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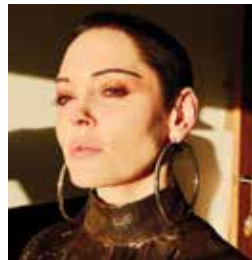
VOL 34, NO. 09 NOV. 21, 2018

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Photos by Brooke Nagler

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ANYTHING, ROSE

Rose McGowan answers some questions.
Photo courtesy of McGowan

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SUKIE DE LA CROIX

Out raconteur on his latest work.
Photo courtesy of de la Croix

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LOSING MY RELIGION

Activists protest anti-LGBT minister on South Side



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ICONIC STATUS

Photo exhibit on impactful individuals

Photos of James Baldwin and David Bowie by Steve Schapiro, courtesy of Fahey Klein Gallery



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PARADISE FOUND

Fort Lauderdale and Wilton Manors, Florida, have plenty to offer the traveler who's looking for a discount.
Photo by Bill Malcolm

CHASING AMY



WCT reviews Amy Ray's show at Old Town School of Folk Music.
Photo by John Stadelman

MORE THAN WORDS

Marty McConnell discuss her newest book of poetry.

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Activists protest pastor's removal of gay teen over his clothing choices

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

About 20 activists gathered Nov. 18 at Power House International Ministries, 7040 S. Western Ave., during the Sunday evening service to protest Rev. Antonio Rocquemore's removal of a 16-year-old gay teenager, Antwan Haywood, from the congregation last Sunday, Nov. 11.

As the activists began to arrive at the storefront church with their protest signs and a rainbow flag with the 50 stars, four Chicago police vehicles drove up with flashing lights. The 10 police officers formed a U-shape at the door to the edge of the sidewalk that prevented the protesters from getting close to the church.

Some of the parishioners who arrived for the service scowled at the protestors as they entered the building, with one getting into a heated discussion with a protestor about how homosexuality is interpreted in the Bible.

During the protest, Haywood explained that Rocquemore ejected him because of the way he was dressed the previous weekend—checkered button down shirt, black jeans and black boots with wedge heels. Haywood was also pulled aside

by one of the police officers, who told him he was getting too loud with his protest chants.

"I thank God for all my supporters here and on social media," said Haywood. "No church can put me in heaven or hell. Only God can do that and for [the pastor] to put me out of the church was wrong. Also, all of these police [officers] being here is not right either because I told everyone this was going to be a peaceful protest and I would not stand for any violence."

"What they did to my son was wrong," said Haywood's mom, Tonia Haywood.

"Having this many police officers here is ridiculous," said lesbian activist and protest organizer Courtney Haskins. "God loves everybody. I asked the pastor's wife if Antwan was allowed in the church tonight and she said no. I asked if God would let him into heaven based on how he was dressed and she had no reply except to say she was not God."

"God loves you no matter what so you should come as you are, not how others want you to be," said protestor Ardelia Pery.

"We should not have to stand out here and fight for who we are when someone [like the pastor] is



Photos by Brooke Nagler

trying to wrong us for the wrong reasons," said protestor Mia Forman. "We are representing the LGBT community and nothing else. We love God and Jesus just as much as [the pastor] does or so he says, but all I can see here [with this church] is a cult."

When asked why her pastor husband ejected

Haywood from the church service the previous weekend, Lela Rocquemore confirmed that it was due to how he was dressed.

See <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Local-minister-ejects-gay-parishioner-for-wearing-womens-clothes/64750.html> for more on this story.



Todd Lillethun.

Photo from Cremation Society of Illinois

PASSAGES

Todd Lillethun

Todd Anthony Lillethun—a filmmaker and social worker who was a native of Janesville, Wisconsin, and a resident of Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood—passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by the love of family, on Nov. 14. He was 46.

After graduating cum laude with a B.S. in social work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and earning a B.A. in film from Co-

lumbia College (again, cum laude), Todd found great satisfaction in a 13-year career as a social worker, ultimately serving as program director at Renaissance Social Services. Todd then served as program director for Chicago Filmmakers for four years and as a career counselor for film students at Northwestern University for three years.

A successful independent filmmaker, Todd wrote, directed and edited short films and documentaries that played at film festivals around the world.

He was the beloved husband and partner of 12 years to D. Brandon Fogel; cherished son of John Louis Lillethun and Donna Maria Lillethun (nee Buckley); loving brother of Chad (Angela Frizzo) Lillethun; uncle of Nadia Josephine Lillethun; and son-in-law of Linda (the late Ronald) Kane and Donald (Cathy) Fogel.

There will be a memorial event Saturday, Dec. 1, at 2 p.m., at Episcopal Church of the Atonement, 5749 N. Kenmore Ave..

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to RSSIChicago.org, Arthritis.org or ChurchOfTheAtonement.org.

Arrangements by Cremation Society of Illinois, 773-281-5058 or Cremation-society.com

Memorial event for Brommel on Dec. 1

There will be a memorial events for Dr. Bernard J. Brommel on Saturday, Dec. 1, at 1 p.m. in the Alumni Hall of the Student Union, Northeastern Illinois University, 5500 N. Saint Louis Ave.

Brommel—a retired Northeastern Illinois University professor, therapist and philanthropist—passed away Sept. 22 in Kalamazoo. His obituary is at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Bernard-Brommel-passes-away-at-88/64226.html>.

Griffin to step down as HRC president

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) announced that President Chad Griffin has informed the board of directors that he will depart the organization in 2019, after seven years at the helm, according to the organization.

In a press release, HRC touted accomplishments under Griffin, including doubling its membership, staff and budget to meet its expanded goals and opportunities. During Griffin's tenure, HRC has also led efforts to win marriage equality, introduce the Equality Act, and establish new programs to expand protections across the Deep South and around the globe, among other things.

Griffin said, in part, "For decades, this organization has shown the world that love conquers hate. But this year, in this election, with the future of our democracy on the ballot and the equality of future generations on the line, we proved that votes conquer hate, too."

In a separate statement, Planned Parenthood Federation of America President Dr. Leana Wen said, "We all live in a more equal and just society because of Chad and his leadership at HRC.

His legacy will not only be the landmark policies and the new generation of legislators he has fought for, but the countless advocates he has inspired along the way."

The HRC board will work to establish an executive search process for Griffin's successor over the coming weeks.

'Stonewall 50 March' planned for NYC

The Reclaim Pride Coalition (RPC)—formed by LGBTQ+ activists in early 2018 to protest what it "called the corporatization and gross mismanagement of NYC Pride by Heritage of Pride (HOP)"—is planning a "Stonewall 50 March for Human Rights and Social Justice" on the 50th anniversary of the historic Stonewall Riots.

The release also stated, "The call-to-action comes on the heels of HOP's announcement at internal planning meetings that it is strongly considering the Barclays Center as the site for the 2019 WorldPride Opening Ceremony. The Brooklyn-based arena is managed by AEG, the company owned by homophobic billionaire Philip Anschutz who has donated millions of dollars to anti-LGBTQ+ organizations and politicians since 1992."

RPC is calling for groups and individuals everywhere to sign up and endorse their vision for a 2019 Stonewall 50 Human Rights and Social Justice March. Visit <https://reclaimpridenyc.org/get-involved/>.

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Chicago Bisexual Health Task Force holds first community forum

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

The newly formed Chicago Bisexual Health Task Force (CBHTF) held a World Café style community forum sponsored by the AIDS Foundation of Chicago Nov. 12 at University Center on State Street.

The task force is made up of community members, healthcare professionals and researchers

improve the lives of bisexual+ individuals in the Chicagoland area by mobilizing communities, engaging in research, advocacy, and education, and supporting the development and implementation of policies and programs and the vision of the CBHTF is a thriving diverse bisexual+ community in the Chicagoland area that is visible, vibrant and healthy."



From left: Lauren Beach, Mike Oboza, Jim Pickett, Adrienne McCue, Brian Feinstein and Ashley Walker. Photo by Carrie Maxwell

focused on improving the lives and health of bisexual people in Chicago. CBHTF has already received a proclamation by Mayor Rahm Emanuel recognizing this past Sept. 23 as "International Day of Bisexual Visibility" in Chicago.

Speakers included Northwestern University Evaluation, Data Integration and Technical Assistance Program Associate Director Lauren Beach; Step Up For Mental Health President and Executive Director Adrienne McCue; Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago Founder Brother Mike Oboza; Northwestern University Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing Research Assistant Professor Brian Feinstein; Northwestern University School of Communications Media, Technology and Society Ph.D. candidate Ashley Walker; and AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) Prevention Advocacy Senior Director Jim Pickett, all of whom are founding members of the CBHTF.

Beach explained that this was CBHTF's inaugural forum and McCue spoke about the blog she created 10 years ago, Bi Social Network, and how that led to her involvement with CBHTF while Oboza gave highlights of the bisexual movement since the '70s.

Feinstein spoke about the origins of CBHTF, which trace back to the bisexual health "We See You" symposium that AFC and Northwestern sponsored in November 2017. He said that since April 2018 the task force has held bi-monthly meetings.

The mission of CBHTF, Feinstein said, "is to

The World Café discussion, led by Walker, featured questions surrounding crucial opportunities and challenges bisexual people face, where bi/pan/queer/fluid people feel supported, and what professional organizations are already doing to support bisexual people, among many other topics.

Pickett ended the session with a call for attendees to make a least one new connection with another attendee during the post-event reception.

Speaking about her experience after the event, Center on Halsted State of Illinois HIV and STD Hotline Manager and AFC Associate Board Member Nicole Holmes, who identifies as bisexual, said, "The conversation was incredibly fruitful and I am glad networking time was worked into it, so people could connect on a social level. Being social was the recurring theme throughout, even though we were focusing on health issues. When we think of health, it often concerns housing insecurity, HIV and smoking cessation, but social health is a very important piece as one gets further into the intersectionalities of the LGBTQ community."

See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ChiBiHealthTF>.

For more information about the "We See You" symposium, visit <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/AFC-conference-focuses-on-bisexual-health/60995.html>.



John Sherwood.

Photo courtesy of Tim Cavanagh

Couple sue police officer, others after nightclub attack

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A gay Chicago couple is continuing their civil lawsuit against a Chicago Police Department (CPD) officer, an Oak Park police officer and two others after they allegedly assaulted the couple in front of the @mosphere bar in Andersonville on Sept. 29. @mosphere is also named in the suit.

According to an amended complaint filed Nov. 8, John Sherwood and Tomasz Stacha were attacked by CPD officer Eric Elkins, and Oak Park Police Department officer Dwayne Jones as well as Jeffrey Rodriguez and Giovanni Rodriguez at the nightclub.

"They're recovering," said the couple's lawyer, Tim Cavanagh. "John sustained a very serious fracture of bone in his leg—the bones were sticking out of the skin. He had to have surgery and was in a surgery for a very lengthy period of time."

After the event, news trickled out that Elkins had a history of legal problems; a Chicago Sun-Times article detailed incidents where he was first accused in 2003 of having sex with a minor—a charge he was cleared of—and, in 2015, when he was accused of touching the penis of a teenager in Michigan. He pled guilty to a lesser charge and has been on CPD desk duty since, while the department investigates.

