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CAKE CASE RULING A 'NARROW' LOSS



Mona Noriega, John Peller, Ed Yohnka, Anthony Galloway and Elissa Jeffers at the Chicago Masterpiece protest June 4 at Federal Plaza.
Photo by Tracy Baim

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Joan Armatrading on new music, LGBT fans.
Photo by Joel Anderson

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Non-binary actor on standing up for others.
Photo by Nicole Weisner

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Photo courtesy of Robert Pooley

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Photo by Vern Hester

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TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Artists Sam Kirk (right) and Jenny Q.
Photos courtesy of Kirk

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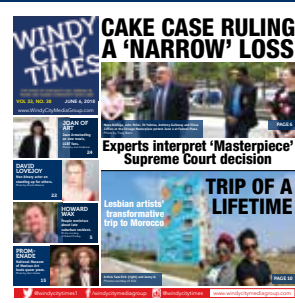


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Above: WCT reviews Bull in a China Shop.
Photo of Kelli Simpkins and Emjoy Gavino by Anna Gelman

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BY NATURE

Bill Malcolm's value-travel column takes a look at Saugatuck.

Photo of Wau-Ke-Nau Nature Preserve Beach by Bill Malcolm

'NEVER' MORE



WCT reviews the production Neverwhere.

Photo by Suzanne Plunkett

SWEET RELIEF

Dozens of vendors enticed attendees at the Sweets and Snacks Expo.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Sandra Bernhard, Benedict Cumberbatch and the show Animal Kingdom.

plus
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Connie Kurtz, from 'Ruthie & Connie' movie, dies

Lesbian pioneer Connie (Constance) Kurtz died peacefully at home, surrounded by loved ones, on the evening of May 27 after a long illness. She was 81.

Born July 19, 1936 in Brooklyn, she moved with her husband and two children to Israel in 1970, and lived there for four years. When she returned to the United States, she reconnected with longtime friend Ruth Berman, who had lived in her apartment building (Contello Towers) in Gravesend, Brooklyn. They fell in love, divorced their respective husbands and became a couple.



Ruth Berman and Connie Kurtz (right).

Photo by Toni Armstrong Jr.

Everyone knew them as "Ruthie and Connie."

In 1988, Connie was a bookkeeper and her partner Ruthie was a guidance counselor and physical education teacher at Sheepshead Bay High School in Brooklyn. In 1988, along with two other couples, Ruthie and Connie sued the New York City Board of Education for domestic-partner benefits, eventually winning these historic rights for all New York City employees in 1994. The couple gained national acclaim when they appeared/came out on the Phil Donahue Show and Geraldo to talk about the case.

Among other activist achievements, the couple started branches of Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in Florida and New York, and in 2000, they began serving as co-chairs of the New York State NOW Lesbian Rights Task Force. They received the SAGE Pioneer Award, and founded The Answer is Loving Counseling Center (they are both certified counselors) and worked there for more than 20 years.

The story of their love and of their activism is captured in the award-winning documentary *Ruthie & Connie: Every Room in the House*. The Ruth Berman and Connie Kurtz Papers are held in the Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History at Smith College and in the Lesbian Archives in

Brooklyn, New York.

They were religiously married in a Jewish wedding on May 20, 2000. Legal marriage happened July 26, 2011, two days after marriage for same-sex couples became legal in New York state. Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, senior rabbi of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, officiated both ceremonies.

The couple retired to Palm Beach County, Florida, where they have continued to fight for human rights in Democratic, LGBT, feminist, and #BlackLivesMatter politics. In recognition of their activism, The Ruthie and Connie LGBT Elder

Americans Act was introduced into Congress in November 2017.

Connie was passionately devoted to the causes of women's rights, LGBTQ rights, and the environment. She is remembered with great fondness and admiration for her humor, her energy, and her dedication to pursuing justice and her art. Since 1996, Connie also focused on being an artist, which emerged as a profoundly deep passion of hers. She expressed herself with vividly colored paintings, collages and quilts—all of which she sold and exhibited.

Connie is survived by her wife, her love, her spouse, her co-conspirator Ruth Berman; her sister Sally Silverman; her daughter Eileen Ben Or and son Moishe Kurtz; 14 grandchildren; and 27 great-grandchildren, as well as Ruthie's children and grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents Elias and Rose Levy. She was buried May 30 at Star of David Cemetery of The Palm Beaches (West Palm Beach, Florida).

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent in Connie's name to CBST: Congregation Beth Simchat Torah; Compass LGBT Center in Lake Worth, FL; OLOC: Old Lesbians Organizing for Change; and/or BLAST: Bi, Lesbian and Straight Together Women of the Palm Beaches.

GUEST COLUMN

BY DELIA KROPP



(Still) a Cis World After All

A tragic, drug-addicted hooker (Dallas Buyers Club). A slasher-transvestite (Dressed to Kill) and a slasher-transvestite dressing as his dead mother (Psycho). A transwoman who tragically perishes during pioneering gender-affirmation surgery (The Danish Girl), a trans man brutally murdered by transphobes (Boys Don't Cry), and even a madperson performing their own bizarre sex-change by culling skins from female murder victims (Silence of the Lambs).

Extraordinary exceptions? No. Sadly, these are the norm in Hollywood, and elsewhere too. In those rare instances where a trans character survives the final act, it's usually to live in infamy, destitution or disgrace.

Now imagine you are, like me, a transgender human. Nearly every cis person processes you with a brain already crammed with these lurid transgender movie tropes. Inevitably, some behave as if you're a actual threat. The bank teller poises to press her alarm; that gang member on the Brown Line threatens to carve you up (both happened to me). Why? Because your real-life face is just one among their familiar fictional gallery of fictional freaks, outsiders, and psychopaths. So, some respond less to who you actually are than their own unfounded fears.

Still, the question I often get is: Why does it matter in a movie or stage work who plays a certain trans role, who directs the production, or who writes the script? My answer is: Because transgender lives depend on getting it right. And because cis people have a terrible track record of exploitation, sensationalism and inaccurate trans narratives.

Receiving the Leppen Leadership Award from About Face Theatre for my service to the transgender community was a surprise because I'm not an advocate or activist in the any traditional sense, but an actor and director. Just a storyteller doing what I know best: taking stage. Making lots of noise and being very visible on behalf of my transgender tribe.

When a raft of problematic stage shows premiered in 2016, from little storefronts to behemoths like *The Goodman*, it alarmed me how trans representation and authenticity were being muscled aside by otherwise sympathetic theatre artists. I had worked as a cisgender actor for 30 years and been part of that community. If I wouldn't stand up and cry foul, who

would?

Compared to the brutality out in the real world, the arts probably seem pretty easy to change. Just bleeding-heart bastions of empathy, inclusion, and equality, right? Well, let me share some typical responses when I speak up about missteps in transgender representation on Chicago's stages.

"Don't you dare censor my Art!"

Live theater today is a notoriously hands-off endeavor. If a director wants to stage *King Lear* with Kabuki puppets wearing tutus, then he shall do so, and don't spare the tulle. The conviction is that artistic meddling from outside the rehearsal hall, be they board members, audience members, or social justice warriors, is bound to be bad. It has roots in the First Amendment, but even deeper ones in the mainstream (white, cisgender, often hetero) convictions that the 1950s and Joe McCarthy are just around the corner. Today's mainstream often forgets that stories about any disenfranchised group also peddle in matters of non-fictional life and death. If you shape public perception, you directly impact the privileges, laws, and even physical survival of marginalized people. So in certain cases, I will gladly see your "Hands off my Sacred Art" and raise you the lives of trans persons, persons of color and other disenfranchised Americans persons threatened by acts of hate.

"But we artists LOVE you, we feel your pain ... and also you need our skills/access/privilege to get the message out there."

To be sure, theater folk are trained to expertly insert themselves squarely into any character's tattered shoes, and walk their woe-ful walk. The "We Can Be Anyone" tradition of Meryl Streep, Dustin Hoffman runs deep. Their cry is We are Artists! We are Everyman!

Well, you know the problem with that? Actors and writers do exactly what they say: they put THEMSELVES into minority characters. I'm sorry, but no coffee chats with your (one) trans friend, no Howlround articles nor hours of RuPaul's Drag Race can change the intrinsic fact of your cisgender-ness. You ARE. NOT. TRANS.

Which is critical because ...

An artists' strongest concerns, insights, and convictions inevitably concern themselves. Life

Turn to page 14

Before gender transitioning, Delia Kropp trained in England and Chicago, and acted with a variety of Chicago companies including The Goodman, Red Twist, Griffin, Lifeline, and Pegasus Players. She won Best Supporting Actor for her work as Alan in "Equus" at Michigan's renowned Boarshead Theatre. She has also directed a number of productions for Chicago storefront and educational institutions. Delia's female acting career begins with "Raggedy And" at Pride Films and Plays in 2016.

Friends recall connections with Howard Wax

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Attorney and River Forest resident Howard Wax, who passed away in May, was remembered by close friend Lee Griesbach, among others, as someone who “collected friends” in the best sense of the phrase.

“He was a networker,” added Griesbach’s partner, David Miller.

Wax took his own life on May 12. He is survived by his husband, Robert Pooley, and two children, Sarah and Marcus Wax.

A native of Livingston, New Jersey, but a long-time Chicago-area resident, Wax had roles in a number of community organizations, and was for many years co-president of the mainly-LGBT synagogue Congregation Or Chadash. After he and his family moved to River Forest, Wax was also an active member at Oak Park Temple.

Rabbi Larry Edwards recalled that Wax was “very involved in his community—the children’s school, the synagogue, the tennis club. One of many words that come to mind about him is ‘generous.’ Howard devoted time and resources, both financial and intellectual, to the community—the Jewish community, the LGBTQ community, pro-bono legal work and beyond.”

Wax’s friends’ remembrances nearly all included

a common theme: his knack for connecting people with one another. Close friend Mark Maroney said, “Whenever I met an individual or couple I thought would make a good connection with Howard and Rob, almost invariably it turned out they already knew one another, often through connections Howard had previously made.”

Edwards added that Wax was “a friendly face and warm presence” at Or Chadash, noting that “numbers of people have told me that Howard was among the first to greet them and make them feel at home when they showed up for the first time. He was in fact the first person to invite me to attend a service at Or Chadash, where I later served as rabbi for 10 years.”

“There was always two degrees of separation,” said Griesbach. “You’d meet someone and somehow there’d be a connection to Howard, no matter who you spoke to or who you knew. He not only collected friends, but he connected them. He knew everyone’s name and remembered everyone. It was amazing how he could do that.”

Wax was an avid runner and took part in marathons and other races, and indeed met Pooley when both were members of Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago. According to Griesbach, Wax was also an avid movie buff, loved musical theater, and was active in his tennis club, which was

just as much a social group as it was a sports one.

“He liked to grow organizations and networks of people,” said Miller.

Susan Boone, who is married to Edwards, explained why she stayed on “the opposite side any circle” Wax was in when he ventured out on the dance floor.

“He was also full of fun ... He was prone to let loose unrestrainedly,” Boone said. “He could do the Russian squat dance with flair. At Jewish events where people danced the hora, I observed on multiple occasions that individuals in his vicinity, and he himself, often lifted completely off the ground—they looked like characters in a Chagall painting, flying.”

Maroney also noted Wax’s devotion to his family, recalling, “Home life was important to Howard. He may have been the ‘stay-at-home’ dad, but he also helped make sure his family ventured out and experienced the world together, and with a wide circle of friends and extended family.

“I’ll always remember the pride and admiration I felt years ago, seeing the photo of Howard and Rob—two gay dads—with their two small children, as part of a cover story in Chicago Parent magazine.”

Besides being a stay-at-home father, Wax worked part-time at the Brown Elephant in Oak Park and did legal work for the Pro Bono Network.

“He was representing people who had come to this country, in a lot of cases, to escape some type of abuse,” said Griesbach.

Miller mentioned that, when he was at Wax’s *shiva*, a number of people credited Wax with in-



Howard Wax.
Photo courtesy of Robert Pooley

roducing them to their life-partners. “Howard liked to match up couples and would hold dinner parties, ostensibly ‘just to hold a dinner party,’ that were really to set people up,” he said.

Griesbach added, “It was pretty amazing how broad his reach was in touching people’s lives.”

In addition to Pooley and his children, Wax is survived by his sisters Rabbi Pamela (Chaim Bronstein) Wax and Sheila (Willy) Chang. Funeral services were held May 30 at Oak Park Temple. Wax’s family has requested donations in his memory for either the Oak Park Temple Chevra Kaddisha (burial society) or the Pro Bono Network.

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The Masterpiece decision, and its ramifications

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

In a what one legal activist characterized as “dangerous encouragement to those who would deny civil rights to LGBT people,” the U.S. Supreme Court voted seven to two on June 4 in favor of a Colorado baker who refused to sell wedding cakes to same-sex couples the same as he sells to male-female couples.

The much-anticipated decision in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado* elicited an unusually broad array of reactions from LGBT legal activists and observers.

While Lambda Legal Chief Executive Officer Rachel Tiven said the ruling offers “dangerous encouragement to those who would deny civil rights to LGBT people and people living with HIV,” the ACLU said the majority opinion “reaffirmed the core principle that businesses open to the public must be open to all.”

Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said the decision was “narrow” and “does not break any new constitutional ground or create any new religious or free speech exceptions to anti-discrimination laws.”

Law professor Tobias Barrington Wolff said “the majority’s reasoning has many implications,” including the likelihood that “litigants will try to apply the Court’s analysis to other forms of discrimination or unfavorable treatment by state authorities (based on race, sex, national origin), and lower courts may entertain those arguments.”

The Alliance Defending Freedom, which brought the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* appeal, was unequivocal: “This is a big win—not just for Jack, but for every American who values freedom.”

The decision

In writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy accepted Colorado baker Jack Phillips’ claim that selling a wedding cake requires the use of his “artistic skills to make an expressive statement, a wedding endorsement in his own voice and of his own creation.” Kennedy also noted that, in 2012, when Phillips refused to sell a cake to the gay couple, Colorado law banned recognition of marriage between same-sex couples.

“At the time of the events in question, this Court had not issued its decisions either in *United States v. Windsor* [striking down the federal Defense of Marriage Act] or *Obergefell* [striking state bans on marriage for same-sex couples]. Since the State itself did not allow those marriages to be performed in Colorado, there is some force to the argument that the baker was not unreasonable in deeming it lawful to decline to take an action that he understood to be an expression of support for their validity when that expression was contrary to his sincerely held religious beliefs, at least insofar as his refusal was limited to refusing to create and express a message in support of gay marriage, even one planned to take place in another State.”

As he did during oral argument, Kennedy also

put considerable emphasis on his interpretation of how the Colorado Civil Rights Commission handled the complaint against Phillips. He said the Commission demonstrated “clear and impermissible hostility toward the sincere religious beliefs that motivated his objection.” His evidence was two-fold: that the Commission did not take adverse action against bakers who had refused to create cakes with anti-LGBT messages, and that a member or members of the Commission made remarks he construed to be hostile toward Phillips’ expressed religious beliefs.

But LGBT legal activists, for the most part, were inclined to focus their reaction Monday to the majority decision’s inclusion of language signaling an acceptance that civil rights laws should and must protect LGBT people from discrimination.

