and amazing neighborhood. ... I am here tonight because I believe that this project would be an amazing asset to the community and a fitting legacy to John Pennycuff. His was the hand I held onto and The John Pennycuff Memorial Apartments at Castillo Plaza could be that 'hand' for so many."

Quigley discusses FDA ban at LifeSource visit

BY MATT SIMONETTE

U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, on Nov. 28, visited both a LifeSource blood bank in suburban Norridge, as well as the organization's regional headquarters in Rosemont, to help assess the state of the blood-donation process.

Quigley, who is vice-chair of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus, has long maintained an interest in the blood donation system, and he has called for the repeal of the FDA's restric-

tions on donations from gay men. Those restrictions were eased somewhat—blood banks now allow donations from men provided they have not had sex with another man in the past year, but many argue that such a restriction is still onerous and unnecessary.

"It is important to understand the nuances of these systems," Quigley said during the visit to LifeSource headquarters. "That is what I—and colleagues—try to do in visits like this."

LifeSource was able to implement the change to the FDA rule this past summer. Regional Executive Director Eva Quinley did not have any exact figures on the number of gay men who've been able to donate since then, but said the number was likely to be quite low. She added that the company is always looking for new donations, and that they are more urgently needed in times of calm and not in times of crisis, such as after 9/11 or the Pulse shooting, when people are more likely to think about donating.

"It is imperative that we prioritize the highest level of blood product safety while also promoting a fair and equitable blood donor policy for all donors wanting to help save lives," said Quigley in a statement following the tour. "I thank LifeSource for today's tour and the opportunity to learn more about the transfusion medicine practices and procedures used to connect Chicagoans with quality healthcare."

On Nov. 30, Quigley also spoke out against hate speech on the Congressional floor where he denounced President Elect Donald Trump's appointment of Steve Bannon to an advisory role. Quigley noted that his office has received more than 600 letters from concerned constituents since the appointment.

"With reports of bias-based attacks continuing to rise following the election, we must remain focused on ensuring that no American—regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation—feels marginalized or afraid in his or her own community," Quigley said. "We must remember that there will always be more that unites us than divides us. It is up to us to stop hatred wherever we see it, especially in our halls of government."

Federal court rehears gay discrimination case

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, on Nov. 30, reheard oral arguments in the case of Kimberly Hively, an Indiana math instructor who was allegedly denied promotion and ultimately fired for being a lesbian.

The case, *Hively v. Ivy Tech Community College*, tests whether the sex-discrimination pro-

tections afforded by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 apply to discrimination based on sexual orientation as well.

Hively said she was denied promotions several times by Ivy Tech and sued the school in federal court in 2014 for Title VII violations. But the court threw out that suit, arguing that Hively would not be protected on the basis of her sexual orientation. A three-person appellate panel upheld that decision in July, 2016, but Hively was granted this new hearing—this time with the entire 11-person panel—in October.

Greg Nevins, counsel and workplace fairness program director for Lambda Legal, and Jon Davidson, legal director and Eden/Rushing chair for Lambda Legal, represented Hively. That organization has long maintained that sexual orientation-based discrimination protections should fall under the larger umbrella of gender-based discrimination protections.

Nevins argued in the hearing that the term "sex discrimination" should be interpreted as a colloquial phrase covering sexual orientation-based discrimination and that the plaintiffs were not suggesting new classes of people for protection.

Judge Ilana Rovner asked Nevins whether that was actually placing too much power into the judiciary, especially since Congress has long been reticent to address the issue. Nevins answered that it would be the court's responsibility to apply the terms of the statute, and Congress' to augment it, a process he said might be analogous to implementation of the American with Disabilities Act.

"What you have is an incoherent framework that's inherently inconsistent," Nevins said.

Ivy Tech attorney John Maley faced aggressive grilling from the panel, some of whom asked why the school was essentially defending the position that it had the right to discriminate.

"You seem to think that the meaning [of the law] is frozen," said Judge Richard Posner. "... You think we're bound by what people were thinking in 1964?"

Maley later said that the question of whether sexual orientation is ultimately encompassed in the larger category of gender "is developing. ... That makes it an ideal issue for Congress."

But Posner was nonetheless skeptical, asking, "Who's going to be hurt by giving lesbians and homosexuals a little more job protection?"

Attorneys from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) joined Hively's lawyers on the case. Members of that body have argued that LGBT individuals are entitled to Title VII protections.

EEOC Commissioner Chai Feldblum, who is lesbian, attended the hearing and said afterward, "The term 'sex,' as it was interpreted in 1964, should have been interpreted right then to include sexual orientation, because when you discriminate against someone based on sexual orientation, you are talking sex into account. ... The courts are now beginning to see that the term 'sex' [for example] includes treating a male who is involved with another man differently than a man who is involved with a woman. It's a very commonsense legal argument that the EEOC set forth in an opinion in 2015."

Nevins spoke of the potential for the case to set precedent, and said that many people are surprised to learn such basic rights for LGBTs have not yet been codified.

"It will be a groundbreaking decision," he said. "It will be a game-changer. The American people will say, 'Of course, we knew this all along.'"

In a Nov. 30 statement through Lambda Legal, Hively said, "Being denied advancement again and again was heartbreaking. Then to lose my job altogether, it was completely demoralizing. It didn't matter that I was a good employee. The fact that I am a lesbian meant that I was never going to be good enough for them. To have gotten this far in my case makes me optimistic—I have a lot of hope."



Chai Feldblum.

Photo by Matt Simonette



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Photo by Kirk Williamson

Big Chicks turns the big 3-0

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

There was a flurry of activity the morning Windy City Times arrived at the Uptown bar Big Chicks.

The cozy, adjoining restaurant Tweet was filled with people enjoying brunch while taking in the insulated relaxation of bygone eras that, like the smell of freshly brewed coffee, saturate the walls and can be relived in selections of old magazines or the art celebrating a beauty that has become a stranger to the ugliness of what is increasingly trending as Trump's America.

Beyond the narrow entry to Big Chicks, a small army of people were hard at work hammering wood into place, painting and re-varnishing while preparing the bar for another night when it will be packed from end-to-end with customers across the age, racial and gender spectrum including representatives of each of the letters on the LGBTQIA umbrella.

It is the way Big Chicks has always remained because it is the tone owner Michelle Fire set from the very beginning. The bar was a 2016 Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame inductee, and Fire beamed from the stage at the Chicago History Museum during the induction ceremony last month.

Fire was varnishing a table when famed Chicago artist Zuleyka Benitez—who has been a part of the business since it opened on Dec. 11, 1986 at 7 a.m.—approached her with a selection of paint colors on some cardboard.

Benitez helped to create the durable, vintage look of each incarnation of the interior that has evolved around the restored 1940s Brunswick Company bar which came with the building, and decorated with an art collection spanning 40 years. She even installed the door buzzer.

Fire made her choice of color and Benitez said she would be back in double time from the hardware store with the paint.

Renovations will be either finished or put on pause before the bar opens for the evening.

For the past 30 years, Big Chicks has remained open every single day. It is a consistency that comes with one standing rule: there are no judgments to be made.

Everyone is welcome except those who pour hatred into glasses and allow it to intoxicate them.

"You have to be inclusive," Fire said. "Even from the beginning it was very clear who would be welcome and who wouldn't. People who don't operate on inclusion stand out very quickly. They don't want to be here and we don't want them here."

Fire has a larger than life personality that



Michelle Fire (third from left) at the induction of Big Chicks into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, last month at the Chicago History Museum.

Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

would make fools cautious.

However, those who have the fortune of stopping her for even a 30-minute conversation leave instantly energized by her virulent pizzazz.

Fire said she wanted her preferred gender pronouns to be "old."

It would have been both an inaccurate and complicated a story of a reluctant barkeep who created an LGBTQ home and so a community in the unlikelyst of places.

"I'm just being a bitch about myself," Fire said with a laugh. "You've got to have a sense of humor about yourself."

She paused to call over to her bartender who was stacking glasses.

"Bill? We're doing an interview here, can you clank at the other end of the bar please?"

Bill grumbled a response but acquiesced. It was an exchange which cemented the idea that everyone who works at Big Chicks is as much a family as those they serve.

Fire went on to describe herself as an "urban child" raised on the West Side of Chicago to a small, lower-working class family. She went to public school and attained a degree in art history from the University of Illinois

"I grew up without a television, without a car," she said. "I made art for about 10 years. I was in all kinds of shows and did all kinds of fun stuff."

Among that fun stuff was being a part of Artemisia—a women's collective gallery which was one of the heights of the city's cultural landscape for 30 years. Fire joined after selling her own nonprofit studio Untitled in Andersonville.

"The '70s was the era of collaborative, artist-run spaces," Fire said. "You did your own work and you curated work from outside bringing people in from all over. Chicago was a big hub of art activity. It was an exciting moment. That was before [Ronald] Reagan cut all the N.E.A. [National Endowment for the Arts] funding."

In 1979, Fire started working in gay bars.

"It was a moment when the world was not quite so accepting and embracing," she said. "So the gay community centered on bars and certain organizations because that's what there was. The bars and the printed newspapers were very much the way people communicated."

Like so many who were part of the community in the '80s, Fire lost an entire generation of friends to HIV/AIDS.

"By the time I opened up Big Chicks in '86, a whole bunch of friends were in hospice," she recalled. "It was just overwhelming. Illinois Masonic [hospital] had whole floors of people that I knew. It looked like the end of the world."

While Fire acknowledged that, in life, many people have a plan, when it came to starting Big Chicks she didn't have idea one.

"I was working at this huge bar called The Loading Dock," she said. "I was a saving my money but looking for an opportunity to move into a different moment. I knew a woman Anna Benedetto who owned The Swan Club and a little grill on Argyle right around the corner from where Big Chicks is right now. Every morning, I would get off work and go there and have breakfast and we'd talk. She told me that Charlie, who owned this little bar around the corner where my mother used to drink, was selling the bar."

"I really didn't want to go into the bar business," Fire added. "I knew how hard it was. It's kind of an outcast profession. It was interesting when these corporations you'd do business with, like liquor corporations, would have an event and I would go first as a woman, second as a gay bar owner. You were always kind of the odd woman out. So it's a profession that's not conducive to women or gay people. It's a very small subculture."

It wasn't the idea of a bar which appealed to Fire so much as it was the place once called The Sheridan Lounge which literally drew upon her imagination.

"It's a beautiful Art Deco, terracotta building, like the kind I used to make art with," she said. "I'd looked at it many times and thought 'I love it.'"

Then she went inside.

"Like Bette Davis said [in Beyond the Forest] 'what a dump!'" Fire recalled with an almost perfect imitation. "As happenstance would have it, the owner didn't want to sell it to anyone he knew. So he sold it to this lesbian who he thought would fuck all of his friends over."

For the next six years, Fire, alongside Benitez, set about renovating and evolving Bette Davis's 'dump' into a place deserving of the name with which Fire christened it.

Big Chicks took root after Fire made a trip to India and was singled out by a group of local men in Bandra who pointed at her and yelled, "Big Chick! Big Chick!"

"It was a moment in time that was so surreal, but I thought 'this has got some meaning,'" Fire said. "So when I bought the bar I had to use it."

While Fire changed the name, initially the bar's patronage remained the same—or so she thought until they decided to come clean with her.

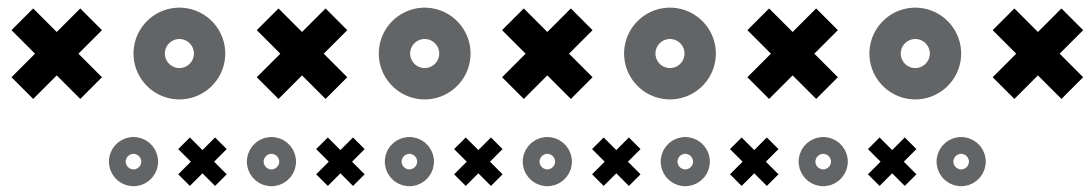
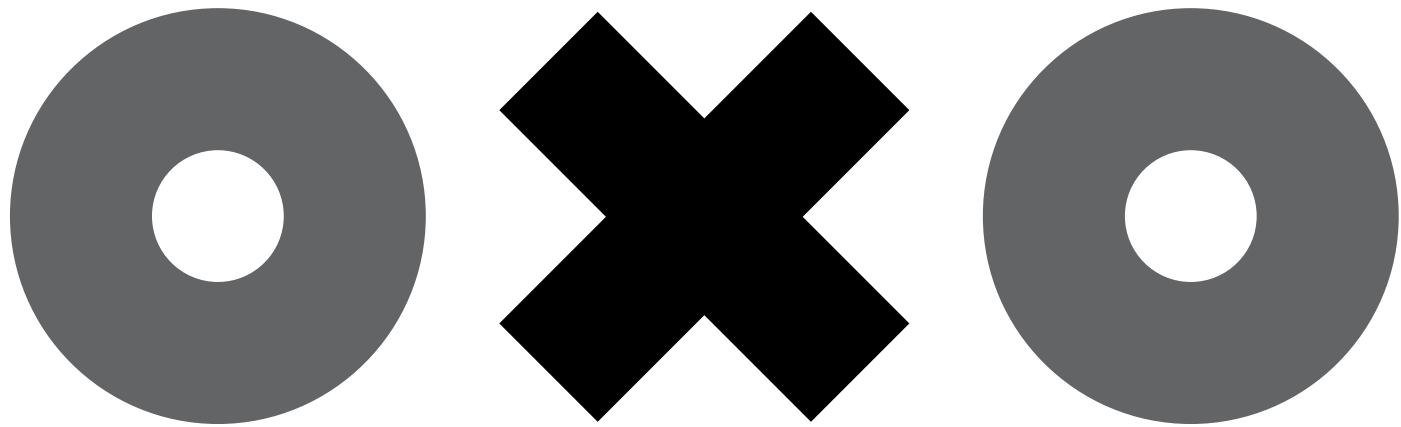
"It was a daytime bar at first," she said. "The street was so rough, nobody was out after nine [p.m.]. So there were a lot of old timers doing shots with their Chihuahuas. It was fabulous. It turns out half the people in there were old queens who never told anybody they were gay. I inherited two bartenders who came with the business. They were gay. It was like, this totally, undercover subculture where everybody had these secret lives, but the minute I got here it was like 'Umm Michelle, I just want to let you know I'm gay.'"