"I've handled cases like this in the past, and obtained a \$20-million settlement against the

City of Chicago for a police officer who had killed two boys drinking and driving," noted Cavanagh. "It's not beyond me to understand that the police have some bad apples, and that the 'code of silence' allows police officers to get breaks that seem to fester. That was what happened here—this guy had a criminal history, the police department knew about it and he should have been fired. ... He was arrested two times and the only [CPD] punishment we know about was that he was put on desk duty."

Sherwood and Stacha "want to make sure that this doesn't happen to anybody else," he added. "They were very dismayed and troubled to find out that a Chicago police sergeant and an Oak Park police officer were involved in this."

AMA adopts new policies at meeting

The American Medical Association (AMA) voted to adopt new policies on emerging health-care topics during the voting session of its recent interim meeting.

The House of Delegates adopted policies such as:

—Affirming the medical spectrum of gender: The AMA will oppose efforts to deny an individual's right to determine their stated sex marker or gender identity. The new policy comes just weeks after a memo circulated within the Trump Administration proposed narrowly defining sex as "a person's status as male or female based on immutable biological traits identifiable by or before birth," according to the New York Times;

—Protecting the integrity of public health data collection: In recognition of a need to better understand the health of sexual and gender minorities, the AMA will advocate for collection of demographic data in federal and state surveys that is inclusive of sexual and gender identity;

—Opposing the detention of migrant children: The AMA will continue to oppose and object to policies separating migrant children from their families, as well as any effort to end or weaken a 1997 legal settlement that limits the length of time and conditions under which the U.S. government can detain immigrant children;

—Increased access to identification cards for those experiencing homelessness: Delegates approved a resolution supporting legislative and policy changes that streamline, simplify and reduce/eliminate the cost of obtaining identification cards for the homeless population; and

—Increasing patient access to sexual-assault medical forensic examinations and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV in emergency departments.



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Trans Israeli activist speaks at Temple Sholom

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Ofer Erez—Jerusalem Open House (JOH) CEO and the first trans officer to serve openly in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)—was the featured speaker recently at Temple Sholom.

Erez is currently on A Wider Bridge's (AWB) Impact Tour, in which the organization brings Israeli grantees to the United States to share their stories. AWB, the Jewish United Fund/Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (JUF) and Temple Sholom co-sponsored this particular event.

Temple Sholom Associate Rabbi Shoshanah Conover spoke about how important it is for their synagogue to show solidarity with the LGBTQ community, and recited a portion of the Torah that talks about who is seen and not seen, and how people are perceived by the wider world.

AWB Western and Midwest States Director Jeroen Vahrmeijer led the discussion. In addition, Vahrmeijer said Erez recently received AWB's first-ever LGBTQ Trailblazer Award.

Erez spoke about his upbringing on a kibbutz, saying he felt different than the other kids, and wanting to have a shaved head and wear boys' clothes. His parents were supportive and granted his wishes. He did not know there was a word for how he was feeling until he met another trans young man when he was 16; there was no trans

visibility or awareness in his community.

According to Erez, he was terrified to be an out trans man when he got his mandatory recruitment letter, so he entered the IDF as a woman. He said the process of coming out publicly to his entire unit did not happen until he finished officer training school everyone was very supportive. An article about Erez—one in which he had issues with how the author portrayed him—nevertheless led to other trans people coming to him for advice.

After coming out, Erez co-led the creation and implementation of a trans-inclusive policy for the IDF. It discussed medical services; addressing trans people by their preferred pronoun and chosen name; and uniforms and living quarters that matches one's gender identity. Erez noted that the IDF publicly announced that gender dysphoria is not a mental health disability.

Erez is the first trans person to head JOH, one of the oldest LGBTQ organizations in Israel. He said many LGBTQ Jerusalem residents rely on JOH to provide them with services and support; that includes an HIV clinic that provides confidential and anonymous testing, the only one of its kind in the city.

Erez said that unlike Tel Aviv, which has its Pride parade financed by the city government, Jerusalem's March for Pride and Tolerance, which



Ofer Erez and Jeroen Vahrmeijer.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell

JOH organizes, is made possible by the community and outside donations like AWB's impact grant. He added that the march has grown every year, but there has been opposition. A man who stabbed marchers in 2005 was sent to prison and released 10 years later, even though he said he would stab marchers again. He did just that in 2015, where he injured five people and killed Shira Banki.

It is important to be engaged and take action on behalf of minority communities across the globe who are being targeted for hate and vio-

lence, especially in this current political climate, said Erez.

Other speakers included Jewish Federations of North America LGBTQ Mission to Israel Co-Chair Michael Bauer, AWB Board Chair Bruce Maxwell and JUF Next Gen Initiatives Assistant Vice President Sally Preminger.

To read more about Erez, visit <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Trans-Israeli-activist-Ofer-Erez-on-making-IDF-history-Open-House-role/64455.html>.

See <http://www.jerusalemopenhouse.com/>.

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Exhibit opening marks Chicago's history of diversity in drag

BY KELSEY HOFF

The Gerber/Hart Library and Archives collaborated with The Jackhammer Complex on a drag performance to accompany the opening of a new exhibit, "The City that Werqs: A History of Chicago's Drag Revolutionaries" on Nov. 10. Gerber/Hart has been promoting the exhibit on Instagram with #TillieTuesday, sharing pictures of Tillie "The Dirty Old Lady" and sneak peeks at magazines, newspapers and ephemera from their collections.



The tongue that was on display at Carol's Speakeasy.

Photo by Kelsey Hoff

James Conley, project manager and lead curator for The City that Werqs—along with Kurt Heinrich, Jennifer Dentel, Chase Ollis and Kevvie Vida—interviewed Chicago drag performers to create a "Drag Diary" and conducted historical research to find images and articles from various publications.

Some of the most radical "Revolutionaries" in the exhibit performed in the 1960s and '70s, such as Wanda Lust, who traveled with a VD testing van promoting sexual health conversations and giving out free condoms. Toots Lorraine and Miss Tillie, both active in the '60s and '70s, have two of the richest collections centered around a specific performer. The Miss Continental pageant, founded in the '80s and still running at the Baton Show Lounge, is perhaps Chicago's most significant contribution to American drag. The Vixen represents one of today's drag revolutionaries; she incorporated activism for Black queens into her routine in response to retaliation after one of her performances in Boystown.

Conley pointed out that this exhibit features a wealth of images compared to the previous one,

"Gay is Good: Homophile Activism before Stonewall," which included a lot of text. Costumes from Toots Lorraine and contemporary queen Jojo Baby will be on display along with artwork by Chicago artist Chad Sell, popular with RuPaul's Drag Race queens, and vinyl records used by Chicago performers. Some of the oldest pieces come from the turn of the 20th century, including Thomas Edison's 1901 film *The Old Maid Having her Picture Taken*, an example of female impersonation, and articles on the annual First Ward Ball with images from the 1907 and 1908 years. Conley notes that while these older visual pieces are rare glimpses of early drag performance, we don't know how the performers would have considered their gender performance or identity because the terminology for how we understand drag had not yet been developed.

Throughout Chicago's history, drag has remained a site of integration and diversity. Articles from the 1920s cover parties that brought queens together with bootleggers, anarchists, communists, mobsters and other outcasts. During this time, drag was not so much its own separate entity, but part of the city's prohibition underground. Chicago drag shows saw attendees of different races mingling through the '50s and '60s while they remained segregated almost everywhere else.

While these artifacts form a chronology of events, the team had to dig a bit deeper to craft a narrative authentic to today's drag culture. The interviewees were able to put Chicago drag into a national context based on their experiences performing in group shows and traveling to perform in other cities.

Conley and his team found that many Chicago performers repeated some variation of the sentiment that "In Chicago, you can find any kind of drag you can imagine almost any night of the week." Without a predominant "scene," Chicago offers more than a traditional understanding of diversity in its drag culture, expanding to diversity in style and innovation. Conley points out that three different performers doing lip synch could present it in completely different ways, from extravagant, non-traditional outfits to high glamour, comedy, avant-garde and everything in between. The longstanding community in the Boystown and Lakeview neighborhoods has expanded to venues in Andersonville and Rogers Park, and parties on the West and South sides bring together a more geographically diverse mix of performers with different tastes.

The exhibit opening began with a welcome from Gerber/Hart Board President John D'Emilio. Historian Owen Keehnen spoke about four drag performers whom he studied for two forthcoming books: Roby Landers, Miss Tillie, Wanda Lust and the Bearded Lady, all included in the exhibit. Keehnen shared stories about significant and shocking moments in Chicago's drag his-



Above: Curators Chase Ollis, James Conley, C'est Kevvie, Jen Dentel and Kurt Heinrich. Below: Coco Sho-Nell performs.

Photos by Kelsey Hoff



tory, quoted revolutionary queens and described some of their most famous outfits. He stressed that Gerber/Hart's collections were instrumental to his works. The team of curators shared their roles in creating the exhibit and personal stories about how drag and studying drag history has influenced them.

Drag-show performers included Coco Sho-Nell, Saltine, Rosemary Maybe, Dago T and host C'est Kevvie, who was part of the exhibit research team. They performed a variety of drag styles, branching out from traditional lip synching to

comedy (Saltine), political satire (Coco Sho-Nell), and performance art (Rosemary Maybe). Drag King Dago T paired up with Rosemary Maybe to perform "I've Got You Babe" by Sonny and Cher as Gomez and Morticia Addams. The entire audience sang along to the final number led by C'est Kevvie, "Like a Prayer" by Madonna, and the other performers joined her in an encore.

The exhibit is on display at the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, 6500 N. Clark St. See GerberHart.org.



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Kareem Strong, D'Ontace Keyes, Michael Rice and Erik Glenn discuss parTy boi.
Photo by Matt Simonette

Doc explores meth use by LGBT persons of color

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Brooklyn-based filmmaker Michael Rice was among those on hand to discuss the prevalence and circumstances of crystal methamphetamine use among LGBT persons of color on Nov. 16.

The discussion came about following a discussion of Rice's documentary parTy boi: Black Diamonds in Ice Castles as part of the Black Alphabet Film Festival (BAFF), which kicked off that evening with screenings at Malcom X College. The filmmaker was joined onstage by Chicago-area advocates.

Rice interviewed meth users, their family members and advocates in both New York City and Los Angeles to trace both how the drug came to be regularly used by LGBT people of color and how and why various individuals used it. The film explores in detail how stressors from systems of racism and classism, among others, often had a hand in decisions about meth use. Rice filmed several of his subjects smoking the drug as they explain their processes for taking it.

In the Nov. 16 discussion, Rice said he was inspired to make the documentary after a friend died from an overdose at a party. That person's family was so distraught that they had no funeral.

"Just like that, all my memories I had of my friend were gone," he added.

Further inspired by a quote by Nina Simone—"It is an artist's duty to speak of the times"—Rice decided to look at the issue closely on film. Rice said, "I knew something was changing in the Black and Latino communities."

