

WINDY CITY TIMES

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DRAGS

Book spotlights NYC drag queens.

Photo of Sasha Velour by Gregory Kramer

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DANIEL BISS

Gubernatorial candidate talks LGBT issues. Campaign photo



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'DREAM' SEQUENCE

An analysis of Drury Lane's Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

Photo by Brett Beiner

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TICKET TO RIDE

Sally Ride's widow forges new path

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Tam O'Shaughnessy and Sally Ride. Courtesy of O'Shaughnessy



Patrisse Khan-Cullors. PR photo

MAKING CALLS

Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Black Lives Matter co-founder, on her new book, When They Call You a Terrorist

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Above: WCT reviews Hinter.
Photo by Gregg Gilman

online exclusives at
www.WindyCityTimes.com



ROOM WITH A VIEW

Savor takes a look at Bounce Chicago and NoMi.

PR photo of NoMi (left)

SWEET SIXTEEN



WCT talks with candidates running for the 16th Congressional District, including Beth Vercolio-Osmund (above).

Photo by Annette Barr

FROSTED TIPS

Fairy Gardener looks at winter hazards, including melters and bird feeders.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Janet Jackson, Dan Savage and Crystal Bowersox.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

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Biden Foundation forms pro-woman, LGBTQ advisory councils

The Biden Foundation—started by Vice President Joe Biden and Dr. Jill Biden—announced the formation of two advisory councils that will support its work to end violence against women and advance LGBTQ equality.

According to the foundation's website, its areas of focus will involve advancing community colleges, ending violence against women, ensuring LGBTQ equality, protecting children, shaping foreign policy, strengthening the middle class and supporting military families.

Members named to the LGBTQ Equality Advisory Council include singer/activist Cyndi Lauper, Matthew Shepard Foundation President Judy Shepard, former NBA player Jason Collins, actress Sara Ramirez, National Center for Transgender Equality Executive Director Mara Keisling, Trevor Project CEO/President Amit Paley and Chicago activist/educator Precious Brady-Davis, among others.

Some of the members of the Ending Violence Against Women Advisory Council include Ujima: The National Center on Violence Against Black Women founder Karma Cottman, actor/filmmaker/activist Justin Baldoni, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence Advocacy Director Ebony Tucker, Men Can Stop Rape Executive Director Neil Irvin and Georgetown Law School professor Victoria Nourse.

The foundation will name advisory council members for its other policy areas in the coming year. See BidenFoundation.org.



Precious Brady-Davis.
Photo by Tracy Baim

GLAAD: Study shows erosion of acceptance

GLAAD announced surprising findings of its fourth annual Accelerating Acceptance report, a national survey among more than 2,100 U.S. adults conducted on GLAAD's behalf by The Harris Poll.

The results were announced during a panel discussion that GLAAD and The Ariadne Getty Foundation hosted at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

For the first time in the report's history, GLAAD and The Harris Poll found a drop in acceptance of LGBTQ people. For example:

—GLAAD and The Harris Poll found that 55 percent of LGBTQ adults reported experiencing discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity. This number is a 11-percentage-point increase from the previous year (44 percent).

—Less than half of non-LGBTQ adults (49 percent) reported being "very" or "somewhat" comfortable with LGBTQ people across seven situations. This is a significant decline from 53 percent last year and the first time the Accel-

erating Acceptance report has shown a drop in acceptance for LGBTQ people.

GLAAD also announced a \$15-million lead gift from the Ariadne Getty Foundation to fund part of the GLAAD Media Institute's launch along with investments in LGBTQ ventures, including media and small businesses, that create social impact worldwide and accelerate acceptance.

The full Accelerating Acceptance report is at <https://www.glaad.org/publications/accelerating-acceptance-2018>.

HIV-criminalization panel Feb. 15

Legal Health Council for Justice and TPAN will co-host "HIV Criminalization: Beyond Shame and Stigma" on Thursday, Feb. 15, at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., 6:30-8:30 p.m.

"HIV Criminalization" will include panelist Dr. Trevor Hoppe of State University of New York (SUNY)-Albany, whose recently published book, *Punishing Disease*, addresses this topic.

Admission is free; visit "HIV Criminalization: Beyond Shame & Stigma" on Eventbrite.com for more information.

THE SEASONED LIFE

BY JANO



Remaining Prepared

About 10 years ago some friends and I were sitting in the indoor space at Washington Park on Chicago's South Side, waiting for the Affinity Community Services annual Burning Bowl ceremony to begin.

There was a wonderful mix of women of all cultures and ages filling the room and my imagination. I softly whispered to CJ, "What if I created a brochure of sexual positions for women approaching 60?"

She quickly responded in a dry tone, "That would probably be a single-page brochure."

For the rest of the afternoon we could not stop laughing. I seriously thought I had a rich idea. CJ, on the other hand, thought it was a joke and further intimated that the nearing-60 lesbians were no longer having sex. When I shared my brilliant idea with the rest of our group they too thought it was a joke.

Although I laughed, I was serious. I did my best to pull it together, remain attentive to the program and look respectful in spite of the irrepressible giggles and my growing curios-

ity. After all, I was shy and slightly nerdy then. However, on the flip side, when I was around similarly aged straight women, they often had celebratory tones and glee talking about "dick."

This selective, intimate sharing still happens among some women, even with topics other than sex. Two times this past year I heard stories about two different seasoned women, part of a couple, who remained silent about a lump in their breast. With each situation ending the same, these women passed away shortly after sharing the news to their partner and doctor. They were too late to have broader options of care. Perhaps their secrecy was based on the fear of becoming involved in the cancer industrial complex and a reluctance to navigate an often-intimidating and confusing system of treatment. However, I pose a different scenario, though no less heartbreaking (and accept that I could be completely wrong).

I imagined the butch partner in these couples as the one hiding her discovery of a breast lump. Perhaps she was never comfortable being a woman or having breasts and all that it meant. Maybe she was hiding, not only that lump but also decades of unresolved shame, angst or discomfort. Years ago if you were a "top, butch, stud," you often dictated what happened in the bedroom which meant, "I touch you, you don't touch me."

The story of these women made me sad because I felt that maybe these couples no longer shared the type of intimacy that would have allowed an earlier discovery by both partners. Even sadder, I know that I could have easily grown into that kind of "butch" partner, based on my youthful persona.

However, now I am officially part of the seasoned life—the life that starts between the late 50s and 60s. I now fully understand how this life can wither any woman's sexual desire: between menopause, illnesses, care-taking of loved ones, grief and loss. I have experienced all of these things in route to my own initiation to the seasoned life.

Yet, this has given me more credibility to laughingly answer the questions from 10 years back and my conversation with CJ. I've now promised myself to keep doing my stretches and remain prepared to possibly model for my very own Sexual Positions for Women Over Sixty, single-page brochure.

"Maybe she was hiding, not only that lump but also decades of unresolved shame, angst or discomfort."

ity about the seasoned life. I started looking around at the women in the room who seemed to fit that demographic. I imagined myself innocently going up to them with a clipboard and questionnaire, inquiring about the state of their sex lives and waiting for the unexpected answers.

Seeing these women reminded me of what I often heard about older lesbian couples; who began as lovers then grew into a relationship equal to roommates. It was thought that they would become a pair of sexless friends who shared memories of their pasts. Many of the seasoned women I met in my youth talked a lot about activist topics, wrapped in feminist ideologies. Their "butch" counterparts, even in safe spaces, waxed on about sports, current events or music but rarely about the joys of sex and romance.

In being around these older lesbians, I was hoping to get some pointers on lesbian sex

Jano is a writer with an insatiable curiosity who has also written for the *Chicago Defender*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Out Magazine*, *Fisk University Almanac of Popular Culture* and more. She wrote a column for *Nightlines*, a sister publication to *Outlines* (now *Windy City Times*) in the 1990s.

Judge denies injunction to trans student in District 211 lawsuit

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A Cook County Circuit Court judge has denied a preliminary injunction that would have allowed a transgender girl attending school in Township High School District 211 in Palatine access to the girls' locker room.

Nova Maday filed suit against the school in November, alleging she is unfairly being blocked from its public accommodations. Maday has had to use either the school nurse's office or an isolated facility before or after her gym class, resulting in her being tardy quite frequently. She wants to use the same facilities as the rest of her peers.

Officials from ACLU Illinois, who filed suit on Maday's behalf, responded to the Jan. 25 injunction denial by Judge Thomas Allen.

"Clearly, we are disappointed in this decision," said John Knight, ACLU Illinois' LGBTQ and HIV project director, in a statement. "We continue to believe that the school is wrong to discriminate against our client. There is no exception under our non-discrimination laws that allows a school to treat transgender students differently because

of lack of understanding or discomfort about transgender people. We are consulting with our client in order to decide how to move forward in the case in light of this decision."

Maday added, "I am disappointed with the decision today. To me, this is a simple question – am I going to be treated just like any other girl in my school. All I want is to be accepted by my school for who I am—a girl—and be able to take gym and use the locker room to change clothes like the other girls in my class."

Maday's suit came even after the school contended with a high-profile controversy resulting from another trans student who sued for public accommodations access in 2015. After the Obama administration intervened in that case, the district cut a deal allowing that student to use the girls' locker room. But that settlement only applied to that particular student and did not result in a comprehensive policy change. An ad hoc group of District 211 families sued in 2016, charging that the 2015 settlement violated the privacy of other girls.

Equality Calif. comments on Bernstein death

Equality California released a statement regarding the murder of Blaze Bernstein, whom the organization said was a gay college student from the University of Pennsylvania whose death in Orange County is being investigated as a possible hate crime.

The organization's executive director, Rick Zbur, said, in part, "We expect a thorough investigation into the claims that this was a hate-crime motivated by 'gay-panic.' We are horrified by the details emerging that this senseless act of violence may have been motivated by homophobic sentiments, and if this is in fact the case, we hope this hate crime is prosecuted at the full extent of the law. Blaze Bernstein and his family deserve justice."

Bernstein's remains were found in Borrego Park in Orange County; the student, 19, was visiting his parents in Lake Forest, California, when he disappeared in early January.

NBC Los Angeles reported that criminal charges were slated to be filed against Samuel Lincoln Woodward, a 20-year-old man arrested in connection with Bernstein's death. Bernstein and Woodward were previously classmates at the Orange County School for the Arts.

Woodward has claimed that he pushed Bernstein away when the victim attempted to kiss

him. MercuryNews.com noted that ProPublica published a piece connecting Woodward to Atomwaffen Division, a Charles Manson-obsessed neo-Nazi group that defines itself as a "revolutionary national socialist organization centered around political activism and the practice of an autonomous fascist lifestyle."

The Mercury News item is at <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/01/29/suspects-in-five-homicides-reportedly-tied-to-macabre-neo-nazi-group/>.

Kenosha school district settles trans lawsuit

A Wisconsin school district will pay \$800,000 to settle a discrimination lawsuit that transgender former student Ash Whitaker brought, The Hill reported, citing The Kenosha News.

The Kenosha Unified School District voted to approve the settlement in the suit from Whitaker, who graduated in June 2017. Whitaker filed the suit in July 2016, alleging that Tremper High School banned him from using the boys' bathroom and monitored his use of bathrooms. Whitaker also said the school district forced him to stay in a room by himself during an overnight school trip.

The article is at <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/368371-wisconsin-school-district-pays-800k-in-discrimination-suit>.



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The passion, the ideas and the commitment the LGBTQ community has shown for equality inspires me and gives me hope in the fights ahead for social and economic justice.

I will always fight for equality and inclusion, and I am here to listen. The LGBTQ community has always had a friend in me and will have a seat at the table in Springfield when I'm governor."

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Sally Ride's widow forges new frontiers at San Diego school

BY SARAH TOCE

Sally Ride Science contemplated for years whether or not they should remain a company or become a nonprofit. The decision was made in October 2015 when Sally Ride Science was acquired by University of California at San Diego.

"It's been a match made in heaven," O'Shaughnessy said. "I became the CEO in 2014 and I immediately started looking for a merger and acquisition with a company or a really good science education nonprofit. We are thriving at UC San Diego."

Science is performing many of the same tasks they always did before the merger and acquisition, but the new partnership has its perks.

"We're actually located at the UC San Diego extension," O'Shaughnessy explained. "It's not like any other university extension I've ever been around. They are global; they make money; they're very entrepreneurial. Our partner at the UC San Diego extension, UCTV, is there. UCTV is the most successful university media outlet in the world."

The organization also partnered with San Diego Supercomputer Center and Scripps Institution of



Sally Ride and Tam O'Shaughnessy in 2004 in Sydney. Photo from O'Shaughnessy

It seemed like a match made in heaven.

"Sally was a professor of physics at UC San Diego," O'Shaughnessy said. "One night I had this idea that I should call the Chancellor of UC San Diego and see if they were at all interested in acquiring us. And the reason that the thought crossed my mind is that UC San Diego is very entrepreneurial. I thought that there was some chance that they would be interested in science education and carrying on our mission."

It was important to O'Shaughnessy that UC San Diego allow original members to stay on board to continue carrying out their mission. Sally Ride

Oceanography, UC San Diego.

"We have a wealth of talented people to work with," O'Shaughnessy boasted.

It was almost as if someone from up above had put the idea of UC San Diego in her mind.

"Yeah, somebody might have!" she said.

It's been 18 years since Sally Ride Science was founded. O'Shaughnessy agreed that it almost felt like her baby going off to college—no pun intended.

"We're in our 18th year; it's really exciting," she said. "Some of the folks at Sally Ride Science are still working with—we're now called

Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego. There's a core group of the Sally Ride Science regulars and then there's a new group also. They are all wonderful and very collaborative."

Programming includes Sally Ride Conversations where "videos with eminent scientists" are conducted and shared to a wide audience. "And then I write articles in a program called 'Tam on Steam' about women in science, engineering and math," O'Shaughnessy said.

The goal of the program is to ensure that the organization is giving young people, parents and teachers diverse role models.

"They need to know that there's more women out there besides Marie Curie," she said.

The Navy optioned to name a research vessel after Ride and the official commissioning happened in October 2016 in San Diego. O'Shaughnessy was invited onto the ship for the commissioning and a video was made depicting how it all came to be. She discussed what she thought Ride might think of the occasion.