The name Big Chicks was also a cause of confusion for the next 30 years.

"If I had a dollar for everyone who told me 'I remember when it was a lesbian bar,'" Fire said. "It's never been a lesbian bar. It was a growth experience for me too. I took every penny I had to make the business work, try to stay in business and mold it in into what I wanted it to be. It's been an all-consuming 30 years."

There is much that is synonymous with Big Chicks; the Sunday brunch in the back, the art on the walls which has attracted museum owners from all over the world, but most of all, the sense of family—customers and staff who have been integral to the business for three decades.

"I am very partial to the notion that the



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viewpoints



**Dana
RUDOLPH**

MOMBIAN Of hate and hope

When I learned of the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, my own son was in elementary school, and I was shaken to the core. He is in middle school now, and the Orlando massacre has shaken me again. The victims this time were not young children—but they were all someone's children.

At 13 years old, my son is too old for me to shelter him from the news—he had first heard about Orlando online, when he saw the black ribbon Google put up in honor of the victims. He said all the kids on his bus the next day were talking about it. I found myself once more trying to explain to him why innocent people had been shot in our country.

I explained what I knew about what happened and asked him how he was feeling. He said it was awful that we lived in a world where someone could just walk into a nightclub and start shooting. He said, "But you don't go to places like that," and I had to tell him I did, once upon a time.

We talked about Stonewall, the evolution of LGBTQ equality, and the increase in acceptance over the past few decades. I said we live in an area where violent incidents are rare, although that is not true for everyone. We spoke of privilege and skin color and the fact that most of the victims were Latinx. He knew that some people would unfairly blame all Muslims for the act of one.

I told him I thought that security in pub-

lic places, including schools, had gone up in the wake of 9/11 and recent school shootings. (I didn't mention that I wasn't sure it was enough.) We discussed the need for stronger gun control laws—and used his love of Nerf guns to explore why restricting access to real guns was so contentious.

I avoided talking about the spate of anti-LGBTQ bills passed or introduced around the country recently, wavering between full disclosure and a parent's desire to protect her child from nightmares. It is enough for now that he knows there is anti-LGBTQ sentiment in our world. I want him aware, but not anxiety-ridden.

Did I succeed? Time will tell.

I, too, learned early on about hate and massacres. I grew up in a Jewish family, minimally observant but very aware of our culture and of the millions who died in the Holocaust. I knew there were people who killed others simply for being who they were. It saddens me no end to have to discuss hate and violence in today's world—on whatever scale, for whatever reason—with my son.

We have the privilege of being white-skinned, however, and I know that the threat of violence is far stronger for people of color in the United States. While a ban on assault weapons is vital, it also remains necessary to continue addressing racism and the many other systemic ills of our society, including homophobia and transphobia, which can overlap with racism to tragic results. Fourteen transgender people, almost all people of color, were reported murdered in the first six months of 2016, the Advocate said recently.

How can we hope to change things, though, when it seems we haven't learned from the past and the next tragedy is just around the corner?

My own answer is to find inspiration in my son, whose very existence was in part motivated by hope in the face of tragedy. My spouse had always wanted children. I hadn't been op-

posed to them, but a few career shifts since college had kept me focused on establishing myself in my latest job—in a building right next to the World Trade Center. Every day, I would take the train to the station underneath WTC and walk across to my office next door on the top floor. Two business days before September 11, however, I switched to a new position in our New Jersey office.

Things might easily have been different, and I began to reflect on unseized opportunities and the swiftness of our lives. That, and the family joy I experienced over a relative's new child, gave me the added push I needed. My spouse and I began to talk seriously about children in the months that followed, and about a year later, she was pregnant with my egg. Yes, it gave us pause, wanting to bring a child into a world of unpredictable violence. But when we lose our faith in the future, those who wish to cause harm have already won.

We have to have faith now that we can build a future for our children that lets them grow up safe and loved and able to love whom they will. We have to believe in a future of human connection across the intersecting lines of race and sexual orientation and gender and all the other aspects of our identities. A future in which kindness and understanding outweigh oppression and disenfranchisement. A future where access to guns is more strictly controlled. We must then work to make that future happen—in our homes, our communities, our country, and our world. Easy? No. But I think of my son's somber, worried face when we discussed Orlando, and I know we have to try.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents.

letters

You gotta have faith

Dear Editor:

[The following letter is directed to Equality Illinois, organizers of the Nov. 28 town hall on post-election concerns.]

I had the opportunity to attend the "Post Election Forum & Action Fair" on Nov. 28 at the Lake View Presbyterian Church.

My interest levels were high in anticipation that there would be good conversation about the current political situation, and the fears that many of our people have. I was surprised that so little time was made available for input from the floor. I say this with a great deal of love: None of us has the answers to what happens to us under a Trump presidency, but we must have faith in each other, build trust within our community, and I believe the solutions will present themselves to us.

My major concerns were voter turnout and the development of community unity.

It is my firm belief that being able to move beyond own pain and suffering allows us to become available to others' pain. When we wallow in our pain, we can become both self-focused and jaded.

Please do not take my letter as a personal

criticism. I know all the good you do for us in striving for justice, but you should have more trust in our people; just perhaps, they may have some answers.

It was good that you moved so quickly to pull this forum together. So many are in fear.

Thank you for all you do for this community.

Joe Murray

Executive Director

Rainbow Sash Movement (LGBTQ Roman Catholics)

On the other hand

To the Editor:

The article (Nov. 30, 2016) on the death of Cuban revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro, was offensively tendentious and one-sided.

In it, Cuban gay activist and physician Alberto Roque Guerra's critique of government oppression during the early days of the AIDS crisis was prominently referenced. But no mention was made of his explicit and eloquent support of the revolution that he said brought dignity to Cubans who had known only degradation under the U.S.-supported Batista dic-

tatorship when Havana was a playground for wealthy Americans seeking prostitutes and gambling in Mafia-controlled casinos.

For LGBT Cubans like Roque Guerra, the struggle for human rights was always framed within the larger context of the struggle for a better life for the vast majority of Cuban people. Today, literacy rates are higher than in the United States and infant mortality rates are lower, while genuine universal healthcare is a right of Cuban citizenship. These achievements benefit all Cubans, gay and straight alike.

In addition, while the U.S. government backed apartheid in South Africa, Cuban forces were fighting the South African surrogates in neighboring Angola. Nelson Mandela credited Cuban forces with playing a decisive role in securing majority rule in South Africa.

WCT's negative assessment of the Cuban revolution and its leader depends on its narrow and exclusive focus on "gay rights." It betrays U.S. parochialism and ignores the stunning improvement in Cuban living standards despite decades of U.S. government's sanctions and boycotts to strangle that small island's inspiring social experiment on behalf of its courageous people.

Bob Schwartz
Chicago

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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36

NaKorn.



36

Big Chicks' staff.



Hair apparent

20

Pat Whalen and Mary Williamson co-star in Give It All Back.

Photo by Jonathan L. Green

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

'Curious' and 'Queer' theatricality

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

It's rare for non-musical plays to get major national tours. But *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is no run-of-the-mill play.

Based on Mark Haddon's best-selling 2003 novel, *The Curious Incident...* makes its Chicago touring debut at the Oriental Theatre after winning with a bevy of major theater awards. It won five Tony Awards in 2015, but also a record-breaking seven Olivier Awards following its 2012 debut at London's National Theatre (only *Matilda The Musical* has matched that tally).

Haddon once felt his novel was averse to adaptation, but playwright Simon Stephens (long a favorite of Chicago's Steep Theatre) and *War Horse* co-director Marianne Elliott both cracked the code. They found a way into the novel's very internal narrative of British teenager Christopher Boone.

Though Haddon and Stephens never disclose Christopher's exact condition, the math whiz displays behavior that many doctors would diagnose as autistic. Initially Christopher tries to solve the mystery of discovering the person who killed his neighbor's dog with a pitchfork, but then his investigations uncover even more disturbing personal clues.

One ingenious aspect of Elliott's high-tech staging is to visually depict what might be going on within Christopher's head. Though the set may look like a simple geometric grid, it gets filled with a dazzling array of lighting and projection effects that are simply breathtaking.

Alex Sharp won a Best Actor Tony Award

for playing Christopher on Broadway, and his fellow recent Julliard Drama graduate Adam Langdon now takes on the role on the road. Playing Christopher is so physically taxing that Langdon just does five shows a week, while Benjamin Wheelwright goes on as the alternate for three performances. Both actors also wait backstage for each other in case someone has to go on mid-show due to injuries.

"Every single Christopher that has ever performed has been incredibly different, so my and Ben's Christopher are polar opposites," Langdon said. "His Christopher has been in him for a long time since he did it on Broadway, so you will get your own Christopher when you see it."

Langdon said just a couple of technologically wowing stage effects seen in *The Curious Incident...* in London and on Broadway have been simplified for the tour, which just launched last month. But Langdon promises that the play's gripping story and its important messages still shine through.

"One of the main messages of the play is that difference is something that should be celebrated," Langdon said. "And to see a boy and his parents and his teacher go through this journey of handling his difference and in this very specific way, it sends out a good message. And in this day and age with everything that has been happening in the world, difference is something that should never be hidden and should always be accepted."

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time continues through Saturday, Dec. 24, at the Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. Tickets are \$22-\$95; call 800-775-2000 or visit BroadwayInChicago.com.

Diversely positive

Queer, Ill + Okay is back for its fourth iteration. The annual show is a multidisciplinary performance piece featuring performance artists who are HIV-positive or dealing with chronic illnesses.

Queer, Ill + Okay was created by Chicago-based producer Joe Varisco following his own HIV-positive diagnosis four years ago. Varisco was dismayed at the lack of narratives and art that matched his and his friends' situations, so he created *Queer, Ill + Okay*.