“Our society has come to the recognition that gay persons and gay couples cannot be treated as social outcasts or as inferior in dignity and worth,” wrote Kennedy. “For that reason the laws and the Constitution can, and in some instances must, protect them in the exercise of their civil rights.”

While “the religious and philosophical objections to gay marriage are protected views and in some instances protected forms of expression,” wrote Kennedy, “...it is a general rule that such objections do not allow business owners and other actors in the economy and in society to deny protected persons equal access to goods and services under a neutral and generally applicable public accommodations law.”

“...[A]ny decision in favor of the baker would have to be sufficiently constrained,” said Kennedy, “lest all purveyors of goods and services who object to gay marriages for moral and religious reasons in effect be allowed to put up signs saying ‘no goods or services will be sold if they will be used for gay marriages,’ something that would impose a serious stigma on gay persons.”

That means “the baker won the battle but lost the war,” said James Essex, director of the LGBT project of the ACLU, which represented the Colorado couple who brought the complaint against the baker.

“This was not the result we were looking for,” said Essex, but the baker “did not get a constitutional license to discriminate.”

While Essex said there were no plans to re-visit this case with the Colorado Commission, he said any same-sex couple who now seeks to buy a cake from the baker might reasonably file a complaint with the Commission if the baker refuses them service and hope for a good outcome.

Others agreed.

“Although ruling for the baker, the [Supreme] Court recognized the importance of protecting the dignity of LGBT people, said Williams Institute Executive Director Jocelyn Samuels, “and affirmed states’ general authority to bar sexual orientation discrimination by businesses that serve the public.”

In addition to Kennedy and the court’s conser-



Ed Yohnka of the ACLU of Illinois at a Chicago protest against the Masterpiece ruling.

Photo by Tracy Baim

vative justices (Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch), two of its more liberal members—Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan—voted with the majority. (Clarence Thomas did not sign onto the majority decision but filed his own opinion, concurring in the judgment.)

A split among the progressives

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote the dissent for herself and Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Ginsburg found fault with the majority’s reliance on the remarks of Commission members and the different outcome in complaints involving other bakers. She noted that the gay couple who approached *Masterpiece Cakeshop* did not seek any particular message “or anything else distinguishing” on their cake.

“When a couple contacts a bakery for a wedding cake, the product they are seeking is a cake celebrating their wedding—not a cake celebrating heterosexual weddings or same-sex weddings—and that is the service Craig and Mullins were denied,” said Ginsburg. The baker in the *Masterpiece* case, she said, “declined to make a cake he found offensive where the offensiveness of the product was determined solely by the identity of the customer requesting it.”

Ginsburg also said she could “see no reason why the comments of one or two Commissioners should be taken to overcome Phillips’ refusal to sell a wedding cake” to the gay couple.

During last December’s oral argument, Kennedy expressed consternation with a remark made by a member of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission during its deliberation—a remark that Kennedy construed to be intolerant of religious beliefs. The Commission member is quoted to have said: “Freedom of religion and religion has been used to justify all kinds of discrimination throughout history, whether it be slavery, whether it be the Holocaust...we can list hundreds of situations where freedom of religion has been used to justify discrimination. And, to me, it is one of the most despicable piece of rhetoric that people can use—to use their religion to hurt others.”

Justices Elena Kagan and Stephen Breyer, two who are usually on the side of equal treatment for LGBT people, said they concurred with the majority that the Commission exhibited “religious

hostility” to Phillips’ view that the Bible opposes marriage for same-sex couples.

Preparing for the next battle

In a telephone press conference after the decision was released, David Mullins who, along with spouse Charlie Craig, filed the original complaint against baker Phillips, said he was “disappointed” with the ruling but that he hopes “people can understand that this is not a wide-ranging ruling and it doesn’t mean the [state law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation] was invalidated in any way.”

Mullins and Craig were living in Colorado but married in Massachusetts in 2012, when the U.S. Supreme Court had not yet struck down state bans against marriage for same-sex couples. After Phillips refused to sell them a cake for their reception, they posted a message on Facebook about the incident and then learned that state law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. That’s when they filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission.

A state administrative judge, the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, and the Colorado Court of Appeals all ruled for the couple and against Phillips. The Commission did not order Phillips to design cakes for same-sex weddings, but rather ordered that he stop “refusing to sell [to same-sex couples] wedding cakes or any product [the baker] would sell to heterosexual couples.”

Colorado and 20 other states have laws prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination in public accommodations and other areas, such as employment and housing.

Rea Carey of the National LGBTQ Task Force said that, while she is “concerned that the Court’s action will lead to future cases that may weaken the rights of LGBTQ people,” she takes “solace in the fact that in Justice Kennedy’s ruling he reminded everyone that religious objections alone do not grant a right to deny services to others.”

Law professor Tobias Barrington Wolff said the majority’s reasoning has “many implications,” including the likelihood that “litigants will try to apply the Court’s analysis to other forms of discrimination or unfavorable treatment by state authorities (based on race, sex, national origin), and lower courts may entertain those arguments.”

“The landscape has shifted on religious discrimination claims,” said Wolff, “...in some ways that might help to advance the rights of minority faith practitioners or non-believers, and in other ways that might result in religious justifications for discrimination occupying a particularly favored status in the day-to-day business of state and local regulation.”

Lambda Legal’s Tiven expressed a similar worry. “This is a deeply disappointing day in American jurisprudence,” said Tiven, but added that her organization “will fiercely resist the coming effort that will seek to turn this ruling into a broad license to discriminate.”

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More information about two Title VII cases that the U.S. Supreme Court is reviewing can be found at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Two-new-Title-VII-cases-now-before-Supreme-Court/63068.html>.

Illinois groups respond to Masterpiece Cake SCOTUS decision

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

ACLU of Illinois, Lambda Legal-Midwest Regional Office, Equality Illinois (EI), AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), Indivisible Chicago, Women's March Illinois and the Transformative Justice Law Project held a rally June 4 at Federal Plaza following the U.S. Supreme Court's 7-2 narrow ruling in favor of the Christian bakers in the Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission

case.

The overriding message from these organizations was that LGBTQ protections remain in effect in Chicago and Illinois despite this ruling.

"We are here today as a community in response to the Supreme Court's decision this morning," said ACLU of Illinois Director of Communications and Public Policy Ed Yohnka. "This case was always about more than just cake. It is about who we are as a people. It is about whether or not we

are going to discriminate or whether or not we are going to be fair, equitable and open for all. I think we should be open for all."

Yohnka said the LGBTQ community "has fought hard and won protections against discrimination" and "we are not going back from all of that."

Lambda Legal-Midwest Legal Assistant Elissa Jeffers explained that this ruling does not change the law and that Illinois' LGBTQ non-discrimina-

tion law is one of the strongest in the country. Gov. Bruce Rauner and Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, as well as all businesses across the state, to publicly support Illinois Human Rights Act in the wake of this Supreme Court decision.

AFC CEO and President John Peller said everyone must remain vigilant because anti-LGBTQ people may use this decision to discriminate in other areas, including against people with HIV.

Chicago Commission on Human Relations Com-



Left: Anthony Galloway. Right: Mona Noriega.

Photos by Tracy Baim

tion law is one of the strongest in the country. Jeffers noted that Lambda Legal will continue to fight anti-discrimination cases nationwide in the coming months and years.

EI Director of Civic Engagement Anthony Galloway said "we are heartened by today's Supreme Court decision." He noted that the opponents of equality will not stop their efforts to hasten and/or roll back protections for LGBTQ people. Galloway explained that although LGBTQ discrimination still exists there is no turning back from the progress that has already been made. He urged

missioner Mona Noriega asked the crowd if they were mad and said her office will enforce the laws protecting LGBTQ people everywhere in the city. She explained that if anyone is discriminated against based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or any of the other protected classes she wants to hear from them.

Following the rally, Noriega handed out an explainer on Chicago's Human Rights and Fair Housing ordinances regarding LGBTQ people and discrimination protections in employment, public accommodations, housing, credit and bonding.

Statement from Chicago's LGBT Caucus on Supreme Court ruling

"Today's U.S. Supreme Court ruling (Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission) is one that the members of LGBTQ caucus in the Chicago City Council find deeply troubling. While it stops short of officially sanctioning discrimination against the LGBTQ community, we fear the court has handed those who seek to spread intolerance and homopho-

bia a symbolic victory in their efforts to ignore the equal protections afforded to LGBTQ Americans under the U.S. Constitution and deny access to services in the marketplace under the guise of 'religious freedom.'

"We invite any and all Americans to visit any of our LGBTQ-owned bakeries in Chicago, especially those who practice religious bigotry. You might learn a thing or two."

The five Aldermen who make up the LGBT Caucus are: James Cappleman, Deb Mell, Raymond Lopez, Carlos Ramirez-Rosa and Tom Tunney.

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Illinois becomes 37th state to ratify ERA

SPRINGFIELD—Following a 72-45 vote in the House, Illinois approved a measure sponsored by state Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago) to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, making it the 37th state to do so.

The Equal Rights Amendment declares that equality of rights will not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex. Currently, women are not guaranteed equal rights under the U.S. Constitution.

State judges group has first gay president

The Honorable James E. Snyder has been installed as president of the Illinois Judges Association during the annual meeting on June 1 at the Chicago-Kent College of Law, in Chicago.

The Honorable Mary Jane Theis of the Illinois Supreme Court administered the oath of office. "Judge Snyder embodies commitment to social justice and service to all communities" Theis said in a statement.

The association, which represents 1,500 active and retired Illinois state court judges, was founded in 1972 to provide services, support and education to its member judges and raise public understanding of the Illinois judicial system.

Snyder was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2007. Prior to that ap-

pointment, he served as general counsel of the Illinois Human Rights Commission and has taught and written about the law of workplace sexual harassment, employment discrimination, fair housing and disability access. He is a former president of the Alliance of Illinois LGBT Judges.

Also, Snyder has been an active in judicial education, teaching peer education classes in advanced discovery, consumer fraud and civil procedure. He has served on the Supreme Court Committees for Judicial Performance Evaluation, Judicial Education and chaired the Illinois Advanced Judicial Academy. He presides over a commercial litigation docket in the Circuit Court of Cook County.

"Judge Snyder is a legend in legal community, known for his steadfast leadership, commitment to principal, compassion and his great sense of humor," said Hon. Mary S. Trew, president of the Alliance of Illinois LGBT Judges, in the same statement.

Several advancements for women's rights, such as the Equal Pay Act and Title IX, could be repealed by a majority vote in Congress. The executive branch also could reduce enforcement of these acts.

Although the deadline to ratify the ERA was initially set as 1982, Congress has the ability to extend that deadline.

Legislation to ratify the ERA was introduced in both the Virginia Senate and House this year, but those measures failed to gain the necessary support to advance.

The ERA had many backers—including many not from Illinois. Rolling Stone lead singer Mick Jagger wrote a letter to Illinois lawmakers asking them to pass the amendment, according to ABC7Chicago.com. In part, Jagger wrote, "Please vote yes on the Equal Rights Amendment. I have three daughters who are US Citizens and they should all deserve rights under the Constitution of the United States."

The ABC item is at <http://abc7chicago.com/politics/mick-jagger-asks-illinois-lawmakers-to-pass-equal-rights-amendment/3502300/>.



Judge Jim Snyder being sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Mary Jane Theis. Photo courtesy of Snyder

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Oak Park-River Forest H.S. passes trans protections

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Community members and school board officials lauded the passage of a rule codifying protections and instructions for transgender students at Oak Park River Forest (OPRF) High School in Oak Park.

The policy that the OPRF Board of Education passed May 24 is added to the school's existing prohibition against discrimination on the basis of gender. Newly added wording states, "Students shall be treated and supported in a manner consistent with their gender identity. This shall include but not be limited to; students having access to gendered facilities, including restrooms



Supporters cheer passage of a pro-trans policy at the school.

Photo by Kelly Benkert

and locker rooms that correspond to their gender identity."

The policy will be reflected in new administrative procedures at the school. The passage was cause for celebration for Jane Ditelberg, who has a transgender son attending OPRF.

"The high school had a lot of ad hoc things in place," explained Ditelberg. "They're very sympathetic. I don't want anyone to think that the school here was not helpful, because they were. It's just that a kid, with what they were experiencing, was navigating it on their own. The students and their parents had to go ask for what they needed. There wasn't anything laid out, and if you didn't know there was an option, you didn't ask for it."

Ditelberg's son, for example, preferred to change for gym class in a unisex bathroom, and did not have a convenient place to store his street clothes while he was in class; he did not realize until months later he had the other options.

"He spent a whole semester last year not knowing what to do," Ditelberg recalled. "This year he had a different gym teacher, who said, 'Why don't we just get you a gym locker right next to the bathroom and you can put your stuff in there?' It was not a big accommodation. The school was making it for other people, but if you didn't know who to ask, you didn't know what you could get."

An ad hoc committee spent several months reviewing the discrimination policy and formulating how to tackle issues transgender students might face at OPRF. Among those on the committee was Board of Education Secretary Jennifer Cassell, who said that equity and inclusion were "pillars of the strategic plan" for the school.

She added, "During the process when we were revamping our strategic plan, there was a lot of

discussion among the staff about having more specific and concrete policies and procedures on the books for our transgender and gender non-conforming students. We also heard a lot of feedback from the community, that it was something the community desired."

Having rules "written down in our policies and procedures was really important," Cassell said.

Board of Education President Jackie Moore noted, "The desire of our board was to ensure that [the policies] were realized and that it was clear from the policy how the procedures could go forward in a way that there was no ambiguity about what the goals are. Boards change, but policies can be put in place that allow procedures to be

effective. Our goal was to put something in place that would not be viewed as ambiguous."

While there was some initial concern about the new policy from some quarters, discussion and debate remained civil.

"Our community is progressive in terms of openness to people of different ilks, whether that's socio-economic [status], gender identity, race, all those things," said Moore. "We had a very effective community organizing approach from our community that was really insistent on clarifying our procedures and wanting that to be something we honed in on. ... We started to hear the hesitation that some community members had, but it was never contentious, and never anything that would rise to the occasion of fear or hatred, just questioning and wanting to understand [whether we are] thinking of all our students."

Many of the concerns were headed off, Moore added, because, "The committee had done their homework and were thoughtful in bringing in families and students, and, at the end of the day, were able to respond to those concerns with, 'We're looking out for the best interests of all of our students.'"

Officials from Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and Lurie Children's Hospital also took part on the committee reviewing the policy.

Community member Kelly Benkert, who was among local residents advocating for the policy change, said, "We were really trying to think about partnership with the school, and we still have work to do. We've had this success in District 200, but there are the two elementary districts in Oak Park and River Forest, who we'll be working with next to try to get their policies and procedures in alignment with those that passed in D200."

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ESSAY

OPEN LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF: You'll be fine—Let go

BY SAM KIRK

In November of 2017, I received a text that would fulfill a couple of my dreams. Curator Neysa Page-Lieberman asked "Would I like to go to Morocco to paint a mural?" For a moment it didn't feel real. For years I've flipped through magazines and the internet fascinated with artists that traveled the world to paint multi-story murals in countries I'd never been. It was something I often hoped to do.