"I think she would be really proud of me and what I did with the company and seeing through this acquisition and I think she'd love this research vessel and be proud," she shared. "It's the first national research vessel named after a woman. The first! Ever. I think she'd be very honored."

Ride and O'Shaughnessy have put in their time working in the field of climate change, which makes the research vessel dedication all that more exciting.

"She would love that this research vessel is doing great studies of the ocean, the fisheries, and how the atmosphere and the water interact and gaining more details about what happens when sea levels rise, and oceans warming...she would love it," she said. "She would be amazed at how much our society has changed in regard to LGBT—she would be astounded. To be who you are and not have to worry about it..." she said.

It's a concept that O'Shaughnessy is now able to enjoy, but is she? Has she found a new love? How is she coping following the loss of her greatest love?

"I have been a new person because I was able to be open about being a gay woman. I don't hide it from anybody," she said. "It's very freeing and almost like my shoulders are relaxed more often."

Time is said to heal all wounds, but it's not always as easy as it sounds.

"It's been five years since Sally died and I've been really busy...taking care of the company; taking care of Sally's legacy with NASA; holding the national tribute for her in Washington, D.C.; and then once we were acquired, it's been a lot to do to develop partnerships and build collaboration with the new and existing teams; and, anyway...I have not found new love. I still miss Sally. But I am hopeful."

Find out more about Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego by visiting <https://extension.ucsd.edu/courses-and-programs/Sally-Ride-Science>.

HUD assists HIV/AIDS groups with \$4.1M

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced \$4.1 million for three groups to assist low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families in Illinois.

—AIDS Foundation of Chicago-Chicago Housing for Health Partnership, has been awarded a HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS) Program permanent supportive housing renewal grant in the amount of \$1,382,574 to continue providing supportive housing to persons living with HIV/AIDS in Chicago. Tenant-based rental assistance will be provided to 99 households over the next annual cycle.

—AIDS Foundation of Chicago-Re-entry Housing for Health Partnership has been awarded a HOPWA permanent supportive housing renewal grant in the amount of \$1,423,648 to continue providing scattered-site tenant-based rental assistance to 38 post-incarcerated individuals annually in collaboration with Christian Community Health Center, The Boulevard of Chicago and the Center for Housing and Health.

—University of Illinois, College of Medicine, has been awarded a HOPWA permanent supportive housing renewal grant of \$1,252,469 to continue providing 55 households with tenant-based rental assistance and supportive services and 75 households with permanent housing placement services (PHP) for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

For more on HUD, visit HUD.gov and <http://espanol.hud.gov>.

State travel/tourism conference in Chicago in Feb.

The Illinois Governor's Conference will hold three days of high-level speakers, educational panels and key networking opportunities in early 2018 in Chicago.

The 2018 Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel and Tourism will take place Feb. 26-28 at the Palmer House Hilton, 17 E. Monroe St. The event includes the nation's leading travel experts and a special LGBTQ breakout session. See <http://www.ilgovconference.com/schedule/>.

Cory M. Jobe, director of the Office of Tourism for the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, said in a press release: "Each year, the Illinois Governor's Conference is the place for an open exchange of ideas and setting the direction for the future of the state's tourism industry."

"The 2018 Illinois Governor's Conference in Chicago is going to be the best yet, featuring the nation's leading travel experts and speakers, and expert panelists who will share their knowledge of the latest travel trends and best practices in the industry. This year's Illinois Governor's Conference also offers plenty of networking opportunities and serves as a forum for connecting with colleagues and sharing ideas."

Register at <https://ww2.eventrebels.com/er/Registration/StepRegInfo.jsp?ActivityID=21586&StepNumber=1>.

Gerber/Hart looks for new board members as board prez steps down

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

The people behind Gerber/Hart Library and Archives want others to know they are here and looking for volunteers—more specifically, new board members.

Gerber/Hart Library and Archives was founded in 1981 to be a depository for records of LGBTQ individuals and organizations, as well as other resources regarding their lives and experiences in American society.

The library/archive's mission includes the belief that "knowledge is the key to dispelling homophobia and that affirming information about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons is critical to fostering pride and self-confidence." The organization, as sited on its website, is dedicated to "meeting the information needs of its unique community in a safe atmosphere that promotes research, exploration, and discovery."

"What it is to me, in a way, it's our sacred trust to the community by preserving and presenting the voices of our past and of our present so that people in the future understand who we were and the growth and progression of our community," said Carrie Barnett, the current president of Gerber/Hart's board—but who is moving to Missouri. "Think about the last 50 years in the LGBTQ community, in the arc of history, it's like rapid fire rocket to all sorts of changes and growth and certainly they were born of a lot of pain and a lot of struggle and I think it's imperative for us to preserve those voices and those stories so that those

who come after us understand this period in time and as time goes on, those periods in time."

Now at 6500 N. Clark St., visitors will walk into Howard Brown Health Center, and can see display cases full of Gerber/Hart's artifacts and archival information in the waiting area on the first floor. The second floor houses Gerber/Hart's archives, library and exhibit space.

Among the library and archives is the William B. Kelley and Chen K. Ooi Collection, which Barnett said is her favorite part of Gerber/Hart. She added that it is hard to describe how magnificent this collection is, as it is made up of everything that William Kelly could get his hands on in about 500 boxes. The organization also has exhibits displayed in different spaces and the themes continue to rotate.

"Gerber/Hart is a special place that brings people together," said Barnett. "To me, the coolest thing about the organization is to come in on a Saturday afternoon for example and see people in their 20s and people in their 60s and 70s having conversations. It happens regularly—people will come in to take out a book, or do research. ... To see people share their experiences across all sorts of differences that we have as individuals and to have people share their perspectives and be interested in other people's perspectives in an intellectual way is invigorating and exciting to me."

Since its launch, Gerber/Hart has moved locations and took a two-year hiatus, reopening four years ago.

"The last four years since we've opened we've done so much to revitalize the organization by creating new processes and new structures and by doing unbelievable amounts of processing the materials and collections that we have in an attempt to make them more readily available to people who come see them and we've done a really great job with that," said Barnett. "We've had a handful of really dedicated board members and we have more than a handful of really amazing volunteers, but specifically in the board area, it needs to grow and it needs to be filled up of people who are from all over the city and people who have different skills."

Barnett said the board currently has seven members, but the body is looking to have 15 members in total.

"It's time for Gerber/Hart to be an institution with its own momentum," said Barnett. "What I mean by that is it needs to be bigger than any one person or any five people who are involved with it. It is an institution of our community, it's an institution of Chicago and it needs to perpetuate because of its value to the community."

Barnett added that it is important for the organization to continue broadening the base of support and gain more financial support from the community, so that Gerber/Hart can continue collecting, protecting and sharing the voices of the LGBT community.

Barnett recalled she was recruited to join Gerber/Hart in 1989 when a new board was assembled. In the '80s, she said, the focus of Gerber/Hart was more on the library than the archives and she was the co-owner of LGBT bookstore People Like Us Books, making it "a natural fit." Having a master's degree in business, with an emphasis on arts administration, the not-for-profit management aspect also appealed to her. Barnett said the experience, including seeing Gerber/Hart expand from the basement of a three-flat to a storefront; and developing the mission statement, has been a fantastic experience. She stayed on the board until 1993 and returned in 2013.



Carrie Barnett.

Photo by Matt Simonette

"Coming back to Gerber/Hart, I discovered how much the archives and special collections had grown," said Barnett. "The things we hold are vital to understanding who we are as a community and how we got to this moment in time. Preserving our history as it happens is the best way to make sure our stories aren't lost. When I rejoined the board, my original goal was to get the doors open and create transparency so that people could see we were back on track. My mission, however, was to help make Gerber/Hart an organization that exists regardless of who is on the board or at the helm."

With her upcoming move, Barnett will be stepping down as an officer. She plans on staying on the board this year, attending meetings via videoconference.

"The goal is to provide continuity," Barnett

Turn to page 9

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ELECTIONS 2018: GOVERNOR

Daniel Biss talks LGBT platform, families' struggles

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Since announcing his candidacy for governor last year, state Sen. Daniel Biss, D-Evanston, has presented his campaign as a grassroots effort, frequently mentioning that the state in 2018 should have "an election, not an auction," in reference to the resources of two opponents in the March 20 primary, J.B. Pritzker and Chris Kennedy.

Biss spoke with Windy City Times about his 2018 campaign, his work on behalf of the LGBT community and what he thinks sets himself apart as a candidate.

Windy City Times: What do you see the state as being like under Gov. Rauner, and how do you see it as being like for the LGBT community?

Daniel Biss: The state has gone off a cliff and it has taken the LGBT community with it. There has been no budget—that's something unlike any state has experienced. The consequences for social service providers, higher education and our [overall] fiscal condition are just extraordinary. I will congratulate the governor, in that unlike many Republicans throughout the country and the state, he has been willing to sign legislation that was in support of specific civil rights for LGBTQ people.

Here's the problem: The LGBTQ community is disproportionately in need of housing services. There are number of LGBTQ youth who are homeless, and [other community] members in need of health care services. The LGBTQ community is

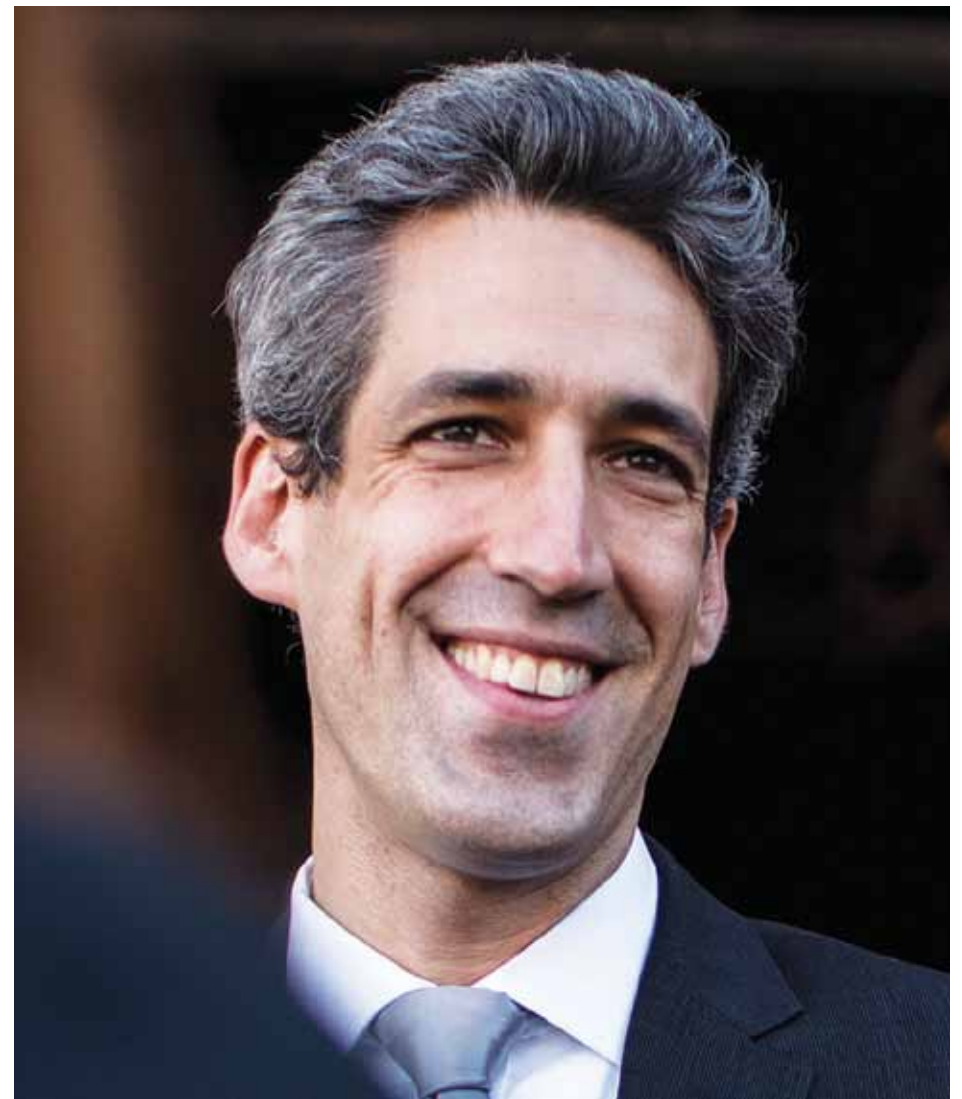
in need of social and mental health support services, particularly for LGBTQ minors who are not accepted by their families and communities. Gov. Rauner has decimated all those services. ... We need a governor who has the lives, means and expectations of ordinary Illinois residents in mind when he makes decision. We need a governor who understands what people are going through and is prepared to enact full policies that transform our state. That's the governor I plan to be.

WCT: In August, you told Windy City Times that your highest priorities included tax reform, stimulating economic investment and stoking engines driving both social and economic justice. Has any of that changed in the subsequent campaign? Is there anything you want to add or have learned from voters?

DB: As I travel the state, what I've learned is that people across Illinois are struggling to have [opportunities] helping to have family life together with the ability to work. I encounter people who can't figure out how to stay at work and also afford child care. Can't afford to stay at work and [figure out] how to enable their aging parents to stay where they are and age in place with dignity. Can't figure how to take time off from work and care for an ill relative or child. What this means is we have a state that is not on the side of our families. We rolled out a "life plan" that would let Illinois families have that—create universal access to health care, day care, family leave. That's what I hear from people across the state—we can't figure out how to have a dignified family life and work at the same time.

WCT: Last month you released a platform on LGBT issues. What work went into that platform, and what are two or three of the most significant issues it addresses?

DB: I was very proud that day to roll out a full LGBTQ agenda. I will be the most pro-LGBTQ governor in the country. Part of that is to try to enshrine protections for LGBTQ people in the Illinois constitution. We've got some really good laws in Illinois but they do not flow from constitutional protections. One thing that means, for example, is when we're trying to protect transgender youth when it comes to bathroom and locker room access in schools, we have to fight those battles one school at a time. I believe LGBTQ rights are human rights and I believe human rights belong in a constitution, so we're going to have a strong LGBT plank in the Illinois constitution when I'm governor.