"What I normally do in those situations when I find that there's an absence in a voice that I'm looking for, where I'm trying to understand more of an experience that reflects something

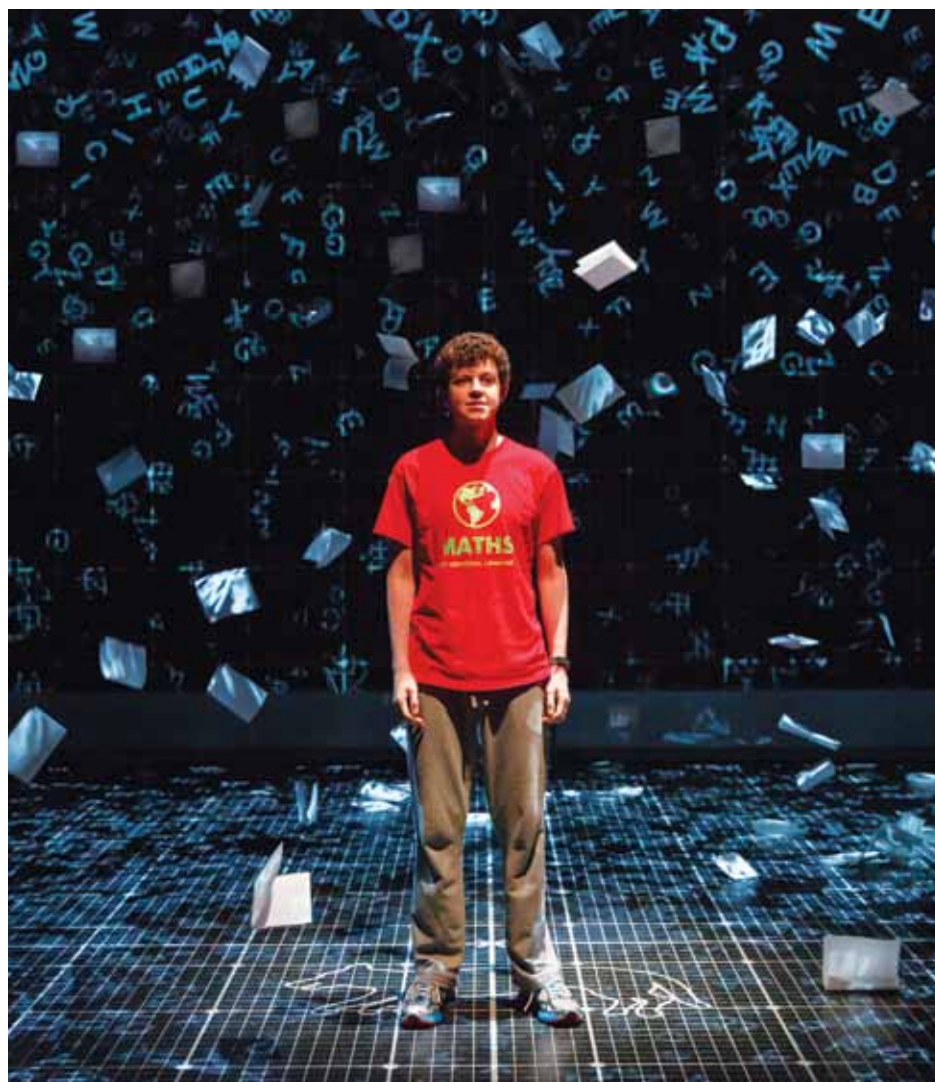
Adam Langdon in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

Photo by Joan Marcus

more directly to the world I know, I turn to my community," said Varisco. "Tell me your story. What does it mean to be positive today? Or live with a chronic illness as a trans individual, as a black or brown individual, as someone who is differently abled? And that is where the idea came for the first show."

Assembling artists together comes naturally to Varisco as a co-curator at Salonathon and the resident curator of Poonie's Cabaret at Links Hall. Varisco also recently took on the role of program coordinator of the new exhibit Art AIDS America Chicago at Alphawood Foundation.

For this year's *Queer, Ill + Okay*, Varisco teamed up with Oracle Productions which is dedicated to offering free public access theatre. The show also prominently features 14 diverse artists from around the county alternating in performances so no two performance lineups are the same.

"The entire production, from the artists that are involved to the designers to the venue to

the lighting and tech operations to marketing are all pulled from the queer community who are in some way connected or invested in the same kind of mission that *Queer, Ill + Okay* has," Varisco said. Since the show is free, "we're trying to create accessibility to as many populations around the city as we can."

***Queer, Ill + Okay* plays four performances only at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Dec. 9, 10, 16 and 17, at Oracle Productions, 1802 W. Berenice Ave. The featured performers are avery r. young, Angel Katz, Bea Cordelia, Dev_n and SK Kerastas, Dirty Grits and Vasilios Papapitsios, Emma Alamo, JuJu Minxx, Kay Ulanday Barrett, Lindsey Lee, Lucas Baisch, Michelle Zacarias, Morgan McNaught, Phillip Lambert X Blakn Brilliant and Tim'm West.**

Tickets are free, but advance reservations are recommended. For an exact roster of artists featured at each performance and to reserve tickets, visit PublicAccessTheatre.org.

Anti-bullying musical Jan.-Feb.

Chicago Children's Theatre's *The Hundred Dresses*—the musical about a young girl who struggles with bullying and learns what it takes to stand up to others—will run Jan. 17-Feb. 12 at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St.

The Hypocrites Artistic Director Sean Graney is directing, and the production is based on Eleanor Estes' novel.

The Hundred Dresses runs approximately one hour, and is ideal for ages 6 to adult. Single tickets are \$10-\$39; visit ChicagoChildrensTheatre.org or call 872-222-9555.

What is TRUVADA for PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis)?

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine that can be used for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection when used together with safer sex practices. This use is only for adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This includes HIV-negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex, and male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV-1. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- ◆ **You must be HIV-negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.
- ◆ **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- ◆ **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- ◆ **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- ◆ **To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:**
 - Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
 - Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
 - Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
 - Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
 - Have fewer sex partners.
 - Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
 - If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- ◆ **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

- ◆ **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- ◆ **Serious liver problems.** Your liver may become large and tender, and you may develop fat in your liver. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.

- ◆ **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking TRUVADA for a long time. In some cases, these serious conditions have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- ◆ **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you also have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider. If your healthcare provider tells you to stop taking TRUVADA, they will need to watch you closely for several months to monitor your health. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of HBV.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status. If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you also take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).

What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:

- ◆ **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
- ◆ **Bone problems,** including bone pain or bones getting soft or thin, may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.
- ◆ **Changes in body fat,** which can happen in people taking TRUVADA or medicines like TRUVADA.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

- ◆ **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- ◆ **If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.** It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
Pregnancy Registry: A pregnancy registry collects information about your health and the health of your baby. There is a pregnancy registry for women who take medicines to prevent HIV-1 during pregnancy. For more information about the registry and how it works, talk to your healthcare provider.
- ◆ **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. The medicines in TRUVADA can pass to your baby in breast milk. If you become HIV-1 positive, HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.
- ◆ **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.
- ◆ **If you take certain other medicines** with TRUVADA for PrEP, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include ledipasvir with sofosbuvir (HARVONI).

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.



Have you heard about

TRUVADA for PrEP™?

The **once-daily prescription medicine** that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when used **with safer sex practices**.

- TRUVADA for PrEP is only for **adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex**.
- You **must be HIV-negative** before you start taking TRUVADA.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

visit start.truvada.com

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IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. This does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Before starting TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must be HIV-1 negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-1 negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- **Tell your healthcare provider if you have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- **See the "How to Further Reduce Your Risk" section for more information.**

TRUVADA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- **Severe liver problems,** which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking TRUVADA for a long time.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP (PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS)

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine used with safer sex practices for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection in adults at high risk:

- HIV-1 negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex.
- Male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

To help determine your risk, talk openly with your doctor about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.**
- Take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About TRUVADA for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.
- Changes in body fat.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

These are not all the possible side effects of TRUVADA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP.

BEFORE TAKING TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical conditions.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you become HIV-1 positive because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with TRUVADA for PrEP.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

- **Take 1 tablet once a day, every day,** not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- You **must** practice safer sex by using condoms and you **must** stay HIV-1 negative.

HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
- Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
- Have fewer sex partners.
- Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV-1 infection.
- Go to start.truvada.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit start.truvada.com for program information.



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THEATER REVIEW

The Rip Nelson Holiday Spectacular

Playwright: David Cerda

At: Hell in a Handbag Productions at Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St.

Tickets: 800-838-3006;

HandbagProductions.org; 28-\$42

Runs through: Dec. 30

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

This holiday sequel to 2010's Rip Nelson Halloween Spooktacular, the latest campy Christmas show dreamed up by playwright David Cerda for Hell in a Handbag Productions, sees the welcome return of Ed Jones as the ever-exasperated fictional title character, an amalgam of Paul Lynde, Rip Taylor and Charles Nelson Reilly. At the top of the show, Nelson receives the happy news that Lynde has died (!) and that he will replace him as the star host of a 1982 TV special.

The problem is that Nelson is just out of rehab, and he's terrified of falling off the wagon despite help from his trusty makeup artist friend, Gladys (Lori Lee). Nelson also must deal with wacky guest stars like a manic Liza Minelli (Alexa Castelvechi), a closeted Dom Deluise (Tommy Bullington), a confused Bruce Jenner (Chazie Bly) and the sparring singing trios of The Lennon Sisters (AJ Wright, Anna Seibert and Kristopher Bottrall) and The King Sisters



From left: Rip Nelson (Ed Jones) and Patti LaBelle (Robert Williams) in *The Rip Nelson Holiday Spectacular*. Photo by Rick Aguilar Studios

(Terry McCarthy, Grant Drager and Adrian Hadlock).

Oh, yes: There's also R&B star Patti LaBelle (Robert Williams), Kermit the Frog (Scott Ray Merchant) and illusionist Doug Henning (David Lipschutz). Henning, in particular, gets lots of visual jokes via his clingy costumes and for how the mustachioed magician resembles a certain Savior of the World.

All of the performers under director/choreographer Steve Love turn out outrageous performances as you'd expect in a Handbag campfest. It's also a visual cavalcade of high-camp fashion courtesy of costume designer Kate Setzer

Kamphausen.

Now if only Cerda's script was stronger. With so many supporting characters alternately bitching or singing, the title character often recedes into the background. That's a shame, since Jones' great take on Nelson deserves more stage time.

Cerda's show-within-a-show numbers also don't ring true. They're either too violent or too sacrilegious for family TV viewing. A more interesting approach might have been playing up the wholesomeness of what's meant for TV versus scandalous behind-the-scenes behavior and antics.

Set designer Brad Caleb Lee and sound designer Matthew Reich also don't make much of an effort to provide enough period props or transition music to properly suit the show's setting.

Yet despite these flaws, *The Rip Nelson Holiday Spectacular* still offers up ample boozy opportunities to laugh your head off. Or if you'd prefer more of the real thing, the remaining Lennon Sisters are actually sharing a concert bill with The Osmond Brothers for *The Andy Williams Christmas Extravaganza* at North Central College in Naperville on Sunday, Dec. 11. Surely, the camp there will be unintentional.

THEATER REVIEW

Give It All Back

Playwright: Calamity West

At: Sideshow Theatre Company at the Biograph, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: \$20-\$30

Runs through: Dec. 18

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The play opens backstage, where an unnamed solo musician resembling—but never identified as—Bob Dylan is preparing for a concert.

Later, we will meet his traveling companion on this tour, a bearded beat bard eerily reminiscent of the late Allen Ginsberg. Other visitors include his generic recording agent, an African-American singer-songwriter whose memories of

their early days together in the protest movement recall those of Joan Baez, and his current consort, whose physical appearance is only a hair color away from fashionista Sara Lownds, the future Mrs. Dylan.

The locale soon shifts to a Paris hotel room where the anonymous folk-rock star has retreated following a radical change in his aesthetic, departing from acoustical ballads to employ electric instruments and amplification. His venture has drawn criticism from his former supporters, who accuse him of selling out to commercial interests. These contextual signposts echo those surrounding the real-life Bob Dylan—who is NOT the hero in this play, remember—circa 1966.

Calamity West is not a playwright inclined to teasing her audiences, nor is her deliberate refusal to name names merely a safeguard

against legal action arising from speculations on the psychology of notoriously private celebrities. The struggle she scrutinizes in 16 scenes spanning two hours is that of the artist—any artist—demanding the freedom to pursue new ideas, and in doing so, resisting the pressure of friends, lovers, colleagues, managers and fans whose own fortunes rely on their breadwinner shunning unexplored frontiers and the risks associated therewith.

This is a crisis faced by many popular entertainers, although Dylan's prodigious skill at artistic reinvention renders him the logical model for West's contemplations. The degree to which this now-you-see-it-now-you-don't narrative lens becomes distracting, even annoying, depends largely on the individual playgoer's familiarity with the events depicted onstage as they unfolded more than fifty years ago—a de-

mographic encompassing an entire generation of would-be hipsters and a substantial number of their descendants.

The cast assembled by Marti Lyons adheres strictly to West's double image, never betraying their source material by a covert wink or exaggerated mannerism, while Matthew Chapman's sound design carefully evades any telltale vocal stylings (coming no closer than the Velvet Underground's "Waiting for the Man"). Their discipline, while admirable, makes for a dramatic tone perhaps too scholarly for its topic, but welcome levity is manifest in Mary Williamson's delightfully outrageous—and surprisingly accurate—drag turn as the gay Ginsberg-surrogate serenely dispensing hallucinogens and zen wisdom.

THEATER REVIEW

A Hedda Gabler

Playwright: Adapted by Nigel O'Hearn

from the play by Henrik Ibsen

At: Red Tape Theatre at Pride

Arts Center, 4147 N. Broadway

Tickets: \$20

Runs through: Dec. 17

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

This is not your schoolroom Ibsen. Over a hundred years after his tale of an angry housewife's misanthropic machinations shocked audiences, Nigel O'Hearn's translation has winnowed its progress to an efficiency better suiting the small stages of our time. More noticeable, however, are the changes to the locale and presentation rendered this Red Tape Theatre production in pursuit of facilitating accessibility to modern audiences.