He noted that the film was intended as a safe-space for dialogue around the issue as well. Participants praised him for not casting judgement

or shame in parTyboi.

"I'm always worried that there's not enough humanity in the stories that are told about us," said Erik Glenn, executive director of Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus.

D'Ontace Keyes of AIDS Foundation of Chicago and Kareem Strong of Chicago Center of HIV Elimination joined Rice and Glenn for the discussion, which was moderated by Maya Green, MD, of Howard Brown Health.

Among those films BAFF also presented Nov. 16 were the short Congo Cabaret; Saturday Church, a full-length musical drama; and the web series pilot After Party.

Report: 17-percent increase in hate crimes

Reflecting a trend from recent years, the FBI reported more than a 17-percent rise in hate crimes in the United States.

The latest annual report showed 7,175 bias crimes in 2017 that targeted 8,493 victims based on race, gender, gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity—up from 6,121 in 2016. FBI.gov also noted that the number of law enforcement agencies reporting hate crime data increased as well, with approximately 1,000 additional agencies contributing information.

In Illinois, 32 agencies reported 82 hate crimes. California led the nation, with 232 agencies reporting 1,094 incidents.

In addition, there were 1,130 incidents nationwide involving sexual orientation, and 119 connected to gender identity. Sexual orientation was the motivation for 15.8 percent of single-bias incidents, with gender identity accounting for 1.6 percent.

The full report is at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2017>.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Exhibit honors impactful activists, celebrities

BY ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

Steve Schapiro knows how to be in the right place at the right time.

He might not be a household name, but his photographs have been seen by thousands worldwide and his subjects are heroes of the civil-rights movement, the LGBTQ community and social-justice causes. The photojournalist and activist started photographing at the age of nine and has not stopped since.

The Chicago-based photographer's latest exhibit, "Activists and Icons: The Photographs of Steve Schapiro," can be seen at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie and features some of Schapiro's most influential work from the 1960s. From Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Joan Baez, Robert and Jacqueline Kennedy to James Baldwin, Schapiro was at the forefront of the civil rights movement and those standing up to injustices. He also photographed activists and celebrities who challenged cultural norms such as David Bowie, Barbra Streisand, Mohammed Ali, Andy Warhol and Rita Schwerner, widow of Michael Schwerner, one of the three activists killed by the Ku Klux Klan near Philadelphia, Mississippi in 1964.

"[The pictures] recollect a period of time and I am glad I was able to do something that helped depict the important period of time for all of us," Schapiro said. "Pictures that could possibly be iconic or do something that reverberates with people and have some emotional feelings about a lot of them make me happy."

As a documentarian and storyteller, that is the main goal: to share the scene and elicit a reaction from the public. Schapiro's photos show personal perspectives from historic icons in the equality movement and linger on many unknown young activists of the time. With signs that read "Stop police killings" and "We march for first-class citizenship" and a powerful image of a young Black man with the word "Vote" painted on his forehead, these images feel omnipresent and are still relevant today. Having experienced both historical times, Schapiro said the only difference between 1965 and now is the behavior of law enforcement.

"The difference back then was all the police were against this nonviolent movement that was going on to gain the vote and today it's more individual cops who have an inner sense of violence" and are less considerate toward minority groups, he said.



"March on Washington," which is part of the exhibit.

Photo by Steve Schapiro, courtesy of Fahey Klein Gallery

Chief curator Arielle Weininger said the theme of the exhibit is equality, a value that resonates with the LGBTQ community. A pioneer icon in the LGBTQ community was Bowie, who is the last picture in the gallery and representative of the LGBTQ scene. Weininger said he was included to show his impact on re-identifying gender and his embrace of cross-dressing. "[He] pushed the limits of what was 'out' in American society," Weininger said, adding that Baldwin, who was gay, did as well, although more privately.

Schapiro said the photoshoot with Bowie was very unexpected and it showed an aspect of him the public was not used to seeing: a spiritual side. He said Bowie was not flamboyant but rather calm and introspective; he drew white stripes on everything and then proceeded to draw on the floor the Tree of Life, or the Kabbalah in Jewish tradition.

Schapiro published a whole book about his time with Bowie in 2016, and he said he was influential to the LGBTQ community and to our culture as a whole for the way he expressed himself.

"All of us have a particular point of view and we don't always express [it] to its fullest but David Bowie expressed all of his inner feelings in a very strong way," Schapiro said. "I appreciate the enormous growth he had as a person and also all that he revealed as his inner self and his inner feelings."

The exhibition's 46 large-format photographs tell the story of pioneering moments in history from the March on Washington in 1963 to Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1968. When gathering photos for it, Schapiro said he discovered many he had forgotten about, ones that had never been published but held the same weight as those already seen by the world. He did not think they would still be of interest today and that was certainly not on his mind as he was in the moment 50 years ago.

Weininger said seeing these unpublished pho-

tos show the dedication Schapiro had to the subject and why his work stood out from the other photographers capturing the events.

"He emphasized the day-to-day work of the organizers that are the thousands behind the few in order to make the movement work," she said.

The order of the photos was pivotal in telling the right story of Schapiro's character, the curators said, separating the gallery in half: one side is the icons and the other is the activists—and some blend into both.

"Schapiro documented the civil rights movement with care and intimacy, unlike others who arrived at a pivotal moment and left once they got the shot," said guest curator Erik Gellman, Associate Professor of History at the University of North Carolina.

Schapiro's photographs of the civil-rights movement appeared in Life magazine and, in the '70s, he did work for Rolling Stone, Look, Time, Newsweek, Vanity Fair, Sports Illustrated, People and Paris Match. He also shot on set of "Taxi Driver," "Midnight Cowboy," "The Godfather," "Rambo," "Risky Business" and "Billy Madison." He also published 11 books and his work has been in worldwide renowned art galleries.

One would never know that it is a challenge for Schapiro to take good photos—or so he says. Looking back on all of the people he has photographed in the past—many who became his close friends—Schapiro considers his career a humbling one and is happy these pictures are receiving more exposure now, after all these years.

"Those people still have the same charisma that they used to have," he said. "I have been very lucky in terms of who I have been able to photograph and the experience of doing it."

The exhibit runs until Oct. 27, 2019, and is free with museum admission. See <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/activists-and-icons/>.



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Forum focuses on LGBT seniors' housing and legal rights

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The renewed attacks on the LGBT community by right-wing elements in recent years, just as many LGBT persons who are aging will rely ever more on robust and equitable public-accommodations policy, was the subject of discussion at a community forum at Howard Brown Health's Rogers Park facilities Nov. 14.

A key component of discussions amongst advocates for Chicago LGBT seniors is housing. Activist Don Bell, who lives in Town Hall Apartments in Lake View, said that his residence is a community asset, but belongs to a housing model that cannot be sustained as LGBT community members age in greater numbers: "While I am blessed to benefit from what exists, that is not the answer for the future."



Amy Whelan at the talk.
Photo by Matt Simonette

Availability of housing resources is closely linked to other challenges facing LGBT seniors, especially discrimination in senior-facilities and lack of socialization.

Amy Whelan, senior staff attorney for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, detailed litigation

centering around persons harassed, abused or refused public accommodations, among them married lesbian couple Mary Walsh and Beverly Nance, who were refused by Friendship Village, a Missouri senior housing facility.

"Literally, if either Beverly or Mary had been a man, they would have been allowed to move in," said Whelan, noting that LGBT seniors quite commonly had to re-enter the closet when moving into such facilities. Serena Worthington, director of national field initiatives for SAGE, noted that about 90 percent of senior housing facilities are affiliated with a religious institution. All panelists agreed that cultural competency training was vital for housing facility employees.

It fell on Whelan to lead what she called the "depressing part" of the forum, a detailed listing of efforts by the Trump administration to undo various LGBT rights and accommodations. She noted that all such gains came during the Obama administration, and that Trump and his officials vowed to undo most if not all policy that Obama put into place. But she was not entirely pessimistic about the future.

"There's a certain amount of progress that can't be rolled back as long as everyone remains vigilant and engaged," said Whelan.

Paula Basta, director of Senior Services for Chicago Housing Authority, and Kim Hunt, executive director of Pride Action Tank, also spoke in the presentation, which SAGE and the National Center for Lesbian Rights sponsored.

Sisters in Cinema planning media hub

The Chicago-based non-profit Sisters in Cinema has launched a crowdfunding campaign for the rehab and building of the Sisters in Cinema Media Arts Center.

Founded by award-winning filmmaker Yvonne Welbon, the center will be located on Chicago's South Shore, the neighborhood where she was raised.

Sisters in Cinema launched in 1997 as an online resource for and about African-American women filmmakers. Currently, it is a non-profit with a mission to entertain, educate, develop and celebrate African-American women filmmakers and their audiences.

The Center will be open to the community and offer workshops, courses, screenings, scholar resources and opportunities to network with industry professionals. Sisters in Cinema wants as much of this as possible to be free.

To donate to the Sisters in Cinema's crowdfunding page, visit <https://goo.gl/rhwTVK>. For more information about Sisters in Cinema visit SistersInCinema.com or email info@sistersincinema.com.

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1457 W. Addison St.
\$1,995,000

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YEPP launches 'Rise Up' at Chicago Theater Works

BY VERNON HESTER

The Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) presented its inaugural annual fundraiser, "Rise Up: A Celebration of Resilience" at Chicago Theater Works on Nov. 14. The event also acknowledged the Transgender Day of Remembrance as well as November being National Runaway and Homeless Month.

YEPP ensemble members largely curated the fundraiser, which featured testimonials and spoken word and dance performances as well as a DJ, a buffet, a cash bar and a photo booth. Among the performances were dance segments featuring Antonio Gray and Malia with spoken pieces by Sticky Buns, Angelina Nordstrom, Gray, Cheyenne Butler and Levi Perez.

The program also featured a special "Say Her Name" segment that acknowledged transgender individuals who were the victims of violence in the past year. YEPP board members Bonsai Bermudez, Pheonix Forbes and Avi Bowie also took the stage while LaTony Alvarado-Rivera emceed.

YEPP is a yearly performance group designed to provide a safe environment for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Through workshops, panels and performances, YEPP investigates new ways to address members' struggles and celebrate their strengths through self, leadership and community development. While ensemble members participate in the program, YEPP supports them with resources such as housing, employment, education, legal aid, health, food, transportation and other basic needs.



Above: Sabrina Hampton (from left), La Tony Alvarado-Rivera, Bonsai Bermudez, Dulce Quintero, Cindy Ibarra . Left: Cheyenne Butler.

Photos by Vern Hester

City committee to discuss pro-trans resolution

On Wed., Nov. 28, at City Hall, 121 N. LaSalle St., room 200, the Committee on Human Relations will hold a meeting.

Ald. Tom Tunney and the rest of the LGBT Caucus (Ald. James Cappleman, Deb Mell, Carlos Ramirez-Rosa and Raymond Lopez) have

introduced a resolution that calls for President Trump and the Department of Health and Human Services to cease attempts to define gender that excludes transgender identity.

The committee will vote after hearing testimony and, at the next City Council meeting on Wed., Dec 12, it will make a recommendation to the full City Council.