Daniel Biss.

Photo courtesy of campaign team

I also pledge to have a cabinet that looks like the state of Illinois, with openly LGBT and openly transgender people for two reasons. First, in order for government to work, the government has to look like the whole state and be run by people who understand the whole state. Second, it is so important to see role models in the upper echelons of government as a beacon of hope that indicates you are loved and wanted by your state. I think that sends out a very strong signal.

We also laid out strong planks on LGBTQ homelessness and health care, to ensure we lay out a single-payer Medicare-for-all health care system. It's going to include the kind of important access to all for health care, whether it is for [treatment for or prevention of] the HIV virus or appropriate health care for transgender or gender non-conforming people. We need to make sure that our health care policies are designed to be appropriate for every person in Illinois. ... It's a strong platform that talks about civil rights, hu-

man rights, economic justice and, if it turns out to be the most pro-LGBTQ state in the country, that will be good for the LGBTQ community and for everybody else as well.

WCT: How would you ensure that there would be the willpower in the General Assembly to put forth and pass these proposals?

DB: With the work that I was so privileged to do, as the lead Senate sponsor of the bill that banned conversion therapy in Illinois, and with the work that I was allied with in passing the bill that allowed gender markers to be changed on birth certificates, you know what I did? I stepped back and created a platform where leaders from the community could be their own spokespeople. ... They changed minds that I was never going to change. ... What I want to do as governor is make sure that I am lifting up the extraordinary activists in the community who are empowering and inspiring, and whose voices go the furthest. I'm going to lift up those voices inside my administration and partner with the community to make sure that we pass the kinds of laws that the community is fighting for and deserves.

See DanielBiss.com. An August 2018 WCT interview with Biss is at bit.ly/2D59KBT.

'Speak Truth to Power' exhibition Feb. 4-June 24

Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center will present the Midwest debut of "Speak Truth to Power," a major touring exhibition based on the book, *Speak Truth to Power: Human Rights Defenders Who Are Changing Our World*, by Kerry Kennedy, president of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights.

The exhibition will run Feb. 4-June 24 at the museum, 9603 Woods Dr., Skokie.

"Speak Truth to Power" highlights activists who have worked tirelessly to defend justice in the areas of political rights, freedom of expression, honor killings, demilitarization, environmental activism, mental health, children's rights, national self-determination and more.

See ILHolocaustMuseum.org/speaktruthtopower.



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Planned Parenthood, Personal PAC unveil governor endorsements



J.B. Pritzker.
Photo from campaign team

The boards of Planned Parenthood Illinois Action (PPIA) and Personal PAC have revealed the candidates they are endorsing for the Democratic gubernatorial primary election on March 20.

The PPIA board of directors is endorsing state Sen. Daniel Biss, Chris Kennedy and J.B. Pritzker for governor.

"After a year of attacks on Planned Parenthood, women's health care, and our civil rights, we must elect leaders who will advocate to protect our rights in Illinois," said PPIA President/CEO Jennifer Welch in a media release.

Pro-choice political action committee Personal PAC has endorsed Pritzker for governor.

"Personal PAC is proud to join U.S. Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, U.S. Representative Cheri Bustos, Mike Quigley and Luis Gutierrez, Secretary of State Jesse White, Comptroller Susana Mendoza, Treasurer Mike Frerichs ... and many others throughout Illinois in uniting behind JB Pritzker as the strongest pro-choice candidate in the Democratic primary and November general election," said Personal PAC Board Chair Melissa Widen in a press release.

"JB understands that reproductive rights are under attack in Illinois and across the country, and he has demonstrated a deep commitment to supporting pro-choice candidates, organizations and legislation. JB was a strong advocate for HB 40 and his campaign led a coordinated effort to pressure Gov. Rauner to sign the bill. Illinois needs a real pro-choice governor who can be counted on to protect women and families at every turn."

Black LGBTQIA+ migrant project launches

The Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project (BLMP), a first-of-its-kind program housed at Transgender Law Center (TLC) and made possible by a 2017 Open Society Foundations Soros Justice Fellowship, launched with an accompanying 20-minute documentary (at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmyvvc91BCs&feature=youtu.be>) and opportunities for community members to get involved.

"As a Black transgender Nigerian migrant, I have too often felt isolated, invisible, and alone in the U.S.," said Ola Osaze, 2017 Soros Justice Fellow and National Organizer of the Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project at TLC, in a press release. "There are no spaces created for people like me, no services developed with me in mind.

Community members and supporters are encouraged to connect with BLMP to stay updated on opportunities available through the project. Visit <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/programs/blmp>.

GERBER/HART from page 7

said. "The decision to move wasn't easy. I'm not from here, but I've been here my entire adult life, so I consider myself a Chicagoan. I love this city and am proud to be a part of the LGBT community. I'll miss my friends, I'll miss Gerber/Hart, I'll miss the lakefront, but it's time to go and find a new life. It's exciting and scary to think about being brand new to a city, but I'll find friends and a way to participate in the community there."

According to Barnett, John D'Emilio will be the

Gilda's Club open house on Feb. 14

Gilda's Club Chicago, 537 N. Wells St., will hold an open house on Wed., Feb. 14.

The organization, named after the late comedian/actress Gilda Radner, offers more than 300 free activities each month. According to its website, the organization's "mission is to ensure that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action, and sustained by community."

The open house will include classes and demos throughout the day. In addition, there are sessions such as Gentle Yoga (10:30-11:30 a.m.) as well as events like "Saturday Night Live: The Best of Gilda Radner" (6-7:30 p.m.), an evening of all things Radner packed with her best SNL skits.

See <https://www.gildasclubchicago.org/>.

president of the board beginning in September. Until then, Fred D. Barnhart will be interim president.

"We've got some great new people on the board, but I can't stress enough how important it is that we add more people," said Barnett. "We've spent the past four years getting our house in order. We need diverse voices from across the community. We need people with marketing and fundraising skills and people who want to help craft the vision for the organization's future."

For more information, visit GerberHart.org.

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Reclassifying the 'female condom' can revolutionize U.S. contraceptive industry

If you've had safe, penetrative sex at some point in your life, you've probably used the "male" condom, which is designed to be worn by a person with a penis. Over the years, this device has been credited as one of the most effective tools to combat HIV, with different variations developed to appeal to a wide array of audiences.

But just like Kim overshadowed the other Kardashian siblings for so long, so too has the male condom stolen the spotlight from its more receptive sibling: the female condom. It's designed to be put inside the vagina or butt to provide superb sexual protection. Most consumers are completely unaware this contraceptive tool is even an option to them or, perhaps worse, have a negative idea about them being cumbersome, weird or just too novel to take seriously.

While an individual's condom preference may seem insignificant (as long as some sort of protection is being used, we're good, right?), the accessibility to one's desired device in the United States is directly

linked to its Food & Drug Administration (FDA) classification. According to the current FDA classification, a male condom is categorized more favorably than internal condoms. (What a surprise ... the patriarchy strikes again.) Male condoms are a Class 2 medical device, which require only minimal testing and approval before it becomes available to consumers. Internal condoms, however, have been deemed a Class 3 device—the same level as a pacemaker—which require much lengthier approvals, more thorough testing and data, and additional investment from manufacturers before they're accessible to the public.

This current classification has crushed the female condom industry. Since it's so expensive to ramp up the creation of a female condom model, there's only one on the market, and you can't find that model on store shelves. With this extreme lack of access to this tool, few know about it and even fewer are using it. But without demand, there's little impetus for a new manufacturer to go through the hoops of getting a new model on the market that might theoretically be used by more people. It's a contraceptive "chicken-or-the-egg" conundrum.

Fortunately, though, a solution could be on its way. After years of lobbying from the National Female Condom Coalition (NFCC) and other sexual health orgs, the FDA is considering a rule change: that the "female" condom be changed from a Class 3 medical device to a Class 2, the same class ascribed to the male condom. The current classification is crippling the female condom industry, but a reclassification provides opportunity for the research and implementation of existing products to enter the U.S. that are already recognized by the World Health Organization

(WHO) and on the market in other countries (such as Africa, Brazil and throughout Europe).

NFCC is also seeking a name change from "female" condom to "internal" condom. The hope is that by changing its name, the device could be seen as a less niche and novel condom and be used by people of all genders. Finally, it's being recommended for use in not just vaginal sex but anal sex as well (which female condom users have been doing all along). This quick change would automatically expand how it can be used by different communities—such as same gender-loving men—which would be a huge win in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Now that the proposed rule change is getting serious consideration, the FDA's Subcommittee on Medical Devices is accepting public comment until Feb. 2 and will be considered during their deliberation.

Advocates are asking the public to submit their own comments and express their thoughts on the potential reclassification. The NFCC welcomes support from organizations, healthcare professionals, advocates, women's health/family planning experts, or anyone interested in the discussion.

If you want to give female condoms the spotlight they deserve, we at the NFCC encourage you to provide a public comment by the Feb. 2 deadline. Specific ways you can help make a difference for this campaign are outlined here: nationalfccoalition.org/fda-campaign.

Sara Semelka is the prevention technology education manager at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and head of the National Female Condom Coalition.

St. Sukie
DE LA CROIX

SENIOR MOMENTS

Letter from Palm Springs

I'm 66 years of age, and growing old as a gay man isn't what I thought it would be.

I was rather looking forward to spending my twilight years sitting in a rocking chair reading Virginia Woolf and complaining about the neighbor's annoying dogs, kids and untended lawns—complaining about everything, really. However, old age ... or my old age, at least ... is proving to be highly amusing. I laughed my ass off the other day when I couldn't unscrew the lid of a marmalade jar and some days I have to roll out of bed because I can't muster the strength to sit up. I look like an overturned beetle, legs and arms pawing at the air.

The good news is that living in Palm Springs, I am not alone. When homosexuals in America stop swimming and float on the tide, they eventually get washed up here in the desert. This gay retirement resort is God's waiting room—sadly, there's no athe-

ist equivalent to that phrase. You know what I mean.

When you organize a dinner party in Palm Springs, you have to work around everybody's colonoscopy. It seems like every week someone I know is having a camera inserted up where the sun don't shine—and not in a fun way. It's not just dinner parties, but anytime you meet friends: "Sorry, can't make it on Wednesday, I'm having a pre-cancer removed" ... "I'm getting this lump checked out" ... "I'm having blood work done" ... "I'm having a stint put in" ... "Sorry, Jim and I are going adult-diaper shopping that day" and "Does this colostomy bag make my ass look fat?"

So hosting a dinner party is a tricky business, involving fancy footwork and a cursory knowledge of medicine.

Hip replacement, knee replacement—some of these old queens are semi-robotic bionic bears. Daleks, R2-D2 even. Some have to plug themselves in and charge up before leaving the house. However, there's one part of their bodies that never fails to function at the sight of an attractive waiter bending over to pick up your napkin—a lot of napkins are dropped on the floor in restaurants in Palm Springs. If you look at a map of this area, you will see a river of Viagra flowing through the Coachella Valley, sweeping up octogenarians in its wake.

Viagra and cannabis sales are huge here.

Pee breaks. That's the other thing I've noticed here. Car trips with four gay seniors are punctuated

by frequent pee breaks. When you're over 60 and you need to go, you need to go NOW—not in five minutes when you get to a gas station, but NOW. And when one pees, everyone else TRIES to pee, otherwise you're stopping every 10 minutes.

I say Palm Springs is a gay retirement town, but that's only one side of the story. It's also a gay resort, which means thousands of gay men arrive here every week for the clothing optional resorts, and thousands of lesbians for the annual Dinah Shore Golf Tournament. What is it with lesbians and golf? That was rhetorical, no need to answer. Some mysteries should be left as mysteries.

The upside to living in a retirement town is that you have gay men with long lives behind them and stories to tell. I've got growing-up-gay in the 1950s stories that would fill a dozen books. I also find that older gay men are more tolerant of eccentricities, are more broadminded, have mostly ditched religious pretensions, are more creative, and laugh a lot more than young gays.

I find younger gays—not all of them, but some—are more conservative, uptight and happily tow the politically correct party line on any given issue the left conjures up this week.

I prefer a good vintage wine. A swimming pool, a bottle of Chateau Vieux Gay Homme and enough marijuana to bring down a water buffalo, and I'm good to go.



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WINDY CITY TIMES

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Isaly Viana, Jenn Geiger and Gaby Moldovan co-star in Spark.

Photo by kClare McKellaston

Timeline's 'Boy' offers transformative look at gender identity

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

When David Peter Reimer died in 2004, it marked the tragic end of one of the most cruelly misguided medical experiments in the history of gender science. Born a cis-gender male in 1965, Reimer endured a horrifically botched circumcision as an infant. The baby's penis was wholly destroyed.

Reimer's parents turned to Dr. John Money, then viewed as one of the world's leading pioneers in gender identity and intersex children. Money told Reimer's parents to raise their child as a girl, to keep the truth of his birth a secret and to subject him to multiple surgeries and hormone treatments designed to feminize him. It didn't work.

David Reimer rebelled early on, as detailed in *As Nature Made Him—The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl*. At 15, he started presenting as male, and speaking out against "treatments" such as the ones he'd endured. At 38—after years of struggling with depression—Reimer killed himself.

Yet the story of David Reimer is not wholly grim. Thanks in part to Reimer's outspoken criticism of Money and willingness to tell his own story, many of the doctor's methods have been discredited. And Reimer's story led playwright Anna Ziegler to *Boy*, a gender-transcending love story running through March 18 at TimeLine Theatre.

Ziegler and TimeLine dramaturg Josephine Kearns stress that *Boy* does not tell the David Reimer story. But there are similarities. In the character of Adam—raised for years as a girl after a circumcision gone awry—Ziegler spins a narra-

tive where Adam's own empowerment ultimately triumphs over his dysphoric certainty that he's an imposter in his own body.

"I'd been fascinated by the whole nature-versus-nurture question, and I knew I wanted to write about science," said Ziegler. "With I found Reimer's story I was so shocked and saddened. 'Boy' is very different in some respects, but at the core, I wanted to dig into the mistakes that people make even when they're coming from a place of love and desperately trying to do the right thing."