I started my public art career about eight years ago, while running a full-time art business which consisted of gallery exhibits, corporate commissions, merchandise development, the works. This came after 10 years in advertising, and a desire to create more work that made an impact on the world.

I hadn't planned any of this (art life). In high school I was trying to deal with being queer. Figuring out what I would be doing with my life was an after thought. If I were told then that in 20 years I'd be painting a five-story mural on the coast of Africa, that I would accomplish this grand opportunity with my partner/girlfriend, and be the first women to do this in Casablanca, Morocco, I probably would have laughed in disbelief.

Art has always been a form of communication for me. As a teenager I used it to understand myself, to reveal my identity, to express things I had no idea how to say with words to my family and friends. Now, 20 years later art is the center of my life and is still a major communication tool for everything I want to share. It is a way of celebrating my identity and culture; a way to create more visibility for underrepresented communities. Everything I needed more of when I was younger, I had been creating it all along.

When I received the call from Neysa, I wanted to shout from the top of my lungs, "Yes! I did it! I beat the odds! I proved, hard work pays off!" I wanted to cry, I did cry. Not once did I expect to

be in a position where my art would take me to a place that meant I had to return to the closet.

I cried on the plane en route to Morocco. As I sat in my seat, leaving Montreal to Casablanca, the fact that I would not be able to touch, talk about, or recognize my partner for who she was to me in public for a month, broke my heart.

A flood of memories overwhelmed me. All of the hate crimes I've survived, two being life-threatening, sat with me the most, as I was preparing to enter a place where who I am is illegal. Grow-

ing up queer in the states was challenging, but for the past 15 years it's been legal to be me.

I felt as though I were under a microscope and I hadn't even entered the country yet. I felt the painful urges of resistance building up for the many times I would want to reach out and hold her hand but couldn't ... After taking deep breaths I tried to focus on my mission and eventually felt the spirit of happiness fill my soul. I thought, "It's just another obstacle we'll get through AND being the first woman to do this—is even more vital to stay focused, AND I'm going to Africa to paint a mural—on the coast of the continent that for years has been the first place out of my mouth when asked, "If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?"

I hadn't experienced such an unbalanced range of emotions in a while. It was almost like preparing for my first kiss with a girl ... "I wasn't supposed to be doing it," but the anticipation of that action felt amazing!

Jen (my partner) has studied Northern African and Mideast cultures for more than a decade. A professional dancer, she has shared stories of her travels through Morocco many times throughout our relationship, which always piqued my curiosity. So, I guess this was destined to be. My tears dried up and I shifted my mind to this life-changing adventure presented to me.

Over the course of the month, we did all of the things we usually do, but in Africa! We explored the local culture and did exchanges to show our

appreciation. We volunteered to teach workshops for youth in an underprivileged area called Sidi Moumen. I created two murals with youth for their Cultural Center, and Jen taught dance workshops.

We wandered the mazes of the Medina in Marrakech. Every step was a joyful reflex as motorcycles piled with two or three people zoomed by, donkeys pulled carts with goods through narrow streets, and pedestrians hustled on to their next destination. I felt my imagination blossom, as my eyes soaked in all of the vibrancy, patterns and details I'd hope to remember for future creations filled my brain.

We ate in the homes of the poor and rich, public housing apartments, beautiful restaurants and glamorous riads, with politicians, everyday people and local artists. We experienced every level of hospitality Casablanca had to offer, and

every place presented us with the most exquisite preparation of food I'd ever seen.

The elegant dinners included five- to six-course meals with Moroccan salad, pastilla, cornish hens, fish and khobz, but they were no match to the couscous that was made for us in the homes of two women.

In the neighborhoods where we worked lived the impoverished, most in need residents. Unsurprisingly, they gave more food and nourishment than we could consume. Countless trays of Moroccan Mint Tea with homemade corn bread, cookies, seloo and Halwa chebakia were delivered to us daily. Some women carried trays of hot tea with several glasses for blocks to treat us to a small break in our days. The smiles that crossed their faces as they handed us a glass, as our spoons filled with couscous, as we gobbled up their creations in gratitude were easily a highlight in this

Above three photos: Sam Kirk (in black sunglasses) and Jenny Q at work. Left: Kirk poses in front of a stop sign.
Photos courtesy of Kirk



adventure. We could feel the love in their cooking and what more is there to ask for beyond that?

There were many encounters which evoked thoughts like, "I could have never imagined art would bring me here." In the beginning, the organization (Chicago Casablanca Sister Cities International) that invited us arranged for several meetings and presented my work to the mayor of Casablanca, Wali of Casablanca, U.S. Consulate General and her staff. There was so much to celebrate, 35 years of programming between Chicago and Casablanca, and when I looked at who I was surrounded by, who brought me here from Chicago, it was a team of incredibly strong women.

All of my work leading up to this point started to replay in my mind. Acknowledging women, celebrating women, being the woman that does the things I'm "not supposed" to do, and here we were, women changing the game again.

In the final week of our trip we completed "Sister Cities," a five-story mural in the El Hank community of Casablanca that celebrates women and encourages unity and friendship for years to come. During this time, we dealt with the usual external challenges encountered as female mural-

Turn to page 12



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KIRK from page 10

ists, but that couldn't shake us. We were 40 feet in the air on a scissor lift that leaked gas and had other issues—with the most incredible view of the Atlantic! We were determined.

On multiple occasions despite what nonsense was happening on the ground, we turned around and said "Can you believe this?" We whispered, "I love you honey" and exchanged glances of adoration away from windows and places where no one could see or hear us.

During this time, I realized another level of love from my partner. Jen chose to cover her head for the month. She often does this in the U.S. as well, but not daily. My appearance when traveling and even in the states is often noticed. The tattoos, hair, androgyny all give pause for thought. While changing some of the answers to many questions and hiding our identities was one task I could manage, I didn't know how to be anyone else or how to alter my physical self.

Jen knew this and decided she would cover her head to help distract from my appearance, also to not reveal her short hair, but mostly to be an example for all, that every type of woman can do this work.

This journey was an amazing opportunity to explore a world very different from my own, to be outside myself and learn from people. No matter what we had to do to hide who we were, Jen and I embarked on this journey together for the visibility of women/women in the arts.

While I was asked to design this mural, she completed it with me and together we are the first women to complete a mural in Casablanca's CasaMouja Annual Street Art Festival. I thank the women that brought us here to make this happen. It further cements the steps I've taken in my life and I hope more women see this and are encouraged to go beyond what is expected of us, and to support other women in fulfilling their dreams.



Left: Sam Kirk at work. Right: Kirk (left) with Jenny Q in Morocco. Photos courtesy of Kirk

About the artists:

Sam Kirk creates artwork to celebrate people and to inspire pride and recognition for underrepresented communities. Her work explores culture, identity, and the politics that have formed society for generations. Born and raised on the South Side of Chicago, working-class communities continue to be Kirk's key ingredient of inspiration. Partially autobiographical, her vibrant color palette and intricate line-work highlights cultural communities via multi-toned figures and familiar buildings and elements. She has exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the U.S., worked with many private and commercial clients and made custom artworks for nonprofit organizations in Chicago and New York. For information visit www.iamsamkirk.com, @iamsamkirk.



Jenny Q. is a cartoonist and performer (under the moniker Jenny RaQs). She is a proud Afro-Latina who also moonlights as a Birth Doula. Born in Brooklyn, New York she has lived across the globe throughout her life. Jenny has studied Raqs Sharqi for approximately 12 years partially at the Egyptian Academy of Oriental Dance in New York City before leaving a career in politics where she opened the first breastfeeding room at the NYC Mayor's Office. Since her first venture into the dances of the Maghreb she has performed as a soloist at several national/ international venues including the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Newark Symphony Music Hall, Rakkasah, Lincoln Center Local and many others. Currently, she is planting roots in her new hometown of Chicago and resides with her partner and their pup Frida

Chanleta. For information visit www.quirklyn.com, @quirklyn

Thank you to the women from Chicago who lead us to this amazing adventure: Lisa Roberts, Julie Stagliano, Neysa Page Lieberman, Cindy Mitchell, Andrea Zopp, Marilyn Diamond and Paula Kahn

This project was organized by Chicago Sister Cities International and World Business Chicago, Curated by Neysa Page-Lieberman as part of an art exchange to celebrate 35 years of collaboration.

To learn more about the Chicago Casablanca Sister Cities International Art Exchange please visit: <http://www.chicagosistercities.com/news/chicago-casablanca-kickoff-mural-exchange/>.

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City workers accidentally whitewash mural

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A Chicago artist, city officials and community members are looking for solutions after, in early May, city workers whitewashed a mural in the Hermosa neighborhood that local residents adored.

The city has said that the mural, entitled "*Es Tiempo de Recordar*," was indeed whitewashed by mistake after it had been defaced with graffiti.

Artist Sandra Antongiori—who painted the mural along with artists Rolf Mueller and Marcus Akinlana in 1992 and restored it in 2010—said that she'd initially heard about the whitewashing and thought little of it, assuming the neighborhood had tired of the piece.

"I was fine until I read the comments" on social media, said Antongiori, who added that she became "shocked and outraged" over the incident.

At this point, she said, there has been discussion of possibly repainting the mural elsewhere, since the viaduct under which it was located is in need of repair, among other options. Antongiori added that Aids. Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th Ward) and Robert Maldonado (26th) have voiced their support.

"It seems like they're interested in finding a solution," Antongiori said. "The aldermen felt it was a big mistake by the city."

SAGE meeting June 8

The national board of directors of SAGE (Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders) will hold a get-together Friday, June 8, in the penthouse of the Wyndham Grand Hotel, 71 E. Wacker Dr., 6-8 p.m.

Among others, guests will meet SAGE Executive Director Michael Adams and the members of the board. SAGE has three board members from Chicago: former Roosevelt University President Chuck Middleton, Ph.D., Phil Lumpkin and Roy Wesley.

Visit SAGEUSA.org/CHI for tickets and more information.

"Es Tiempo de Recordar" mural before whitewashing.

Photo by John Vergara and Sandra Antongiori

Equality rally June 10 at Midsommarfest

The second annual Chicago Equality Rally will take place Sunday, June 10, 12-1 p.m. on the Pride Stage at the Andersonville Midsommarfest, 5400 N. Clark St.

The schedule is as follows:

12 p.m.: Welcome

12:05-12:10 p.m.: Senn High School Orchestra

12:10-12:40 p.m.: Speakers

12:40-12:45 p.m.: Senn High School Orchestra

12:45-1 p.m.: Pierce Elementary School Bollywood dancers and closing remarks

Speakers are slated to include lesbian Chicago mayoral candidate Lori Lightfoot, LGBTQ-rights activist Rick Garcia, openly gay state Rep. Greg Harris and Chicago Ald. Harry Osterman.

According to a press release, "The Chicago Equality Rally at Midsommarfest aims to unify people with a mission to make change towards equal treatment, protection, and access for all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigrant



State Rep. Greg Harris.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

status. While we may each believe this abstractly or understand the need for change theoretically, this rally serves to put human experience at the forefront of the issue of inequality. We see storytelling as humanizing and believe in the power of the personal."



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Community Partners: Equality Illinois, Windy City Times, Center on Halsted, The Legacy Project, Chicago Alliance of Museums with Pride

Equality Illinois brunch ushers in Pride Month

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Victory Fund CEO and former Houston Mayor An-nise Parker, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner were among those in attendance June 3 as the LGBT advocacy Equality Illinois kicked off June with its annual Pride Brunch at Venue West, 221 N. Paulina St.

Numerous community members, elected and appointed officials and political candidates were on hand for the event. Among those in attendance were Democratic gubernatorial candidate J.B. Pritzker and his running mate, lieutenant governor candidate Juliana Stratton; Chicago mayoral candidate Lori Lightfoot; Illinois Treasurer Mike Frerichs; Illinois state representative candidate Lamont Robinson; Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) Commissioner Debra Shore; Chicago Ald. James Cappleman; Berwyn Ald. Scott Lennon; Berwyn school board member Julia McAleer-Forte; Berwyn Township Trustee Joseph Johnston; Cook County Board candidate Kevin Morrison; Aurora School Board Member Alex Arroyo; aldermanic candidate Andre Vazquez; MWRD board candidate Marcelina Garcia; and Chicago Commission on Human Rights Commissioner Mona Noriega.

Rauner was introduced by his wife Diana, and noted that he had signed all bills that had come before him advancing LGBT equality; he also mentioned that his first act as a justice of the peace after becoming governor was officiating at the same-sex wedding of one of his staff.

"These issues are not partisan issues," Rauner said. "They are people issues."

As he has done at numerous LGBT events during his time in office, Emanuel framed LGBT rights in the larger context of the city's overall diversity and welcomeness, promising, "We're not giving an inch on the gains we've made. This city will remain a 'Trump-free' zone."

Parker, who was the first openly lesbian mayor



Lori Lightfoot (left) and An-nise Parker at the Equality Illinois brunch.

Photo by Matt Simonette

of a major U.S. city, called for pushes to bring out younger voters. She also called on more awareness surrounding issues affecting the transgender community, something that Victory Fund directly impacts in its support of transgender candidates across the nation.

"Too many Americans do not understand what it means to be transgender in America, and that needs to change," she said.

Equality Illinois CEO Brian Johnson also spoke at the event, and Hillary Wirtz of Breakthru Beverages presented the organization with a check for \$55,000. Among the honorees in the program were attorney Nicole Bashor, who has long served on the board of Equality Illinois PAC, and HIV/AIDS advocate and service provider Saul Avina Jr.

More photos are at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

GUEST COLUMN from page 4

is rendered through the grimy lense of our own experiences and perspective. This is just human nature. Undeniably, today's artists sometime achieve their rainbow-and-unicorn dream world where pure artistic imagination (and that hard-earned MFA) magically supercede the all limits of their experience. Where trans stories are concerned, no such Superpowers are in evidence. Cis artists don't even score passing grades when depicting our transitions, our self-perception, our love-lives, and especially not our typical roles in society. "But I'm gay, I know your pain."

Oh dear Lord, no. You're gay and you know YOUR pain. But, because trans is hip and cool, we become ciphers for your stories. I had the displeasure to direct such a play, that tried to translate its writer's memories of mid-century gay youth into a modern transgender story. The ways he got us wrong staggered not only me but my cisgender

cast, too. Yet this play had been judged exemplary by several gay theater artists until I staged a reading, and detailed its many trans-gressions. Folks are still discovering that we're not all interchangeable LGBT misfits.

So I continually challenge our entertainment industry because these insitutions resist change, and trans people are still largely figments of cis-gender imagination. And I believe that artists' response has to be No. No more marginalization. No more noble deaths but tales where we flourish. No more heart-of-gold whores but transgender business owners, mothers, and steel workers. Our very survival depends on this.

Like all human beings, we merit narratives which exemplify our right to exist with dignity, and to move freely among our fellow man. Only then shall I gladly confine my noise and fury to the stage.

*Note: The author here uses "transgender" to denote all gender-nonconforming persons typically grouped under that umbrella term.

POST CARD.

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Wish you were here!