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Does the GOP have a racist cutoff point?

President Donald Trump traffics in racial epithets.

Since his first year in office, Trump's displays of xenophobic, misogynistic, LGBTQ-phobic and racist remarks (to name just a few from his laundry list of bigotry) appear to have no cutoff point.

The Republican Party under Trump doesn't seem to have one, either.

In a recent YouGov poll, 70 percent of Republicans said they believe diversity unfairly advantages Blacks and hurt whites, 59 percent said Blacks don't have as much motivation as whites, and 59 percent said the judicial system treats Blacks fairly.

And, two of Trump's top staffers are just the tip of the racist iceberg. For example, in June 2018, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions used the biblical passage Romans 13 to defend Trump's indefensible "zero-tolerance" immigration policy.

"I would cite you to the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13, to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of the order," said Sessions. "Orderly

and lawful processes are good in themselves and protect the weak and lawful."

The scripture has been used as a text of terror by miscreant thugs in power throughout history, including slave owners, Nazi sympathizers, apartheid enforcers, supporters of Japanese-American internment, and loyalists opposed to the American Revolution.

In 2017, Boston-born White House Chief of Staff John Kelly came off as a diehard lost cause apologist on Laura Ingraham's Fox News show. His remarks reopened a divide deep in this country about slavery when he told the conservative media television host that he viewed Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee as "an honorable man" and that "the lack of an ability to compromise led to the Civil War."

But, if a tape of Trump using the N-word appears, a tape that former White House staffer Omarosa Manigault Newman said a while ago exists, will the GOP have a cutoff point? What stance will the Republican Party take? Impeachment or apology? Or will it be too feeble to move forward?

The N-word is one of the most odious of words deriving from this country's original sin of slavery. And, it is firmly embedded in the lexicon of racist language that was and still is used to disparage African-Americans. If Trump used the N-word, then he has breached his oath of office to respect and represent "all the people" as one who holds the highest office in a democratic society.

Trump has a history of racist statements and actions toward Blacks. He mocked LeBron James' intel-

ligence, called CNN anchor Don Lemon the dumbest man on TV and said Auntie Maxine Waters has a low IQ.

Trump has also called NFL players "sons of b*tches" for taking knees at games, created birther fearmongering and came to national attention when he took out full-page advertisements in four New York newspapers calling for the return of the death penalty for the Central Park Five—and he continued his call after they were exonerated.

Trump's embrace of white supremacy showed itself in his statement about Black immigrants from what he depicted as "sh*thole countries." And Trump's removal of white-supremacist groups—the Ku Klux Klan, Identitarians, Identity Christians, Neo-Nazis and neo-Confederates, to name a few—from a list of violent extremist groups put out by the Southern Poverty Law Center highlights the Jim Crow era Trump wants the country to time travel back to when he says "Make America Great Again."

The GOP has already demonstrated an allegiance to its party over the country. White nationalists are gradually winning state and county seats, and Democratic incumbents are running scared in states with huge numbers of Trump supporters.

Republicans have no cutoff point when it comes to Trump's demands and his supporters. With no spine or moral compass, the GOP will neither impeach Trump nor make him apologize. The Republican Party—whether willingly or unwillingly—is dragging its feet and has become the party of racism.


**Toni
VAN PELT**

Proposed Title IX changes would gut critical protections for students everywhere

Nov. 16, 2018

WASHINGTON—Today, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced sweeping changes to Title IX that would eliminate from schools at all levels nearly all responsibilities to protect students from sexual harassment and violence. The proposed changes would take our education system back decades to a time when there was very little recourse for students to report harassment or assault and obtain needed support. Very often victims—mostly young women—just dropped out of school.

Coming from a conservative administration which

has shown great tolerance for sexual harassment and assault, it probably should not surprise us. From the start, DeVos embraced the recommendations of groups representing formerly accused persons wanting to overturn guidelines adopted under the Obama Administration. DeVos virtually ignored survivors' stories and it appears she did not take seriously input from college, university and school administrators about the success of their programs to better protect students, keep them in school and make campuses safer.

Along with staff and interns from NOW, I spoke out against the proposed rule change recently, citing how dangerous the changes would be for survivors. We told Department of Education officials that the changes would tip the scales in favor of alleged perpetrators and lead to higher rates of sexual harassment and violence. We know that sexual violence affects one in five girls ages 14-18, one in five college women, one in ten college men and one in four transgender and gender non-conforming students. The proposed changes, if adopted, will expand the epidemic even further.

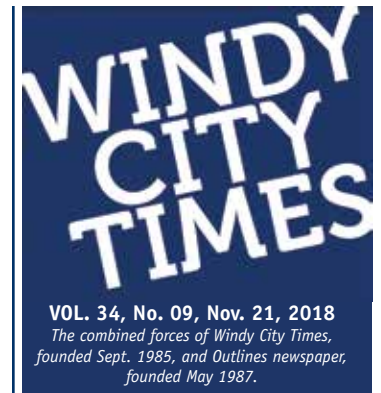
The single most damaging provision is the limitation to responding only to complaints that happen on campus. It is estimated that 87 percent of college students now live off campus; so that vast majority of victims of harassment and assault would have little protection. Their only recourse would be

to report incidents to law enforcement authorities and there is a long history of these types of complaints being ignored.

Other harmful changes include a restrictive definition of sexual harassment that would require students to endure severe harassment before the school has to respond; allowing schools to adopt a criminal standard of evidence in deciding cases when Title IX is a civil rights law and a lower standard of evidence is more appropriate; setting up a situation for unbalanced investigations where schools are required to start with the presumption that the named perpetrator is not responsible (thus the victims are not to be believed); allowing alleged perpetrators to directly question their accusers causing more trauma; and, permitting religious exemptions for schools to avoid compliance with Title IX protections placing at serious risk LGBTQIA students, pregnant and parenting students (some are unmarried), and student who need access to birth control and abortion care.

If these harmful changes are adopted—which we expect may be the case even though thousands of students, parents and activists will protest—we will have to turn to lawmakers in the next Congress to restore Title IX's proven protections so critical to keep students safe and in school.

Toni Van Pelt is president of the National Organization for Women (NOW).



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THEATER REVIEW

Rightlynd

Playwright: Ike Holter
 At: Victory Gardens Theater,
 2433 N. Lincoln Ave.
 Tickets: 773-871-3000;
 VictoryGardens.org; \$27-\$55
 Runs through: Dec. 23

BY KERRY REID

Meet Nina Esposito. She's just taken on a long-time alderman and won a seat in City Council by one vote. She's eager to stop the forces of rapacious gentrification and official social neglect that have led to school closings and unchecked crime in Chicago's 51st Ward, a.k.a. Rightlynd. She's fired up and ready to go.

Good luck with that.

Ike Holter's latest play bears the name of his fictional neighborhood, and is designed to be the first chronologically in his "Chicago cycle," which has already included acclaimed titles such as Exit Strategy and The Wolf at the End of the Block.



Monica Orozco and Sasha Smith in Rightlynd.
 Photo by Liz Lauren

In Esposito, he's created a character who feels like a cunning blend of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Tommy Carcetti, the "reform" mayor from the

HBO series The Wire, who finds himself sucked in by the same forces he campaigned against.

Rightlynd's biggest enemy is the Applewood Foundation (embodied by the oily rep played by Jerome Beck), which has been landing "urban renewal" deals throughout Chicago and pushing out small businesses. But as Monica Orozco's Nina quickly finds out, campaigning in poetry and then trying to govern in prose means disappointing your constituents—even if you're not making side deals with drug dealers.

Director Lisa Portes nimbly handles all the narrative devices Holter uses to create this tough, funny, scabrous and sorrowful world. These include dance sequences, comic asides (Robert Cornelius as Robinson, the plainspoken owner of a Rightlynd auto-repair shop, gets a lot of zingers), and even a terrific street-fight sequence (created by violence director Jaq Seifert) that goes from exhilarating to horrifying.

That tension between comic absurdity and grim reality doesn't always gel successfully here. In particular, the central relationship between Nina and ex-con Pac (Eddie Martinez) feels like it could use some more fire and pushback from Pac,

who more than anyone else we meet here has suffered from the callousness and injustice of the status quo.

The alderwoman wins trust easily, including that of Benny (Anish Jethmalani), a reporter for the Daily News. (Jethmalani, at times, seems to be channeling the mix of cynicism and hope embodied by the Daily News' most famous columnist, Mike Royko.) But Nina herself doesn't always feel like someone deserving of that trust. She has passion, to be sure. But we don't see enough of her own roots in the community, other than her loyalty to her late mother's long-closed corner shop and her on-the-verge-of-being-closed old high school. What exactly is her base? What is her coalition? I don't think Holter is going for docu-realism here as much as allegory. Yet when Nina cries out late in the play about the community not supporting her, it's hard not to wonder "Who do you think your community is, exactly?"

Then again, that might be the cogent point Holter is making—and that political outsiders learn over and over. Winning isn't the hard part. Staying in power without losing sight of your goals is.

THEATER REVIEW

The Safe House

Playwright: Kristine Thatcher
 At: City Lit Theatre at Edgewater
 Presbyterian Church, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.
 Tickets: CityLit.org; \$32
 Runs through: Dec. 16

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

There's this house, you see—a modest mid-20th-century family-sized dwelling in Lansing, Michigan. The ambience is a study in Norman Rockwell warmth and tranquility, with a laundry room in

the basement, a garden by the kitchen door and a grandmother who grows vegetables that she cooks into hearty stews (recipe in the playbill).

To be sure, grandma Hannah has been experiencing occasional lapses of memory, but refuses the advice of her son Mathius, who wants her to relocate to a "retirement center" so he can sell the property to pay his brother and sister-in-law's medical bills. Complicating matters further is the recent return of Hannah's granddaughter/Mathius' niece Bridget, an aspiring artist and soon-to-be divorcee who champions Hannah's wish to remain independent, even it means taking a temporary hiatus from her career.

The reluctance of the old to make way for the young has been a theme in literature since antiq-

uity, but don't be lulled into complacency by a premise nowadays undergoing a revival, spurred by the aging of the boom-generation population. So absorbing is the smartly articulated conflict between the intractable Hannah and the overprotective Mathius that not until late in the story do we consider the motive behind Bridget's craving for the sanctuary offered by childhood refuges and nurturing elders.

A play progressing in linear real-time, its exposition integrated deftly into dialogue uttered by characters of uniform Northern European-ancestry who eventually arrive at a satisfactory resolution to their problems, may seem quaint in an age when fourth wall-breaking monologues and mosaic narratives gobble up the big awards. Chicago

playwright Kristine Thatcher knows her audiences too well, however, to discount the value of a "well-made" play—especially when constructed around a showcase role for a female actor of, um, advanced years.

Doing the honors in this world premiere production at City Lit is the always-captivating marissie Mencotti as the formidable Hannah (whose charms encompass a backstory of immigrant survival and an impromptu song-and-dance just prior to intermission). She is flanked by Paul Chakrin and Kat Evans as the kin whose selfless resilience is the factor elevating Ray Toler's cozy Midwestern hearth above simple nostalgic scenic design into the kind of home we wish had been ours.