With a cast and crew that includes half a dozen non-gender conforming artists, TimeLine's "Boy" marks the first time the play will be produced with a trans actor (Theo Germaine) in the role of Adam.

"It never occurred to me before TimeLine that the play could hold a trans actor in the lead, because the play isn't about a trans person," Ziegler said, "It's about a person who was born a boy and always was that boy despite being told otherwise. I'm thrilled with this casting. There is something so very powerful about seeing someone onstage who has dealt with the very things Adam has dealt with; it adds so many layers."

Kearns transitioned about three years ago, with TimeLine bearing witness to her metamorphosis; "Boy" is the 28th production Kearns has worked on with the company. She was a driving force behind casting a non-binary actor as Adam and making sure the entire creative process included as many non-gender conforming artists as possible.



Emily Marson (left) and Theo Germaine in *Boy*. Photo by Lara Goetsch

"TimeLine has given all of us non-binary folks an enormous voice in this show," Kearns said, "There's at least six of us. And every time there's been a decision made, there's been multiple gender non-conforming people in the room to make sure that decision is right. All of the cis-folkx have been hyper aware of how much they need to listen."

"Casting a trans or a non-binary actor as Adam, I felt that was important from the start," Kearns added, "Even though Adam is really a cis-male, there are similarities between what he goes through and what trans people go through. Adam has the experience of growing up in an identity that doesn't fit him."

"That's a crucial part of this story—what it's like to be assigned a gender that isn't yours. To have that forced upon you, whether it means having to wear dresses or being subjected to surgery before you can speak up for yourself.

"One thing I discovered when I was transitioning is that it just isn't fully possible to articulate what it's like to somebody who hasn't gone through it. It's kind of the same way that it's not possible for me as a white person to ever really comprehend what it would be like to be black in this country," Kearns concluded, "I will never understand that, obviously. Having someone non-binary play Adam brings an authenticity to the role that you can't achieve with a cis actor."

That's true, said director Damon Kiley, but nobody should make the mistake of thinking Germaine (whose pronouns are they, their and them) was cast solely because they are gender non-conforming. "I want to be very clear," says Kiley, "We cast Theo because they're extraordinarily talented. They're not a trans actor. They are an amazing actor who is trans."

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THEATER REVIEW

All My Sons

Playwright: Arthur Miller

At: Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave.

Tickets: 773-753-4472;

CourtTheatre.org; \$44-\$74

Runs through: Feb. 11

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Director Charles Newell has assembled several of Chicago's most powerful actors—notably, John Judd, Kate Collins and Timothy Edward Kane as Joe, Kate and Chris Keller, respectively—and then reined them in, never letting them cut loose with the deep, dark ferocity they have demonstrated in other roles. Emotions are tempered because Newell doesn't want us swept up in the passions of *All My Sons* or, heaven forbid, to pity its characters. Instead, Newell wants us to understand them and to clearly comprehend the ideas and moral values of Arthur Miller's 1947 play. His production unquestionably achieves this goal.

The timeless tale is about how the sins of fa-



Heidi Kettenring and Dan Waller in *All My Sons*. Photo by Michael Brosilow

thers impact offspring. Its specific context is 1946 post-WWII America where small industrialist Joe Keller (Judd) grew rich producing airplane parts. When faulty merchandise caused the deaths of 21 fighter pilots, Joe's partner alone went to prison even though Joe was complicit. Joe's older son—also a pilot—went MIA in 1943 and Joe's wife, Kate (Collins), deludes herself that he's still alive. Chris (Kane), their surviving son, is heir-presumptive to the business and wants to marry Ann (Heidi Kettenring), who was

his brother's fiancé and is the daughter of the disgraced partner. A storm erupts when family loyalties are tested and secrets come out, especially when Ann's brother (Dan Waller) shows up defending his father.

Arguably, *All My Sons* is Miller's most classical play, influenced by Henrik Ibsen's 19th-century moral dramas. Newell's production also strongly invokes Greek tragedy, so much of which concerns terrible retributions by children against parents. John Culbert's scenic design is a Greek theatre

of sorts, with a gently-sloping patio of six steps replacing the circular Greek orchestra. Standing at the center of the wide Court Theatre stage, it's the only place action occurs.

On this platform, Newell often positions his actors in straight lines or in nearly frozen tableaux—versus realistic physical groupings—to deliver the text, which fortunately never becomes declamatory. The secondary characters—the Kellers' neighbors—frequently stand formally on each side of the patio as witnesses, as a Greek chorus might do, their presence reminding the audience to listen, observe and take note for this is us. Miller always wrote about the fabric of society, not merely the individual story illustrating his ideas.

The line earning the most audible audience response comes late in the play when Chris, in an anguished confrontation with Joe, says, "I thought you were better. I didn't see you as a man, I saw you as my father." Some sons grow up early, others late. Some have a father in the White House and we question whether father or sons have grown up at all. Take note: This is us.

THEATER REVIEW

Hinter

Playwright: Calamity West

At: Steep Theatre Company,

1115 W. Berwyn Ave.

Tickets: \$28-\$38

Runs through: March 3

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Calamity West's thriller begins with the last of five murders, walks us through the police investigation and then flashes back to acquaint us with the events leading up to the crime itself.

Audiences may cry "foul" at the playwright's refusal to reveal whodunit by the end of the play, but those listening closely will have gathered

enough information to speculate on the identity of the villain(s) whose motives may lie in individual perversion, opportunistic deception or spectral miasma, but whose culpability leaves *everyone* with, literally, blood on their hands. What is certain, observes our weary detective, is that in isolated, sparsely populated, economically depressed, war-devastated regions, "these things happen."

The region, in this case, is a farm, known locally as "Hinterkaifeck"—its very name locating it "behind" the rural Bavarian village of Kaifeck—in 1922, barely two years after the cessation of World War One, where widowed women work the fields, the menfolk mostly having emerged from the conflict either dead or crippled. The Gruber family—old Andres, his wife Cazillia, their daughter Viktoria and infant granddaugh-

ter, Ilse—employ two servants, stablehand Klara and housekeeper Maria, the latter recently hired following her predecessor Elizabeth's abrupt departure. The land surrounding the Gruber household, you see, is haunted by preternatural manifestations—phenomena affirmed by local citizens George and Lorenz, but dismissed by city-born neighbor Frieda.

"Can someone be haunted by a living person?" asks a character, after recalling parents warning children to beware of "witches" in the woods—mythology perhaps fabricated from rumors of a sexual predator lurking nearby and incest leading to illicit progeny. What about the large sum of cash concealed in the house on the fatal night—were the Gruber women planning an escape? Were Elizabeth and Klara really seen by the barn "naked and touching" one another? What does

Maria's decidedly un-servile attitude mean? How dangerous is the shell-shocked Lorenz? Oh, and how do we explain the distant screams, footsteps in empty rooms and locked doors opening with no visible human assistance?

The tiny Steep Theatre performance space succeeds in suggesting the bleak landscape just outside the kitchen (which assumes the ambience of a prison cell). Combined with the emotional intensity displayed by Brad DeFabo Akin's direction of a laser-focused cast, the suspense generated as each clue surfaces is as provocative as it is persistent.

THEATER REVIEW

Spark

Playwright: Caridad Svitch

At: 20% Theatre in the Flat Iron Arts

Building, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Tickets: \$20

Runs through: Feb. 24

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

When a play's synopsis begins, "Well, there's these three sisters," we immediately think of Chekhov, but the women of the Glimord clan are a long way from the bored, pampered, upper-class Misses Prozorov.

For one thing, they live in rural North Carolina—not in a swanky country-club mansion, but a shabby frame house in need of repair, just off Highway 40 (dubbed "Tobacco Road" for its surrounding landscape). For another, their father was no decorated general, but a hard-drinking

wastrel who abandoned their late mother to a lifetime of toil in the fields. On her deathbed, six years earlier, she charged Evelyn Jane with the care of her siblings—an assignment forcing the still teenage eldest daughter to forgo her plans for college and marriage.

What the "Glimmer girls"—as their neighbor Hector calls them—share with their Russian predecessors is boredom. Evelyn's is rooted in frustration over holding down "ten tiny jobs" in order to provide for herself and high school-dropout youngest sister Alijah "Ali" Margaret, who dreams of becoming a championship boxer like middle-sister Alexandra "Lexie" Ray, due to come home today from a tour in the desert wars.

While Evelyn grumbles over her kin's ingratitude and ignores the smitten Hector's courtly advances, Ali prowls the bars looking for a fight—but only if attached to a cash prize—and Lexie battles PTSD, we gradually stop anticipating cataclysmic Chekhovian crises and instead

come to appreciate the resiliency of those who just "get through what we get through." By the end of the play, each character has made some small progress toward a happier future—in Lexie's case, with the assistance of another ex-GI (who might well be a ghost) during a graveyard beer-bash.

The concept of women seeking their fortune in the ring or on the battlefield may baffle audiences accustomed to conventional gender roles, but Caridad Svitch is not a playwright to traffic in sexist stereotypes. However remote the experience of the Gilmords may be from our own, Denise Yvette Serna's subtle direction, a cast delivering full-bodied, delicate-subtexted performances, a minimalist stage ambience detailed down to individual birdsongs—indeed, every aspect of this 20% Theatre production—ensures our emotional investment in the realization of their goals.

CRITICS' PICKS

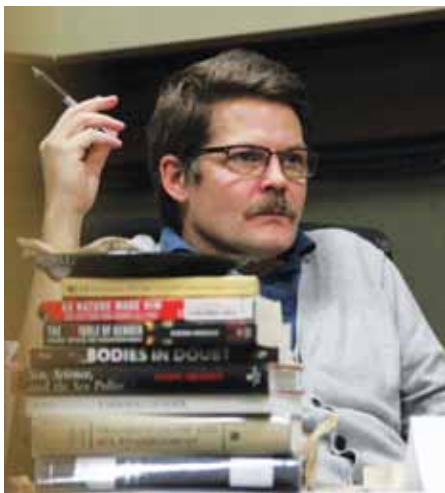
The Antelope Party, Theater Wit, through Feb. 24. Eric John Meyer find laughs from die-hard My Little Pony fans while also exposing worrying paranoia tied to online communities in this world-premiere dark comedy that is a true reflection of our troubling times in America. SCM

The Good Fight, Babes With Blades Theatre Company at City Lit Theater, through Feb. 17. The story of how the Suffragettes created a jujitsu-trained "bodyguard" squad to protect their leaders is a perfect choice for this all-female stage-combat ensemble. MSB

The Light, The New Colony at The Den Theatre, extended through Feb. 25. A loving African-American couple have to face some shattering truths in Loy Webb's emotional drama that powerfully speaks to our troubled times. Highly recommended. SCM

Traitor, A Red Orchid Theatre, through March 4. Ibsen's fable of corporate corruption and individual opposition in 1882 Norway loses none of its applicability (or immediacy) when transposed to the suburbs of Chicago in 2018. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan



Boy director Damon Kiely.

Photo by Jenny Lynn Christoffersen

THEATER REVIEW

Boy

Playwright: Anna Ziegler

At: TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington Ave.

Tickets: 773-281-8463 or

TimeLineTheatre.com; \$40-\$54

Runs through: March 18

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Hindsight is painfully agonizing in *Boy*, Anna Ziegler's 2016 off-Broadway drama now receiving a solid Chicago premiere courtesy of director Damon Kiely for TimeLine Theatre. *Boy* serves up many interpretations to its fictionalized (and more hopeful) take on a real-life gender experiment that ended in tragedy.

Ziegler's inspiration for *Boy* was drawn from the late Canadian David Reimer. As an infant in the 1960s, Reimer's male genitals were destroyed in a circumcision accident. Reimer's parents were then encouraged to surgically alter and raise their child and as a girl based upon Dr. John Money's shaky theories that gender was malleable in

infancy. (After a very troubled childhood, Reimer transitioned to male as a teenager.)

In *Boy*, the life circumstances of Ziegler's main protagonist mirror those of Reimer. But instead of a chronological progression, Ziegler shifts *Boy* back and forth in time (and to an American setting).

Hence there are 1980s scenes of Adam Turner (Theo Germaine) as a bookish young man courting his former classmate, the single mother Jenny Lafferty (Emily Marso). Spliced in between are childhood moments of young Samantha Turner (also Germaine) and her conflicted interactions with the charismatic and controlling Dr. Wendell Barnes (David Parkes, who looks period-perfect in outfits reminiscent of TV personalities Dick Cavett and Fred Rogers by costumer Samantha C. Jones).

With *Boy*, Ziegler is able to show Adam's struggles alternately to embody a gender role that feels alien, while also being full of self-doubt as someone who stresses over when to come out with the details of a traumatic childhood. All this time-shifting proves to be a great dramatic workout for Germaine, a nuanced trans performer previously interviewed by the *Windy City Times* in 2016.

More than matching Germaine's intensity on-stage are Parkes as Dr. Barnes, who gets to the heart and frustration of a man whose professional reputation is tied to a child's emotional fluctuations. Marso is also great as a young woman confused by Adam's tentative courtship.

Mechelle Moe and Stef Tovar as parents Trudy and Doug Turner are not as prominently featured as characters in the drama. Yet their guilt, shame and pain are all very palpable in their brief moments of confrontation and acceptance with Adam.

Another marvel of *Boy* is how brilliantly it functions on both literal and symbolic levels. Audiences can take *Boy*'s plot mechanics at face value. Or they can liken Adam's struggles to those of trans folk who are forced into gender roles that stifle their true sense of being. Either way, *Boy* is a welcome drama to spur conversation and emotionally stir audiences.

SPOTLIGHT

Maestro Riccardo Muti is set to conduct the world-premiere co-commission of lesbian composer Jennifer Higdon's *Low Brass Concerto* for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Also on the program are Benjamin Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* from Peter Grimes, Igor Stravinsky's *Scherzo fantastique* and Ernest Chausson's *Poeme de l'amour et de la mer*. The concerts are at 8 p.m. Thursday and Saturday, Feb. 1 and 3, and 1:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 2, at Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave. Performances are at. Tickets are \$34-\$221; call 312-294-3000 or



visit CSO.org.