"Boats, Buggies & Broadway," Sullivan serves as the county seat of Moultrie County and is home to The Little Theatre On the Square, the only Equity (professional) theatre located between Chicago and St. Louis. In addition, the city serves as the north gateway to Lake Shelbyville, and also marks the west edge of the area's large Amish settlement.

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National Museum of Mexican Art hosts Annual queer prom

BY VERNON HESTER

On June 1, The National Museum of Mexican Art presented its 13th annual gay prom. The event, in Pilsen, attracted students from all over Chicago and featured drag performers, a buffet dinner, a DJ, an on-site photographer and a tabling section.

Youth mentor and community leader Emmanuel Garcia said, "Queer prom kicks off Pride Month, and what better way than celebrating LGBTQ young people from all over the city? We're 13 this year and it's so important to have this space for young people, especially with so many of them leading activist movements for change."

Event coordinator Eric Amaya said that, with the event, he "wanted to accomplish community. I love queer prom because it's a place to come together, and I think of it as a love letter to the youth."

Entertainment was provided by DJ M Dok and a crew of drag performers, including Venus, Cindy Neri, Cherry Delicious and Iris LaVelle.

Community sponsors included Broadway Youth Center, Chicago Public Library, Illinois Safe School Alliance and Illinois Institute of Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Well Being of Northwestern University.

Sponsors for the event included Calor Heath Services, The Impulse Group, and The Hektoen Health and Research Institute. Other sponsors for the event included Dyke March, Anne H. and Robert Lurie Hospital, Esperanza Healthcare and Marimacha Monarca Press.



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viewpoints



**Dana
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MOMBIAN Two new picture books tell story of the rainbow flag

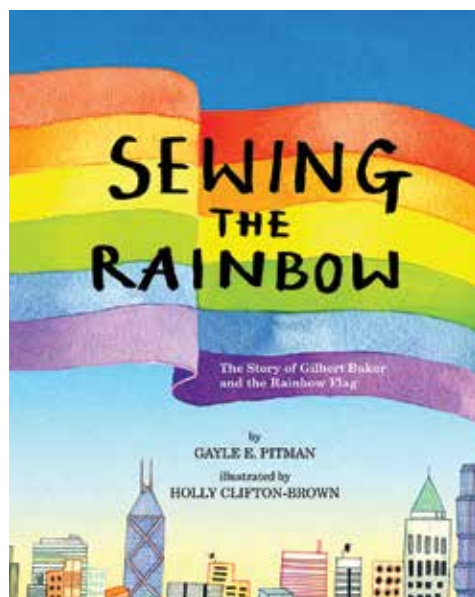
Pride season is here, and so are two new picture books that tell the story of the rainbow flag and the individuals who inspired and created it.

Rob Sanders' *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* (Random House) begins with Milk dreaming of equality as a young man and carrying those dreams forward as he becomes an elected official. When he organizes a march "to protest inequality and unfair laws," he seeks something that people may carry to give them a sense of hope and community. He reaches out to artist Gilbert Baker, who envisions a rainbow flag and enlists volunteers to create it.

Sanders deals as gently as possible with Milk's death, noting that he and San Francisco mayor George Moscone were assassinated by a man who did not think, feel, or love like Harvey. He then explains that people continued to create the flags as a symbol of hope, pride, and equality. A brief afterward and timeline give further details for those who want them.

My one quibble is that Sanders merely says, "Harvey dreamed that everyone—even gay people—would have equality," without saying what being gay means. Parents and teachers who don't already have that language will need to find it elsewhere. (And "including gay people" might have been better than "even.")

The only other picture book about Milk, Kari Krakow's 2001 *The Harvey Milk Story*, goes into more detail about Milk's life and work, making it best for the older end of the picture-book crowd. Sanders' simpler version—more a snapshot than a full biography—and the inclusion of the colorful flag tale will appeal to slightly younger readers. So will the bright illustrations by Steven Salerno, showing the flag waving over crowds and being held by people of various gender identities, races, and physical abili-



ties. This inspiring, positive story is a great introduction to two LGBTQ heroes and to the spirit of the LGBTQ community.

Gayle Pitman's *Sewing the Rainbow* (Magination Press) looks at the same era through the life of Gilbert Baker. Pitman has already written several children's books on LGBTQ history and culture, including *Stonewall Book Award-winning This Day In June*, about a Pride parade; *When You Look Out the Window*, about LGBTQ-rights pioneers Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin; and *A Church for All*, about an LGBTQ-inclusive church. Her latest work shows us not only a key moment in queer history, but also the journey of a boy to becoming his true self. A few gaps in explanation, however, will require grown-ups to reference the Reader Note at the end.

Sewing the Rainbow starts in Gilbert's dull Kansas hometown, where he "was full of color and sparkle and glitter." He would watch his grandmother sew in her clothing store, while he drew pictures of gowns and costumes. Then one day, "his father took away his art supplies and tore up his drawings." Pitman provides no reason for this, though, which may puzzle young readers.

Although Gilbert hoped to go someplace "filled with color" when he turned 18, he instead received a letter that "knocked every last bit of sparkle out of him." Pitman doesn't tell us what the letter said, however. On the next page, we simply read about his

life in the army; adults will need to explain what a draft letter was.

Still, readers will feel almost as happy as Gilbert when he finally makes his way to San Francisco, learns to sew, and creates costumes for famous singers, banners for (unspecified) marches and rallies, and "regalia for Mama José and her Imperial Court." Even the Reader Note, however, doesn't tell us what the Imperial Court (an LGBTQ charitable organization known for its fancy balls) is.

A more serious omission comes when Gilbert's friend Harvey asks him for a new logo to replace a symbol that "continued to blemish" their city and "in Gilbert's community, was a constant reminder of evil." The text doesn't say what the symbol was, however; some readers may think it was a logo of the city. (The reader note explains that it was the pink triangle.)

Additionally, nowhere in the story does Pitman use the word "gay," "queer," or "LGBTQ," although she does in the Reader Note. There is still much value in the broad message of acceptance and inclusion—but part of me feels this is like writing about Martin Luther King, Jr. without specifying that he fought for Black people and racial equality.

Still, many young readers, especially LGBTQ children, will likely identify with Gilbert's struggle to be himself. When Gilbert's flags first fly over San Francisco, we can't help cheering with the diverse crowd that celebrates them. And Pitman's final message, that when one sees a rainbow flag, "you'll know that it's okay to be your colorful, sparkly, glittery self," will inspire many, especially queer children with a more feminine gender expression. Illustrations by Holly Clifton-Brown are bright and whimsical, and the glittery rainbow cover adds to the book's attraction.

Sanders' tale is of heroes writ large, making public change with bold strokes. Pitman's story intertwines both personal and public transformations. Both approaches will add to children's understanding of these iconic figures and the time in which they lived—and our ongoing debt to them.

Let us hope they are followed by picture books (by these authors or others) about Mama José (José Sarría) and other people of color and of different genders who have also been fundamental to the LGBTQ rights movement.

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

**Send columns or letters to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com.
Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.**

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Francesca's Bryn Mawr.



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Sidetrack summer.

THEATER

Queer comedy with a side of Curry

BY KERRY REID

In the months leading up to the election of Donald Trump, several performers at Second City left in the wake of receiving increasingly homophobic, sexist and racist comments from audiences (and in at least one instance, directed to a fellow audience member). Former cast member Peter Kim (a gay Asian man) recounted his experiences in an essay for Chicago Magazine in October 2016, describing the level of verbal abuse as “a stage-four cancer spreading through the entire cavity of our nation.”

But since then, Second City has taken some concrete steps to foster the voices of diverse and marginalized performers. Those voices are front and center in two shows opening in conjunction with Pride Month. In *Let's Make It Perfectly Queer: A Salute to Pride*, directed by Annoyance founder and longtime director Mick Napier, a cast that is entirely LGBTQIA performs classic Second City sketches about queer life, along with some original black-outs and songs connecting the archival pieces. It runs through June 24. And on June 6, the company offers *The Bob Curry Fellowship Showcase*, directed by Second City co-artistic director Matt Hovde, featuring a diverse cast performing archival material, original sketches and improv sets.

The Bob Curry Fellowship, named for the first African American to perform as an improviser on the Second City mainstage in 1966, has been up and running since 2013 as part of the theater's Diversity and Inclusion Program. The highly competitive fellowship (only 16 are accepted annually out of over 200 applicants) provides ten weeks of intensive mentorship and training to

performers from traditionally underrepresented communities. Last year, Riley Mondragon was the first transgender fellow and she joins two of the current Curry Fellows—Maya Haughton and George Elrod—as part of the cast for *Let's Make It Perfectly Queer*.

Interestingly enough, the Pride show marks the first time that Second City has offered a Pride-specific revue. Elrod, who also works at iO, created their first Pride-centric showcase last year and is doing it again this year with the 12-hour marathon iO Pride Fest on June 10. Said Elrod “I don't know if people want to be outer, louder and prouder given the political situation, or if they're just finding a better support system around this time.”

Asked if the well-publicized problems with bigoted audience comments at Second City played a role in making the show, Haughton said “It hasn't been specifically mentioned to my knowledge. It's definitely been in the backs of the minds of people creating the show. Mick is so in your face that he really wants us to say ‘fuck you, we're here.’ He's all about making it ‘Look at us. We are here to show you that we are powerful and strong and we don't care what you think.’”

Going back into the archives also means that the performers confronted the mindsets of earlier eras. For example, Elrod noted that, “A lot of the stuff I'm working with in the show deals with characters who may not bring up their queerness, but it is a two-person same-sex or queer relationship. Watching the videos and seeing audience members ooh and aaah and laugh at things that wouldn't be laughed about today or that queer audiences wouldn't really care about is the most interesting thing to me.”



Wigging out

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WCT reviews *The Revolutionists*.

Photo of Stephanie Sullivan and Laura Sturm by Anna Gelman

Haughton said that Napier “gave us the power to speak up on sketches that we didn't have good feelings about. Or if we flagged something that was problematic we could say ‘Hey, let's tweak this.’”

For Elrod, the goals of the Pride show and the Curry showcase are different. “Let's Make It Perfectly Queer is a salute to all the past queer performers in the [Second City] space. The showcase highlights our ability as Second City performers. The archive is showing we can reproduce and mimic and put on a show that was created by someone else. The original showcase shows we can write and generate material from our own POV.”

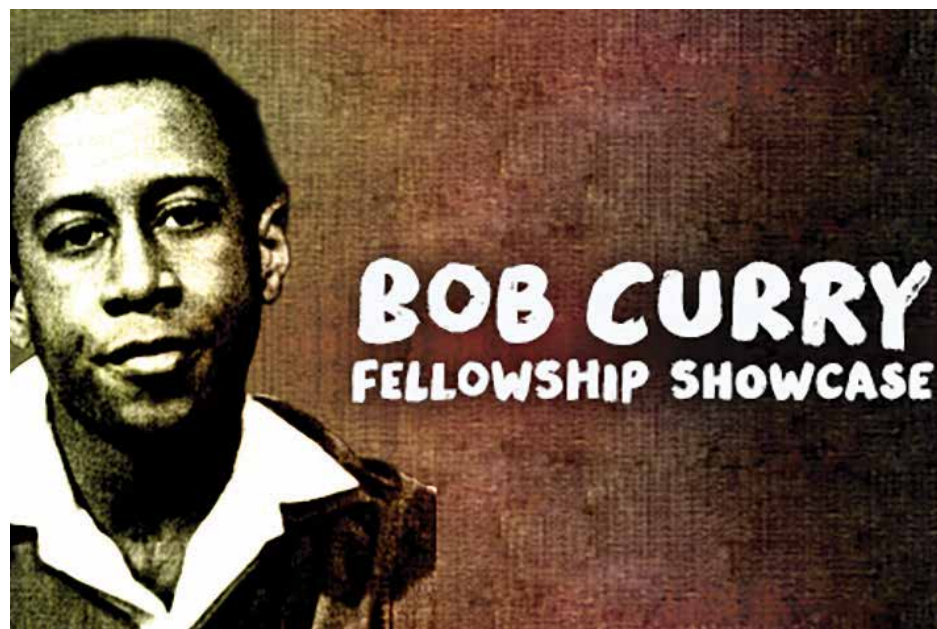
Several graduates of the Curry fellowship, including Rashawn Nadine Scott and Tien Tran, have ended up in mainstage revues. But for Haughton—who didn't study at the Second City Conservatory or iO, but has been active in comedy for more than 20 years—the fellowship strengthened her understanding of how improv and scene

structure works. She also noted “Because I have been doing it so long, I had fallen into bad habits in terms of repeating some of the character types I do. It's helped me break those habits.”

For Elrod, one of the great things about creating work with a diverse cast in the Curry program is the shorthand that exists among the ensemble. “If we were in a room that wasn't as diverse, there might a need to be explain someone's pitch. This room is so eager to carry someone's ideas to the end. That's the thing that has been unique. We've all got this ability to just go with it and everyone is going there together.”

That's something to celebrate for Pride Month and beyond.

Bob Curry Fellowship Showcase runs at 8 p.m. on Wed., June 6, at Second City's e.t.c. Theater, 230 W. North Ave., second floor of Piper's Alley. Tickets are \$15. For more information go to secondcity.com or call 312/337-3992.



BOB CURRY
FELLOWSHIP SHOWCASE

THEATER REVIEW

Bette Davis Ain't for Sissies

Playwright: Jessica Sherr

At: Athenaeum Theatre,
2936 N. Southport Ave.Tickets: \$26-36; AthenaeumTheatre.org;
773-935-6875

Runs through: June 17

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

Jessica Sherr is a one-woman revolution.

Her original show *Bette Davis Ain't for Sissies* began as an acting-class exercise in Sherr's home base of New York City. After acclaimed runs off-Broadway, in London and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Sherr brought *Bette* to the Athenaeum in June 2017 and was commissioned by the theater to further develop the solo performance. One year later, Sherr makes a triumphant return to Chicago with an expanded 90-minute love letter to the tough, complex and truly unforgettable

star of stage and screen.

Sherr wrote and directed the production, as well as coordinating impressive lighting and sound clips and sourcing gorgeous, vibrant evening gowns and peignoirs worthy of a cinematic icon. The one-act begins and ends on the evening of the 1939 Academy Awards, which Davis has stormed out of with the knowledge (thanks to a leak from the Los Angeles Times) that Vivien Leigh has beaten her for Best Actress. Davis chats on the telephone with her mother, Ruthie, close friend Olivia de Havilland (who won't stop crying) and co-star Humphrey Bogart while running lines for the next morning's shoot and taking the audience through her life and career, one sassy monologue at a time. Once a small-town girl doing summer stock in Lowell, Massachusetts, Davis gradually ascends to Broadway thanks to the encouragement of Ruthie, her smart and driven single mother in a time when such families were incredibly rare. Davis desires nothing more than a life on stage, but when a Hollywood talent scout invites her to meet a big-time producer, everything changes.

From *Bette's* early days in the studio system

Jessica Sherr in *Bette Davis Ain't for Sissies*.
PR photo

(when actresses were locked into contracts that resembled indentured servitude) to *All About Eve* and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, Sherr covers it all, using that fateful Oscar night as bookends. Also, Sherr pulls no punches: As talented and stunning as Davis was, she was also prickly, demanding and forever dissatisfied with *La La Land*, escaping to her beloved East Coast whenever she could.