The time remains 1890, but the home of George and Hedda Tesman (*née* Gabler) is now a gloomy mansion in our nation's Deep South, sporting a leaking roof requiring a drip bucket during heavy rains and furnished in funereal greens and purples. (Its new mistress complains that it smells of "dead lavender.") The newlyweds have just returned from their honeymoon, so the wilted flowers strewn about the parlor may be merely coincidental, but



Aayisha Hymphrey and Johnard Washington in *A Hedda Gabler*.

Photo by Austin Oie

the bride's conviction that she has chosen the wrong husband is irrefutable.

Acknowledging the number of marriages based in filial pressure, the "custom of the country" granted tolerance to spouses conducting extramarital affairs, with the stipulation that these remain discreet, scandal being the sole unforgivable sin of the ruling class. This might suggest a more permissive social dynamic than in Ibsen's day, but the proud daughter of General Gabler vows to choose her own *cicisbeo*. Refusing the advances of

the lecherous Judge Brack, she strives to rekindle her volatile connection with ex-beau Eilert—once a hard-drinking playboy, but recently transformed into a serious and sober scholar under the influence of his selfless female companion Thea.

To ensure that we understand what spurs our frustrated heroine to initiate mischief that will destroy whatever future happiness she may salvage from her impetuous error, the surface realism of Joanna Iwanika and Abigail Cain's antebellum decor has been tweaked to introduce such expressionistic elements as a Victrola-era gramophone on which Hedda plays music-box arrangements of romantic Disney ballads as she vents her fury in wild impassioned dances until, exhausted, she gazes wistfully at a birdcage suspended in the center of the room.

Director Max Truax has assembled an ensemble capable of portraying these extravagant emotions, retaining control of their text even when locking eyes with playgoers barely an arm's length away. In the title role, Aayisha Hymphrey delivers a spellbinding performance, pursuing her single-minded schemes with the leisurely concentration of a snake stalking its prey, riveting our attention for the 100 intermissionless minutes of play's duration as surely as her bad behavior transcends our disapproval to merit our sympathies.

CRITICS' PICKS



The Fundamentals, Steppenwolf Theatre, through Dec. 23. Dirty doings and sly intrigues that we used to associate with the rich and powerful are nowadays also employed by lower-level laborers unwilling to lose what little they have. MSB

Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley, Northlight Theatre, Skokie, extended through Dec. 24. This is no ordinary fan fiction, but a sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* granting bookish middle sister Mary Bennet her due while remaining faithful to the conventions of Regency romance. MSB

The Last Wife, TimeLine Theatre, through Dec. 18. Big, meaty-but-intelligent performances drive playwright Kate Henning's tale of a woman's survival and power in a man's world, ostensibly about King Henry VIII and Catherine Parr but very much a modern work. JA

Twist Your Dickens, The Second City and Goodman Theatre, through Dec. 30. This side-splitting spoof of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is back for its third year. It prominently features plenty of improvised bits drawn from audience suggestions to increase the non-stop humor. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

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Chris Acevedo and Kiayla Jackson in *Winterset*.
Photo by Austin Oie

THEATER REVIEW

Winterset

Playwright: Maxwell Anderson
At: Griffin Theatre Company at
The Den, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Tickets: 866-811-4111;
Griffintheatre.com; \$36
Runs through: Dec. 23

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Last week, I reviewed *Electra* (Court Theatre through Dec. 11), the 5th-century BCE verse tragedy about a son who returns from long exile to revenge his father's unjust execution.

This week's play is *Winterset*, a free verse tragedy written in 1935, about a son who returns to New York City seeking revenge for his father's unjust execution. *Winterset* (meaning the winter solstice) is not based on the ancient Greek model, instead borrowing rather obviously from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*. A prize-winning success in its time, *Winterset* today is rarely performed and seems odd. It's an ambitious work to attempt, which Griffin Theatre Company does not quite master in an uneven production.

Audiences of 1935 would have recognized that the play's plot and social justice theme were inspired by the Sacco-Vanzetti case of 1920-1927, in which two Italian immigrant anarchists were executed for murder after a highly prejudicial and questionable trial. Viewers would have connected the real-life Bartolomeo Vanzetti and the fictional Bartolomeo Romagna. Audiences today are far less likely to know the play's historic basis.

Instead, they'll encounter plot mechanics echoing 19th-century melodrama, assembling

all the key players under highly-improbable and coincidental circumstances. *Winterset* gathers Bartolomeo's truth-seeking son, the real killer and two witnesses, the Orthodox Jewish father and sister of one witness, the patrician trial judge (now half-mad with guilt), assorted down-trodden local citizens and a bully cop, all crowded into a tenement apartment. Almost predictably, the son and the witness' sister fall in love, although teenagers like *Romeo and Juliet*.

All the characters are introduced in Act I amidst confusing shifts of focus and a diversion into 1930s Leftie populism. Acts II and III provide clarity and a predictable tragic ending, but the play may lose you by then. The forced plot structure had me asking, "Why didn't they shoot the bad guy when they had the chance?"

Winterset possibly still could sing with a stronger production. However, some cast members do not deliver the play's free verse dialogue in a way which makes it either believable or rich as language. The play looks like realism but is not, and the language—even common or vulgar phrases—sounds wrong when spoken as realistic dialogue, as would Shakespeare or *Electra*.

Several of the leads are strong but others are not, resulting in portions which sound clumsy or are unclear in thought. Director Jonathan Berry—whose work I usually admire—has not created a unified ensemble approach to the text this time. *Winterset* certainly looks appropriately somber and threatening on Joe Schermoly's hard urban riverfront set, under Alexander Ridgers' moody lighting. Despite imperfections, Griffin Theatre deserves praise for staging this challenging, important work of U.S. theater.



SPOTLIGHT

The holiday season is often described as "magical," but *The Rosenkranz Mysteries* aims to literally share that adjective with audiences with this one-man cabaret show. Prominently on the bill is illusionist Ricardo Rosenkranz, who has worked with magicians Eugene Burger, Jeff McBride and more to craft this cozy and enlightening show. The *Rosenkranz Mysteries* continues through Saturday, Dec. 24, in The Royal George Theatre's Cabaret Space, 1641 N. Halsted St. Tickets are \$50 with discounts available for seniors and students. Cabaret tables seating four are also available for \$75 per person. Call 312-988-9000 or visit Ticketmaster.com.

Illusionist Ricardo Rosenkranz stars in *The Rosenkranz Mysteries*. Photo by Richard Faverty, Beckett Studios



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DANCE from cover

Each is tasked with fulfilling the lofty visions of Tony-award winning director and choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, who with Caldecott-winning author and illustrator Brian Selznick have moved the ballet's setting from an upper-class German living room to a shanty at the fairgrounds on the near south side in 1892 Chicago, the winter before the Columbian Exposition would open. Ms. Katz, Mr. Crouch and Mr. Percy reflected on the artistic process and the realization of Christopher Wheeldon's dream for his *Nutcracker* in electronic correspondence with *Windy City Times*.

"Working with Chris is heaven," wrote Natasha Katz. "I've worked with Chris for over 15 years and I think he makes me a better designer every time I work with him." Ben Percy agreed: "Working with Chris is many things—exciting, challenging, joyful and, above all, great fun. ... He has a wonderful ability to be both demanding and kind and really brings out the best work from his collaborators."

Many choreographers work on the movement first and build design elements in after the dance is formed. The team said the working with Wheeldon is different because he has a vision for lighting, sets, projections and props from early in the process. "Chris is the kind of director who has a very singular vision and is very closely involved with every aspect of his productions," wrote Julian Crouch. "A fair amount of my relationship with Chris is trying to unpick his thoughts and read his mind, because I know the show is already in there... in my opinion he is more theatrically and story minded than many pure [theater] directors that I've worked with."

Working together to tell the story liberates the designers to fully exploit their respective mediums, but it also unites them toward a common goal, meaning no one element speaks louder than another. "It is a collaboration in the deepest sense," wrote Crouch. "The influence we have on each other and the production is constant and equal. I think each one of us want the very best for the production, and are willing to blur the boundaries of our separate skills to achieve a seamless whole." Katz agreed: "Collaboration is everything on this ballet. It's a wonderful mix of scenery, costumes, projection and lighting, choreography, storytelling and music."

For better or worse, the dance world is influenced by ghosts of *Nutcrackers* past. "The *Nutcracker* comes with many expectations," wrote Crouch, "and the greatest challenge was to honor this while simultaneously delivering something fresh and exciting." Christopher Wheeldon takes care to ensure certain needs and expectations are met, partly because they are dictated by his use of the original Tchaikovsky score: the tree will grow; there will be snow, and mice, and a kingdom of worldly delights. It is some of these elements, however,



that have been most difficult to see realized. "The transformation of the tree has been very challenging to get right," said Percy. "It's the marriage of every element of the production, and that integration has to be seamless for it to work."

What is most interesting about this *Nutcracker* team, however, is the relative novelty each brings to the *Nutcracker*. For Katz and Crouch, this is their first *Nutcracker*. Percy drew some influence from a Chicago production at the Arie Crown Theatre in the early 1990s. "I was the assistant lighting designer for Tom Skelton," he said. "That production was very different visually and conceptually from [Wheeldon's] *Nutcracker*, but I did take some inspiration from how the Overture was staged. Tom crafted a story with light on the show curtain that took the audience on a journey through the idyllic town that was painted onto the curtain. I'd like to think that our imagery for the Overture also creates a journey for the audience and brings them into our unique story."



The Broadway-bred group of designers is feeling the idiosyncracies of the dance world, with the most obvious challenge begin time. "Lighting is very exacting and it takes time in the theatre to get the lighting exactly right," wrote Katz. "We have worked very fast, since the vision has been in our collective head for months." Ballet costumes and sets presented unique challenges for Crouch, including that his elements be able to withstand wear and tear over the next several decades. "The Joffrey needs a show that will last a very long time," wrote Crouch. Indeed, the original impetus for commissioning the ballet was one of practicality; when Artistic Director Ashley Wheater took the Joffrey's helm in 2007, he found the quarter century-old sets and costumes of Robert Joffrey's *Nutcracker* (for which he danced the role of Father/Snow King in the 1987 premiere) in tatters.

It may or may not be coincidence that the World's Fair and the *Nutcracker* it inspired have been chock full of challenges, not least of which is Wheeldon's ankle-breaking fall into the orchestra pit in Iowa City (as reported by the *New York Times*). Despite the challenges, the show will go on, as the World's Fair did, and will undoubtedly bring magic, wonder and delight to the masses.

Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker*, presented by the Joffrey Ballet, runs Dec. 10-30 at the Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress Pkwy. For more information and tickets, visit Joffrey.org.

Left: Christopher Wheeldon (seated) with dancers April Daly and Fabrice Calmels in rehearsals for *The Nutcracker*.

Photo by Todd Rosenberg

Below: Costume renderings from *The Nutcracker*.

Courtesy of The Joffrey Ballet



Photos by Kirk Williamson

Santa Speedo Run shows off for charity

Runners braved near-freezing temps to strut their stuff for the Santa Speedo Run, Saturday, December 3, at Sidetrack. The colorful crowd gathered at the bar, screwed up their courage and hit the streets for a one-mile run through Boystown, all in—and out of—their holiday finest.

This sixth-annual event brought in a record \$52,000, to benefit Center On Halsted's Youth Housing Initiative.

After the run, participants and friends warmed up to the emcee stylings of Debbie Fox, as she doled out raffle prizes and auctioned off underwear (and other underthings) from sponsors such as Crochet Empire.



Lesbian mystery writer Ellen Hart to receive Grand Master Award

BY SARAH TOCE

Lesbian mystery author Ellen Hart's exemplary work embodies over three decades of relevance and now the Minneapolis based prodigy is being honored by the Mystery Writers of America (MWA) organization. Hart is scheduled to receive the 2017 Grand Master Award by the MWA at the 71st Annual Edgar Awards Banquet at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City on Thursday, April 27, 2017. Hart will share the Grand Master title with Road to Perdition suspense scribe Max Allan Collins.

"A writer's stock-in-trade is imagination," Hart said upon learning of the honor. "I've always felt mine was pretty good, but never in a million years did I ever think winning the MWA Grand Master award was a possibility. I'm stunned, grateful and profoundly honored."

Six-time Lambda Literary Award winner Hart is the author of 32 crime novels and has been named the four-time winner of the Minnesota Book Award for Best Popular Fiction, and the three-time winner of the Golden Crown Literary Award for mystery. The mystery series "Jane Lawless and Sophie Greenaway" are perhaps the most well-known in her lengthy arsenal (the Lawless series features a lesbian restaurateur and her smart-mouthed best friend, Cordelia Thorn).

In addition to her work in literature, Hart has taught writing for 17 years through the Loft Literary Center, the largest independent writing community in the nation.



Ellen Hart.
PR photo

Hart and wife Kathleen Kruger live in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, and have been partners for more than 37 years. The former professional chef met Kruger in college and became roommates with Kruger's two children (later legally adopted by Hart). The two share two grandchildren.