Caption: The world premiere of lesbian composer Jennifer Higdon's *Low Brass Concerto* is performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Publicity photo by Candance DiCarlo



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www.windycitymediagroup.com

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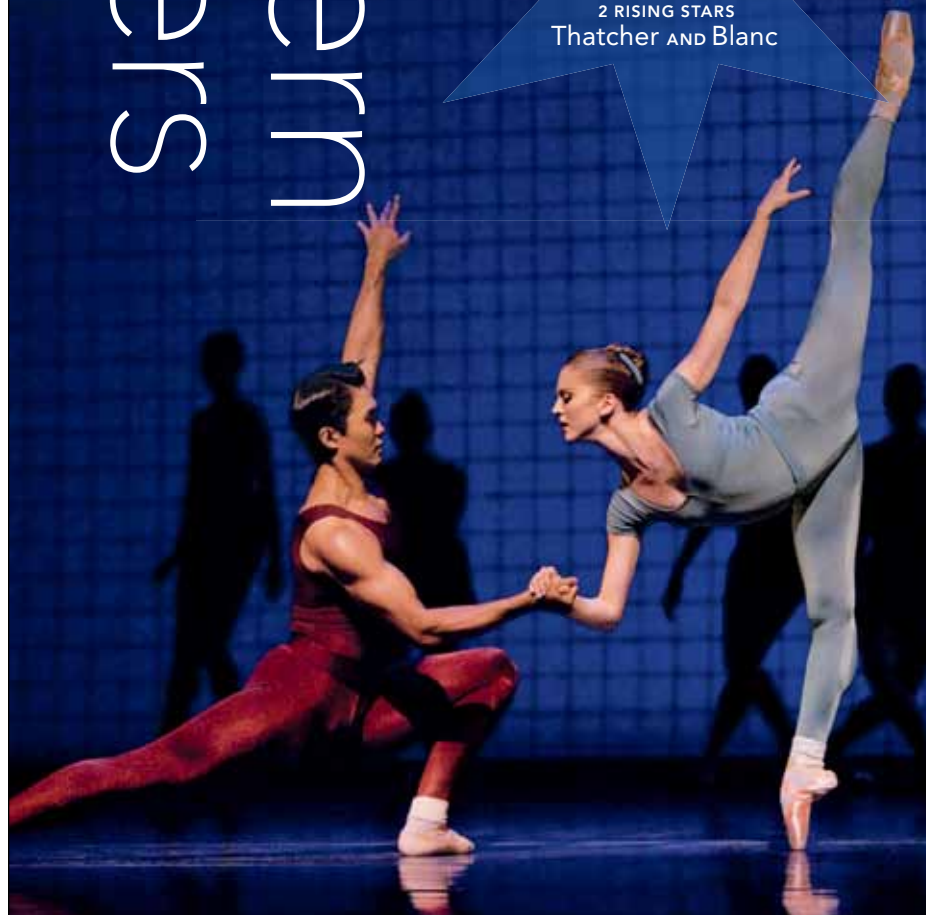
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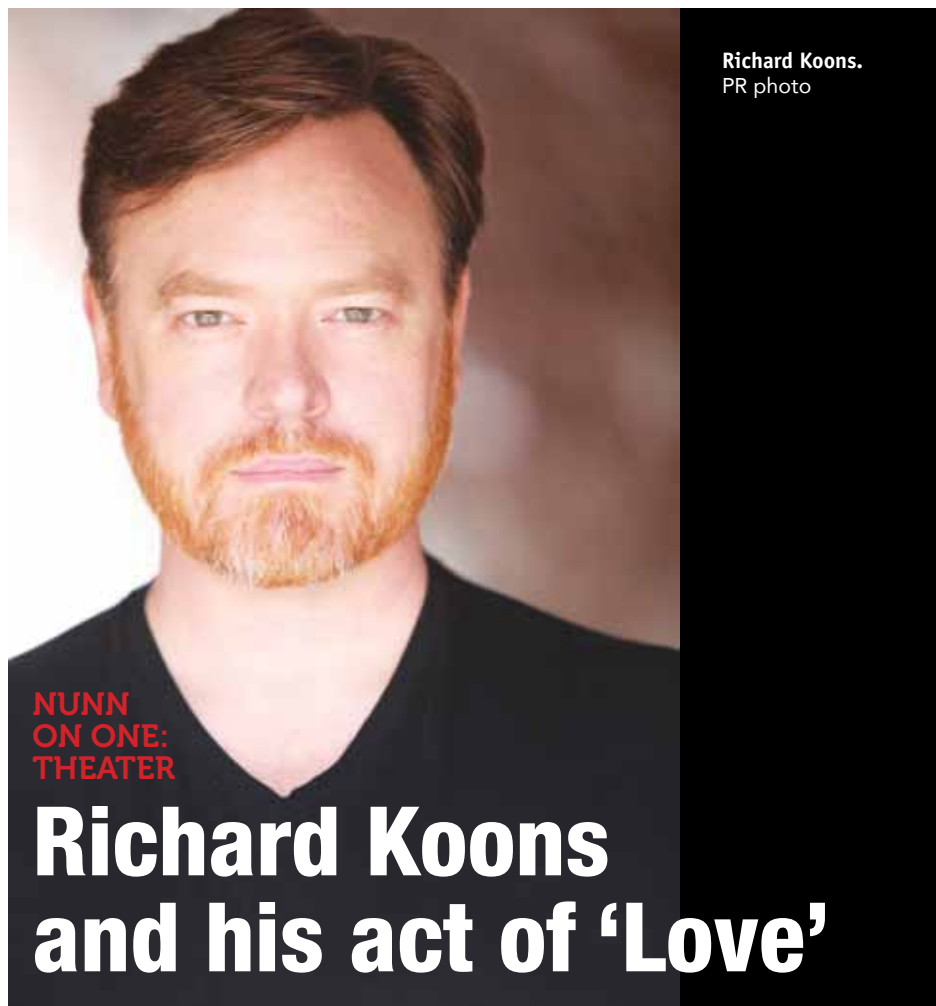
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Carla Körbes & Bathkurel Bold/Pacific Northwest Ballet | Photo by Angela Sterling



Richard Koons.
PR photo

Deuteronomy in *Cats*, and Horton in *Seussical*.

Windy City Times: Tell our readers about *Love Never Dies*.

Richard Koons: The show has been through a few versions. This is the one that Simon Phillips directed. It is most like the Australian production that was videotaped. It has a few new things and is completely different than the CD, because that is from the 2010 London version.

WCT: Who is your character?

RK: His name is Squelch and he is part of a trio: Squelch, Fleck and Gangle. We are the minions for the phantom. It takes place 10 years in the future from where the first musical left off. There are characters from *Phantom* such as Madame Giry, Meg Giry, the Phantom, Raoul and Christine. You find out that Christine and Raoul have a son named Gustave.

At the end of *Phantom*, Meg comes down to find the mask and it ends. With this show we find out that Meg and Madame Giry have whisked the Phantom away, saved him from the mob in Paris, and brought him to New York. He has created the first side show in Coney Island. He can live a life he never had anywhere else. He has taken on the name Mr. Y. as in mystery. He uses the three of us to do his bidding. We show up in this amazing carriage to kidnap Christine to Coney Island.

The set designer gives everyone a feast for their eyes. It is really revenant because I just saw the movie *The Greatest Showman*. It is very much like that!

It is gorgeous but also dark and creepy. It's one of Andrew Lloyd Webber's most beautiful scores. It is a pleasure to listen to and sing every night.

WCT: You wear makeup?

RK: Yes, and they made me shave my head, too. We are in an off-kilter world even in our makeup. I have one very large eyebrow and one itty bitty one. I have one earring on one side and blue makeup on one side.

WCT: Are there any gay characters?

RK: We always tease the master of ceremonies, Stephen Petrovich, that he's like the character in *Cabaret*.

For Squelch they made him a high tenor, but

he's the strongest man in the world. You would think his voice would be rough, but I'm singing in the stratosphere all the time. I'm not sure why his voice is that high compared to his physical aspect.

If I had to pick the character that is the closest to being gay, it would be Stephen's Gangle.

WCT: How is it traveling and having a family at the same time?

RK: My son Rhys is now 6 years old and lives with my husband, Russell, in New York. When my son was born he took a backseat to my career. Since my husband is a school teacher I just did concert singing during the school year and would only do Broadway shows during the summer. I went off and did that my first year with *Cats*. During his fifth year I was cast in *Love Never Dies*.

When I was growing up *Phantom* came out and it always meant something important to me. I couldn't pass up the opportunity and knew it would be hard for us. Thanks to FaceTime I talk to him every day. He likes to watch me put on my makeup.

I made sure he wasn't scared of this production and he wasn't. He enjoyed it and has seen the show several times. When we are in Boston it will be a car ride to visit him. I am never longer than 10 weeks without seeing him on the tour and usually it is only four weeks.

It can be hard, but I want him to know he can do and be whatever he wants. The best way is for him to see his parents thriving in what they love to do.

WCT: You have had so many costumes in shows, such as *Edna in Hairspray*. Do you like that part?

RK: If I had the choice I would only wear one costume. I just hate changing my clothes!

I have done some great character roles like Santa in *Miracle on 34th Street* and *Edna in Hairspray*. The costumes make your character.

The pants for this character make me look like I weight 60 more pounds than I do. They are hand painted. It's beautiful, but heavy. It is fun to

Turn to page 22

BY JERRY NUNN

The *Phantom of the Opera* musical was a phenomenon that spawned more than 12,000 performances. Now it has inspired a sequel called *Love Never Dies*. Original character Christine Daae is invited to perform at *Phantasma* in Coney Island. The *Phantom* is involved in bringing her there

and drama ensues when he's discovered.

The legendary Andrew Lloyd Webber returns as composer, and is the writer of the book.

Out actor Richard Koons tackles the national tour as the character Squelch. A graduate of The University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Koons studied vocal performance. Past credits include playing *Edna in Hairspray*, *Old*

program coordinator for the Gender Development Program. With Lurie's Gender Development Program Manager Jennifer Leininger, Kearns crafted *Gender 101* as a crash course in gender-related issues.

"The program helped teach our box office staff how to talk about the show, how we teach the show to students and how we do talk backs after the show," said Kearns. Also designed to help *TimeLine* market *Boy*, *Gender 101* deals with everything from language and pronoun use to "how to deal with tough situations" that might come up. Those touchy situations sometimes feature intrusive, abusive or just plain rude questions, Kearns said.

"Trans and non-binary people, we get asked a lot of awkward things," said Kearns, "You get asked about your genitals. Your sex life. People ask all kinds of inappropriate things—sometimes people you don't even know."

Another issue: The often negative way pop culture depicts with non-binary people. From *Dressed to Kill* to *Zoolander* to *Nip/Tuck*, trans

tropes turn people into punchlines or dysfunctional misfits.

"Being trans doesn't mean your entire life is angst," said Kearns, "To have a character like Adam, who falls in love and is finally able to live his truth? I love seeing that on stage."

"One of the big things I hope people walk away talking about is what gender identity means," said Kearns, "And how our society's enforcement of it affects people. I hope they also leave talking about why we can get so obsessed with bodies being quote normal unquote, and the damaging lengths we go to make people fit into what is supposedly normal."

While the education curve surrounding non-binary issues is steep, the world at large seems to be making steps toward the ascent. Laverne Cox on the cover of *Time*, the runaway success of Jill Soloway's *Transparent*, RuPaul's *Drag Race* excising the word "she-male" from the script all point to an evolving world, albeit one evolving at a pace that some view as glacial.

"We've come a long way," said Kearns, "But we

still have a long way to go."

Something extra

TimeLine's lobby display for *Boy* includes an art installation of eight photos (and accompanying audio) that explore the experiences of intersex, trans and gender non-conforming Chicagoans. In the piece curated for the People Artists Collective by Jireh L. Drake, and K. Rodriguez, participants talk about how they navigate a world where an oppressive gender binary insists everybody identify as either male or female, depending on their assigned gender at birth. The installation also forces its viewers to confront their own participation in the oppression of intersex and trans or non-conforming people. People can download the audio reflections via *TimeLine's* mobile app here: <http://services.instantencore.com/Util/Share/DownloadApp/5183616/TimeLine>.

Boy runs through March 18 at *TimeLine Theatre*, 615 W. Wellington Ave. Tickets are \$40-\$54 each; visit TimelineTheatre.com.

BOY from page 11

Kiley—who is a cis, hetero male—brought *Boy* to *TimeLine* after reading it in one sitting about four years ago. Ziegler acknowledges Kiley in the title pages as someone who championed the piece in its earliest stages.

"As a cis male, I have no qualms about directing this," Kiley said, "It's not the same as me directing an August Wilson play—which I would never do. I've said from the start that it's a love story. It's the story of a young man who falls in love. It's also the story of parents trying to do the right thing by the child they love."

Still, Kiley said there's when it comes to gender identity and expression, there's been a learning curve involved with directing *Boy*. The learning process isn't relegated solely to Kiley. *TimeLine* staffers have all been enrolled in *Gender 101*, a 90-minute workshop on gender issues.

The workshop was created in partnership with Lurie Children's Hospital, where Kearns is the

'Joseph' a flaming triumph

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS BY CATEY SULLIVAN

The opening-night reminder for the Drury Lane's Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat came with a caveat: "(T)his production of 'Joseph' includes adult content." Anyone passingly familiar with the squeaky-clean retelling of the Old Testament tale probably did a double-take. What hath director Alan Souza wrought? How could one of musical theater's most wholesome shows possibly contain "adult content?"

I'll tell you what Souza hath wrought: something fabulous. His "Joseph" sounds good, looks great, is immensely entertaining and is also—arguably, I suppose—the gayest show in all the land. There are performances by Cher on a trapeze, Liza in a pink Cadillac, Britney with a boa constrictor draped over her shiny green bikini, Elton on a bedazzled piano and Bette, suggestively flopping her mermaid tail on a bed of sea-shell pink. There are also Shania, Dolly, Celine, Barbra, Bernadette, Patti, Liberace and Siegfried and Roy.