Although Davis and her mother remained incredibly close until Ruthie's death, the actress was far from a good mother to her own daughter, B.D., resulting in a lifelong estrangement. But as Sherr deftly demonstrates—with a brilliant mastery of *Bette's* voice, style and mannerisms—there's a lot to like and admire about an actress who didn't fit the Hollywood mold (she was petite and gravelly among a cadre of long-legged beauties), and perpetually resisted playing the pretty girl, in favor of darker, grittier roles.

In *Bette Davis Ain't for Sissies*, Sherr has created something funny, tragic and completely unforgettable. Don't miss this tribute to Old Hollywood—warts and all—during its short but sweet Chicago run.

THEATER REVIEW

The Revolutionists

Playwright: Lauren Gunderson

At: Organic Theater Company at
the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.Tickets: \$25; OrganicTheater.org;
773-404-7336

Runs through: July 8

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The first thing we hear is a female quartet crooning a song extolling the value of "stories." The second is the ominous crunch of a guillotine blade. The third is a cheerful young woman dressed in fashions of the French Directoire, declaring, "Well, *that's* not the way to start a com-

edy!"

We don't know it yet, but Lauren Gunderson has just apprised us of the agenda for her latest play—a smart, eloquent, multiple-metatheatrical romp that gallops apace without ever leaving us in the dust of boring fests.

Our setting is Paris in 1793—a city in turmoil following the overthrow of the monarchy and the rise of a citizenry flushed with desire for revenge. Our hostess is Olympe de Gouges, real-life feminist playwright determined to preserve in literature the tale of her turbulent times, but with no loss of commercial appeal. Potential protagonists include Charlotte Corday (real-life assassin of radical journalist Jean-Paul Marat), Marianne Angelle (couleur-libre spy for real-life Haitian rebels) and Marie Antoinette (real-life former empress of France). They have come seeking

Olympe's assurance that their part in launching a new age of liberty, equality and fraternity—but sadly lacking in sorority—is not lost to the history that will be written by the victors.

Both comedy and tragedy rely on incongruity for their tension, and since Gunderson proclaims her play to be both, her text supplies enough deconstructive dissonance for a dozen Tom Stoppards and two dozen Aaron Posners: powdered wigs and pannier skirts are juxtaposed with debates—conducted in modern sociospeak replete with identity-linked buzzwords—over the wisdom of incorporating musical scores, romantic subplots or puppets into the as-yet-unfinished docudrama. Amid the anachronistic giggles, however, lurks the grim realization of what happens to freedom when the long-promised power falls to the zealots.

A narrative operating on this many levels requires a conductor more than it does a director, but Bryan Wakefield embraces the challenge of its verbal choreography, as does the exemplary cast assembled for this Organic Theater Company production. Taylor Raye's bemused Marianne and Sara Copeland's peppery Charlotte anchor a dialogue propelled by Laura Sturm's revisionable Marie and Stephanie Sullivan's cautious Olympe, whose own execution would render forever undecided the question of whether women would have made for better post-revolution government.

THEATER REVIEW

Bull in a China Shop

Playwright: Bryna Turner

At: Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave.

Tickets: 773-975-8150;

AboutFaceTheatre.com; \$20-\$38

Runs through: July 1

BY KERRY REID

Looking for a nice demure story of a "Boston marriage?" Well, you won't find it in Bryna Turner's *Bull in a China Shop*, now in a local premiere with About Face Theatre. It's a funny, profane and sometimes quite insightful portrait of two women who broke ground for all women while risking personal heartbreak of their own.

The women are Mary Woolley and Jeannette Marks. The latter was president of Mount Holyoke College and the former a writer and teacher. Both fought for women's rights, particularly a woman's right to an education equal to that provided for men, without regard for whether

it made one "marriageable" or not. ("If a man is interested in headless women, send him to France," Woolley says.) They were also suffragists, peace activists—and lovers for 55 years. Their letters provided the inspiration for Turner (a Mount Holyoke alum, where Marks pioneered the first playwriting classes). But there's nothing dusty and epistolary in this story.

Rather, it unfolds in Keira Fromm's staging as a series of short scenes encompassing the years of Woolley's controversial tenure at Holyoke, where the relationship between her and Marks raised eyebrows as they raised hell. As played by Kelli Simpkins and Emjoy Gavino, Woolley and Marks struggle to find equal footing between themselves even as they advocate equality for all women. Marks, a former student of Woolley's, also finds herself the object of obsession for Pearl (Aurora Adachi-Winter), part of a "secret society" of budding lesbians who look to Woolley and Marks as role models.

Sometimes the structure works against developing the conflicts. An argument will begin in one scene and then be dropped as we move forward in time. Pearl's storyline ultimately gets

short shrift, which feels odd for a play about empowering the voices of female students. However, Mary Beth Fisher works her delicious deadpan style as Dean Welsh, tasked with telling Simpkins' Woolley that her revolutionary stances are costing the college donors.

Moments resonate with our own time of resistance. After Marks, Pearl and fellow professor Felicity (Adithi Chandrashekar) get arrested for trying to vote, Simpkins' Woolley reads them the riot act. "It's not a sexy revolution," she says. "There is compromise. There is hedging." Hillary Clinton couldn't have said it more directly.

On a long trip to China that tests the strength of their love, Woolley writes to Marks back home at Holyoke about seeing swans—who mate for life—floating on a river. She marvels "how elegant they look above the surface of the water while down below they must be churning relentlessly to go against such a strong current while maintaining their poise." *Bull in a China Shop* shows us the churn and the love that carried two remarkable women through the tides of their own tumultuous times.

CRITICS' PICKS

Damascus, Strawdog Theatre Company, through June 23. A terrorist bomber and an airport shuttle-driver on a night drive from Minneapolis to Chicago makes for an edge-of-your-seat thriller in this word premiere from Bennett Fisher. MSB

A New Attitude: Tribute to Patti LaBelle, Black Ensemble Theater, through June 17. Geechie, geechie, ya-ya tata! Even the audience was doing pre-curtain vocal warm-ups at the show needing two soloists to portray this multi-talented fab-fashion superstar. MSB

The Laramie Project, Raven Theatre, through July 8. It's been nearly 20 years since Matthew Shepard's murder in Laramie, Wyoming. Moises Kaufman's docudrama about the killing remains urgent as ever. Aston Rep's cast has the power to make it soar and shatter. CES

Wild Women of Wongo, through July 14. Dave Ogrin's B-movie-inspired romp through the galaxies features astronauts lost in space, dancing, games, prizes and a score by a former sound/mix engineer for the likes of Run DMC and Public Enemy. CES

—By Barnidge and Sullivan



David Lovejoy and Bill Gordon in *Monsieur D'eon Is a Woman*. Photo by Chris Popio

THEATER REVIEW

Monsieur D'eon Is a Woman

Playwright: Mark Brownell

At: Trap Door Theatre at Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland Ave.

Tickets: \$20-\$25; TrapdoorTheatre.com

Runs through: June 30

BY BRIAN KIRST

Chevaliere D'eon has to be one of history's most fascinating figures.

A soldier and a spy for King Louis XV of France in the 18th century, she charmed and intrigued Russia's Elizabeth I and England's King George III. Although distinguished by acts of bravery, controversy eventually surrounded her. Living as a man for 49 years, rumors persisted about her gender. Bets were even placed through the London Stock Exchange to determine her true gender—a contest in which D'eon was one of the invitees. Her courage and strength, despite these indignities, has ensured her place as an early, celebrated figure for transgender and women's rights.

In *Monsieur D'eon Is a Woman*, being given a colorful push by Trap Door Theatre, playwright Mark Brownell takes the compelling narrative of D'eon's life and creates a friendly romp, full of energetic twists and turns. D'eon, who lived out her last 33 years as a woman, died in poverty, earning a living by performing acts of swordplay in a sideshow act. But whether Brownell is detailing her glory years as a celebrated citizen of the

court or her time living in squalor with a devoted female companion, it is always done with a sense of humor and respect. In fact, Brownell only goes astray with the prurient humor that he assigns to other members of the ensemble, particularly with an overtly lewd King Louis XV. Despite the rambunctious nature of the piece, the juvenility of these actions consistently falls flat here.

This misstep, thankfully, does not spoil the show as a whole. The devoted energy that director Nicole Weisner and her athletic ensemble bring to the proceedings always keeps the audience intrigued and their mission to give D'eon a full and loving tribute is always in evidence. Notably, flexible costuming by Rachel M. Sypniewski imbues things with a touch of everything from DC Comics to the Industrial Revolution as well.

The cast, many of whom enact multiple roles, is also to be commended for its commitment to multileveled playing. In particular, the majestic Ann Sonnevile nearly steals the show with her brightly regal, nearly poisonous take on Elizabeth I. Strangely, as the character is the primary focus; David Lovejoy is almost too subdued as D'eon. Perhaps working too conceptually, the performance—until its final moments—almost leaves the audience with too much of an emotional distance to the character. Thankfully, the story is so compelling and worthy of exploration that this does little to mar the show's impact.

In fact, this production could ultimately rank as one of Trap Door's most compelling tales. Always exploring the strange, unparalleled beauty of the world, this piece is truly a celebration of D'eon and the respect that she demanded for the fluidity of existence.

SPOTLIGHT

We're ceding this week's Spotlight to director Hutch Pimentel, whose points about First Floor Theater's compelling sci-fi thriller *Refrigerator* bear repeating: "When we lost Will Davis and American Theater Company earlier this season, there was an uproar over the lack of support for radical queer work. If you care about supporting radical queer work in Chicago then I hope you'll put your money where your mouth is and come see this show. If you can't afford it, please send me a message and I will figure it out." Pimentel is right on all counts about



Lucas Baisch's dystopian drama. Get there. It runs through June 6 at the Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave.; \$10-\$20; FirstFloorTheater.com.

Caption: Photo of Nathaniel Andrew (left) and Kevin Stangler by Evan Hanover

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THEATER REVIEW

20,000 Leagues Under the Seas (sic)

Playwright: David Kersnar & Althos Low
 At: Lookingglass Theatre at Water Tower Water Works, 821 N. Michigan Ave.
 Tickets: 312-337-0665;
 LookingglassTheatre.org; \$45-\$80
 Run through: Aug. 19

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Jules Verne's 20,000 Leagues Under the Seas (plural), first published in 1869-70, featured meticulous scientific research for its time and a rip-snorting story with secretive Capt. Nemo as the antagonist. So vivid was Nemo—the name (with Latin/Greek roots) didn't exist until Verne employed it—that he quickly eclipsed the intended hero and narrator of the tale, French marine biologist Prof. Pierre Aronnax.

When Nemo next appeared in Verne's 1874 follow-up, Mysterious Island, he was the central figure narrating his detailed backstory which was almost entirely missing in 20,000 Leagues. Across nearly two dozen screen adaptations (the first a 1916 silent film), the obviously indelible Nemo has been played by Lionel Barrymore, James Mason, Herbert Lom, Michael Caine, Omar Sharif, Patrick Stewart, Ben Cross and Jose Ferrer, among others.

For this vigorous new production, adapters David Kersnar (also the director) and Althos Low

combine Mysterious Island and (mostly) 20,000 Leagues to create a complete character arc for Nemo (intense, thoughtful Kareem Bandoaly, revealed in Mysterious Island to be of South Asian royal heritage). The major alteration is to recast Pierre Aronnax as female Prof. Morgan Aronnax (Kasey Foster), and ditto her assistant, Conseil (Lanise Antoine Shelley). In the mold of tomb-raider Lara Croft, they are fighting scientists required to use knives and fists. The sex change is handled adroitly in the new/alterd text but doesn't impact the plot or final outcome at all, so the sole motive is the opportunity to make contemporary statements about mistaken perceptions (limitations) of women in male-dominant cultures. It may not be a distraction but it provides limited value.

This adaptation squarely is about Nemo, who is far more conflicted, outraged and complex than in other portrayals. Ideas of justice, responsibility and morality are raised frequently, along with social roles one may be required to play. Ace Canadian harpooner Ned Lane (Walter Briggs)—a captive of Nemo's along with Aronnax and Conseil—is a rascal and rule-breaker, so it's interesting to weigh his opposition to rule-breaker Nemo. Is Nemo an archetypal supervillain who wishes to punish the world, or an avatar of a new world order? You decide.

Lookingglass' 20,000 Leagues Under the Seas offers a varied and appealing physical production involving wonderful puppets of ships and sea creatures, agile physical work by the company, some circus skills, exotic costuming, astute lighting and multi-layer scenic design. Nemo's ship, The Nautilus, is not conveyed with specific exte-



Thomas J. Cox in 20,000 Leagues Under the Seas.

Photo by Liz Lauren

rior or interior details so one shouldn't anticipate the literalness of the still-popular 1954 Disney film. Likewise, the attack of the giant squid (squids in the original) is a game-changer in the film but not in this production (nor the novel), although the puppet technology in both is about equal!

THEATER REVIEW

Mies Julie

Playwright: Yael Farber (adapted from August Strindberg's "Miss Julie")

At: Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: 773-871-3000;

VictoryGardens.org; \$15-\$60

Runs through: June 24

BY KERRY REID

Athol Fugard's portraits of apartheid-era South Africa served as the moral lens for his nation. Post-apartheid works such as 1996's Valley Song offered a hopeful look at healing the country's wounds.

No such balm finds its way into South African playwright Yael Farber's Mies Julie, which premiered to acclaim in the 2012 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The Chicago premiere at Victory Gardens, directed with blast-furnace intensity by Dexter Bullard, builds upon—and then bludgeons through—the skeletal structure that August Strindberg's 1888 naturalist classic of class and gender struggle provides.

It's Freedom Day in 2012—the national day of celebration for the end of apartheid 18 years earlier. As in the original, Mies Julie (Heather Chrisler), the daughter of an Afrikaner widower landowner with a brutal reputation, is dancing with the farm workers as the play begins. She's also tracking dirt all over the clean-but-cracked tile floor that Christine (Celeste Williams) has scrubbed by hand. John (Jalen Gilbert), Christine's son, polishes the master's boots and dreams of escape.

By making Christine John's mother instead of his fiancée (as in the original), Farber drives home the themes of resentment and ownership. Christine raised Julie after her mother blew her brains out in the kitchen. Williams' Christine aches to find connection with her own ancestors, buried on land just beneath the kitchen floor, while John feels trapped on a farm where he was brutalized by others, white and Black. John and Julie are two semi-orphaned children trying to soothe their sense of emotional abandonment through the sexual variety.

It's tricky territory, but Farber's roadmap creases along the lines of narratives familiar to our own racist history of using "miscegenation" as an excuse for lynching black men. At the same time, though Chrisler's Julie is undeniably manipulative and mercurial, her performance shows us the aching wounds of an isolated young woman who fears falling into the hellscape of her mother's history. "If you are sensitive out here on this dry land—you don't make it," she tells John.

Farber's play also invokes the ancestral spirits through T. Ayo Alston's "ukhokho" (the Zulu word for "ancestor"). Alston appears at key moments, singing original songs that add a spectral texture to the gritty sexual and verbal battles between John and Julie. They are both fighting for a foothold on the land beneath them and looking for a means of escape. The tragedy is that their country's history won't allow for either without a bloody cost.