Hart has previously said of her work, "I don't

write about the Mean Streets. I don't live there...I don't do lots of blood and gore. I don't do sex scenes in any great detail. I'd never kill a dog or a cat. I guess you could call my style, maximal suspense and minimal gore."

In 2005, Hart was inducted into the Saints and Sinners Hall of Fame—an honor previously bestowed to Dorothy Allison, Felice Picano and Katherine V. Forrest. Hart was awarded the Trailblazer Award from the Golden Crown Literary Society in 2010, and is a founding member of The Minnesota Crime Wave.

Previous MWA Grand Masters include Walter Mosley, Lois Duncan, James Ellroy, Robert Crais, Carolyn Hart, Martha Grimes, Sara Paretsky, James Lee Burke, Sue Grafton, Mary Higgins Clark, Lawrence Sanders, P.D. James, Ellery Queen, Daphne du Maurier, Alfred Hitchcock, Graham Greene, Agatha Christie and many others.

The Edgar Awards—or "Edgars," as they are commonly known—are named after MWA's patron saint, Edgar Allan Poe, and are presented to authors of distinguished work in various categories. MWA is the premier organization for mystery writers, professionals allied to the crime-writing field, aspiring crime writers and those devoted to the genre. The organization encompasses some 3,000 members including authors of fiction and non-fiction books, screen and television writers, as well as publishers, editors and literary agents.

For more information about Mystery Writers of America, visit MysteryWriters.org.

Morrissey cancels Chicago show

Singer Morrissey (formerly of The Smiths) will not be performing in Chicago, after he canceled tour dates in several cities, The Chicago Tribune noted.

A statement reads, "It is with great re-

gret that the rescheduled Morrissey concerts in Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and Texas are now cancelled. Tickets purchased online or by phone will be automatically refunded to your credit card. Tickets purchased at the Aragon Ballroom box office or a Ticketmaster outlet can be refunded at the point of purchase starting this Monday, December 5."

Rolling Stone reported that the mismanagement of funds factored in the cancellations. In a post titled "There Is a Light That Now Goes Out" on Morrissey's fan site True to You, the singer said he and the band were in "unrecoverable despair" after the shows were "pulled down." He added, "When Gustavo [Manzur, keyboardist] collapsed at the Boulder show, 360 Management responded with the announcement that all funds had suddenly evaporated."

No word has been released on the reschedule of the now-canceled rescheduled shows.

Skinner Ricketts named CMO of Cars.com


Cars.com announced the appointment of Brooke Skinner Ricketts as the company's chief marketing officer (CMO), effective immediately.

Skinner Ricketts most recently served as vice president of brand and design at Avant. Previously she was head of brand strategy at Twitter, where she delivered revenue-driving creative ideas for Fortune 200 clients.

Prior to her time at Avant and Twitter, Skinner Ricketts was senior vice president of brand strategy at DigitalLi from 2011 until 2014. Skinner Ricketts became a Leadership Greater Chicago Fellow in 2014 and is on the boards of Housing Opportunities for Women, Chicago Cubs Charities and She100.

Cars.com was founded in 1998 and is headquartered in Chicago.

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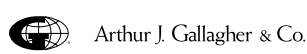
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Tig Notaro.
Photo by Kevin Winter

Tig Notaro: Profile of a survivor

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

Comedian Tig Notaro has been spending much of the last six months at home thanks to two new additions to her family. Notaro and her wife, Stephanie Allynne, welcomed twin sons in June.

Her career has not slowed down, however, and 2017 will likely be another busy year for the comedian.

Notaro, who has been performing standup and acting since the 1990s, became more widely known after a standup performance that went viral in 2012, just days after she'd been diagnosed with cancer.

Peers have hailed her performance as one of the best in the history of standup

Notaro's set that night began with an acknowledgement: "I have cancer." It then continued with a harrowing performance that had the audience laughing despite the seriousness of the situation.

The cancer diagnosis was one of a trifecta of life altering events to befall Notaro. That

same year she'd also been diagnosed with a life threatening intestinal disease and her mother had died following a fall.

Much of Notaro's life since her incredible performance has been well-documented: She's been profiled by countless national media outlets; written a New York Times best-selling memoir, *I'm Just a Person*; earned critical acclaim for her Netflix original documentary *Tig*; and received an Emmy nomination for her HBO standup special *Boyish Girl Interrupted*.

She also writes, produces and stars in the semiautobiographical comedy series *One Mississippi*, which premiered on Amazon Prime this fall and has been nominated for a Critic's Choice Award for Best New Series.

The show has been picked up for a second season, and Notaro said that is how she will begin the New Year.

"We start writing the second season on Jan. 3," she said. "We are all really excited to get back to it."

The six-episode season doesn't have a release date set yet—and Notaro said she has no idea what direction the second season will take.

"I have no idea about what is going to happen in the second season. The first season is fictionalized. It's loosely based on my real life, but it has parts of what the other writers have brought from experiences from their lives," she said.

"That is what is fun. I have no idea where my story is going. They are taking bits and pieces of my life and adding to it. I'm excited to get in there and find out where my story goes."

While the show will continue to draw from Notaro's real-life experiences, she said she does expect it to veer off more in its own direction as it goes along and she said that is one of the things she enjoys about doing the show and working in a collaborative environment.

"I think there will always be these elements of reality, but then veering off the road is turning out to be a lot of fun," she said.

She also said her family members are big fans of the show and don't take the characters too personally, but she does recognize its not just her story being put out there.

"I definitely have to have boundaries and use my best judgment of how to tell the story, which is my story, but also includes other people," she said. "Luckily my family loves the show and are supportive of it and they realize its only based on some true events."

With lesbians still making up a meager number of characters on network TV, outlets like Amazon Prime and Netflix have been providing more opportunities not only for lesbian characters to appear, but also for more varied storylines to be explored. Notaro said she doesn't spend a lot of time thinking about her show's contribution to this, but she agrees visibility is important.

"I'm not showing anything to make a point, but I definitely think visibility is important, and I think more than anything I enjoy showing that there isn't a stereotypical reaction to

my sexuality or relationships that people might expect in a small Southern town," she said.

"I think that is the most exciting part for me, because it is a non-issue in my family. People have responded saying they expected more of a reaction or coming out moment or conflict within the family when my girlfriend comes home and it's not a part of it. I guess that has been important to me, to show that it's not all clichés and obvious ways people might think something like that would go."

Notaro said besides working on "One Mississippi," she also expects to spend time touring next year and is hoping it will culminate in a new comedy special.

Between now and then, Notaro is busy getting in the Christmas spirit; something she said is mostly due to the newborns.

"Both of our families will be in town and its the babies first Christmas, which we can't wait for," she said. "We are going to take them to get the photo with Santa and get our Christmas tree this weekend."

"Stephanie was teasing me this morning, saying I always tell everyone that she loves Christmas so much and she pointed out a million different ways that I've come around to it more, but I think that just comes with the excitement of having a family of my own."

Notaro is scheduled to perform at the Harris Theater, 205 E. Randolph St., at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 17. For tickets, visit <https://harristheaterchicago.org/>.

MUSIC

Laura Jane Grace meets fans at book-signing

BY VERNON HESTER

Transgender rocker and Against Me! singer/vocalist/guitarist Laura Jane Grace touched down at The Wilson Abbey, 935 W. Wilson Ave., for a book-reading, signing, and Q&A session with her fans in support of her new memoir, *Tranny: Confessions of Punk Rock's Most Infamous Anarchist Sellout* (co-written by Dan Ozzi and published by Hachette Books).

The event, which took place Dec. 2 and was the last stop on the 10-city book tour, ultimately sold out just before showtime. Women and Children First Bookstore sponsored the event.

Grace became famous with her band, *Against Me!*, over the course of a career that started in 1997 and has produced seven full albums. Up until 2013, Grace performed as Tom Gabel but then came out as suffering from transgender dysphoria in an interview in *Rolling Stone* magazine in 2012. Gabel then started the transition to living as a woman while also recording and touring behind the *Against Me!* album *Transgender Dysphoria Blues* (on Total Treble Records), which dealt

with the physical and psychological process of her transformation.

Standing onstage in front of the capacity crowd (approximately 200 people), Grace read excerpts from the book that not only depicts her trans process but her career in music and being a disaffected youth who took part in drug abuse and self-loathing. About the title of the book, Grace said, "I hate that word ["tranny"]. I definitely don't identify with that word, I don't like hearing it used for other people. But it captures a lot of what the book is about, and a lot of what the book is about is internalized transphobia and self-hate."

Though her stories featured a degree of seriousness, Grace kept the event open and light, and this tone was reflected in the Q&A segment of the evening. The audience asked questions and shared anecdotes that included speaking to pre-adolescent children about Grace's transformation to fan adulation to trans individuals sharing their own tribulations.

As she signed books for the audience, Grace also took individual selfies with each audience member.



Laura Jane Grace.
Photo by Vern Hester

'America in Transition' launch Dec. 8

The official launch of the series *America in Transition* will take place at Reunion, 2557 W. North Ave., on Thursday, Dec. 8, 7-11 p.m.

Director Andre Perez has been traveling across the country to film and share stories of transgender people from marginalized communities. Organizers will be screening the first two episodes, talking about what it all means with Andre Perez and Deejorn Gauthier, and feature a performance by Zanariah Phillips.

There will be a sliding-scale donation of \$10-\$20, although no one will be turned away due to lack of funds.

See "Official America in Transition Launch!" on Facebook. Also, see AmericaInTransition.org.

Lavender Voices fundraiser Dec. 16

"All the Works," a fundraiser for Lavender Voices, will take place Friday, Dec. 16, at 7 p.m. at Open Books, 651 W. Lake St.

Lavender Voices is a monthly storytelling series featuring queer women and femme writers. Anthologies of writers' shared works over the year will be available for purchase at \$10/book.

See "Lavender Voices" on Facebook.

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No bones about love: A surprise engagement

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

On March 13, 2015, Bethany Minor proposed marriage to Alissa Pagels and she said “yes.” On March 13, 2016, Pagels asked Minor the same question at the Chicago Field Museum. The twist in this re-proposal? The “yes” was shortly followed by an “I do” in a surprise wedding ceremony.

Minor, originally from Mississippi, works in product development for a media agency, primarily in software development. Pagels, hails from Lockport, IL and works at an ad agency on the social media team, making creative visual content. She is also a freelance photographer.

The two met on the dating site OKCupid. They described their first date as an accidental first date. Over a message, Pagels asked Minor about attending a particular event at a bar. They met up at that event, but were not feeling well. Not in the mood to mingle with others, they sat in the corner together. Minor remembered Pagels was hungry, and so they fed her. Pagels chimes in joking that that’s the story of their relationship. Minor jokes back that the date “ended in the most awkward hug ever.”

After one year of dating, Minor proposed to Pagels in a restaurant on top of a hill, overlooking Los Angeles.

Pagels described Minor as a paper work-person, explaining she kept throwing out the idea of going to the courthouse to get married. Pagels said “no way” and had other ideas.

“Almost every single day after our two-month anniversary, I would ask Alissa to marry me; It’s been a thing,” said Minor. “In 2015, I finally got her to agree to marry me. Every single day, after I got her to do that, I’ve basically been asking her to just go to the courthouse.”

“I was definitely open to the fact,” said Pagels. “Bethany likes to get everything done right now and I’m a procrastinator, so I was like ‘some day.’”

For the one-year anniversary of their engagement, they planned a staycation in Chicago. Pagels filled the staycation with surprises, including a trip to get marriage licenses and Minor’s first trip to the Field Museum on the anniversary of the first proposal.

“It was a whirlwind,” Pagels explained of orchestrating the surprise. “Bethany loves history and has never been to the Field Museum. So, one: it was a cool cover and two: [with photographer-brain] I needed an indoor space with natural light that a photographer could photograph us, while being concealed.”

Pagels not only surprised Minor by getting down on one knee at the museum under Sue the T. rex, but capped off the big question with “right now.” About 11 friends and family members in attendance for the surprise wedding. Minor’s best friend officiated the wedding. Gold Grid Studios captured the whole thing.

Minor humorously added, “Sue the T. rex was my Best Woman.”

“I was completely shocked,” said Minor, specifically mentioning how Pagels bought the ring without them knowing. “If my mouth could detach itself, it would’ve hit the ground, basically. It was this ultimate act of caring and love for me. There was never a question of whether she loved me, but I think that when you have your roles in the family, it’s so cool when someone kind of shirks that and goes ‘I’m going to do something over the top to make you feel super special.’”

“The ring showed up online for me again [in an ad], and I was like, ‘So I have to get it and then I just worked on enlisting people,’” Pagels said. “I told them I’m going to do this big surprise, I want you to be there, here’s the plan.”

The couple is planning an intimate, destination wedding in Greece on March 13, 2017. Although intimate in numbers, they plan to celebrate big.