Joseph spends most of the first act in his underwear and most of the second act in a silver skort. Ryan Park's costumes make the male ensemble members look like they all just placed in the International Mr. Leather (IML) Pageant and the women like they're moonlighting from dominatrix duties in an upscale dungeon. Were it any more intentionally flaming, you'd have to call in firefighters.

Word is there have been complaints at the box office. This is not surprising. The Drury Lane is nestled in ultra-conservative DuPage County. Reportedly, some of the residents of this staunch Trumplandia have demanded refunds. To which I say: Get the fuck over yourself. As Liza says in the second act, "Mama would have loved this show."

Chicago Theatre Week Feb. 8-18

Presented by the League of Chicago Theatres in partnership with Choose Chicago, Chicago Theatre Week is returning for its sixth year and will take place Feb. 8-18.

Visitors and residents will again have the opportunity to choose from more than 120 productions and sample the range of theatrical offerings in Chicago.

Tickets are \$15-\$30 (or less) during this time. Just a few of the productions are YANK!: A World War II Love Story, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Blue Man Group, The Joffrey Ballet's Modern Masters, Late Nite Catechism, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, and BREACH: a manifesto on race in America through the eyes of a black girl recovering from self-hate.

See <https://www.choosechicago.com> and <https://chicagoplays.com/theatre-week.html>.

If it's good enough for Judy, it ought to be good enough for you. If the show makes you feel the need to demand a refund, I'd advise you to look into medical marijuana.

Souza's reimagining is set at the Luxor Hotel, in Las Vegas. Joseph unpacks, checks out the room, takes a long leak, gives a subtle chuckle at the Bible stashed in the nightstand and crawls into bed. The next thing he knows, a phalanx of buff, singing, dancing chorus boys somersaults out of the mini-bar while a woman with a pyramid on her head flips through the aforementioned Bible. Joseph calls security.

So begins Joseph's epic Vegas vacation. Is he hallucinating? Is he drunk? Is he dreaming? Who gives a shit. By the time Britney shows up, Joseph is having a ball and you will be, too.

Usually, Joseph is anchored by a primly charming narrator who trills sweetly through the key plot points: Doting father Jacob gives Joseph a colored coat. Jacob's brothers get fratricidal and jealous. They sell Joseph into slavery. Joseph gains favor with Pharaoh. Joseph reunites with his repentant siblings. (Sorry/not sorry if that's a spoiler. The story is more than 2,000 years old.)

Souza has cast celebrity impersonator Christina Bianco as the narrator. In shape-shifting Britney to Cher to Dolly, Bianco takes the show's exposition to what Tyra would call "next level fierce." Here's how good Bianco is: I didn't realize the same person was playing Bette/Celine/Shania *et al* until the last 40 minutes of the two-hour (including intermission) show. This reminds me: Do not leave before the curtain call. Bianco gives a reprise that'll have you smacking your head in wonderment. At one point, she morphs into a dozen different celebrities while singling out the words "la la la." It's a true tour de force.

As Joseph, Evan Alexander Smith is terrific. He's got a belt ("Close Every Door") as mighty as Joshua's trumpet at Jericho and a marvelous sense of comic timing. Under music director Alan Bukowiecki, the show sounds terrific, particularly in the all-male ensemble numbers. "Those Canaan Days" will have you absolutely wallowing, Mooney-eyed, in the luxuriance of its harmonies.

Scenic design Kevin Depinet's set starts out looking like a replica of Pink Floyd's Dark Side of Moon album, and then opens up into a picture-perfect rendition of mid-rate hotel room. Lighting designer Lee Fiskness and projection designer Kevan Loney make the show glitter like the Strip at midnight. With Grady McLeod Bowman's inventive choreography, the whole shebang amounts to a Bible story that's as entertaining as, well, a Vegas headliner.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat continues through March 25 at the Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace. Tickets are \$47-\$62; call 630-530-0111 or go to DruryLaneTheatre.com.



Evan Alexander Smith and Christina Bianco in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Photo by Brett Beiner

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NUNN ON ONE: BOOKS

Gregory Kramer unveils drag reel



DRAGS
models
Crimson
Kitty (right)
and Daphne
Sumtimez
(left).

Photos by
Gregory
Kramer

BY JERRY NUNN

Fashion photographer Gregory Kramer has created a new book called DRAGS, spotlighting the art of drag. Centering on his home base of New York City has helped him focus on various drag icons in the Big Apple.

Kramer has a strong background, photographing for companies/stores such as Bloomingdale's, Club Monaco, Macy's, Target and Saks Fifth Avenue.

As a director, he has created commercials for Bloomingdale's, Macy's and Gay Men's Health Crisis. He's directed music videos for performer/actress Bridget Everett (who WCT interviewed recently), and was the assistant director for the Isaac Mizrahi documentary Unzipped.

Windy City Times: How long have you been doing photography?

Gregory Kramer: I have been shooting professionally for 20 years, but I've always been interested in photography. I got started shooting for my high school year book!

WCT: Why the fascination with drag for this book?

GK: I have always been a huge fan of drag, whether it was seeing Sweetie hosting at High Life/Low Life or Linda Simpson pulling bingo balls out for her weekly gig Linda Loves Bingo. I was looking for a project, and got inspired by Irving Penn's book Small Trades. After looking through it, I thought "That's it. I want to do a photo book on New York City's drag scene."

WCT: Why is the book only in black and white?

GK: I wanted to strip down the campiness of drag and really focus on each individual persona. Black and white also lends itself to classic, timeless photos.

WCT: Why were some subjects allowed to write about themselves and others not?

GK: Everyone wrote their own penned description that appears next to each photo. As the project was coming together, I wanted a few stories to come from within the book. So I reached out to Sasha Velour, Linda Simpson, Sweetie, Charles Busch and Goldie Peacock, who all offer a distinctive point of view on drag.

WCT: The RuPaul Drag Racers were just from this past season. Why not others?

GK: I did approach a few past contestants and, for one reason or another, our communication just fizzled out. The cover shot of Sasha was already in production before Aja, Peppermint and Sasha were announced as contestants for season nine. We were really excited when they got selected to be on the show, and even more excited when Sasha won!

WCT: RuPaul has made drag very popular. Why else do you think drag popularity is growing?

GK: There are a few factors. One is a generational change. Being gay is more accepted in today's society. The other is accessibility to resources, and each other. Getting a size 13 shoe is now just a few clicks away. I hope the book inspires and makes drag even easier for the future king and queens.

WCT: All of the subjects had to be currently living in New York?

GK: Yes, I really wanted to focus on the scene in NYC.

WCT: How is the price of the book decided on?

GK: It all started with an Italian printer. Nobody does it better than the Italians. From there we decided not to cut any costs and wanted DRAGS to stand on its own, not only for the photography and subject matter but also as a museum quality book. Which we achieved as MoMA and The Andy Warhol Museum stock the book in their shops.

WCT: Have you ever dressed in drag?

GK: I have not done drag. After witnessing numerous transformations, I decided to leave it to the professionals!

WCT: Any plans for a book-signing in Chicago?

GK: The publishers and I are working on upcoming engagements so hopefully we will be able to make it to Chicago in the near future.

WCT: What are your future projects?

GK: I just started shooting a project called DOWNTOWN. It's studio portraits of the downtown scene, including burlesque dancers, cabaret performers, writers, influencers and, of course, a few more drag kings and queens.

Purchase DRAGS visit DRAGSBook.com or try locally at Unabridged Books, 3251 N. Broadway. More on Kramer can be found at GregoryKramer.com.

Sidetrack's OUTspoken! Series: February's featured storytellers



Emily Fightmaster



Justin Hardesty



Kim Hunt



Archy Jamjun



Brody Tate



Gayle Weiss

The February edition of OUTspoken! LGBTQ storyteller series takes place Tuesday, Feb. 6, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St. Doors open at 6 pm, stories begin at 7.

See www.outspokenchicago.com for more info.

—**Emily Fightmaster** is from Cincinnati, Ohio. She is the newest member of The Second City's e.t.c. stage and has traveled coast to coast with The Second City Touring Company (Green Co.). She is a proud alum of Boom Chicago, an Amsterdam-based comedy theatre. Emily is a member of Baby Wine at the Annoyance and Glass Basement at iO.

—**Justin Hardesty** is originally from Goshen, Ind., and moved to Chicago in 1999. He is currently the president of Chicago Area Nudist Sons (CANS), Chicago's longest running nudist organization, and was co-organizer behind the No Pants Subway Ride-Chicago Edition from 2009-2017. He currently sings with Windy City Performing Arts' Windy City Gay Chorus. This is Justin's first time ever performing at a storytelling event.

—**Kim Hunt** is currently executive director of Pride Action Tank (PAT). Her career spans the public, private, and nonprofit sectors with a focus on collaborative approaches, advocacy and project management. Ms. Hunt is a co-host of OUTspoken, the political columnist for FOP Magazine and serves on several boards and advisory groups, such as The Legacy Project, the OUT at Chicago History Museum program committee, and Open Televisions advisory council.

—**Archy Jamjun** is a writer and storyteller from the burbs. He won the Moth Grand Slam and his work has been featured on Risk!, The Rumpus, and The Coachella Review. He also co-curates OUTspoken! You can see more of his work at ArchyArchJ.com

—**Brody Tate** is a transplant from Wyoming, working in higher education at an arts college in the Loop. He's moved 18 times, and traveled to 30 states and 7 countries. He ended up in Chicago for graduate school and fell in love with the city, the people. He loves learning, nerdy facts, and is even published in a book chapter of an LGBTQIA book titled: "Queering Classrooms".

—**Gayle Weiss** is a semi-retired artist with a passion for international travel and a collector's eye with no place to hang artwork. She's been 'home free' by choice since last January and will return to life in the States in June 2019. She is currently between trips and in town for a few weeks before she leaves for South America and wanted to tell a story from this past year before she forgets what happened.



Mark Saxenmeyer and Sunny Dee-Lite.

Photos by Jerry Nunn

Miss Continental—with complete backstage access. Topics such as body alterations and the strict rules of the 38-year-old competition are addressed. The Baton Show Lounge, in Chicago's River North area, is also featured in the documentary, as the owner of the club, Jim Flint, created Miss Continental.

Sunny Dee-Lite and Naysha Lopez, from the film, attended the screening. A Q&A followed the screening, and feedback was encouraged.

Proceeds from the evening will go to post-production costs and to aid in widespread distribution of the production.

The Queens travels to Minneapolis, next with a similar event on Feb. 8 at Honey at Ginger Hop.

A short preview of another project, The Innocent Convicts, was shown as well. The Reporters Inc—a journalistic organization that Saxenmeyer is the executive director of—is behind said project. This documentary covers wrongful-conviction cases across the country.

More information on both endeavors can be found at TheReporters.org.

Photos and text by Jerry Nunn

Kit Kat hosts Miss Continental movie fundraiser

Kit Kat Lounge & Supper Club on Halsted Street hosted a viewing party and fundraiser for a new film called *The Queens* on Jan. 25. For a donation, attendees received complimentary appetizers, one entree, and a martini along with the early screening.

Director/producer Mark Saxenmeyer introduced the project and described some controversy over the inclusion of transgender artists as part of the drag scene. He said, "Some say that because male-to-female transgender performers are already living their lives as women, that they are not considered female impersonators."

The *Queens* addresses that controversy and follows a few individuals as they compete for the crown of



Naysha Lopez (left) and a friend.

Chicago Auto Show Feb. 10-19

The next Chicago Auto Show will take place Feb. 10-19 at McCormick Place, 2301 S. Lake Shore Dr.

North America's largest auto show, the event spans more than 1 million square feet of floor space of the McCormick Place complex and displays multiple world and North American introductions and a complete range of domestic and imported passenger cars, trucks, sport-utility vehicles, minivans and concept cars.

Admission is \$13 for adults, \$7 for seniors age 62 and older as well as children ages 7-12, and free for children 6 and younger.

In addition to the public show, First Look for Charity will also take place. The black-tie-required affair will be Friday, Feb. 9, 7-11 p.m. There will also be two vehicle giveaways: a 2018 Ford Mustang or Expedition. Follow it at #FLFC18.

See ChicagoAutoShow.com.



Sarah Paulson and Tracy Letts at Steppenwolf event.

PR photo

Steppenwolf event features Sarah Paulson

BY JERRY NUNN

The Steppenwolf Theatre held its annual Women in the Arts fundraising luncheon at the Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel on Jan. 22. Out, award-winning actress Sarah Paulson was featured this year, and there was a question-and-answer session about her career with Steppenwolf ensemble member Tracy Letts. (Paulson acted in the early Letts play *Killer Joe*.)

The Golden Globe-winning actress credited *American Horror Story*'s Ryan Murphy for allowing her to play such a wide range of characters on the show. She explained how she studied attorney Marcia Clark for *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson*. She then answered a few questions from people in the audience.

More than 300 people attended the luncheon, raising \$196,000 for Steppenwolf's various programs. Visit Steppenwolf.org for current shows and information.

CULTURE CLUB



BOOKS

Patrisse Khan-Cullors reflects on helping to start Black Lives Matter

BY ANGELIQUE SMITH

"What I feel serious about, specifically around political direction, is a resurgence of a reparations campaign ... and one of the first agenda items I would have [is], I would really like for every Black person to have their own therapist as a part of the reparations package. I think that's essential."—Patrisse Khan-Cullors when asked her greatest hope for Black Lives Matter to accomplish in the next few years.

A Fulbright Scholar, activist and artist who identifies as queer, Patrisse Khan-Cullors created the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter and, along with Opal Tometi and Alicia Garza, founded one of the most important decentralized, localized movements of this generation. A movement that won a Sydney Peace Prize in 2017—among other honors—but was also declared a "terrorist organization" by dissenters.

Khan-Cullors recently started a book tour for her memoir, *When They Call You a Terrorist* co-authored with journalist asha bandele and with a forward by the legendary Angela Davis, who has had her own share of being labeled as a terrorist.

On Jan. 23 at Wilson Abbey, in an auditorium filled with people and the free flow of ideas on direct action, Women and Children First hosted an author reading for Khan-Cullors, who sat with Black Youth Project 100's (BYP100's) Charlene Carruthers to discuss Khan-Cullors' beautifully-written book and the life of activism that inspired it.