Chrisler and Gilbert go for broke here, but Bullard's staging allows fleeting moments of tenderness, with Farber's script weaving in broken poetic interludes about the dusty land around them. Black snakelike roots encircle Kurtis Boetcher's set, suggesting just how difficult it is to break through the entangled bloody history of racism and colonialism.



Heather Chrisler and Jalen Gilbert in Mies Julie.

Photo by Liz Lauren

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THEATER REVIEW

A Little Night Music

Authors: Stephen Sondheim & Hugh Wheeler
At: Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: 773-404-7336 or
GreenhouseTheater.org; \$25-35
Runs through: July 8

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

Musicals are the brazen flirt at the party who charms the room with memorized banter and a killer look, buttressed with layers of shapewear. Or, they are the keynote speaker, insisting to a flock of junior executives that they too can achieve wealth and success with a little elbow grease.

Musicals want you to forget the hard work and precision that it takes to craft a production like Boho Theatre's A Little Night Music. However, with this intimate staging, director Linda Fortunado and music director Tom Vendafreddo invite audiences to take a magnifying glass to observe the cracks in their evening's plaster.

So much credit is due to the workhorse cast, amazing chamber quartet and artistic team who clearly put their whole hearts into a lively night of humor, intrigue, and sadness. We may clearly see the buttress at times, but this ensemble is no stranger to musical theater's other secret weapon: a good song can make your audience forget



Marguerite Mariama in A Little Night Music.
Photo by Liz Lauren

flubs and dropped lines in an instant.

It's 1900, and Fredrik (Peter Robel), his young, still-virginal new wife Anne (Rachel Guth) and moody adult son Henrik (Jordan Dell Harris) are all stuck under one roof, in a state of perpetual

romantic frustration. When Fredrik's old flame Desiree (Kelli Harrington), a renowned stage actor, appears and gladly obliges to a tryst, their indiscretion leads to social chaos. Word gets out to Desiree's other lover, count Carl-Magnus (Christopher Davis), his unhappy wife Charlotte (Stephanie Stockstill) and back to a devastated Anne. Desiree's mother Madame Armfeldt (Marguerite Mariama) and teen daughter Fredrika (Isabelle Roberts) sign on for a leisurely gathering at their sprawling estate, intended to clear the air between Fredrik and Desiree, but when everyone else gets wind of it, the whole house of cards threatens to flutter into oblivion.

For the casual degradation they receive in the libretto, the women of A Little Night Music do the heavy lifting and transporting of audience spirits. Kelli Harrington, though younger than you'd expect, is magnetic as Desiree. Rachel Guth brings more layers to ground a typically flighty Anne, and I've never understood Charlotte so well as I have from Stephanie Stockstill's aching yet hilarious performance. As Madame Armfeldt, Marguerite Mariama keeps things very quiet and understated, which has the power to make you lean in closer.

What tipped the scales for me was the very effective, inclusive and somewhat sexually fluid chorus featuring Nicole Besa, Rachel Klippel, Emily Goldberg, Lazaro Estrada and Ross Matsuda. And I'd be lax if I didn't mention Teressa LaGamma as Petra, who can deliver a rousing pep talk to any crotch, regardless of gender. Their bursts of joy power through the dull moments that could use sharpening.

Door Kinetic to run June 11-15

The Door Kinetic Arts Festival (DKAF) has confirmed its lineup up films, including Oscar winners and nominees, Wisconsin-made films and the Rainn Wilson one-man show Thom Pain, which will kick off its third annual fest June 11-15 at Bjorklunden, the northern campus of Wisconsin's Lawrence University.

Wilson will host the screening of Thom Pain, a film version of the Pulitzer-winning play he performed at the Geffen Theatre in Los Angeles, on Monday, June 11 at 7 p.m. and lead a post-screening talkback.

DKAF will also hold a cocktail competition Tuesday, June 5, at the Wickman House in Ellison Bay to select the official cocktail of the 2018 festival.

DKAF previously announced that Wilson, famous for his portrayal of Dwight Schrute in the U.S. version of The Office, will be in residence developing a screenplay based on the life of Stetson Kennedy and his mission to bring down the Ku Klux Klan. That screenplay will receive a reading Wed., June 13, at 8:30 p.m.

See DoorKinetic.com.

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THEATER

Trap Door transcends with binary-breaking French patriot

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

Had ze lived in 18th-century France, David Lovejoy might well have been one of the unsung superheroes of history. As it is, the gender-fluid actor (Pronouns: Ze, hir, hers, himself) is playing one at Wicker Park's Trap Door Theatre. In Mark Brownell's comedy *Monsieur D'eon is a Woman*, Lovejoy steps into the heeled shoes of a gender rebel in the court of Louis XIV.

Centuries before the world had language for those whose very existence proves that the binary is rubbish, D'eon forged a life as a woman who (in the clothes of a man) became a high-ranking French diplomat and a decorated war hero.

Assigned "male" at birth, D'eon knew from childhood that she was a woman. And not just any woman: With no tolerance for dresses or homemaking or other historically female pursuits, D'eon donned breeches and set out to fight for her country. It wasn't until the final years of her life that officials stripped D'eon of her ranking and forced her into petticoats and corsets.

"The cast refers to her as a superhero of history," said director Nicole Wiesner. A superhero whose battles are waged still: "We've been having this discussion about trans people in the military for hundreds of years," Wiesner said. "There have always been people who didn't fit the binary and wanted to serve their country. It was going on in Louis's time, and it's going on now."

At 23, Lovejoy is as fluent in French as ze is adept at rocking a ballgown. Hir gender defies narrow classification. "I'm not a transwoman. I'm non-binary. And with that comes the experience of people not understanding who or what I am. In that, I relate to *Monsieur D'eon*," ze said.

"The part of her I also really identify with is that she had no interest in conforming to the stereotypes of what a woman was supposed to be or do," Lovejoy added. "She wanted to ... be a soldier and a patriot, and to be taken seriously," ze said.

In Brownell's history-based comedy, D'eon is guided throughout life by a kindred spirit: Joan of Arc (played by Ty Easley, who is trans). St. Joan isn't the only larger-than-life historical figure to pass through D'eon's life. Benjamin Franklin, Empress Elizabeth of Russia and Jean Jacques Rousseau also show up in the play (the last with concerns that Louis's glittery court was becoming altogether too effeminate).

Wiesner's 11-person ensemble plays roughly 80 roles among them, with Lovejoy at the gleaming center.

Lovejoy grew up in Marblehead, Massachusetts, where ze spent seven years studying at Beverly's Waring School, a bilingual institution where lessons were taught in French as well as English.



David Lovejoy.
Publicity photo by Nicole Weisner

Ze arrived in Chicago about six years ago, as a theater student at the University of Chicago.

Lovejoy remains fluent in French. But it's not just language that ze shares with D'eon. The soldier's struggles aren't so far removed from Lovejoy's own. Take, for example, the fixation D'eon's peers had with what was in her breeches.

"Everyone wants to know what's underneath D'eon's pants. That's still something that happens today—people reduce everything in to 'well, you were born a man, right?' Wrong," ze said.

Lovejoy started hir outward journey with nail polish.

"My first step of was when a friend painted my nails. Something in me clicked. I felt more beautiful, more like myself. So I started doing nail designs. People stared sometimes. They'd notice when I was paying for something, for instance.

"But after a while, I started feeling pride instead of fear," Lovejoy continued. "And with that pride, I started wearing make-up and skirts and dresses. The first time I stepped out in a dress, I was terrified. Then, I started seeing my clothes as battle armor. People would stare and I'd stare right back," ze said.

"The first time I introduced myself with my pronouns, I thought I was going to vomit," ze added. "But after it poured out of my mouth, I felt amazing and beautiful. And seen."

Still, the malevolent ignorance of others' assumptions can be harrowing, both emotionally

and physically. Lovejoy endured a beating on the El en route to a May performance, pummeled bloody at the hands of transphobic cisgender men. Ze talks about the experience in this issue of *Windy City Times*.

"No matter how hard we try, people will continue to assume things about other people's gender," ze said. "Plays like this are important in part because they make the audience confront those assumptions."

"I am very proud of my gender and myself," Lovejoy said. "But I still closet myself sometimes because I don't feel safe.

"Regrettable as it is, other people can make you question yourself. We can't help but care what other people think and how we are seen in the world," ze said.

"Being seen is everything," ze said. "I will never forget telling my best friend and she said, 'I see you and you're beautiful,' and I broke down in tears. And we were both much more comfortable because we both knew who I was."

D'eon lived to be an octogenarian—a remarkable life span for someone in the 18th century.

"It was a long life, and a remarkable one. And a difficult one," Lovejoy said. "It wasn't easy, but it was beautiful."

Monsieur D'eon is a Woman continues through June 30 at Trap Door Theater, 1655 W. Cortland St. Tickets are \$20 and \$25, two-for-one on Thursdays. Go to trapdoortheatre.com or call 773-384-0494.

THEATER VIEWPOINT

Don't just stand there

In the wake of an attack, non-binary actor urges allies to act

BY DAVID LOVEJOY

I was on the crowded Red Line train on my way to the third performance of Trap Door Theatre's *Monsieur D'eon is a Woman* when the man punched me in the jaw. It was fully unprovoked, without warning. He continued to punch me, grabbed my throat and threw me to the ground while grunting slurs at me. The others on the train stepped aside so as not to get in the way.

I am non-binary; I am not a man, I am not a woman. I do not wish to pass as a man or to pass as a woman; I just want to look like me. The man who punched me didn't want someone like me standing next to him. He decided that the small wedge of space I fit into on the rush hour train much larger than I deserved.

In that moment—and regrettably in many moments since—I too was made to feel that I didn't deserve that small wedge of space. But it wasn't the attacker who made me believe this, it was every single person on the rush-hour train who stood there, watched it happen, and did nothing.

I looked up and screamed for help to a pack of young and fit men. They watched me like they were watching a YouTube video. All they did was step aside so my attacker could throw me to the ground. None of them shouted, called 911 or got him off of me, although I'm sure they all have posted pictures of themselves at the pride parade, tweeted about their support for LGBTQ+

rights or "have gay friends."

It wasn't until it was clear that my attacker was actually trying to kill me that someone pulled his hands from my throat as another told me to move away. I crawled to the other side of the train. No one asked if I was okay. No one helped me up. No one got off the train at the next stop to get away from my attacker, because they knew that they weren't in danger.

I have never been so alone in my life.

Just two days before the attack, I had written on Facebook about having the bravery to look people back in the eyes when they stared at me. I called my femme clothes battle armor and I stepped out of my apartment door with courage and pride. Now, my battle armor is broken. I step outside and feel the terror creep in. For the past week I've decided to present as male. I once swore that I would never closet myself again, but here I am back in the closet.

When I am onstage though, I am not in the closet. I am proud, I am defiant, and I am strong. The cast of *Monsieur D'eon Is a Woman* is unafraid to look people in the eyes and tell this trans narrative with strength and pride. These actors give me the love and support to tell a proud, tragic and beautiful story of D'eon's trans experience. This stage is the safest place I feel I can truly be myself right now, and I know this is the case with many trans performers.

We deserve space on a train. We deserve space in the world. We have created space on the stage for ourselves, but that space is still small. I might even say tiny. Historically, many trans folks have needed to closet themselves to take cis roles because trans roles are rare and hard to come by. I urge artists to act on your allyship. Don't force us to closet ourselves just so we can work in our profession.

It is hard to go out the door and have the world see us for who we truly are. With a theatrical platform, the world comes to us and sees who we truly are. Our stories need to be told and our voices need to be heard. Nicole Wiesner and Trap Door Theatre have given me the remarkable opportunity to share my voice and tell D'eon's story—and I will be forever grateful. I thank everyone who has and will attend the theater to experience D'eon's journey.

To everyone who claims to be an ally, I now speak directly to you: Be a real ally. Please don't stand there like those people on the El did. Please. I beg you, just as I begged those people on the train—until I tasted blood in my throat.

I'm sure you may fear for your safety when you consider getting involved in situations like this one, but we fear for much more than our safety, we fear for our very lives. Being an ally is more than posting a picture of yourself at a pride parade or tweeting your support for gay rights. Frankly, I don't care about a picture of you wearing a rainbow boa. Don't flaunt your allyship—act on your allyship.

See us.

Hear us.

Stand with us.

Fight with us.

Actor David Lovejoy continues through June 30 in Trap Door Theatre's *Monsieur D'eon is a Woman*. For more info, see story in this issue or go to TrapDoorTheatre.com.

Pivot Arts Festival through June 10

The sixth annual Pivot Arts Festival—a celebration of contemporary performances and multi-disciplinary works presented throughout Chicago's Uptown and Edgewater neighborhoods—will take place through June 10.

This year, the festival features the Chicago premiere of *Rude Mechs*, a theater collective from Austin, Texas, that has performed at major venues across the country.

See PivotArts.org.

GayCo's 'Party' June 22-23

GayCo Productions will run its Pride Comedy Party (or PCP, for short) Friday-Saturday, June 22-23, at The Playground Theater, 3209 N. Halsted St., at 10:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$15, and can be purchased at the door or in advance by visiting <https://gaycopride.eventbrite.com>. Attendees must be at least 21 years old.

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Milwaukee Pride to feature Danica Roem

Milwaukee Pride kicks off the 31st Annual PrideFest Milwaukee opening ceremonies at the Dance Pavilion on Friday, June 8, at 3 p.m.

Journalist and politician Danica Roem will be the keynote speaker. When elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 2017, Roem became the first openly transgender individual to be elected and serve in any U.S. legislature.

To increase community access to PrideFest Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Pride Board of Directors is offering free admission with a \$1 donation per person to the PrideFest Plus One Campaign. This year's campaign supports Diverse & Resilient, which impacts thousands of local LGBTQ lives every year with critical health care programs. This offer will only be valid on Friday, June 8, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Also, the 2018 Pride Awards will be presented, to 1st Annual Ride with Pride Cormac Kehoe (Individual); Ald. Cavalier Johnson of the Milwaukee Common Council (Ally); the Queer Zine Archive Project (Organization); transgender prom queen Nikko Nelson (Valor); and History of Gay Milwaukee's Facebook administrator, Jamie Taylor (Legacy).

PrideFest Milwaukee will welcome the B-52s, Jussie Smollett and Daya to the Miller Lite Main stage this June 8-10 on the Summerfest Grounds.

PrideFest Milwaukee 2018 will be held at Henry W. Maier Festival Park. Visit Pridefest.com.



Danica Roem.
Photo from Facebook account

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Joan Armatrading.
Publicity photo by Joel Anderson

NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Joan Armatrading: Icon spreads 'Love and Affection'

BY JERRY NUNN

British singer Joan Armatrading has a career spanning almost 50 years. She has released 19 studio albums along with live albums and compilations.

Over the years she has received many accolades, including Grammy nominations and an Ivor Novello Award for Outstanding Contemporary Song Collection. She took home honorary degrees from the Liverpool John Moores University, the University of Birmingham and the University of Northampton, among others. She was even made a member of the Order of the British Empire and was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Acoustic Festival of Britain. After all of that, she tackled her first marathon in New York at age 58.

Armatrading is extremely private about her life but it was reported that she entered into a civil partnership with girlfriend Maggie Butler back in 2011.