“Even though we live in a world that is much

better about recognizing the fact that when two people who are same-sex and in love, I told her over and over again that we need to make sure that we secure that and that no one can come between if something were to happen to us,” Minor said. “So for me, the surprise engagement was cool because one: it was Alissa being like ‘I planned all of this to show you that I’m 100 percent invested and we’re 100 percent a team and I’m going to have all of our friends and family there, specifically your best friends, because I want them to see how much I love you.’”

When asked what advice they have for other newlyweds, they both are able to answer with ease.

“I think what helps us, is to keep coming back to the thought that you don’t just get married and then everything’s done and now we can just sit back,” said Pagels. “You have to work on it everyday.”

“The best advice we got from some newlyweds is that you have to actively choose each other each day,” Minor said. “This isn’t something where you have just settled in and you get to be complacent. When you actively choose each other, you’re actually trying to work and grow.”

To learn more about the engagement, visit: <http://goldgridstudios.com/blog/>.

Bethany Minor (left) and Alissa Pagels.

Photo by Gold Grid Studios

Photo by Joan Marcus



New documentary tackles disability clichés in Hollywood

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Silence is not an option when it comes to disability exploitation in Hollywood films and the new documentary Code of the Freaks sets out to expose this as it begins its Kickstarter campaign.

Code of the Freaks will be a 90-minute documentary featuring local, national, and internationally known artists, activists and scholars with disabilities who critique Hollywood’s (mis)representations of disability, while addressing how these clichés and portrayals shape the real lives of both disabled and non-disabled people.

Tod Browning’s 1932 cult classic Freaks inspired the documentary’s title with the quote “Their code is a law unto themselves. Offend one, and you offend them all.”

Code of the Freaks is driven by artists, scholars and activists—all of which have disabilities or are allies. This creative team includes Chicago-based filmmaker Salome Chasnoff; novelist Susan Nussbaum; University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) faculty lecturer Aly Patsavas; UIC Director of the Program on Disability Art, Culture and Humanities Carrie Sandahl; and School of the Art Institute editor Jerzy Rose.

“It’s really important to all of us and the community that we’re making this film with that it’s disabled people making the film about disability,” said Patsavas, who lives in chronic pain. “It is a combination of these mash-ups of Hollywood’s clips and interviews and conversations with disabled artists, activists, performers and scholars, focusing on their experience and analysis of these films, alongside those clips.”

The project is a work in progress, so the group has recently announced its Kickstarter campaign to raise funds to complete the project. The effort is crowdfunding to raise \$30,000 and runs through Dec. 18.

“We need a film for disability that can kind

team had with the community about the topic, the more they realized those conversations are the film.

Through the interviews and clips, various topics are explored, including, disabilities with the intersections of race, class, age, gender, and sexuality in order to expose pernicious myths about disability, from the notion that heterosexual romance has curing powers to the belief that living with disability is

of do the historical overview of representations of disability in film and actually show that disability was sort of central to early film,” said Patsavas, mentioning Thomas Edi-



1st row (L to R) Carrie Sandahl, Mat Fraser, Salome Chasnoff, Meredith Zielke. 2nd row (L to R) Aly Patsavas, Tiara Epps, Jerzy Rose.

Photo by Denise Fontana Hoover

son’s film “The Fake Beggar” is thought to be one of the first films, if not, the first film to address disabilities. “We wanted a vehicle to tell that story, but we also wanted the community voice and we wanted to bring disabled people together to have that. We felt like it was really important in this film we had an opportunity to raise the voices of disabled people and that’s actually what the film is about. It’s about giving the microphone to disabled people to talk about film, but in doing that we quickly realized that people were talking about their lives.”

Patsavas said the more conversations the

worse than death.

Code of the Freaks seeks to reveal Hollywood’s 116-year history of exploiting disability stereotypes through beloved characters and storylines, while decoding some statistics including: 20 percent of U.S. residents between 5 and 64 years-old are disabled, yet fewer than 2 percent of film and television characters are disabled; and only .05 percent of disabled characters’ lines are spoken by disabled actors.

“There’s something really important about

Turn to page 31



in the LIFE

Ale Maes

TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN
PHOTOS FROM MAES

- **Age**
36
- **Dream vacation**
Thailand
- **Local DJ gigs**
Works regularly for SKIN Productions, at Hydrate, and elsewhere.
- **Little-known fact**
"I do not know my father ... Everything has a reason, [so] maybe not knowing [him] was good for me. Maybe a greater force moves me. I have no hurt or resentment [to or for him]. If he [reads] this interview, I'm here to be your friend."
- **Neighborhood**
West Lake View
- **Favorite TV shows**
"At the moment, [favorites include] House of Cards [and] The Fall."

Ale Maes has been a DJ for 20 years, the past three years as his full-time profession.

"Music is fuel for the soul," he said. "It's my dream, what I like to do, where I feel happy and fulfilled. I hope I can do this [forever]."

Maes in the DJ booth is the same as Maes on the dance floor. So yes, he is often dancing while DJing. And his music is driven to make people sweat, he said. His sounds are filled with drums, rhythmic vocals, swing and, well, all the standard house music sounds.

"When I see the dance floor, [with] people smiling, flirting [and] partying," that brings happiness, Maes said. "The music connects me to everyone on the dance floor [and the] connection fills my heart with joy."

Maes said one of his favorite gigs was during the 2015 Chicago Pride weekend. The weather forecast called for rain and storms all day that Sunday, so he admittedly was sad, expecting his crowd to be limited. "I went to sleep asking God for the sun to appear," he said.

Sure enough, that last Sunday in June 2015 "was one of the most beautiful days I've ever had," he said.

He played for eight hours on the rooftop of a Halsted Street apartment building.

Maes said he often works 10 hour-days several times a week, every week to fine-tune his sounds.

"The music changes every day, and as DJs we need to be attentive," Maes said.

"Chicago is one of the most important cities in the U.S. for DJs. Every weekend the best DJs in the gay scene perform here. Great [venues]



and big parties make Chicago a landmark in electronic music. Chicago is, the world capital of house music."

And what if you weren't a DJ?

"I would [be] working [as an] industrial designer," he said.

But being a DJ is Maes' specialty, without

question.

"We always want to evolve [as a DJ] and reach the biggest and best festivals," he said. "Playing big parties and nightclubs in the U.S. and Brazil makes me very happy. I always hope to keep growing and taking my music and joy to more people."



Right-wingers speak out against gay IHRC members

BY MATT SIMONETTE

In a turn of events that one long-time LGBT rights activist said could be "a harbinger of things to come" in the years ahead, the right-wing Illinois Policy Institute (IPI), on Dec. 1, publicly denounced openly gay members of the Illinois Human Rights Commission (IHRC).

Those IHRC members—Terry Cosgrove, who heads the pro-choice Personal PAC organization, and Duke Alden, an Aon executive who is also board chair for Howard Brown Health—were part of a three-person panel that decided against reviewing a finding against bed and breakfast owner Jim Walder, who had refused to let his place of business be used for a

same-sex civil union ceremony in 2011.

In a Dec. 1 statement, IPI said Cosgrove and Alden should have been excluded from that panel since they are gay.

The statement said, "So, after learning a bit more about the commissioners who made the decision on the Wathen's complaint, can anyone read this statement from the Illinois Human Rights Commission with a straight face: 'The Commission provides a neutral forum for resolving complaints of discrimination filed under the Illinois Human Rights Act. ... Our primary responsibility is to make impartial determinations of whether there has been unlawful discrimination, as defined by the Illinois Human Rights Act.'"

Equality Illinois co-founder Art Johnston said that he feared such actions from the right-wing could be a sign of things to come, since many feel emboldened following the Nov. 2016 election.

"This is a criticism aimed squarely at the

gay community," said Johnston, who likened the criticism of Cosgrove and Alden to Donald Trump's criticism of Judge Gonzalo Curiel. "They are aggressively targeting us. IPI hasn't raised a question if a commissioner who is a person of color renders a decision on a case involving a person of color. Nobody [from IPI] raises a question then."

When reached for comment, Cosgrove said Commissioners are prohibited from discussing the Commission's business publicly.

HIV Care Connect offering new text, videos

Illinois HIV Care Connect published new text and video content on its website on World AIDS Day to encourage people living with HIV in Illinois to stay in HIV care.

HIV-positive Illinoisans can view the new content as well as take the seven-minute #StayinCare Quiz—which measures understanding of the importance of staying in HIV care, also known as "retention in care." Illinois HIV Care Connect will compare the scores of those taking the quiz before the content was published with those taking the quiz after to gauge how effectively the content improved awareness and knowledge.

The organization added that, for a person living with HIV, staying in HIV care is an important step toward achieving viral suppression and a low level of HIV in the blood, and toward increasing the chance of a long and healthful life.

The stay-in-care initiative follows two campaigns Illinois HIV Care Connect has done previously: one on the importance of viral suppression, and another on HIV and mental health.

DOCUMENTARY from page 30

the conversation that happens, but also the repetition and showing the repetition of these stories by having these clips compiled together," said Patsavas.

In terms of sexuality, Patsavas said, the role of heterosexuality in these narratives creates a big silence around disability and sexuality. The queer, disabled folks the creative team talks to (including herself), Patsavas said, want to actually see experiences represented in different ways within broader culture, which includes film.

"I think that the short version is that when you don't have your experiences represented on screen, when it's coupled with a total lack of access to information about disabled people's sexuality, then that's sad and that's a problem for a lot of people and I think that's a conversation we want to have," said Patsavas, who identifies as a queer woman. "What does it mean for queer disabled folks to not see their likenesses on screen? To have representations on screen that are so tied to this rehabilitative heterosexual narrative, that's part of the problem. We have no easy solutions, but that's why we're having a

conversation with so many people."

Patsavas said disability also poses this giant question for people that don't live with disability, whether it is a question of "how do they live like that?" to "how do they have sex?" to "how do you get dressed in the morning?" In a narrative, she explained, there is this big question mark that has to get resolved somehow in order to answer the question for the viewers or readers. This wrap-up is usually done by curing, killing or institutionalizing those with disabilities.

"We can learn a lot from the ways that stories sort of force these narrative endings," said Patsavas. "We're not just talking about the overarching narratives, but through our film, actually, in some ways [we're] trying to offer an alternative to the representations we're critiquing by having voices of people who represent the kind of diversity heterogeneity of the community."

For more information, visit CodeOfTheFreaks.com.

To contribute to the Kickstarter campaign, visit: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/codeofthefreaks/code-of-the-freaks-a-documentary-film/>.

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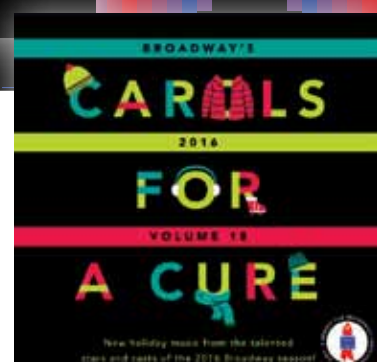


This is mitt

AlwaysFits.com is putting a different spin on cooking, thanks to the **Hotties with Bodies** mitts. Each buff, hard-bodied oven mitt is fully lined with Insul-Bright, includes a hanging loop and is machine-washable. The mitts may actually get you into the kitchen.

Stage presence

Broadway's Carols for a Cure (<http://broadway-cares.stores.yahoo.net/caforcu20vo16.html>), the new holiday album from Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, is the perfect gift for fans of the musicals. Some of the musicals featured on the album include *The Lion King*, *On Your Feet*, *Chicago*, *Matilda* and a little-known production called *Hamilton*.



I'll drink to that

A unique site for the LGBT community, **Equality Wines** (EqualityWines.com) offers items such as the Biscuits and Bubbles gift set, which Oprah Winfrey has chosen as one of her favorite things. The set pairs the Love Wins cuvee with the Big Bottom Biscuit Mix and Honey Gift Set, making for a delicious way to support us.



A sporting chance

You may not be one, but chances are you know someone who is a big NFL fan. To that end, the **2016 NFL Homegating Collection** (NFLShop.com/Homegating) has everything for the chef, entertainer, foodie or fashionista—and, of course, it comes in every team design.