THEATER REVIEW

Plainclothes

Playwright: Spenser Davis
 At: Broken Nose Theatre @
 The Den, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave.
 Tickets: BrokenNoseTheatre.com;
 pay-what-you-can
 Runs through: Dec. 15

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Plainclothes is a comedy with a message, although the message is uncertain as audiences may draw interpretations unintended, I suspect, by author Spenser Davis. Baby Boomers (me) may see Plainclothes as a statement about irresponsible, immature millennials, since the play's lead characters are perpetually squabbling, self-interested and distrustful. Closer to the mark, yet perhaps not intended, this world premiere appears to concern crypto-fascism by faceless corporate bureaucracy in Trumpian America.

The story, however, is about several mostly-young department store employees working in

poor conditions to catch shoplifters. They wear street clothes to blend in with customers. Like a fictional movie platoon, there's one of everything: white guy, Asian woman, Latinx guy (well, Hispanic Cuban) and a Black-identifying mixed-race woman along with other store employees, uniformed guards and perps. White supervisor Bobby (Adam Soule) bends over backwards to avoid racist behavior although others manipulate race cards, but when Bobby is promoted, Asian T (Stephanie Shum) is certain it's at the expense of mixed-race Karina (Carmen Molina). Eventually T chooses to confront unseen store bureaucracy which triggers a catastrophe for nearly everyone. But not right away. T—who is excitable verging on out-of-control—is complicit in a significant cover-up by the security team. Her sudden attack of ethics months later seems motivated by her war with store management, but clearly connects to her views on workplace racism and Bobby.

For all that, Plainclothes turns serious only late in the game. The cover-up isn't revealed until Act II and the precipitating incident—occurring offstage early in Act I—receives no more emphasis than anything else, such as introducing a serial shoplifter nicknamed Booty

Shorts (personable Ben F. Locke) for his provocative dress. Most of Act I plays like sitcom with comic riffs about/between the characters, who engage us as personalities or types rather than real people. Co-directors Kanome Jones and Davis keep it energetic, fast and funny, with pop culture references whizzing by which I didn't get but younger audience members did. Alejandro Tey (the Cubano) and Rob Frankel (store exec Jim) are excellent supporting actors in a capable ensemble.

Davis clearly has writing and directing chops—he sets up situations well, understands pacing and writes good dialogue—but Plainclothes would be stronger performed in one act with more emphasis earlier on the cover-up, which now comes arbitrarily out of left field. Also, characters must say each other's names early and often—Playwriting 101—since the program doesn't list them in order of appearance. Finally, a subplot between Booty Shorts and Mary, an older store employee (astutely performed by RjW Mays), is extremely effective but unconnected to the plot (although it has to do with racism). Can it be made intrinsic to plot?

CRITICS' PICKS

Women in Magic at Chicago Magic Lounge, Nov. 29-Dec. 1. Female magicians are rare, but for one weekend, Ladies of Legerdemain Alba, Jade and Lucy Darling headline the shows in the swanky Andersonville speakeasy. MSB

Women of Soul, Black Ensemble, through Jan. 27. Even if you can't define "Soul," you'll know how to recognize it by the time this musical revue finishes paying homage to a pantheon of star vocalists spanning half a century. MSB

Gypsy, Porchlight Music Theatre, through Dec. 29. E. Faye Butler is ferocious yet tender in this exceptional production of a legendary musical. Butler was born to play Mama Rose. JA

Neverland, Prop Thtr, through Dec. 2; Peter Pan, Bros Do Prose at the Mercury Theater, through Dec. 23. You've got two Peter Pan options this month, with Prop and Bros Do Prose both telling the story of the boy who refused to grow up. If you're a J.M. Barrie aficionado, this is your season. CES

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Sullivan

THEATER REVIEW

The Nutcracker

By: Jake Minton, Phillip Klapperich, Kevin O'Donnell, and Tommy Rapley
 At: The House Theatre of Chicago, 1543 W. Division St.,
 Tickets: TheHouseTheatre.com; \$20-\$50
 Runs through: Dec. 30

BY AMELIA OROZCO

This holiday season, as usual, there are plenty of Nutcracker productions in town.

Thankfully, a Chicago tradition stands strong and stands out at The House Theatre of Chicago. Tommy Rapley's direction and choreography adds a freshness to The Nutcracker and the Mouse, the original story by E.T.A. Hoffman of hopes, dreams and magic. Rapley's The Nutcracker is not a ballet, but a celebration of family and friends amidst grief and sorrow, wrapped and ready to deliver through song and dance.

Part of the experience of this show is seen upon arrival at the venue. A milieu of people in costume are seen talking, laughing and dancing pre-show and during intermission. It has a SNL afterglow feel as the actors interact and mingle with guests who will take their seats just a few steps away, some at floor level. The stage is at center ring and the entire room is a living stage as some action takes place on the walls and spaces behind the seats. In a swirl of dancing and song, theatergoers experience the story up close and personal in this inviting and interactive space of

Haley Bolithon and rats in *The Nutcracker*.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

The House Theatre. The players draw people in with eye contact and in-your-face interactions that tug at the heart.

This adaptation—by Minton, Klapperich, O'Donnell and Rapley—quickly enraptures with an opening Christmas party scene filled with anticipation and joy and then, just as fast, turns into the grim realities of death and loss. This is a brave undertaking by both the creators and actors as they are seamlessly moving from one scene to the next, a wardrobe change at a time and most treacherously of all, from smiles to tears. They are successful at it with all nimbleness of body and mind, bringing light to an otherwise dark tale.

There are many examples of this duality throughout the play. Take, for example, Clara (Haley Bolithon), an endearing child who is seen jumping with glee one moment and literally dropping to the floor the next, as she mourns the loss of her brother, Fritz (Desmond Gray). But her

young heart trusts her Uncle Drosselmeyer (Rom Barkhordar) when he tells her that magic is real when the nutcracker doll he gifts her comes to life as her beloved brother, Fritz.

These imaginings are to the dismay of her grieving folks, David (Nicholas Bailey) and mom, Martha (Amanda de la Guardia) who reject any mention of the life and loss of their son Fritz, who died while serving in the military. Amidst this heavy dialogue, Bailey, de la Guardia and Barkhordar also double as the seedy rat crew, with English accents to boot. Each time, the actors return to their main roles and characters of uncle, mom and dad completely unsullied.

Music, lighting and larger-than-life rat puppets help in illustrating all of these points and it's done in a way that makes so much sense to the imaginative mind of a child. Deep darkness and low notes crescendo into emotional turmoil and turn back into Christmas magic that sweeps in

with prop snow in flurries all around. This, by the way, was a playground of sorts at intermission enjoyed by all.

This Nutcracker is more than about toys that come to life to fight off grumpy rats—it's about cherishing loved ones and celebrating their lives, whether present or not. Clara and her family had lost a loved one and, yet, they still possessed all the elements to create a perfect Christmas but it was difficult to imagine it through their tears. It took the innocence and valor of a little girl to go into the dark places of the heart to battle these fears and finally break the family free from their sorrow, allowing them to once again celebrate with a renewed joy.

A wonderful gift that should also become a yearly tradition for families, The House Theatre of Chicago's Nutcracker will touch the most crotchety to the most sensible member of your family.

SPOTLIGHT

With *Twelfth Night*, Writers Theatre takes one of Shakespeare's most conflicted comedies and instills it with warmth, wit and emotional clarity. The story launches with a shipwreck and closes snowfall. In between, there are lovers, liars and fools who make the language sing, even when it's weeping. Performances run through Dec. 16 at Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe. Tickets are \$35-\$80; visit WritersTheatre.org.



Photo by Michael Brosilow

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Shawn Goudie, Camille Robinson and Brandon Dahlquist in *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago*. Photo by Johnny Knight

Entertaining the guests: Thanksgiving activities

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Suburban and rural households are seldom dismayed at the prospect of family gatherings. For city dwellers in small apartments, however, multiple-generation reunions often lead to claustrophobic stress. Downtown events are typically swarming with hotel visitors and oversized automobiles, so why not minimize the long waits and the scimmages by entertaining guests—parents, in-laws, siblings, nieces and nephews—away from the tourist districts?

Non-holiday plays:

—**Blue Man Group:** In the nearly three decades since the enigmatic ceruleans with the squirting vests and splashy drums descended on our city, new generations continue to delight in their unique brand of mischievous spectacle. Four performances daily on Nov. 23-24 and two on Nov. 25 at the Briar Street Theater, 3133 N. Halsted St. Info: Blueman.com

—**Women of Soul:** Black Ensemble's musical revue showcases nine powerhouse vocalists paying homage to a glittering pantheon of icons from Mavis Staples to Aretha Franklin. Evening performances Nov. 23-24 and afternoon Nov. 25 at the Black Ensemble Theater, 4450 N. Clark St. Info: BlackEnsembletheater.org 773-769-4451

—**Chicago Magic Lounge:** The secret-code entry of this speakeasy-style club (don't be fooled by the washing machines) leads to three swanky rooms hosting a diverse array of close-up magicians. Two shows nightly on Nov. 23-24. All-ages no-alcohol show on Sunday Nov. 25. Info: ChicagoMagicLounge.com 312-366-4500

—**Bonus Round Game Cafe:** Not a theater, but a coffee lounge on the border of Boystown/Wrigleyville with a bazillion kindsa board games for rent and on-site tutors to instruct newbies in how to play them. (Recommended by students at Loyola and DePaul.) Open 11 am-midnight at 3230 N. Clark St. Info: BonusRoundCafe.com 773-857-7037

Getting into the holiday spirit:

—**Amahl and the Night Visitors:** Chicago Chamber Opera (assisted by the Ensemble Espanol Dance Company) presents Gian-Carlo Menotti's fable of the three kings bound for Bethlehem and the humble family they meet on their journey. Performances Nov. 24-25 at the Athenaeum, 2936 N. Southport Ave. Info: ChamberOperaChicago.org 773-935-6875

—**It's A Wonderful Life:** Live In Chicago: This live-action adaptation of the Frank Capra film classic is framed in an old-time radio broadcast by American Blues Theater. Performances Nov. 23-25 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Info:

AmericanBluesTheater.com 773-327-5252

—**Christmas Bingo:** It's A Ho-Ho-Holiday: The folks who brought you the long-running Late Nite Catechism replicate an interactive game event with a bar, prizes and lots of Yuletide trivia. Performances Nov. 23-25 at the Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted St. Info: RoyalGeorgeTheatre.com 312-988-9000.

—**The Nutcracker:** Not the toe-shoes and tutus version, but House Theatre's heartwarming tale of brave toys, evil rats and a family finding solace in a dark time. Performances 23-25 at Chopin Theater, 1543 W. Division St. Info: TheHouseTheatre.com 773-769-3832

Just for grown-ups:

—**The Book of Merman:** Flying Elephant Pro-



Amahl and the Night Visitor.