She brings her new album *Not Too Far Away* to town for five nights of performances before eventually playing the United Kingdom.

Windy City Times: Hi, Joan. Where in the world are you?

Joan Armatrading: I am in New York. I am in the middle of a tour.

WCT: How do you decide on a set list after being so long in the music business?

JA: It is very difficult to come up with a set list, actually. There are lots of songs and it is just hard. [Laughs]

WCT: Is the trick balancing the older material with the new music?

JA: Yes and that is what I have always done throughout my career. I wouldn't want to tour if all I did was old songs.

I am very lucky and my audience knows that I always play new songs. People must remember that an old song at some point was a brand new song. They had never heard it before. The first time they heard it was the first time. You must always give new things an opportunity to become a favorite. You can't only want to hear the old stuff, because that was brand new when you heard it.

WCT: Do you always have to play "Love and Affection"?

JA: I love playing it and have played it every single concert that I have done since it was written. That song got me attention from all over the world. I would be a complete idiot if I didn't want to play it.

I don't understand when people don't want to play a song that made them known.

WCT: Has a fan said something to you over the years that means a lot personally?

JA: Just someone saying they love my music means a lot. I started my career in 1972 and it is 2018 now. Without people coming to my shows and buying the albums, there would be no long career. I am not having this long career in a vacuum. I am not doing this on my own!

Fans are very important. For example one fan told me they met their partner through my music, got married, and now come to my show to

celebrate their relationship decades later. That is some great stuff.

Some people name their children after my songs. I have met a lot of "Willows" and "Rosies."

WCT: How did you go about making the album *Not Too Far Away*?

JA: When I started writing I would write whatever came into my head. I would write a blues song, followed by a jazz song, followed by a pop song. I would write the words first, then music or both together, whatever happens happened. I have always played everything myself on my demos. In 2003, I decided to play everything myself on the album, apart from drums.

I decided to do a trilogy of blues, rock and jazz. Into the Blues had me playing blues, *This Charming Life* was rock and *Starlight* was jazz.

This album I decided to write all of the words first before any of the music. The order of the album is exactly how I wrote it. The first song is the first one I wrote and the last one is last song I wrote.

WCT: This album seems personal. Is it?

JA: I don't generally write about myself all the time. This is a lot of albums to be writing about Joan. That is too weird. Nobody needs that!

There are lots of things happening in the songs. I would be some kind of messed up person if they were all about me.

So, in general, I am writing about things I am looking at, people I see, people I know, people I don't know, something I have read, something on television, or something at a restaurant, among other things.

I want people to relate to what I am writing. The things I write are from something real and I can make it more real.

I am trying not to say "he" and "she." I wrote something called "The Weakness in Me." The same amount of men as women would come to me and say that was what they were going through. This happened with other songs as well. When you put a gender on it then it excludes the other gender. That's a shame.

WCT: I bet many artists don't think about cutting off listeners by stating genders.

JA: Yes, and lots of men go through what women go through and the other way around. It is nice to describe it for everyone.

WCT: The gender topic has grown since when you first started in the business.

JA: Yes, it has. I wrote a song called "Rosie" about a transvestite [Editor's note: her word]; these days it would be about a transgender person.

WCT: Did you know someone like Rosie?

JA: I didn't know them, but I saw them on the street. I was taken to 42nd Street and there were a lot of Rosie's on that street. That is where I got the song from.

WCT: What is the new song "No More Pain" about?

JA: It is about being in a bad situation and being determined to come out of that situation. It is taking charge of one's life now because they have been through so much upset.

WCT: Would you ever want a documentary about you made?

JA: Maybe one day, but it depends on how it's done. I don't have a salacious life, so it might be quite boring.

WCT: How do you connect with an audience when playing live?

JA: I don't know. I talk to them.

WCT: Do you tell stories?

JA: No. I am not a storyteller like that. I don't have good stories, but people seem to like it.

WCT: After all of your awards, what one meant the most?

JA: That would be my BA honors degree that I got after taking all the exams and passing them. I am very proud of that.

WCT: Is there something you would say to your LGBT fans who have followed your career over these years?

JA: Well, thank you for following my career all of these years. My songs are for everybody. I have been asked do I mind that my LGBT fans take my songs to heart or be offended by that. I would be offended if they didn't take them to heart.

My songs are for people. We are all going through very similar things, whether it is heart-break, falling in love, falling out of love, getting married, or getting divorced. The planet is going through very similar things, no matter the gender, or sexual orientation is. Everyone wants to have this thing to express what they are going through.

What I try to do is write what people are feeling and have the emotion expressed, so thank you, guys!

Armatrading plays City Winery, 1200 W. Randolph St., on June 9-10 and 12-14. Visit CityWinery.com and JoanArmatrading.com for details.



Steve "Silk" Hurley.
Publicity photo

'Queen!' to feature Steve "Silk" Hurley and CeCe Peniston

Red Bull Music will present "Queen!" on Friday, June 22, at 9 p.m. at Metro, 3730 N. Clark St.

DJ Steve "Silk" Hurley is the headliner; special guests are slated to include dance-music star CeCe Peniston ("Finally"), house-music artist Dajae ("Brighter Days"), Joe Smooth, Shaun J. Wright and Hey Rae Char-donnay.

The event will celebrate Queen!, one of the most thriving inclusive weekly parties in the city known as the birthplace of house music.

Among those scheduled to also appear are drag personalities Lucy Stooles, Dida Ritz, JoJo Baby, Monica Beverly Hillz and many more.

See <https://www.redbull.com/us-en/music/events/red-bull-music-presents-queen>.

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TELEVISION REVIEW

Pose

Director: Ryan Murphy (first two episodes)

Starring: Evan Peters, MJ Rodriguez and Dominique Jackson, among others

Time: Varies

Premiere date: June 3

BY JERRY NUNN

The new FX series *Pose* is set in the '80s, and tells the story of slices of life in the Big Apple. In each episode the characters (a slew of LGBTQ individuals, in a television set-up that is way overdue) face challenges that grow deeper with each episode.

The drag-ball scene is depicted, with the House of Abundance ruling the roost until part of the group leaves to form the House of Evangelista. Meanwhile, a young man named Stan Bowes meets a transgender prostitute named Angel who threatens to throw his wife and job with the Trump empire into a tailspin. The struggle is real as the largest LGBTQ recurring cast on television takes audiences on a difficult journey in eight episodes, with each lasting approximately an hour.

Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Steven Canals are the show's co-creators. It takes an LGBTQ army to create this piece of work, with many consultants, writers and producers wisely included. Never forget it's Murphy's puppet show, though, as he's a producer and directs the first two episodes. (Transgender advocate/author/actress Janet Mock is among those directing other episodes.) In his last original FX series, he brings along his muse, Evan Peters, for the ride and shows this is no *Glee*, but instead more of an American Horror Story tale, with AIDS as the real killer.

This landmark drama is making history and is also described as a musical, although in the first four episodes no one sings. Music is used smartly over the course of the series, from the beginning with Mary Jane Girls' "In My House" at the ball to Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill" used for emotional impact. It is a smorgasbord of songs that were sometimes on the fringe of the music world—just like this community, with society in general.

There is a lot of dancing thanks to newcomer Ryan Jamaal Swain who plays his character Damon full of innocence and wonder as he discovers the gay world and ballet scene.

Pose is a TV show inspired by the movie *Paris Is Burning*, with *Flashdance* and *Fame* mixed in for good measure. It reminds us once again that Madonna did not invent voguing and how the Cinderella story at the ball still works to this day.

The series evolves with each episode and covers a variety of heavy topics, including sex, relationships, death, homelessness and racism. It does veer towards preaching at times and has a few corny lines such as "You will never find a place to belong if you keep running away." But you have to marvel at the number of television firsts that are accomplished—this talented troupe goes where no one has gone before time and time again. The possibilities are endless if FX picks up more seasons.

From the very beginning, when the House of Abundance breaks into a museum for costumes, we are immediately presented with a piece of work that thinks outside the box. We may not agree with everything the characters do but *Pose* is going to show us everything, warts and all.

The cast lives each part possibly from experience, and the scenes feel authentic. Murphy insisted on using trans actors to convey his poignant story where the real category is finding a job to survive. One heartbreaking scene has Angel, portrayed by Indya Moore, trying desperately to work at an upscale clothing store—only to be rejected to return to a life of hustling. Times may have not changed drastically but bringing awareness to this discrimination is a step in the right direction. Murphy has done his part by employing and spotlighting a diverse cast that deserves to be there for this important journey.

Broadway's *Billy Porter* plays character Pray Tell, who emcees the drag competitions and glues the group together as a fairy godfather. Give this Tony Award winner another trophy and make it an Emmy this time!

Are mainstream television audiences ready for a show such as this? Only time will tell, but expect some controversy with the world we live in today.

The *Pose* posse earns perfect scores across the board for trying with this trailblazing endeavor, darling.

Black Lesbian Archives Exhibit June 14-July 13 at Affinity

10FOLD Productions is presenting the Black Lesbian Archives Exhibit June 14-July 13 at Affinity Community Services, 2850 S. Wabash, #108.

The exhibit is being put together by Kru, an archivist, DJ and CEO of 10FOLD Productions. "The importance of exploring and preserving our history is more crucial than ever," said Kru.

"During this exhibit we explore Chicago's Black Lesbian history while discussing how we can collectively go about making our archival efforts more concrete. We embark on unifying and bridging the generational gap for the present-future," Kru said. Affinity Community Services, Windy City Times and the Gerber/Hart Library are providing the archival materials.

Opening night (Thursday, June 14) will feature Yvonne Welbon of *Sisters in the Life: A History of African-American Lesbian Media Making*. The free and all-inclusive event will take place 6-8:30 p.m.; visit Eventbrite.com to RSVP. For more information, email 10FOLD411@gmail.com.

Other events include a short-film screening Monday, June 18, 6-8 p.m., with talks featuring Kasey White and Cougie Hughes (screenings of



Billy Porter in Pose.

Photo by Pari Dukovic/FX

The Homestretch and My Mama Said Yo Mama's A Dyke); W.O.M.B. Poetry on Thursday, June 21, 7-9 p.m.; and a panel discussion Tuesday, July 3, 6-8 p.m. The closing exhibit reception will be July 13, 6-8 p.m.

Back Lot Bash on June 15, 22-24

Taking place every Pride in Chicago, Back Lot Bash—which a press release called "the Midwest's most-attended women's festival," and



Kate Moennig.

Photo from Twitter

which will take place June 15 and 22-24 in Andersonville—has announced its 2018 15th-anniversary entertainment.

The headliners are DJ and lesbian icon Kate Moennig (TV shows *The L Word* and *Ray Donovan*), *KITTENS*, Brooke Candy, Chicago rapper Jade The Ivy, Bridget Lyons, Whitney Mixer, Rose Garcia and local female rockers Catfight. Dance Loud, DJ All the Way Kay and DJ Zel will also entertain. Visit BackLotBashChicago.com.

Mirza part of 'Red Line' series

Local Pakistani, Muslim, queer actress-activist Fawzia Mirza will be a writer on the CBS show *Red Line*.

Ava Duvernay and Greg Berlanti are the executive producers of this Chicago-set series that looks at the lives of three families. Erica Weiss and Caitlin Montanye Parrish are co-creators.

Deadline noted that Noah Wyle (*ER*; *The Librarians*) has been tapped as the lead of the racially charged hourlong drama. *Red Line* explores what happens after a white cop in Chicago (Noel Fisher) mistakenly shoots and kills a Black doctor; Wyle will play a high school teacher who was the victim's husband.

The Deadline article is at <https://deadline.com/2018/03/noah-wyle-cast-cbs-pilot-red-line-ava-duvernay-greg-berlanti-1202312484/>.



BILLY Masters

"There was a beautiful model next to me in bed and so I did some Method acting. I got a little bit excited. The exhibitionist was acting up because there was 40 people running cameras. I used to always ask, 'How do actors do it?' But now I know how they do it."—**Ricky Martin** talks about shooting a sex scene in *The Assassination of Gianni Versace*.

Kathy Griffin is being honored in conjunction with Los Angeles Pride. On Tuesday, June 5, she was to be one of the recipients of the Rainbow Key Awards, which the City of West Hollywood gives out to honor people who have made outstanding contributions to the gay and lesbian community. I hasten to add that Stormy Daniels is not one of the recipients.

Speaking of sexy photos, underwear giant **Andrew Christian** just made history by hiring its first trans man as a model. **Jesse Diamond** started testosterone treatment only four years ago. However, he's identified as male since he was three. With this gig, he's achieved a landmark goal, saying, "When I started working out about five years ago, my dream was basically to become Marky Mark. I wanted to be an underwear model, a buff guy, and I've been buying Andrew Christians for years. So it was definitely like a dream come true for me." Check him out on our website.

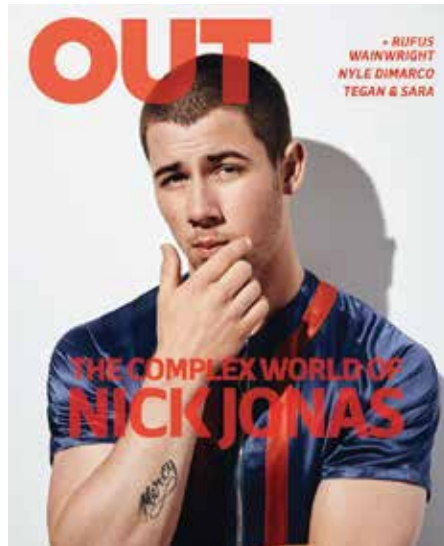
Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Tyler in San Diego: "Is Jared on *RuPaul's Drag Race* the same guy who did that sex scene with **Nick Jonas** on *Kingdom*? Sure looks like him."

Good catch. Two years ago, I brought you Jonas' *Kingdom* three-way which included a model named **Jared North**. Turns out that is the same Jared who is part of the Pit Crew on *Drag Race*. In real life, he's a model and a dancer and, apparently, an actor. In addition to what he showed on *Kingdom*, we can show you a whole lot more—like, literally, every inch of him, on BillyMasters.com. And, trust me, this one is well worth checking out.

When I'm delivering the keys to the kingdom, it's time for me to end yet another column. One thing I didn't mention was how important I feel the reboot of *Roseanne* is. While many people condemned it sight unseen due to the star's views, it deftly showed a politically divided family who still managed to care for each other; a conservative matriarch with liberal values; and a family struggling with various sexual identities. If ever we needed a show like that, it is now. What you probably need right now is to check out BillyMasters.com—the site that delivers the goods, in and out of undies. Feel free to send your questions and comments to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before we uncover the truth behind Mark Steines' abrupt termination from hosting *Home & Family*. (There's a story there—I just know it.) While I'm waiting for *Debbie Matenopoulos* to return my calls, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.



Ricky Martin talks about his acting technique.
Photo by Nino Munoz



Nick Jonas' acting partner gets in the 'Pit.'



Trans model **Jesse Diamond** breaks new ground in his **Andrew Christians**.
Instagram photo

the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Passion House Coffee Roasters; Francesca's lunch

BY ANDREW DAVIS

In a city where there seem to be thousands of coffeehouses, **Passion House Coffee Roasters** (2631 N. Kedzie Ave.; <http://www.passionhousecoffee.com/>) seems to be making its own mark.