Growing up in Van Nuys, California, under the constant terror of police presence and criminalization of Black people, Khan-Cullors' raw and riveting book touches on the various systems that regularly fail marginalized groups—racialized trauma and mental health issues not being properly addressed nor funded, how the failed war on drugs and America being tethered to punishment works to fill our prisons, the discrepancies in education, resources and living conditions—and how those failures laid the groundwork for her life's work.

Prior to the event, Windy City Times sat down with Khan-Cullors:

Windy City Times: It's considered controversial by some to actually say the words, "Black Lives Matter." Could you have ever, in your life, thought that your simple statement could result in such vitriol and pushback in this country?

Patrisse Khan-Cullors: No, I didn't. Part of the excitement about Black Lives Matter when we started it, for me, was that we were going to be able to galvanize a new generation around the impacts of anti-Black racism on our communities. And the backlash we received, pretty early on,



Patrisse Khan-Cullors.
PR photo

[around] the calling out of the phrase ... I wasn't surprised, because I know the history of white folks and their racism against Black people, in particular, but I was confused. It's a very simple statement and we see what's happening to Black people, so why is that so difficult for people to embrace?

WCT: What made you decide to write your memoir?

PK-C: I did it reluctantly. It wasn't this thing I was excited about it, or what I thought was the best use of my time. But, then Black Lives Matter was called a terrorist organization and we were watching a moment where 45 was a candidate for president. As people were debating whether Jeff Sessions should be appointed, I went to look at his record and [saw] the terror he has caused throughout the South. I was very concerned about his role in the war on drugs and what we could be reliving as a country if he became the attorney general. I wanted to write a story down on what I've seen, what created this current iteration of our movement.

WCT: The word, "terrorist," and the concept of terror comes up often in this book—not just in the title, but in relation to what your

own brother was charged with and what it feels like to be constantly over-policed and under siege. It led me to think about [U.S. Attorney General Jeff] Sessions' Department of Justice speaking about the terrorist threat of so-called "Black identity extremists." When was the first time you heard or read about yourself being called a "terrorist?"

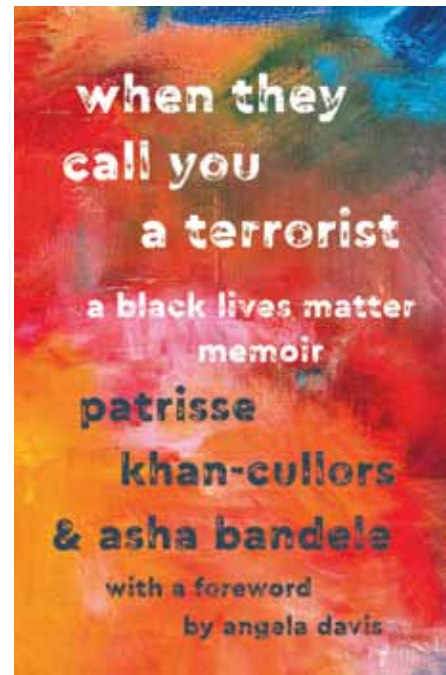
PK-C: It was either on Bill O'Reilly or Breitbart ... or both at the same time. And I was scared; I was concerned. I was clear that this is what happens when you take up the mantle to fight for our lives. This is what happens to so many Black activists.

WCT: Martin Luther King Jr., in his time, included. You've mentioned that activists such as yourself are going through COINTELPRO 2.0. I was going to ask you to expand on that, and then I thought about how we've never had a reckoning or an acknowledgement in this country of COINTELPRO, in general. I guess with that said, and with more people starting to care more about politics and protest, are you optimistic about our country finally waking up to the realities of injustice?

PK-C: I don't think it happens where everybody wakes up at the same time, it happens in waves. There are moments in which people realize, "Oh, this is why they're saying 'Black Lives Matter.'" But there are also moments where people are committed to bigotry and their own racism, their own power and privilege. Some people will forever be in this country, die in this country and be staunch racists. And some people will evolve and grow. I'd like to think more people will do evolving and growing.

WCT: Here's hoping.

PK-C: I think the fact that you can get millions of people out in the streets fighting for women's rights is huge. At the height of Black Lives Matter and our protesting, we were getting thousands of people out in the streets to fight for Black lives, which is huge, but it's a long-haul fight. There's no one day that everyone wakes up. It took 500 years to get here and it's going to take 500 years or more to get out.



WCT: Similar to the erasure of the roles of Black women, and queer ones in particular, in the civil-rights movement, you've mentioned that it was both painful and enraging to have the story of Black Lives Matter initially unfold in the media without you in it. Tell us about that.

PK-C: There's a history of not just erasing Black women's work, but stealing it. That someone else gets to be praised, honored and, oftentimes, gain financial status because of the labor Black women put in. That first year and a half that we were cultivating and nurturing Black Lives Matter, it was clarifying and also painful to see how much people wanted to fixate on the idea that a Black, cis-male leader is going to get us to the salvation of Black people. Also, how hard it was for people to believe that Black women were at the helm of Black Lives Matter.

WCT: Can you tell us about how, post-Ferguson, the decision was made to affirm Trans voices and ensure their visibility in the movement?

PK-C: Black Lives Matter arrived in St. Louis, Darnell Moore and myself, and dozens of activists across the country, including Toronto, went on that ride, helped develop it and get people there. We had a crew of Black Trans women who came on the ride and gave us some really strong feedback at the end of it. They felt like they were invisible, like there was no space to talk about Trans people.

We took that feedback very seriously and relooked at who we were centering and how we were centering them, and what kinds of conversations we were having. What would come out of it was the tragedy of Black Trans women being killed and murdered more than any other group of Trans people, and why we had to focus on believing and loving and witnessing Black Trans women in their life, not just in their death.

WCT: Yes, so true. In the book, you often talk of not having the resources, or access to them, in terms of dealing with your father's incarceration, navigating the criminal justice system ... especially in a time before crowd sourcing online, etc. What organizations should the community turn to that you wish that you had when you were growing up?

PK-C: I think BYP100 is an amazing organization; obviously, the Black Lives Matter Global Network. Organizations like Dignity and Power Now. Law for Black Lives, an organization that's full of lawyers who are specifically fighting on behalf of Black people and Black communities. There are so many organizations both at the local and national level that are doing powerful work. I think it's really important that all of us joins something right now. Don't do this alone.

WCT: A lot of this book is about your brother, Monte, and his battle with bipolar schizoaffective disorder. There was one part where you were forced to call the police when he was having a mental break and after no hospital would take him. I just felt the utter desperation that you must have felt to even consider that choice. Can you speak about what people can do when the system fails them in this way?

PK-C: In California, we have something called the Justice Teams Network, a statewide network that I started, and Cat Brooks is the executive

director of, where we support families in dealing with responding to state violence. We know how to respond to natural disasters, when there's a hurricane or earthquake, but we don't respond well to state violence because we haven't trained ourselves, and it happens every single day.

WCT: Toward the end of the book, I think I came away with a deeper understanding of the word, "organizer," other than the obvious ... especially in the way the Black Lives Matter organizes itself internally, making sure self-care is prioritized, that the organization is uplifting those within. How do you personally cope and what do you do for self-care?

PK-C: I'm a big fan of therapy. I deeply believe

in the practice of generative somatics: the idea that our bodies hold trauma and that we're able to release that trauma and practice new ways of being. I believe in prayer and being in the community, not isolating myself, even when it feels hard and terrible.

WCT: What gives you hope these days?

PK-C: Being able to see the consistency of this movement. I don't see our movements—whether it's Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, the immigrants' rights movement, or the Women's March—as separate. Black Lives Matter has laid the foundation on how people can fight in this movement. ... I think we are all connected. I'm so proud to be a part of a generation that is taking our 1st

Amendment rights seriously through exercising it and practicing the most innovative ways to approach the biggest social ills.

WCT: What's next for you after the book tour and for the organization, as a whole?

PK-C: I'm in school, so I'm going to take my butt back home and finish my MFA program. The tour is just one leg of how we are going to uplift the story and this book, so lots of exciting things to come. February is Black History Month, so it's our month. We can do everything!

WCT: I mean, Black Panther is coming out, so...

PK-C: Exactly! A lot of exciting things this year, professionally and personally. Within our

network, we're at an interesting moment. We're taking stock of what we've been able to do for the last four and a half years. This is a midterm election, so some of our chapters are going to focus on the gubernatorial races. Many of our chapters are focusing on local legislation they're trying to pass. But as a global network, we are trying to understand what kinds of campaigns we can galvanize ourselves around globally that we can put out in 2019.

When They Call You Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir can be purchased online and in stores. Visit patissecullors.com for more information about the book and the tour.



Yance Ford.

Transgender director makes Oscar history

Yance Ford has become the first transgender director whose work has been nominated for an Oscar.

Ford's movie, *Strong Island*, has been nominated for Best Documentary Feature. It centers on the death of Ford's brother, William Ford, a high school teacher shot and killed on April 7, 1992.

"The very exciting thing for me when I think

about history is that this film is a correction to the historical record of my brother's life," Ford said, according to Entertainment Weekly, "and if this nomination helps to magnify that and if by making history I helped to magnify that, then... it's all good as far as I'm concerned."

Strong Island is now available to stream on Netflix.

In related news, *A Fantastic Woman*—starring trans actor Daniela Vega—has been nominated in the Best Foreign Language Film category.

The 90th Academy Awards will take place Sunday, March 4.

The Entertainment Weekly item is at EW.com/movies/2018/01/23/oscars-yance-ford-trans-director-strong-island/.

Elton John to retire from touring

Saying "I've been touring since I was 17 with various bands. I thought the time is right to say thank you to all my fans and say goodbye," iconic singer Elton John announced in a press event on Jan. 24 that his next world tour will be his last.

John said his priorities changed when he and husband David Furnish had children.

"Performing live fuels me and I'm ecstatic and humbled to continue to play to audiences across the globe," said John in a press release. "I plan to bring the passion and creativity that has entertained my fans for decades to my final tour. After the tour finishes, I'm very much looking forward to closing off that chapter of my life by saying farewell to life on the road. I need to dedicate more time to raising my children."

John said that he decided three years ago that this would be his last tour, telling CNN's Anderson Cooper, "I can't go on forever." The tour is called "Farewell Yellow Brick Road"—but this isn't farewell forever, as John still wants to make more albums.

John will hit the road on Sept. 8 for a tour that will include 300 shows and span five continents. Tickets for "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" go on sale Feb. 2.

The CNN item is at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/24/entertainment/elton-john-retiring-final-tour/index.html>.

Langston Hughes tribute Feb. 1

Black History Month will start at City Winery, 1200 W. Randolph St., with a celebration of the 116th birthday of U.S. author, activist and thinker Langston Hughes.

The event will take place Thursday, Feb. 1, at 8 p.m.

The evening will include readings of Hughes' poetry and music that he wrote, inspired and/or enjoyed. Special guests include Chicago native Timon Kyle Durrett (from the show *Queen Sugar*), Golden Globe-winning actress Regina Taylor, actress Felicia P. Fields and more.

Tickets are \$35-\$45 each; visit CityWinery.com/chicago/happy-birthday-langston-hughes-2-1-18.html.

Exhibition spotlights Black disabled artists

Bridgeport Arts Center, 1200 W. 35th St., will run an exhibition entitled "Honoring Legendary African American Artists: Distinct Portraits By disAbled Artists."

The Feb. 9 VIP exhibition and fundraiser—followed by a public exhibition Feb. 16—Masking me when book eight will be available. The ending to *Boystown Season Seven* foreshadowed the deaths of two main characters, including a member of the Mancini family, and readers tell me they are longing to know who died."

Boystown Season Eight is available for pre-order on iTunes, Kindle and Nook. The series is available in paperback, audiobook and all e-book formats. Readers may order autographed paperback copies of the books directly from BoystownTheSeries.com.

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Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Benny's Chop House; mayor honors chefs

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Benny's Chop House (444 N. Wabash Ave.; Benny'sChopHouse.com/) is a deceptive spot.

The steakhouse has a distinctly upper-crust feel, from the menu (more on that later) to the stately decor—and one might expect a haughty atmosphere. However, it's as welcoming as the corner diner where one might get a slice of apple pie, a cup of coffee and a server who calls you "hon."

Hostesses greet diners with non-plastic smiles, and staffers (including Director of Operations Mitchell Schmieding and Chef Gaetano Ascione) mingle among diners with hellos, stories—and checks on how patrons like the food/drinks.

And the food... Ascione certainly knows what he's doing—and here's hoping he doesn't



Carrot cake at Benny's Chop House.
PR photo

change a thing (or much) in the near future. Even something such as nachos are elevated, as the blue chips are dotted with jalapeno and chop-house bacon (and this dish was actually one of my favorite of the night). The arancini were delicious, as were the petite crab cakes and oysters Rockefeller (and I'm not even a fan of the shellfish).

I was fortunate enough to sample a Benny's beef tasting—including the Japanese Tajima Kobe, A5 filet, which didn't even need a knife to cut. However, one can't go wrong with the USDA prime natural filet mignon or the prime dry-aged, bone-in ribeye.

Turn to page 22



FULL KIT GEAR

Happy third anniversary! Thursday, January 25.
Photos by Kirk Williamson



Mr. Chicago Leather '18



Stitch (above) was chosen from a field of six contestants as **Mr. Chicago Leather (MCL) 2018**. Stitch will go on to represent Chicago at this year's International Mr. Leather (IML), now in its 40th year.

The contest was held in the theater at **Leather Archives & Museum**, Saturday, January 27. For those who could not get tickets to the sold-out event, a simulcast was shown at **Touche**, which sponsored the contest as well.

Speeches during the event on the topics of community service and leather brother/sisterhood were given by IML 2017 Ralph Bruneau—who also served as one of the judges—and outgoing MCL Daddy G. Contest organizer David Boyer presented Joey McDonald with the annual Chuck Windemuth Mentorship Award. John Pandal returned from England once again to emcee the show.

The contest was followed by a raucous Victory Dance at Touche.

Photos by Kirk Williamson



Left: IML 2017 Ralph Bruneau. Center: MCL 2018 Stitch (center) flanked by eight former MCLs. Right: Joey McDonald (left) receives the Chuck Windemuth Award from David Boyer.