Photo by Lisa Howe-Ebright Photography

ductions spoofs the gloriously vulgar Parker-Stone-Lopez musical while serving up a roster of Ethel Merman's greatest hits, delivered by Nicole Frydman as the immortal Broadway diva, herself. Performances Nov. 24-25 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Info: FlyingElephantProductions.com 773-327-5252

—**SnowGirls-The Musical:** The ribald camp-dragsters of Hell In A Handbag Productions embark on a parody of the 1995 Hollywood sleazeflick with the saga of a pole dancer at the North Pole. Performances Nov. 24-25 at Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St. Info: HandbagProductions.org 800-838-3006

Hanging out on the big day itself:

—**Lincoln Park Zoo** boasts that it stays open every day of the year. Be thankful with the animals from 10 am to 5 pm at 2001 N. Clark St (Lake Shore Drive at Fullerton Parkway). Info: LPzoo.org 312-742-2000

—**Winterland Rink at Wrigley Field.** Marvel at the grandeur of the friendly confines (without the crowds) or rent ice skates for a spin on an artificial pond in the adjoining plaza at 3637 N. Clark St. Info: GallagherWay.com 773-388-8260

—**Lincoln Park Conservatory** is an indoor museum displaying exotic vegetation of every description at 2391 N. Stockton Drive. Info: ChicagoParkDistrict.com/parks-facilities/LincolnPark-Conservatory

—**Oz Park** at 2021 N. Burling St. features open-air sculptures of beloved characters from the L. Frank Baum/Wicked series. Info: ChicagoParkDistrict.com/parks-facilities/OzPark.

For those who want to stroll in a green space close by, Chicago's Park District website (ChicagoParkDistrict.com) offers a comprehensive guide to its locations citywide. People can also rent Divvy bikes and work up appetites for pumpkin pie with a ride around neighborhoods.

Sam Massey, Nicole Frydman and Michael Idalski in *The Book of Merman*.

Photo by Christopher Semel





Devon Nimerfroh and Jacqueline Grandt in *Ghosts*.
Photo by Gracie Meier

THEATER REVIEW

Ghosts

Playwright: Henrik Ibsen

At: Redtwist Theatre, 1044 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.

Tickets: Redtwist.org 773-728-7529; \$35-\$40

Runs through: Dec. 10

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Over a century ago, Henrik Ibsen declared Victorian morality—to women, especially. Ever since, allegedly enlightened societies have continued to hide behind equivocation, speculation and flat-out denial in their attempts to rein in the vehemence of his diatribe on the folly of blind obedience to rigidly inhumane convention.

We meet the widow Alving on an auspicious occasion: tomorrow is the dedication ceremony of the orphanage that will serve as the late Captain Alving's legacy, the residue of his estate going toward its operations under the administration of their church leader, Pastor Manders. More welcome to Helene Alving, however, is the return of her long-absent son Oswald from his pursuit of an artistic career in Paris. Little does the devoted mother and wife suspect that this reunion will precipitate the undoing of all her plans, not to mention exposing the futility of her sacrifices on their behalf.

Erin Murray's premiere adaptation mostly adheres to the original text, with a few slight emendations—starting with Mrs. Alving addressed by her given name, Helen. Our locale is designated “an island” in the playbill, and the actors speak without accents (except for Manders' tendency to orate even in casual conversation), but the casting of African-American actors as housemaid Regina and tradesmen Jacob, coupled with reference indicating a maritime-based economy, hint at a colonial-governed outpost.

Playgoers versed in the play's many translations will also note a number of modern motifs inserted by the author/director—some intensifying the anger lying beneath the characters' regrets, but others inadvertently diluting the extent to which they can be held individually accountable for their misdeeds. (Helen's deceased husband, for example, is now represented as a likewise frustrated victim of his own robust appetites instead of a hard-drinking philanderer well-deserving of a memorial founded on criminal activities.)

The cast assembled for this intimate Redtwist production strive mightily to overcome the shortcomings of Murray's as-yet-incomplete framing concept. Jacqueline Grandt navigates Ibsen's literary syntax with virtuoso skill to deliver a delicately nuanced performance as the remorseful Helen Alving, as does Sophie Hoyt as the pragmatic Regina and Lionel Gentle as her wily sire. Ultimately, though, their brave efforts cannot dispel a curiously flattened dramatic tone leading us to wonder what all the fuss was about in 1882.



Jamie Shriner in
Wife Material.
Photo by Evan
Hanover

THEATER REVIEW

Wife Material

By: Jamie Shriner

At: The Understudy, 4609 N. Clark St.

Tickets: UnderscoreTheatre.org; \$20-\$25

Runs through: Dec. 9

BY SARAH KATHERINE BOWDEN

Jamie Shriner is defiant in sharing her private life onstage.

Her musical *Wife Material*, produced by Underscore Theatre Company and playing at the company's Understudy space, unfurls Shriner's sexual history and romantic woes for the audience, giving her the chance to decide whether or not she has it in her to be the kind of uncomplicated, domesticated wife society expects of her. If the musical does not quite justify its need for the audience to watch her work through that problem, it does provide laughs and a few entertaining songs that had people cheering the night I attended.

This production was adapted from Shriner's one-woman show, which also addressed her love of sex, her bisexuality and her restriction by a patriarchal society that requires her either to be an angel or a whore. She smartly expands the cast to include Caitlin Dobbins and Natalie Rae, playing Angie and Luci, the angel and devil on the shoulder who take on the traits of all the men and women with whom Shriner shares her time. Director Dana Anderson shapes the performance around the changing physicalities of Dobbins and Rae, and the results lead to wonderful sight gags involving Satan and Jesus arriving on the scene, as well as each performer accurately transitioning into the slouches of an angsty teen musician and the predatory leans of cat-callers. Anderson moves Shriner around Nicholas Schwartz's small bar set as if she is a singer at a cocktail lounge, and that attitude and confidence helps keep the audience involved, even when the musical's narrative becomes hard to invest in.

Shriner's “teen with a reputation” years in Indiana, and her messier adult years in Chicago, should make for a relatable experience. There were tons of laughs of recognition or groans of sympathy throughout the performance. But there are so many vignettes packed into this hour and a half show that parsing what matters and what might be a one-off joke is difficult. Shriner's fierceness in sharing ugly moments, hypocrisy, toxic masculinity, and sexual longing is admirable. But none of the relationships we see her engage in have enough time onstage for the viewer to care whether or not Jamie finds answers within them. So it begins to feel as if we are watching a therapy workout, rather than a narrative collaboration between audience and actor.

That said, Shriner's music is delightful, with her girl group/power ballad sound mixing well with lyrics that touch on contemporary hookups and self-love in surprising and funny ways. And music director Kyra Leigh brings energy to the band that adds life to the performance. If *Wife Material* doesn't say anything new about the power of identity and sexuality, at least it leaves people humming a tune.

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Sukie de la Croix weaves real-life 'Fairy Tale'

BY OWEN KEEHNEN

Sukie de la Croix made such an indelible mark on Chicago's LGBTQ scene when he lived in the Windy City from 1991-2014 that the Chicago Sun-Times proclaimed him "The Gay Studs Terkel."

During his time here, de la Croix authored the award-winning book *Chicago Whispers: A History of LGBT Chicago Before Stonewall* and wrote the popular *Chicago Whispers* column in *Windy City Times*. He wrote for numerous other papers as well, including *Outlines*, *Chicago Now* and *Chicago Free Press*. His popular history blog, *Bitter Old Queen*, was published on the Chicago Tribune Media Group's website, *Chicago Now*. His colorful LGBT history anecdotes and engaging personality merged when he scripted and conducted the Chicago Lesbian and Gay Tour for Chicago Neighborhood Tours, a division of Chicago's municipal tourism authority. In addition to being a popular speaker on LGBTQ history, de la Croix has had two plays adapted for the stage and was inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in 2012.

Since moving to Palm Springs in 2014, de la Croix has remained busy. In addition to maintaining his strong queer presence on social media, de la Croix last year released a novel set in 1924 Chicago, *The Blue Spong and the Flight from Mediocrity*. Last month, de la Croix released his latest work, *The Memoir of a Groucho Marxist: A Very British Fairy Tale*, a fantastical tale of his impoverished childhood in Bath, England and the first part of the story about how Darryl Michael Vincent eventually became St. Sukie de la Croix.

Windy City Times: What did you want to capture with *The Memoir of a Groucho Marxist*, the fantastical story of your boyhood in Bath, England?

Sukie de la Croix: I've never been a Grateful Dead fan. Their music reminds me of a bewildered old man wandering the streets with his fly open, trying to remember where he lives. However, having said that, Jerry Garcia said one good thing. He said, "What a long, strange trip it's been." Life is strange. I may now be living in a four-bedroom house in Palm Springs, but I came from intense poverty. After World War II, Britain was devastated, and I grew up in its wake. Bomb sites, ration books, damaged people—all figured in my childhood.

With *The Memoir of a Groucho Marxist*, my initial intention was to write a novel about a little sissy boy growing up in post-World War II Britain. I soon realized I was writing about my own childhood. I've never dwelled on the past before, but this book started to pour out of me. A floodgate opened. I just let it go. My attitude was, "Let's see what happens with this." What emerged was the story of an outcast. A boy who escaped into children's adventure books, then ran away to join the circus.

BOOKS

I'm at a point in my life where I've given myself permission to look back and ponder.

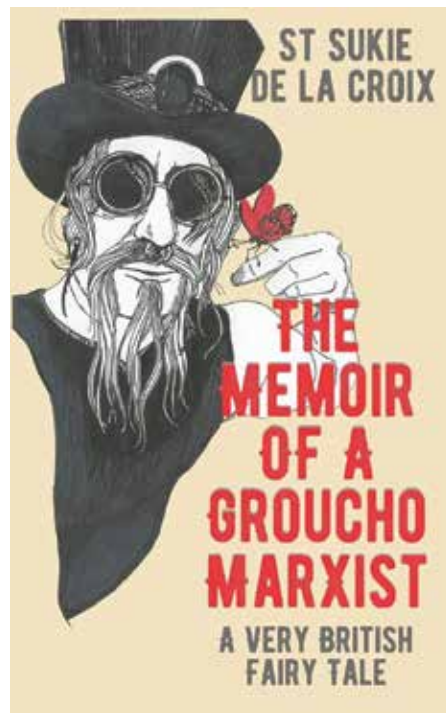
WCT: If you were to give me a recipe of your childhood, what would the ingredients and proportions be?

SdLC: My childhood certainly wasn't a gourmet meal with specific proportions. It was a big old pot where anything around me was thrown in. Ingredients included chaos, insanity, isolation, socialism, Buddy Holly, I Love Lucy, children's storybooks, steam trains, butterflies, art, love, Russian spies and the wisdom of the fairies.

WCT: How do you explain Darryl Michael Vincent becoming St. Sukie de la Croix?

SdLC: Our birth names are only temporary. They come from our parents. Mine named me after Darryl F. Zanuck, the film producer. However, as I explain in *The Memoir of a Groucho Marxist*, I was not really born of woman. I emerged from a badger hole in Midford Woods. Growing up, it soon became clear to me that sissy boys were not welcome in "their" society, so I set off in search of a world where I belonged. That's what LGBT people do, isn't it? Not only LGBT people, but all outcasts. That's our journey and our destiny. In the same way that everyone should have a drag name, we should all have a fairy name as well. St. Sukie de la Croix is my fairy name.