Sleep impact

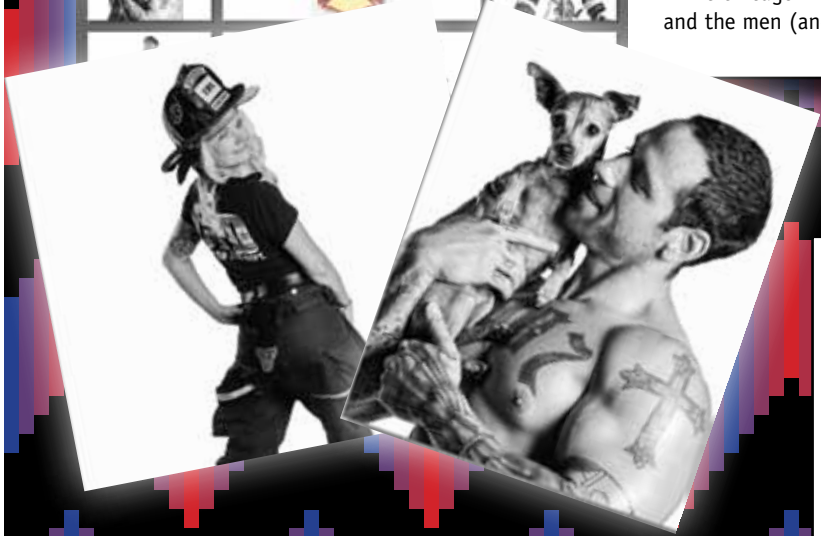
You've seen the infomercials for various pillow companies saying their products are the best. I haven't tried those, but let me tout one that has impressed me: the bamboo line of pillows by **Relax Home Life** (Relax-HomeLife.com). The pillows even come with a five-year never-goes-flat warranty. (I just wish our bodies came with the same guarantee.)





That's the spirit!

The Chicago Fire Department charity organization **Ignite the Spirit** (IgniteTheSpirit.org) has released its 2017 calendar—and the men (and woman) are enough to set anyone's heart on fire. And speaking of heat, check out July!



Kid power

UNICEF, the largest children's charity, has continued to further its mission, including in Chicago. (As an example, 6,000 local students participated in the UNICEF Kid Power school program.) Help this organization by purchasing items from Alex & Ani bracelets (AlexAndAni.com), UNICEF Inspired gifts (InspiredGifts.org) or UNICEF Market (a partnership between the U.S. Fund for UNICEF and Novica, which offers handcrafted goods such as wallets; Market.UNICEFUSA.org).



All hands on tech

Combining functionality and minimalist designs, **Hedgren Luggage** (HedgrenConnect.com) specializes in tech-friendly bags, backpacks, carry-ons and laptop bags. One of the really cool things about the collection is that items support external batteries for charging mobile devices, with retractable USB cords for added convenience.

Smart choices

Being a nerd has never been cooler. Chicago's **Museum of Science and Industry** (MSIChicago.org) was intriguing, innovative items like the MSI Water Globe, the Chemis-tree T-shirt, exhibit offerings and even The LEGO Christmas Ornaments book.



Basket case

Pastoral (PastoralArtisan.com)—the local chain owned by same-sex couple Ken Miller and Greg O'Neill—is the perfect place to get gift baskets like the Snack Attack (which has pretzels and horseradish mustard, among other items) and Best of the Midwest (with Potter's Crisps and honey). Good snacks make good friends.



Near and bar

R.M. Palmer Company (RMPalmer.com) has been making candy for decades—and it now has offerings specifically for the holidays. Who wouldn't want to indulge in a Belgian milk chocolate one-pound BulLion Bar Gift Box (although maybe not all at once) or even a YooHoo one-pound Milk Holiday Gift Box (again, not in one sitting)?

Hungry like the 'Wolf

Theater experiences don't get much better than productions at Steppenwolf. The **Steppenwolf Black Card** (Steppenwolf.org) is six flexible tickets to use any way you want—bring a date, a friend or two, or the entire group. Also, purchase a Black Card before Jan. 1 and receive a \$25 gift card to one of the theater's local restaurant partners.



The Essential RuPaul

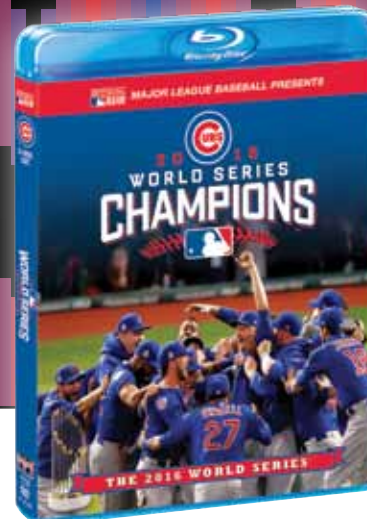
HERSTORY,
PHILOSOPHY &
HER FIERCEST
QUEENS

John Davis

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LIBBY VANDERPLOEG

Drag doll

You better work (or read, at least)! **The Essential RuPaul: HERstory, Philosophy & Her Fiercest Queens**, by John Davis, celebrates Ru's history (or herstory, as she frames it) and philosophy ("If you can't love yourself—how in the hell you gonna love someone else?") as well as profiles the most loved and reviled queens from RuPaul's Drag Race.



Batter up

In case you lived under a rock this year, The Chicago Cubs finally snapped its 108-year streak without a World Series title. Relive the victorious season with the official Major League Baseball film **The 2016 World Series** as well as the eight-disc **2016 World Series Collector's Edition** (ShoutFactory.com). Getting all up and close, you'll practically be able to smell the ballpark hot dogs.

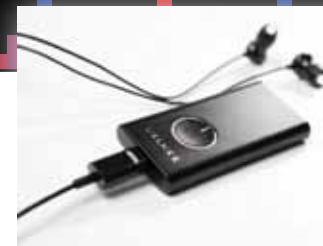


Kiehl or be Kiehl'd

Kiehl's Since 1851 (Kiehls.com) is continuing its philanthropic tradition this upcoming season with its 8th Annual Limited Edition Creme de Corps Holiday Collection. (All of the sales of this collection will benefit Feeding America, providing 1,100,000 meals to families this holiday season.) And not only will you do a very good thing, but you'll enjoy products such as Creme de Corps Soy Milk & Honey Whipped Body Butter.

Light year

Recognizing that many suffer from what are called the "winter blues," the **HumanCharger** (HumanCharger.com) is a light-therapy device that can be used to help fight depression, increase mental alertness and even reduce jet lag. Moreover, you just need to use it for an average of 12 minutes daily to get the ideal amount of light therapy—and get back into your routine of partying (or just sitting upright, if that was your pre-blues routine).



Mat's life

A mat may not be the first idea for a holiday gift—but **GelPro's** items (GelPro.com) may just change your mind. I've never thought of these kitchen items as being luxurious, but your feet will thank you as you cook for hours (or microwave for minutes).



Meter reader

Perfect for frigid temperatures (and Chicagoans know of what I speak, er, write), **Alps & Meters** (AlpsAndMeters.com) offers really cool knitwear, outerwear and accessories. And no leather item is complete without leather milk. (Trust me—it's a real thing.)





Life saber

Wookiee here! With that new Star Wars film in theaters shortly, it might be the perfect time to purchase **Firefly's Star Wars Lightsaber toothbrush** (FireflyToothbrush.com). The toothbrush has a method to its madness: Sound effects encourage kids (and kids at heart) to brush for the recommended two minutes. On a related note, adults can take part in sci-fi games with the **Gillette + Star Wars Holiday Gift Pack** (Gillette.com).



Bottle service

Pining for a unique gift? Look no further than the **Medea Vodka programmable Bluetooth bottle** (MedeaVodka.com). And there are two ways you can go: manually with pre-programmed greetings like "Congratulations," or technologically through an app that lets you input your own statements (like "Happy Walk of Shame").



Strap session

Mission belts (MissionBelt.com) have no holes—making them the perfect fit for whatever your size is. Moreover, a dollar from every belt goes to fight hunger and poverty worldwide through microlending.

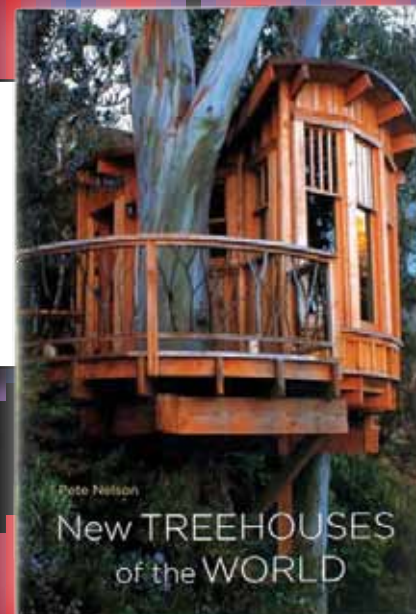
Shoe-in

Gay-owned menswear brand **King & Stone** (KingAndStone.com) offers a subscription shoe service. King & Stone presents subscribers with a selection of on-trend designs to choose from, delivering four pairs of shoes per year (one per season) for a monthly subscription rate of \$25. When the new season drops, subscribers pick the style they want and their new shoes will be manufactured and shipped.



Wood you rather?

As a kid, I always wanted a treehouse (although maybe not so much now). Give your favorite nature nut something from **Nelson Treehouse and Supply** (https://store.BeInATree.com). The company specializes in luxury backyard treehouses, but the store has a variety of related items, including books and apparel. And, no, you wouldn't look out of your tree getting something from this site.



Head games

For years, **Audio-Technica** (Audio-Technica.com) has offered top-quality turntables and headphones—and this year is no different. Honestly, the QuietPoint® ATH-ANC40BT noise-cancelling and Sonic Fuel® ATH-S700BT wireless headphones are among the best I've tried. If they can totally block out rush-hour subway noise, they must be pretty good.



Game on

Put a rainbow spin on your next party with **That's So Gay** and **The Gayme**. The former tests your knowledge of LGBT people and achievements, while the latter consolidates the gay lifestyle and coming-of-age experience into hundreds of cards. And as for The Gayme, the best-dressed player starts it. (Hey: That's what they stipulate.)



the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR NaKorn

BY ANDREW DAVIS

A lot of us have our favorite local Thai restaurants that we visit, indulging in curry dishes or other items that are some almost exotic version of comfort food

NaKorn (1622 Orrington Ave., Evanston; NaKornKitchen.com) also offers Thai food—but it's probably unlike anything you've tried.

Sam Rattanopas told Windy City Times that she and partner Mina Sudsaard that the inspiration for NaKorn was that they wanted to serve dishes like they had growing up—and that they couldn't find anything locally. The result are some incredibly delicious dishes that are only surpassed by their artful presentation.

The decor is charming and pretty artful itself, down to the cage light fixes and the mural of Bhumbol Adulyadej, the late king of Thailand who recently died at age 88. (The mural shows him in his 30s, Rattanopas said.)



Tapioca pearl crackers with tamarind-coconut sauce and cilantro (left) and sirloin at NaKorn.
Photos by Andrew Davis

Appetizers included housemade tapioca pearl crackers—which are just okay by themselves, but excellent when paired with the accompanying tamarind-coconut sauce and cilantro. My dining partner practically inhaled the taro chicken (which is marinated in lemongrass-infused coconut milk), and we both really liked the tenderloin.

Regarding the entrees, the top sirloin (coconut cream curry sauce) was sufficiently tender. I ordered the jumbo lump crab meat—and, coming from the Chesapeake Bay area, my expectations were not that high, as some local restaurants have served some disastrous seafood items. However, I was pleasantly surprised the crab (served on a bed of noodles) at NaKorn. And to show we weren't

total carnivores, we tried the fried tofu with fri-see—which I adored, thanks in part to the chili-tamarind peanut paste. Again, I cannot stress the artistry of the dishes enough.

A chocolate mousse with candied pecans and vanilla ice cream was not as unique as some of the other dishes—but it still provided a more-than-satisfying ending to the meal.

The only drawback for some might be the location, as some people I know won't even venture beyond their immediate neighborhoods. However, this is one trip that is worth it.

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

BIG CHICKS from page 16

[LGBTQ] community is a very interesting community," Fire said. "Diverse, eclectic, educated and marvelous."

Big Chicks has mirrored the community it serves.

"The space has functioned as a stand-alone bar, as a dance venue on weekends," Fire said. "We've had performance art, lesbian speed dating, you name it. There's so many things that have been here over 30 years, I can't remember them all."

One moment Fire does remember was when a greedy developer tried to put an end to Big Chicks.

"Around 2002, they wanted this piece of land," she said. "They were trying to force me out so they created this kerfuffle with City Hall about me being close to a defunct synagogue. It was a pivotal moment. The city was going to close me down because someone had called and complained. I am sure it was the developer who wanted to force me out. It was two years of hell."

But it was a hell in which what Fire calls "the Big Chicks community" would be damned before they were going to let it consume their beloved bar.

"They rallied, they petitioned, they organized demonstrations, they went to court," Fire said. "Eventually Greg Harris and [then-state Rep.] Larry McKeon helped push through an exemption to the law. I had to go to every block club in the neighborhood to petition to stay here. I said 'what would you like from me?' They said 'We'd like you to open a restaurant.'"

Tweet was born in a closed Vietnamese restaurant next door.

"I had a stove and that was it," Fire said. "So I brought cooks in, worked on a menu and got the place up and running. I never wanted to own a gay bar. I never wanted to run a restaurant. Now we are in our 14th year at Tweet and our 30th here."

But, like Fire, her customers remain invested in Big Chicks heart and soul.