Located right across the street from the Logan Square Blue Line stop, Passion House (which has been around for about a year) is small, yet open (and features a patio setting when the weather cooperates).

The baristas certainly know what they're doing, as they serve espressos and espresso beverages, specialty drinks (e.g., matcha, wildflower spice latte and bittersweet mocha), cold- and batch-



Passion House sweets.
Photo by Andrew Davis

brew items and (thankfully, for me, since I don't drink coffee) tea.

However, Passion House also has tasty items to satisfy hunger pains. Savory bites include vegetable and meat quiches, buttered croissant and a salmon-and-cream cheese scone. Items on the sweet side include the apricot rose scone (a must-have) as well as the pear-anise crumb case (with just a hint of the licorice-tasting anise), pistachio brioche, banana walnut financier and—my fave—the chocolate-chip toffee cookie.

Also, for Windy City Times readers, there's another incentive to go there: Passion House has teamed with LGBT-rights organization Equality

Illinois to produce a 12-ounce bag of single-origin Papua New Guinea Sigiri Estate beans, with 50 percent of proceeds benefiting the organization. (Bags are available in the cafe and online for \$15 each.)

And if those items don't make Passion House enough of an enticement, there's a DJ on Saturdays at 10 a.m.-1 p.m. I don't know if the DJ takes requests, but there's only one way to know...

Francesca's Bryn Mawr

In Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood, **Francesca's Bryn Mawr** (1039 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.; <http://www.miafrancesca.com/locations/profile/francescas-bryn-mawr-edgewater>) has been a staple for years, living up to the Francesca's chain's reputation of doling out tasty Italian fare. Francesca's is a bit more, um, lived-in than some of the other of the chain's spots, giving it a vintage feel. It also gives the spot a more accessible vibe.

Now, Francesca's Bryn Mawr is offering a new lunch menu with more options, including lunch combos with soup, salad and half-portions. Items are not groundbreaking, but are well-done. You really can't go wrong with the calamari fritti or the bruschetta alla Romana (garlic toast with tomato, basil and fresh mozzarella).

Pizza selections include the Napoletana (with arugula, cherry tomatoes, garlic, olive oil, provolone and shaved parmesan) and the quattro

stagioni (prosciutto, artichoke, mushroom, olive and egg). However, my dining companion and I opted for the farmer sandwich (an enticing olio of grilled chicken, maple-glazed pepper bacon, provolone, sunny-side up egg, arugula and lemon aioli on ciabatta) and the pasta dish rigatoni con Scarola (with the right combination of Italian sausage, roasted cherry tomatoes, oregano, white beans, escarole, garlic and pine nuts, in a light herb broth).

Be sure to conclude things with one of the desserts, whether it's the justifiably-named Sloppy Sundae or the delectably dense torta lava, which comes with mint-chocolate gelato.



Calamari fritti at Francesca's.
Photo by Matt Simonette

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

Trans women and drag queens mingle at Campit Resort

BY MIKE KUBY

Krista Anderson, PhD, never imagined she would attend a drag show much less work one, but she enjoyed the Ms. Campit Pageant on May 19 and earned pin money for Gender SAFE (Supporting All For Equality) by collecting donations in exchange for free beer.

Dr. Anderson provides professional support as a clinical psychologist and facilitator for Gender SAFE in Holland, Michigan, and one of her children is a transgender teenager. The support group was formed almost three years ago, spinning off of PFLAG Holland/Lakeshore to focus specifically on trans and gender nonconformity issues. Group

members can attend two meetings a month in Holland, at Out on the Lakeshore, a non-profit LGBTQ community center, and at Grace Episcopal Church. Besides transgender people, group members include allies and "a lot of parents," according to Wildene, a group member in his 70s, who says she never felt comfortable with her birth gender but didn't understand it and only came to terms with her trans identity late in life, after a divorce and lot of personal pain. "Younger people see what's happening," she said.

To help give visibility to the group and encourage donations, an open bar was stocked with beer and sparkling wine by Campit owners Michael O'Connor and Sally Howard. Dr. Anderson



Lucy Fyrre-Fatalé and Krista Anderson, PhD.
Photo by Mike Kuby

confessed that the introverted Gender SAFE team was not ideal donation solicitors. Still, she said, the campers were generous and the group made enough to produce handouts for Holland Pride, June 23, to publicize their support meetings.

Instead of aggressively hawking beer, Amber Marie, one of the group's transgender women, was content to watch the show. She was impressed at the dexterity of the drag queens twerking and cavorting about the clubhouse. However, at over 6'2" and worried about standing out, she couldn't see the point of wearing five inch heels.

At the conclusion of the pageant, reigning Ms. Campit 2017 Karina Passion relinquished her crown to Lucy Fyrre-Fatalé from Detroit. Passion expects to abandon Michigan and her gig at Rumors in Grand Rapids for Chicago soon. Fyrre-Fatalé won the contest in part for the answer she gave to in the Q&A portion of the contest to a question regarding the California congressional candidate who videotaped herself harassing a transgender woman in a restroom. Fyrre-Fatalé told the campers, who had paid \$15 for the dinner and show, "Everyone needs acceptance. What I like about this place is that everyone can feel safe."



SIDETRACK

Come through, summer!
Photos by Jed Dulanias

WINDY CITY TIMES

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., June 6

17th Annual OUT of the Office Pride Networking Party VIP reception opens at 5 pm, party 6 pm 5:00pm - 8:00pm Godfrey Roof Top I/O, 127 W. Huron, Chicago <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/out-of-the-office-2018-tickets-45363835453>

Pink Orchids Five eloquently interwoven and often funny monologues on living with HIV. Through July 7 7:30pm The Buena, Pride Arts Center 4147 N. Broadway 866-811-4111 <http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com>

Thursday, June 7

Taste of Diversity Chefs, alumni and students of the Center on Halsted's Silver Fork culinary arts and job readiness program present tasting samples from a diverse cultural landscape. Passed hors d'oeuvres, food stations, and wine pairings. \$40 ticket includes wine, beer, soda. Tickets at link 5:30pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=15418>

Looking Out // Looking In Performance and Talk Back with About Face Theater True stories of the performers, connecting race, class, sexuality, age, gender, and self-esteem. Speaks specifically to queer/trans identities, allyship. Suitable for adults and teens 6:00pm - 7:00pm Harold Washington Public Library 400 S State Chicago [http://chipublib.bibliocommons.com/events/search/fq=program:\(52ec52e0cb8b1e0000000031\)/event/5ae9d08cab78273800c9593d](http://chipublib.bibliocommons.com/events/search/fq=program:(52ec52e0cb8b1e0000000031)/event/5ae9d08cab78273800c9593d)

American Veterans for Equal Rights Chicago Chapter monthly meeting 7:00pm Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted Chicago, <http://www.averchicago.org/>



'OFFICE' SPACE

Wed., June 6

The annual event "OUT of the Office" will take place at the I/O Godfrey rooftop. Archival photo of Kinley Preston at event

Friday, June 8

PrideFest Milwaukee opening ceremony for 3-day weekend Danica Roem, journalist and politician, speak. Jussie Smollett of "Empire," B-52s, and Daya appear on the Miller Lite Main stage June 8-10. Free with \$1 donation per person to the PrideFest Plus One Campaign. Full schedule at link. 2:30pm - 12am. Summerfest Grounds, Henry W. Maier Festival Park <http://pridefest.com>

Andersonville Midsommarfest Annual street festival with music, dancing, kids' entertainment, food, vendors from around the region, dance troupes, DJs, and bands. \$10 donation. 5:00pm - 10:00pm Clark Street between Foster and Catalpa <http://www.brownpaper-tickets.com>

Saturday, June 9

Andersonville Midsommarfest Annual street festival with music, dancing, kids' entertainment, food, vendors from around the region, dance troupes, DJs, and bands. \$10 donation. 11:00am - 10:00pm Clark Street between Foster and Catalpa <http://www.brownpaper-tickets.com>

44th annual Wells Street Art Festival Nearly 200 juried artists, traditional and eco-friendly art and "Remix" recycled art area. Performance by 16 Candles, Big Suit, Wedding Banned. Kids art corner, acrobatics, Happiness Club musical troupe among Old Town restaurants. Two days. 12:00pm - 7:30pm Wells Street between North Avenue and Division 773.868.3010 <http://www.WellsStreetArtFest.us>

Joan Armatrading 46 The Tour. Three Grammy nominations, has performed for Nelson Mandela, is one of the first female artists to be honored by Queen Elizabeth II, first female U.K. artist to have debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's Blues chart. June 9,10,12,13 &14 Time:TBA City Winery Chicago 1200 W Randolph St Chicago <http://www.citywinery.com>

Artemis Singers' More Than Music Pride choral concert and community dance Includes poet e nina jay, author of Body of Rooms, and DJ OCD in a soaring gothic acoustically beautiful space. 7:00pm First Unitarian Church of Chicago 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave. Chicago <http://morethanmusic.brownpapertickets.com/>.

Sunday, June 10

Andersonville Midsommarfest and Chicago Equality Rally Annual street festival with music, dancing, kids' entertainment, food, vendors from around the region, dance troupes, DJs, and bands. \$10 donation. 11:00am - 10:00pm. Equality Rally (at noon) to include lesbian Chicago mayoral candidate Lori Lightfoot, longtime LGBTQ-rights activist Rick Garcia, openly gay state Rep. Greg

Harris and Chicago Ald. Harry Osterman. Clark Street between Foster and Catalpa. <http://andersonville.org>

Holocaust Museum Pride Event: The Right Side of History? LGBTQ Rights Worldwide History, early battles, defeats, victories in the struggle for equality, how defend human rights. Equality Illinois co-founder Art Johnston; attorney Matt Nosanchuck, who helped craft President Obama's LGBT-rights agenda; transgender activist Channyn Lynne Parker, manager of youth drop-in at Broadway Youth Center. Lora Branch, Gilead Sciences, will moderate. Reservations required. 2:00pm - 3:30pm Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center 9603 Woods Dr. Skokie, IL 60077 <http://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org>

Lesbian comedian Fortune Feimster Out comic has played Last Comic Standing, Chelsea Lately, numerous Comedy Central and late night show appearances. First show 6pm 8:30pm Zanies Rosemont <http://rosemont.zanies.com/>

Monday, June 11

Pride Open Mic hosted by Sappho's Salon For folks of all gender identities, plus featured performers. Food, art, community while celebrating gender, sexuality, and feminism. Open Mic sign up beings at 7 pm.Show 7:30. Pay what you can at door. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Tuesday, June 12

Pride Film Festival: Summer Shorts Sexy and fun upbeat films for summer. Last of the monthly short film fests until November. Various prices 7:30pm Pride Arts Center, 4147 N. Broadway 866-811-4111 Tickets: <http://www.pridefilm-sandplays.com>

Wed., June 13

City of Chicago Salute to LGBTQ Veterans Speaker Vanessa Sheridan, Air Force

veteran, Director of Trans Relations and Community Engagement and author of The Complete Guide to Transgender in the Workplace. Hosted by the American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER). Questions to jamesdarby@aol.com 12:00pm Daley Center Plaza 50 W Washington St Chicago 773-752-0058 <http://www.averchicago.org>

Trans Ice Cream Social On Center on Halsted's beautiful rooftop deck, celebrate Pride Month, meet new friends, listen to the sweet sounds of DJ X-tasy and enjoy complimentary Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream. Free. No RSVP Required 5:30pm - 7:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=15419>

A Brief Visual History of Queer Linguistics walking tour Kevin Whiteneir of the Library's LGBT Pride Committee will lead a walking tour of their heritage exhibit. Questions to kwhiteneir@chipublib.org 5:30pm Harold Washington Public Library 400 S State Chicago 312-747-4300 <http://www.chipublib.org>

Thursday, June 14

LGBTQIA Roundtable "Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging: Advocating For LGBTQIA Equality in the Workplace" coordinated by the Illinois Diversity Council and the LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois. 8:00am - 12:00pm Chicago Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce 3179 N Clark Chicago <http://www.IllinoisDiversityCouncil.org>

Out at CHM: Queer Expression in Public Spaces Panel discussion on evolution and documentation of LGBTQ sexuality over the decades, how public spaces have provided opportunities for intimacy while documentation forms powerful messages about politics, sexuality and love. \$20 6:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.chicagohistory.org>

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HELP WANTED

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO is seeking applicants for the position of Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center. View position details and apply online at <https://jobs.uic.edu/>. For fullest consideration, please upload a resume and cover letter by August 8, 2018 (8/8/18-13)

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Bingham Cup in Amsterdam in June

The Bingham Cup program—the world championship of LGBT-inclusive men's and women's rugby—will take place in Amsterdam through June 11.

The tournament, taking place June 8-10, will be the centerpiece of the program.

The Chicago Dragons is the only area team slated to compete. Dozens of other teams (totaling more than 1,600 players) will take part, and they are from such cities as Madrid, Nashville, Liverpool, Stockholm, Dallas and Toronto.

First held in 2002, the Bingham Cup is named in memory of 9/11 hero and rugby player Mark Bingham, who was instrumental in establishing two leading LGBT rugby clubs: the San Francisco Fog and the Gotham Knights.

Visit <https://binghamcup.com/>.

LGBTQ-inclusive CAKE comics expo hits Center on Halsted

BY VERNON HESTER

The Chicago Alternative Comics Expo (CAKE) landed at Center on Halsted to celebrate the world of alternative comic art June 2-3.

With an army of exhibitors, artists, fans, debut authors and illustrators as well as curiosity-seekers, CAKE, now in its sixth year, offered something for everyone.

Among the celebrated artists who presented at the event were queer artist Tony Breed (author and illustrator of the titles Finn and Charlie are Hitched and Muddlers Beat), Audrey Niffenegger (The Time Traveler's Wife), Nicole Hollander (Sylvia), Fiona Smyth (The Never Weres), Emil Ferris (My Favorite Thing Is Monsters) and Bianca Xunise (The Nib, The Washington Post, Bitch Magazine). Among the many comic art pieces and comic books on display was a healthy amount of work by queer artists including Archie Bongiovanni, Betsey Swardlick and Jasjyot Singh Hans.

CAKE was hardly just about comic books, as it also played host to panel discussions like "Gender in Comics" (which featured artists who have overtly addressed gender non-gender conforming narratives in their work, including Penina Gal, Gabe Howell, Chloe Perkis and Carta Moir, with poet H. Melt moderating) and a one-on-one interview with celebrated artist Bianca Xunise and culture journalist Britt Julious. There were also workshops such as "Drawing the Inside Out: Art, Listening, and Autobiography" and "Positive Obsession: Subjects That Inspire Creation."

Sponsors of the event included Print Ninja, The Museum of Contemporary Art, The Annoyance Theater and Bar, Center on Halsted, Lillstreet Art Center, The Busy Beaver Button Company, Quimby's Bookstore, and Blick Art Materials.



Left to right: Jasjyot Singh Hans; Tony Breed (left in photo, with Ethan Hutchinson); Nicole Hollander meeting a fan. All photos by Vernon Hester



Bianca Xunise and Britt Julious in discussion.

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