WCT: Fairies and the spirits of Virginia Woolf, Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde, and others visit and advise you in the book.



Sukie de la Croix.
Photo courtesy of the subject

What's the best advice you've ever been given?

SdLC: Never disrespect a guinea pig and never take advice from humans.

WCT: If they visited and spoke to you in Bath, whose spirit spoke to you and advised you during your Chicago years?

SdLC: For me to write I have to separate myself from what most people call the "real world." I observe it and report what I see. Other people's opinions are irrelevant to me. I get my advice from a more-trusted source. I absorb the wisdom of those who have passed from this earth. Dead people have no agenda.

In the *Introduction to Chicago Whispers: The History of LGBT Before Stonewall*, I wrote: "If you stand on a corner in Chicago and close your eyes, you can hear the past: the rat-tat-tat of Al Capone's machine guns, the Haymarket Rioters, and the screams of the passengers on the SS Eastland capsizing into the Chicago River in 1915. Stand on the corner long enough, peel away those cries from the past like the layers of an onion, and underneath you will hear the whispering of ghosts as they tell their untold stories. These voices belong to lesbians and gay men locked in the closet of Chicago's past. Men and women who lead double lives, lying to the world by day, then turning up their collars to hide their frightened faces as they dart down litter-strewn alleys into unmarked bars at night."

Those are the voices I listened to in Chicago. I listened and wrote that book.

WCT: I love that. You wrote Chicago Whispers, you have done columns for years on Chicago social history, given numerous tours, etc. What spot, or two, in Chicago should every LGBTQ Chicagoan know about and celebrate as part of our local history?

SdLC: Henry Gerber, who started the first gay-rights organization in the U.S., lived at 1710 N. Crilly Ct., so that's worth a visit. Also, a mostly gay African-American jazz joint called the Kitty Kat Club at 611 E. 63rd St. It's an empty lot now, but you can feel the history there. I'd also suggest a visit to Bobby Love's, the location of the earliest gay Lake View bar I can find. It was the Inbetween circa 1972, run by a woman, and then it became Augie's, a lesbian bar, the following year. It was two years later that a men's gay bar opened in Lakeview.

WCT: As a queer historian, what era would you most like to have lived in, and why?

SdLC: [In the] 1940s, [at] a gay-friendly jazz

joint in Chicago with a drag show called Joe's Deluxe. Why? Who wouldn't want to go see that?

WCT: As someone with a strong Internet presence, do you consider social media a god-send or a scourge?

SdLC: Well, it's obviously both. It's like all drugs; some people can pace themselves and others overindulge.

WCT: Tell me about life in Palm Springs. What is a typical day like in the life of St. Sukie de la Croix?

SdLC: I'm an early bird. Up between 3-4 a.m. usually. Most days I drive to a gym in Palm Springs, lift weights and work out for an hour. Home, it's breakfast, often sitting outside in the garden. Then I start work in my office. I try to take a break at lunchtime, which is coffee or lunch with friends. I continue working until I'm too tired.

Then I sit outside, make notes, doze off, drink chocolate milk, swim in the pool, read books, make more notes, etc. I'm cutting back on eating out, so I cook, or mostly my husband cooks, dinner. Evenings it's a gallery opening, a movie, a play, TV etc. I always use marijuana in the evenings. I'm stoned by 8 p.m. I lead a very quiet life. I don't drink alcohol anymore, so I only go to a bar once a week. On Sunday afternoon, to a leather bar called the Barracks.

WCT: Palm Springs must be agreeing with you because you are in an amazingly productive phase. What other projects do you have coming?

SdLC: Several. I'm putting the finishing touches to *Out of the Underground: Homosexuals, the Radical Press, and the Rise and Fall of the Gay Liberation Front*. That's been a major project. Local artist Curt Miller did the artwork for the cover. That should be published in the New Year. The next book is *St. Sukie's Strange Garden of Woodland Creatures*, a collection of short stories being illustrated by Roy Alton Wald, another local artist here in Cathedral City. The next book is under wraps, but it's a collaborative effort called *Tell Me About It*. I've also completed the next installment of *Chicago Whispers*, but it needs a lot of work.

WCT: What's been behind your sudden surge of productivity?

SdLC: I started *Rattling Good Yarns Press*. I wanted control over my own work, covers of the books, etc. Now I'm the literary dominatrix.

THERE'S A LOT TO LOVE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



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10 questions with Vic

Gerami headshot by Stephen Blaha

BY VIC GERAMI

Often, it isn't until after a long time has passed that people fully appreciate and acknowledge a star's legacy.

But that is not the case with **Rose McGowan**, whose natural talents have earned her immense success and critical acclaim; striking beauty has forever elevated Hollywood iconography; exceptional intellect has made her a survivor and a champion; and finally, her charisma and articulation have made her the Joan of Arc of the #MeToo and Time's Up movements.

It is difficult to measure an artist's contribution to society and the countless people she influences and inspires. But it's impossible to ascertain Rose's impact as the defacto heroine of a historical and long overdue global movement. She has conquered acting, singing, writing, producing, directing and public speaking, and they have led her to this new chapter in her life where she sheds old pedals to reveal fresh glorious beauty.

Windy City Times: Modesty aside, how would you describe yourself?

RM: Rose McGowan: A good person who just wants the best for everyone.

WCT: You have emerged as a heroine, a pillar of strength and an inspiration for millions after a tumultuous and controversial year. How are you doing now?

RM: The past few years have been harder than I could imagine. Surviving the last year most especially. What helped me was the support I got in real life. I've met person after person who said, "Keep going, keep fighting." It has been both humbling and inspiring. It was a hard, hard year, but there were bright spots of joy here and there. I try to focus on those. The answer is I'm healing. I have great friends and a great relationship that is helping with the healing.

WCT: What have you learned from the last year that you can share with people who might have gone through or are still going through similar experiences?

RM: I have learned that we are stronger than we know, that tears equal strength, that pain equals growth, and to just hang on because it does in fact get better. Keep going no matter what, keep going.

WCT: Would you do anything differently?

RM: There are certain toxic people I wish I'd never let into my life. I had no idea how dark some people's secrets are, and the lengths they'll go to protect those secrets.

WCT: Do you feel pressure to be strong all the time, considering your strength and defacto role as a leader?

RM: It's an unusual pressure. We haven't been here before societally; there is no road map. A bit like walking through a jungle with a machete and you have no idea where the drop offs are but you hope for the best. For me, the best is always trying to be ten



Rose McGowan

Photo courtesy of McGowan

percent better than I have to be, I use it as a personal challenge and one that may inspire others to be better versions of themselves.

WCT: You have an impressive resume as an actress in film and TV, but have since added best-selling author with your memoir, Brave, and a documentarian with your four-part docuseries Citizen Rose. Do you miss acting and do you plan to do film or TV again soon?

RM: I'm proud of my body of work. I did the best I could job wise, despite being heavily blacklisted. TV and film were very separate businesses at the time. The TV producers on Charmed didn't know that I had been canceled in the movie industry. I always tried to communicate with the audience through my eyes; now it's time for my own voice. Through acting I inhabited many skins, lives, voices—so many other people for so many years—it's time for me to just be me. For now, I can't see acting anytime in the future. I do miss directing and crafting a story, but right now I feel like we don't have time for metaphors. What needs to be said needs to be said.

WCT: Tell me a bit about the album you're working on?

RM: Planet 9 is the name of my upcoming album. I've been crafting it for three years. I like to say it's music that can take us to space. Suspended in time, given room to feel and move. The album takes listeners on a journey for sure. If you mixed up Pink Floyd, Grace Jones and Stevie Nicks with some propulsive French beats, you have Planet 9.

WCT: Tell me about your fans, especially people who reach out to you following the past year.

RM: I have met extraordinary beings this past year. I'm honored to walk with them on this journey, which is why I'm turning my Instagram @rosemcgowan over to others to share their truths on my page for the month. Calling it #NOVember. I'm really excited to highlight and honor those who are fighting the good fight. People that have risen up and are rising; it's a beautiful thing to witness. I hope you'll all join us.

WCT: What are a few misconceptions about you?

RM: Ooof, that I'm transphobic. Nothing could be further from the truth. This one hurts a lot because my life has been interwoven with the community since I was 13 years old. I was a runaway taken in by two loving trans women who saved me from a life on the streets. The idea that I'm transphobic makes me physically ill, it hurts my soul. When I said, "What have you done for women?" I meant ALL women.

WCT: You have traveled quite a bit in the last year. Has your perspective changed being outside of the USA looking in?

RM: When I came to America [from Italy] as a young girl, I expe-

rienced massive culture shock. That shock never really went away, and it does feel like a gentler life not being there. I think we all know why.

WCT: Do you have any advice for people who are victimized, bullied and harassed, but feel fearful and powerless?

RM: Act as if you are brave and you will become brave. It doesn't mean you won't be scared, it just means you do it anyway.

WCT: What is your favorite charity or cause?

RM: I really advocate for the smaller charities, the ones that are on the front lines. It is not easy and I tip my hat to them. In the past, I've volunteered at Covenant House helping homeless LGBTQ teenagers, my focus for years being gay rights. I also love the East Los Angeles Women's Center; an extraordinary place doing great aftercare work with rape and human trafficking survivors. Now that this year has settled down a bit, I hope to get back to more volunteer work. We all should.

WCT: Which living person(s) do you most admire?

RM: All of us who have survived and come out the other side of pain. Those who inspire. I also really admire my partner, Rain Dove.

WCT: What project(s) do you have coming up?

RM: I have a skin-care line called The Only that I've been developing with my aunt Rory for eight years. It's an incredible product mixing science and nature. I'm working on the visuals to go with my album, Planet 9, because I want it to be an experience. Also, starting work on my next book and preparing for Brave to come out in paperback!

WCT: Tell me a secret—a good one!

RM: When I'm in America, I eat at Taco Bell at least two times a week. I know I shouldn't, but I just can't help myself.

For more information on Rose McGowan and to purchase her book, Brave, visit RoseMcGowan.com. To see who Gerami interviews on 10 Questions with Vic each week, visit WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Raul Esparza to be in 'Hamlet' next year

Chicago Shakespeare Theater announced that four-time Tony Award nominee and Law and Order: SVU alum Raul Esparza will lead William Shakespeare's Hamlet, staged by Artistic Director Barbara Gaines, in the Courtyard Theater, April 17–June 9, 2019.

Esparza takes on the iconic title role of a grief-stricken Prince of Denmark as he attempts to navigate his father's death, betrayal and relationships torn asunder in one of the great masterworks of Western literature. The complete casting will be announced in the coming months.

Single tickets (\$48–\$88 each) are on sale now. For more information, visit ChicagoShakes.com/hamlet.



Raul Esparza.