"People tell me, 'I met my lover there 20 years ago and we're still together,'" Fire said. "Staying in business, staying successful and being a part of the community has been a win for everybody."

For more information on Big Chicks, visit BigChicks.com.

BEHIND BAR: BIG CHICKS

In salute to the 30th anniversary of Big Chicks, here some of our favorite photos of the staff, from the Nightspots archives.

Various photographers





"Andy and I were first set up on a blind date, which never happened 'cause we had a phone call and after two minutes I said, 'I'm not dating this guy.' He broke my cardinal rule, which is he mentioned my mom within the first four sentences of meeting me. If somebody does that, it's a deal-breaker. And we're never going on a date."—Anderson Cooper talks about his aborted romantic relationship with **Andy Cohen**. Imagine how shocked Coop would have been if Cohen showed up for their date in a pair of Gloria Vanderbilt jeans ... or with a pet swan!

I spent most of last week in New York City. Because I know many of you travel during the holidays, I'll tell you which shows to see, and which ones to skip. At the top of the list of anyone reading this column is the revival of **Falsettos**. It is the best production and cast of this show you'll ever see, although what was once edgy and groundbreaking is somewhat dated today. Rather than play it as a period piece, the show is time-ambiguous, which works if you don't think about it too much.

Along with the illness that is never named, the pitfalls of coming out, relationships and parenting are still salient. Holding it all together is a masterful performance by **Christian Borle**—whose deflated arms prove that nothing lasts forever. As Marvin, he is never less than captivating vocally and dramatically. **Stephanie J. Block** plays the role of his ex-wife with enormous color and nuances. This made her "I'm Breaking Down" less schtick and more devastating. I was less enthralled by **Andrew Rannells**, who plays Borle's lover. I'm surely in the minority of people who felt that his very specific talents were not a natural fit here. Throughout the show, I kept thinking how wonderful he must have been in Hedwig!

There's no doubt that the hit of this Broadway season will be **Dear Evan Hansen**, a new musical about teen angst, suicide, social media and coming of age. The show created quite a buzz last season off-Broadway, and that built-in audience has led to a frenzy reminiscent of the lead-up to Hamilton. The preview performance I attended was like a rock show, with palpable electricity in the audience from the moment the curtain rose. The show speaks to anyone who has felt like an outsider. Major kudos to **Ben Platt** (from Pitch Perfect), who is a shoo-in Tony winner. Truth be told, there's nary a misstep in the entire production.

In the annals of theater, **The Front Page** is legendary. The caliber of the cast in the current revival is a luxury rarely accorded to a Broadway show; perhaps the strictly limited run helped lock in the best people. Once you get past the dense first act, hold onto your seat, because the show flies. **John Slattery** (with curious hair) may lead the show, but it's **Nathan Lane** who galvanizes it with a frenetic presence that just sucks you into its wake. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the transcendent **Holland Taylor**, who gives everyone a run for their money, and Robert Morse, who all but steals the show with two tiny scenes. It's a must-see.

The 39-year-old heir to the Fiat empire, **Lapo Elkann**, was just arrested for faking his own kidnapping. And he was arrested along with a transgender hooker ... eh, escort! Lapo flew into NYC on Thanksgiving and called several female escorts. One of them directed Lapo to a person



Anderson Cooper has dished on his non-romance with Andy Cohen. CNN photo

who has been identified as a 29-year-old transgender hooker named **Curtis McKinstry**. The two were holed up in what has been referred to as a housing project and embarked on what The Daily Beast called a "two-day booze and blow bender."

When his cash ran out, he told relatives that a woman had kidnapped him and demanded a \$10,000 ransom or he would be "hurt." \$10K? For the Fiat heir? With apologies to Bette Midler, was he kidnapped by K-Mart? Elkann didn't count on a couple of things: 1) His family would report the kidnapping to the NYPD and b) they knew he called from his own cell phone! How do you say schmuck in Italian? The cops set up a plan to pay the ransom, and then arrested Lapo and his lap dog when they showed up to collect the dough. At first, Elkann tried to pin the blame on the hooker, who until that point had stayed quiet. Well, don't diss a transgender hooker—s/he'll cut a bitch! The escort turned the tables, and the cops let that person go. Elkann was charged with making a false police report, but apparently that doesn't warrant bail. He was released and is due in court in January.

For the first of this week's Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions, let me urge you all to do your shopping at **Target**. The retailer is facing a massive boycott from the American Family Association and couldn't care less. The group has collected 1.2 million signatures on their petition promising to boycott Target because of the company's support of LGBT rights. The group is upset that Target has gone against North Carolina's HB2 law and allowed people to use whatever bathroom they want to. CEO Brian Cornell said, "We've had a long history of embracing diversity and inclusion. ... What's been lost in this story is the fact that the vast majority of our stores—actually over 1,400 of our stores—already have a family restroom. And we're committed over the next few months to make sure every one of our stores has that option, because we want our guests to be welcomed in our stores." Bravo, Brian.

And now, let's meld shopping, holidays, theater and activism together. Every year, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS releases a Broadway Legends ornament. This year, it is **Patti LuPone**. La LuPone is featured in her Evita regalia with her arms borne aloft. How could you not want to see Patti hanging from a tree? I mean that in the figurative, non-hooded way! It costs \$70—and it's tax-deductible. Order one now at Broadway-Cares.org.

In a final gift, I'm sure you saw the mega-hot Flaunt photo session of singer Shawn Mendes and wondered if the rumored nude pics exist. Both Shawn and I are "excited" to show them to you on BillyMasters.com.

When we're flaunting photos of fluffed fellas, it's time to end yet another column. Yes, this was a theatre-heavy column. You can get more variety at BillyMasters.com, the site that celebrates diversity ... one dick at a time (OK, sometimes two at a time). If you have a question for me, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before the heir to the Fiat fortune brings a date to a Target restroom! Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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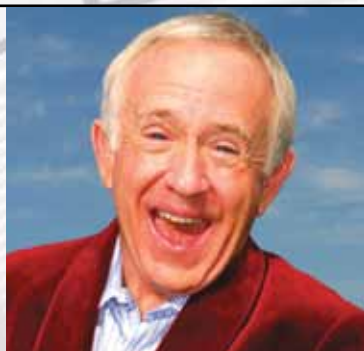
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Dec. 7

End of the Rainbow 1968 and Judy Garland is about to make her comeback.... again. In a London hotel room, with both her new young fiance and her adoring accompanist, Garland struggles to get "beyond the rainbow." Featuring some of Garland's most memorable songs. Tickets through the Stage 773 Box Office 1:30pm Stage 773 1225 W Belmont Chicago 773-327-5252 <http://porchlightmusictheatre.org/end-of-the-rainbow/>

Gay Liberation Network organizing meeting Monthly planning meeting of Chicago's multi-issue direct action group that promotes the rights of LGBTI people. Through demonstrations and advocacy, we change the social and political situation of police brutality, labor, immigration, and more. Sept. 7 Oct. 5 Nov. 2 Dec. 7 7:00pm Berger Park Cultural Center 6205 N. Sheridan Rd Chicago <http://www.gayliberation.net>

Author Reading & Conversation: Ronna Wineberg & Donna Baier Stein Ronna will read from her new collection of stories, Nine Facts That Can Change Your Life, and Donna Baier Stein will read from her debut novel, The Silver Baron's Wife. The two authors also will discuss the process of writing, their experiences publishing a book, and how their own writing and editing stories for a literary journal interact. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/author-reading-conversation-ronna-wineberg-donna-baier-stein>

CROSSING JORDAN
Dec. 8-10

Leslie Jordan will be at
Northeastern Illinois
University and Hydrate
Nightclub.
PR photo

Thursday, Dec. 8

Leslie Jordan Emmy Award-winning out actor and comedian will perform stand-up to conclude NEIU Gives Back Week and benefit a new scholarship for students who belong to the LGBTQ community. This is a student-led effort. \$20 for faculty, staff, alumni and the general public. Free to students. 3:00pm Northeastern Illinois University Auditorium 3701 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. Chicago, <http://www.neiu.edu/about/news/comedian-leslie-jordan-headline-neiu-gives-back-week> Tickets: <https://10691neiu.thankyou4caring.org/givesback/lesliejordan>

Parents of Trans Individuals PTI is a sub-chapter of PFLAG. It offers a safe

place for parents of children from all ages - families and friends of transgender and/or gender questioning individuals to come together to meet for conversation, support and education. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=11123>

Friday, Dec. 9

Queer Genre Fiction Book Discussion Group A discussion of Breakfast On Pluto by Patrick McCabe. Bring yourself, a friend, and make few new ones. 7:00pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/38122225601229/>

Queer, Ill and Okay Annual multidisciplinary performance series exploring, challenging and reinventing narratives about the lives of queer individuals and their relationships to HIV and other forms of mental and chronic illness. Two weekends. 8:00pm Oracle Theater Tickets: https://oracle.yapsody.com/event/index/54684/queer-ill-okay/245927?mc_cid=3afaeaf16f&mc_eid=265541f534

Leslie Jordan Straight Outta Chattanooga tour The Cabaret Project will open for Leslie, performing their Bette Midler review, "You Bette, We Did." Doors open 6pm 8:00pm Hydrate Nightclub 3458 N Halsted St. (Also taking place Dec. 10 at the same time) Tickets: <http://www.stageleftshows.com/>

Saturday, Dec. 10

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance (LGBTQ) Support meeting to talk about illnesses, symptoms, treatment, doctors, and personal issues such as dating, relationships and work. Every Saturday. 11:00am - 12:30am Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://dbsa-glbtc-chicago.com>

Story time with Drag Queens featuring

Coco Sho-Nell, Ashley Morgan, and Muffy Fishbasket Muffy Fishbasket, Coco Sho-Nell, and Ashley Morgan read their favorite holiday-themed picture books like How the Grinch Stole Christmas. 3:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/holiday-story-time-drag-queens>

Nutcracker Director Ashley Wheeler brings unique, inclusive perspective on dance, reflecting the diversity of America with its company, audiences, and repertoire. Through Dec. 30 7:00pm The Joffrey Ballet 10 E Randolph Chicago <http://www.joffrey.org>

Asians and Friends Chicago Chestnuts and Jingle Balls Bring a dish or drink to share. And if enough people wear ugly Christmas sweaters, there will be a contest 7:00pm - 10:30pm Contact organizer for location <http://www.af-chicago.org>

Duke It Out! family concert An adaptation of The Nutcracker, curated by Dance Chicago, that pairs the classical (Tchaikovsky) and jazz (Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn) versions, performed by Axiom Brass and Music Institute Ensemble-in-Residence Quintet Attacca. Second show at 2:00 pm. 10:00am Nichols Concert Hall 1490 Chicago Ave Evanston, IL 60201 Tickets: <https://www.musicinst.org/faculty-guest-artist-series>

Sunday, Dec. 11

aChurch4Me Sunday Worship Service A place to find peace, comfort and prayer 11:00am aChurch4Me, 7366 N. Clark St., Chicago <http://www.achurch4me.org>

Dave Koz: Christmas Tour 2016 Out smooth jazz saxophonist. Tickets on sale Saturday, 9/17 at 10am 8:00pm The Chicago Theatre (Chicago) 175 N State St Chicago <http://www.LiveNation.com> Tickets: <http://www.ticketmaster.com>

master.com

Monday, Dec. 12

Congressman Mike Quigley winter reception This is the new date for the event. Individual ticket \$150. 5:30pm - 7:30pm Hutch 3301 N. Clark St. <https://act.myngp.com/Forms/7275791690668116736?midqs=4407616660312162304>

Gay Fathers of Greater Chicago A network of gay men who have children living with us or apart from us. Our peer meetings provide a safe, confidential, and welcoming forum for talking about the issues that affect us. Check out our website for more information. 7:30pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://gayfatherschicago.org/>

Tuesday, Dec. 13

Melissa Etheridge Holiday Trio Performing songs from her 2008 holiday album, A New Thought for Christmas. \$70, \$80, \$90 7:30pm North Shore Center for the Performing Arts 9501 Skokie Blvd. Skokie, IL 60077 http://www.northshorecenter.org/event/Melissa-etheridge/?utm_source=FB&utm_medium=ad&utm_campaign=etheridge16

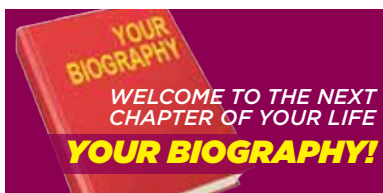
Chicago Gay Men's Chorus Home for the Holidays From musical theatre to pop and even opera includes traditional songs and original holiday songs by divas from Liza Minnelli to Lady Gaga, Judy Garland to Jessye Norman, and Mariah Carey to Whitney Houston. Opera singer extraordinaire Cynthia Clarey will grace the stage. 7:30pm Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W 111th St, Chicago Tickets: https://cgmc.secure.force.com/ticket/#sections_a0F2A00000MK-bP9UAL

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