TOUCHE

Nice to "meat" the MCL '18 judges and contestants, Friday, January 26.
Photos by Kirk Williamson



BILLY Masters

"This is a détente, ladies and gentlemen."—**Patti LuPone's** first words on the mike when she showed up to rehearse the tribute to **Andrew Lloyd Webber** for the Grammy Awards. We hear they even hugged!

Last week, everyone was abuzz about 14 semi-naked Russian air cadets in their underwear. The situation began when cadets at the Ulyanovsk Institute of Civil Aviation made a video to the song "Satisfaction," by Benny Benassi. Apparently the original video of the 2002 Italian dance hit featured scantily clad women doing construction work. Back in 2013, British Army officers made a parody video of song. But in this new Russian version, the scantily clad Soviets strut through the halls, engage in some twerking and suggestively devour fruit. In short order, an official condemnation was released. "Frivolous dances in underwear in the institute's uniform cap on the territory of the aviation university are unacceptable"—which I bet sounded a whole lot better in the original Russian. The head of the campus said, "I honestly do not want to comment on this disgusting behavior of cadets. To be honest, I must sit and digest what I've seen." It should be noted that a good source of potassium is bananas.

Within hours, the video disappeared from the web and the lads were threatened with expulsion—which I thought was Phase Two of the Clinique regime! And then the craziest thing happened—thousands of people came to their defense and started posting their own videos. This quickly became known as the "Satisfaction Challenge," and much of the support came from within Russia itself. A group of "chic grannies" did a version. So did a group of Ukrainian swimmers. We even saw one made from a group of welders from the Urals—which sounds far more titillating than it actually is. With hundreds of thousands of hits, the Russians realized maybe a little attention to their aviation program wasn't such a bad thing. But where, oh where, can you find the video that started this craze? At BillyMasters.com, naturally.

A big story in the news was the death of Storm Chasers star **Joel Taylor** on the Atlantis Harmony Caribbean cruise. Allegedly, the death was an OD from GHB, although no official toxicology has been released. That didn't stop several revelers on the ship from contacting me, sharing some salacious tales (or, in this case, tails). Originally, it was reported that the death happened in the middle of a concert by **Olivia Newton-John**. False—but let it be known that when it's my time to go, that's how I'd like to exit ... preferably during the medley from Xanadu. We're told Taylor passed out on the dance floor and died shortly



Storm Chasers' Joel Taylor met an untimely end.

Photo from Storm Chasers' Facebook account

thereafter. The FBI was investigating the death since it happened on open waters, but the case was dropped after it was determined that foul play was not involved.

This was not the only incident on the cruise. Porn couple **Jesse Jackman** and **Dirk Caber** had to leave the ship in Puerto Rico. According to reports, they had a fight, Dirk got drunk and passed out. He was later found to have pneumonia and was rushed to an area hospital. It seems a cloud was hanging over this trip before it even left dock in Fort Lauderdale. Two prospective passengers were stopped from boarding when they were found to be carrying what has been described in the press as "a ton of illegal drugs on board." I'm not sure exactly how we're defining "ton" these days. Authorities confiscated 25 Ecstasy pills and a baby-powder container with 7.87 grams of ketamine. Hardly a ton—in fact, it's barely a fraction of a pound! It must be that new math all the kids are doing.

After several aborted attempts at a reboot, **Murphy Brown** is back. The show previously announced a reunion series in 2012, to coincide with the election. At the time, creator **Diane English** said, "We're having a little conversation with CBS about a few episodes, and I think it's possible. **Candice** knows about it, and we're going to talk to her more in July once she wraps her Broadway play." Alas, that didn't happen, but Diane never gave up hope (although I almost did since release of DVDs of the series stalled because of rights to the music). After 20 years, the network, the producers and the star are all on the same page and want it to happen. The one unknown is how many of the original cast members will return.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Frank in Baltimore: "What do you know about that garbage man who became a model? He's so freakin'

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hot. And I hear he's even posed nude. Do you have the photos? Is he gay?"

A gay garbage man? And I said that with my best Googie Gomez impersonation. You are obviously talking about the quite stunning **Jeff Tomsik**, who was a garbage collector in Ohio before someone discovered him. Regarding his sex life, he's predictably cagey: "I never kiss and tell, but all you need to know is I'm an honest faithful guy." And yet, I need to know SO much more! And, yes, he has posed nude. When asked about it, he says, "Well, what happens behind the scenes, stays behind the scenes." Happily, they are front and center on BillyMasters.com.

When one man's trash is another man's treasure, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Since we ran long (and I mean REALLY long), I barely have time to remind you to check out BillyMasters.com—the site that never holds back. If you have a question for me, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I learn how to say anything more than "Da!" in Russian. So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Jan. 31

HIV Town Hall AIDS Foundation of Chicago presents The Getting to Zero project, working to bring an end to the HIV epidemic in our state by 2027RSVP online. 2:00pm - 4:00pm Doubletree Hotel 1000 Eastport Plaza Dr, Collinsville Collinsville, IL http://events.aidschicago.org/site/Survey?ACTION_REQUIRED=URI_ACTION_USER_REQUESTS&SURVEY_ID=6771

Thursday, Feb. 1

Quiet Storm: the Art and Times of Black LGBTQ Life Opening event for our Black History Month series. This event is an art showcase, featuring a traveling exhibition from Gerber Hart Library, a musical performance from Dr. Johari Jabir, and photography from artist Darryl Terrell. Free. 6:00pm - 8:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted St., <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=14660>

Happy Birthday Langston Hughes: A Celebration In Poetry, Prose And Song



JIM DANDY
Saturday, Feb. 3
Jim Bennett will be among those honored at the Equality Illinois gala.
WCT archival photo

Featuring Regina Taylor, Terisa Griffin, Malik Yusef, Felicia P. Fields, Malcolm London, La Donna Tittle and Timon Kyle Durrant, E'mon Lauren and Jalen Kobayashi. Door 6pm 8:00pm - 10:00pm City Winery Chicago 1200 W Randolph St

Chicago <http://www.citywinery.com>

American Veterans for Equal Rights Chicago Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, the national organization of LGBT veterans formerly known as Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America (GLBVA). 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.averchicago.org/>

Friday, Feb. 2

Elton John ticket sales Concert Oct. 26 and 27 10:00am United Center 1901 W Madison Ave Chicago <http://www.unitedcenterchicagotickets.com/?ppscsrc=bing>

Andersonville Winter Sidewalk Sale Through Feb. 4. 10:00am List of locations at the link <http://www.andersonville.org/events/winter-sidewalk-sale/>

Woman Spirit 2018: Holly Near "I Am Willing" ucevanston.org 4:00pm Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1330 Ridge Ave., Evanston. Continues Feb. 3. <http://www.womenandreligion.org/?platform=hootsuite>

Baryshnikov Cherry Orchard Festival will present the Chicago premiere of the one-man play Brodsky/Baryshnikov through Feb. 4. \$45-\$150. More information, including curtain time, to come. 7:30pm Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph St.; 312-334-7777 Tickets: <http://HarristheaterChicago.org>

Saturday, Feb. 3

Frontrunners, Frontwalkers Chicago Frontrunners, Frontwalkers Chicago Chicago's LGBT running and walking club. Meet at the totem pole 9:00am Addison and Lakeshore Dr. <http://www.frfwchicago.org>

Equality Illinois 2018 Gala Honoring longtime LGBTQ activist Jim Bennett, Planned Parenthood of Illinois, and transgender youth activist Jazz Jennings. Cocktail reception, seated dinner, speakers on the work of Equality Illinois, luxury silent auction, a round-the-world travel raffle, and dancing till midnight. \$300 or \$500 VIP. Reception and silent auction 6:00 pm. 8:00pm Chicago Hilton and Towers 720 S Michigan Ave Chicago <http://www.equalityillinois.us/2018gala/>

Brunch Remixed All of the proceeds from the sexy singles auction goes to Affinity Community Services, a social justice organization that works with and on behalf of Black LGBTQ communities, queer youth, and allies. 1:00pm - 4:00pm City Winery Chicago, 1200 W Randolph St. Tickets: <http://brunchremixedcw.splashthat.com/>

Chicago Spirit Brigade Big Bang Show: Radio CSB One-night-only cabaret style show. Chicago Spirit Brigaded members display their talents to raise operational

funds. This is the only fundraiser CBS does. \$25. general, \$40 VIP includes reserved seating, two free drinks. First show 3:30 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://csbstars.ticketleap.com> Tickets: <http://www.csbstars.com>

Sunday, Feb. 4

Judy Collins Collins has inspired audiences with sublime vocals, boldly vulnerable songwriting, personal life triumphs, and a firm commitment to social activism. 8:00pm City Winery Chicago 1200 W Randolph St Chicago <http://www.citywinery.com>

Monday, Feb. 5

Stories in the Spotlight: Writing Workshop Transgender participants will transform an important moment into a story that professional actors will perform onstage. Playwright Susan Lieberman teaches techniques for writing effective autobiographical anecdotes in this six-week, free workshop at Center on Halsted. Workshop sessions Monday evenings Jan. 8 through Feb. 12. Performance Monday, Feb. 19. Email susanlieberman17@gmail.com. 7:00pm - 8:00pm Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St.; <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

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DISH from page 20

And if you still manage to have room for dessert, Benny's has some pretty scrumptious options to consider. For example, there are a huge slice of banana cream pie with caramel-glazed bananas; chocolate pudding cake with coffee-toffee ice cream; and perfectly made souffles (which can be notoriously difficult to bake).

Also, be sure to consider this spot for Valentine's Day. Not only will the restaurant do such things as personalize menus and desserts, but people will certainly vie for Booth 41—considered by some to be the most romantic restaurant seating in the city.

Benny's has been around since 2010. Here's hoping its welcoming atmosphere and great food exist for much longer. Pound for pound, it's one of the best steakhouses in Chicago.

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

KOONS from page 14

dress up.

WCT: Is there any musical you wanted to be in but haven't?

RK: I am in the Phantom family, but I want to do Phantom of the Opera. If my career ended today at least I have been in this. How many people can say they opened a Webber show and stood next to him onstage? He came to Baltimore and worked with us for a few days. When he walked on the stage at curtain call you could see the emotion and tears in his eyes. The show means so much to him. It was a pleasure to do

Mayor honors chefs

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has proclaimed Feb. 15 to be "Fred Hoffmann Day in Chicago"; Feb. 16 to be "Chef Mindy Segal Day in Chicago"; and Feb. 17 to be "Chef John Hogan Day in Chicago"; all leading up to their inductions into the Chicago Culinary Museum and Chefs Hall of Fame (<https://www.thechicagoculinarymuseum.org/>).

All three chefs will be formally inducted at an event open to the public on Saturday, Feb. 17, at The Palmer House Hilton, 17 E. Monroe St. 6-7 p.m. The induction ceremony will precede the For the Love Of Chocolate Foundation's 13th annual fundraiser, and tickets purchased for the Chefs Hall of Fame induction event will include attendance at "Whimsy: A Dessert Dream Brought to Life" until midnight. Tickets are \$175 each; visit TheChicagoCulinaryMuseum.org or FTLOC.org.

the show for him. He's been such a big part of my life growing up.

WCT: Were you able to speak to [Andrew Lloyd Webber] directly?

RK: Yes. He went out to dinner with us and we got time with him. He's writing his memoirs right now and I think it will be released in March. He wasn't going to make the opening in Detroit because of it, but he did make it after all and flew out for it. He spent the night with us again!

Love Never Dies haunts the Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph St., on Feb. 14-Mar. 4. Visit BroadwayInChicago.com for tickets and information.

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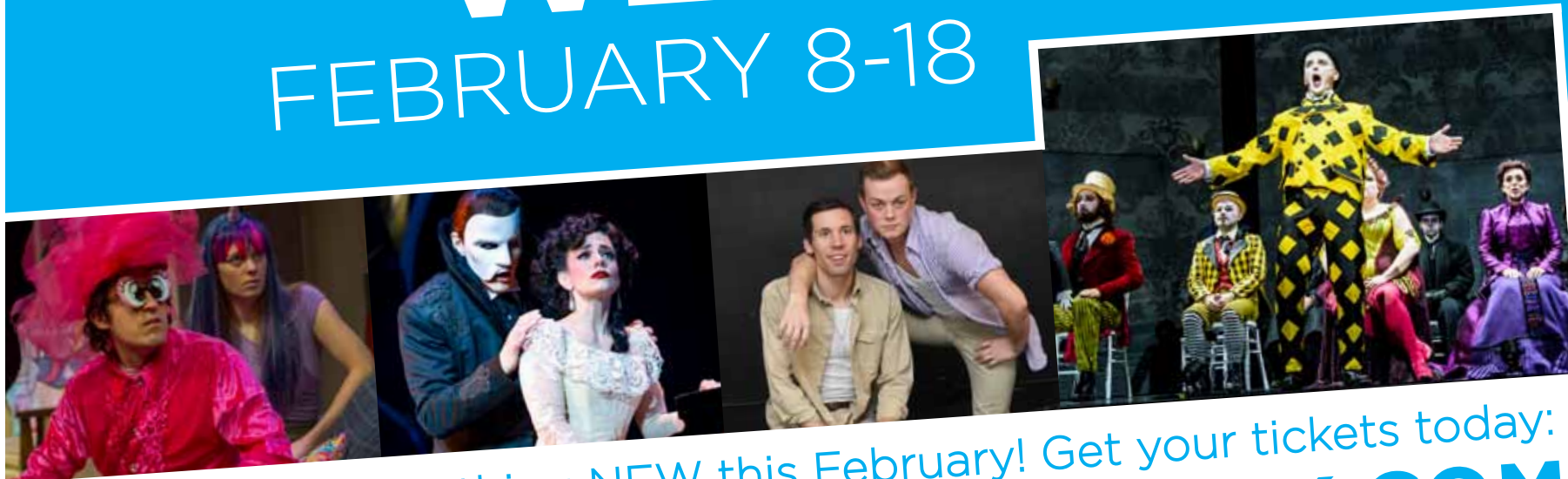
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