Photo courtesy of Chicago Shakespeare Theater

Reese Witherspoon, Cameron Esposito and more at storytelling event

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

A diverse line-up of women-identified speakers took to the stage at the Hello Sunshine X Together Live storytelling tour Nov. 12 at the Auditorium Theater.

This is Together Live's third year on tour and the first time they have partnered with Hello Sunshine, founded by actor and activist Reese Witherspoon.

Witherspoon joined fellow actor and activist Sophia Bush; award-winning author, speaker and digital strategist Luvvie Ajayi; Thrive Labs Founder and author Priya Parker; lesbian comedian, actor and writer Cameron Esposito; singer-songwriter MILCK (Connie Lim); Together Rising Founder and President, Momastery online community creator, author, activist and philanthropist Glennon Doyle; and retired soccer player, coach, two-time Olympic gold medalist, FIFA Women's World Cup champion and activist Abby Wambach. Doyle and Wambach have been married since May 2017.

The event was moderated by William Morris Endeavor Worldwide Literary, Lectures and Conference Divisions Director and Together Live Tour

SPOKEN WORD

Founder Jennifer Rudolph Walsh.

Walsh greeted the packed house of more than 3,500 attendees and said the power of storytelling can showcase what is possible for individuals and the wider world.

Parker spoke about what it was like living at the intersection of two diametrically opposite worlds when her parents got divorced and she was shuffled between her liberal Democratic Indian-British atheist mother's house and her white American evangelical Christian conservative Republican father's house.

Walsh said her motto/mantra is, "It is not what happens; it is what happens next," because no one can change the past. She asked everyone else to share theirs.

"Sometimes you do not know you can do it, but you do it anyway," said Witherspoon, referring to starting her own production company.

Esposito said to "hold the door open" so others, especially marginalized people, can have opportunities for success.



Left: Reese Witherspoon. Right: Cameron Esposito.

Photos by Jerry Nunn

"Listen deeply enough to be changed by what you hear," said Parker.

Bush said, "Stop being someone else's definition of 'enough,' and start listening to what you feel is enough."

"Go off the path," said Wambach because that has always been the way she has learned about what is important in life.

MILCK said, "It is hard to hate up close."

"Save as drafts," said Doyle in reference to her outspoken nature and her need to sit with her thoughts before sending them out into the world.

Ajayi explained that hers is, "Put the glass down," because the longer one holds onto things, the harder it will be for them to go out in the world and do things.

Being a "troublemaker for good" was the focus of Ajayi's talk.

"We are so afraid of discomfort we will take comfort over justice," said Ajayi.

Esposito performed an uproarious comedy set that began with her calling herself "a giant lesbian" who looks like "a vacationing Draco Malfoy."

One-on-one conversations took place between Walsh and Witherspoon, Bush and Doyle and Wambach and Doyle.

Walsh and Witherspoon's talk focused on Witherspoon's evolution from being an actor to an actor-producer-activist. Witherspoon said it started with what she called "a crappy script" in 2009.

Bush and Doyle spoke about what drives them, with Bush explaining that "learning to let the lies go" and creating boundaries have been vital to her growth as a person.

"The great loves of my life are Abby, our kids, coffee and boundaries," said Doyle.

Ahead of Doyle and Wambach's conversation on what it really means to be brave and how to make real change in the world, Wambach recognized the handful of men in the audience and those "who may lie somewhere on the gender spectrum."

"You can be grateful and also demand what you deserve," said Wambach.

Doyle spoke about her journey to sobriety and the importance of "feeling every single one of my feelings."

MILCK also performed "O-o-h Child" to open the event and her song "Quiet," which became the Women's March's unofficial anthem, to close out the evening.

See <https://togetherrising.org/> and <https://hello-sunshine.com/>.

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A Cradle Song: Part Six

WRITTEN BY MARK ZUBRO; ILLUSTRATED BY W.S. REED

A Cradle Song, written by Mark Zubro and illustrated by W.S. Reed, debuts in the Windy City Times as the new holiday classic. Filled with travail and woe, warmth and great joy, it is a story for the ages. It will appear in ten installments from Octo-

ber 17 to December 19 and will also be available for gift giving as an e-book and as a paperback. For the true joy and meaning of the season, this is the book you want to read.

Today **A Cradle Song: Part Six**.

Chapter Six Part Two

Most often, Matthew stood with one foot in the tiny space between the toy store and the bakery next door. This way he was half in front of each store, and he hoped less noticeable to both. He hung onto a drainpipe with one hand so he could lean farther over. He'd stare for the longest time. He hoped no one noticed his longing gazes at the toys or the bakery.

The smells from the baked goods were nearly intoxicating, fresh bread being his favorite. Once in a while, Matthew could find a discarded sweet snack or bit of bread out back. While waiting for scraps, he lingered out front in the tiny corner with its dripping drain pipe.

In the bakery window, he could see cakes piled high with swirling frosting and bright confections of flowers heaped and nestled in mounds of multi-hued icing and filled eclairs. Nothing like the stale and tough stuff he ate. On the food he found, Matthew often scraped off the moldy parts.

He remembered he'd had a cake on his last birthday. His mom had made it. It was perfect. And his dad had been home. And he'd gotten a tiny little car which had a wonderful sad face. He'd loved it.

His eyes always strayed to the toy store. There were other reasons Matthew didn't dare go into the toy store. He didn't want the look of pity. Or the glare of annoyance of a clerk or the owner after admitting he had no money and them telling him he couldn't stay. He had no mom or dad to keep him company.

The toys displayed in the window were a wonderment of childhood joys. Matthew's favorites were the little trains. They chuffed around on their miniature mountain. He could see puffs of real smoke come out of the trains' chimneys. They ran round and round on tiny tracks that traversed bridges and spanned painted streams. Crossing gates would lower by themselves. Small plastic people waved forever from their silent, unmoving perches. One static man in a uniform held out tickets.

In the window, Matthew also saw metal machines whirr and spin. A million blocks of a zillion colors climbed in a wild array more than halfway to the ceiling. Wisps of cloudy cotton filled every space. Stars twinkled and shone in the ceiling. Every time Matthew looked, there seemed to be more to see and wonder at.

Through chinks in the stacks of toys or when he caught glimpses inside as the front door opened and closed, Matthew could get a little bit of a better view to the aisles crammed with more toys than he ever imagined having as his own in his own house, in his own room.

One time, he saw two little girls about his age admiring some brightly colored paper dresses covered with frills and ribbons. The girls pointed and shyly giggled. When the old man looked at them, the girls hung their heads. Matthew feared for the little girls, knowing how much the old man didn't like it when kids lingered too long. That day, he saw the old man scowling at the girls. As the door opened and closed, he heard him harrumph and grumble. The old man put out his hand to grasp his cane. Matthew knew he was going to chase the little girls away.

Then an older woman appeared between the girls and the old man. She worked at the table with the cash register. She frowned at the old man and said the girls could pick one dress apiece. The woman paid for them herself and told the girls they could go. As they rushed out the door, the little girls were beaming and thankful.

The old man seemed to nod and almost smiled. The girls walked away. The woman returned to her regular perch.

Matthew thought that was really wonderful.

In another direction inside, Matthew could see war toys: cannons and guns and bazookas and tanks, and ranks of plastic, still, tin, or wooden army men. All that unmoving, pent-up violence caused him to frown. He didn't like the danger they represented to his dad. He didn't like that they didn't move. He wanted his daddy to be alive, not rigid, inert, and lifeless.

He tried to look beyond to other shiny, noisy toys with mechanical parts that chuffed and huffed. Some of them tooted and twisted and twirled and sang songs. He didn't like the dolls that seemed to blink at odd moments. He wished he could touch the tiny little cars and trucks, some barely bigger than his thumb. He wished he could touch the little red fire truck that always had a sad look on its face.

If other kids came to the store window, Matthew sidled away. He didn't want them intruding on his dreams and hopes.

On this Christmas Eve, the gray iron sky let loose a few flurries. It was as cold today as it had ever been during Matthew's exile. What light the dun-colored sky had let in was fading.

The Christmas display in the window was even more wondrous with packages covered in brightly colored wrapping paper with cheerful bows spouting from their tops.

This Christmas Eve, Matthew was drawn even closer to the window from his safe perch by the drain pipe. His fingers touched the pane. His nose was an inch away from the glass. He gave a wistful sigh.

Matthew noticed Tawny, the big golden retriever, walking beside his human in the wheelchair as they approached. They came up beside him, Tawny on his right, the man on his left. Tawny sat down next to the boy. The man stopped and rested his hands on the arms of the wheelchair.

Matthew wasn't afraid. He could see the dog's breath in the cold. He had on a harness and a dog coat.

Together, the three gazed at all the wonders on the other side of the window. The golden retriever leaned against him. Matthew felt great comfort in that closeness. He lowered his hand and let his fingers touch the soft fur.

As they lingered, Matthew felt Tawny's muzzle nuzzle under his elbow as if urging him toward the door. Matthew glanced down at the dog. He thought the animal might be smiling. Do dogs smile? The animal looked in his eyes. For several more moments, all three, boy, dog, and adult

stared at the little trains going round and round on the toy mountain filled with tiny humans, bridges, and little trees.

It seemed to Matthew almost as if wheelchair and dog had formed a funnel right to the front door of the store itself.

He found himself grasping the doorknob.

As he opened the door and stepped inside, Matthew looked back for a moment. Man and dog seemed to be smiling. As he closed the door, the little bell at the top tinkled. Neither the gruff old man nor any of the clerks or the woman at the register took note of him.

Matthew stepped farther inside. No one bothered him as he let his feet lead him into the depths of the store, down long wondrous aisles with shelves filled with toys mounting to the ceiling.

Chapter Seven: The Isle of Misfit Toys

On every continent, in every country, in cities and towns no matter how big or small, most often in the shabbiest part of town, there was always an old toy store. Sometimes it was very hard to find on a not-very-busy street next to where the old dime-store used to be, or around back in the alley behind the last independent bookstore in town, or near a used bookstore, or next to a shoe repair shop, or down a little ways from the closed-up uptown theater, or near the river where it sometimes flooded.

If you were lucky enough to find it, the bell above the door tinkled when you entered. You could wander forever up and down aisles past treasures and glories. Every child could find something his heart desired.

If you spent a long enough time and followed the paths into the depth of the stores, you might stumble onto a winding path that led to a dark passage, which opened onto a sun-lit pathway. This narrow lane had well-manicured shrubbery on each side. Tall trees rose behind it. If you followed the narrow lane for a short while, you came to a metal bridge covered

with little starlights: top, and bottom, and up and down along each metal strut and beam. The bridge arched high over a vast expanse of deep blue water. If you were lucky enough to stumble onto the bridge and walked across to the other side, you came to the Isle of Misfit Toys.

The Isle of Misfit Toys was a magical place.

Its cobbled street stretched in great sweeping curves that wound around and around the mountain that made up the heart of the island.

All along the path the multi-hued buildings gleamed and shone. On the landward side, the street was lined with a myriad of cheerful little stores. On the other side, a small parapet rose over which you could see a magnificent vista of the deep blue sea.

Every kind of toy had its own special store. One might have blocks, all the kinds and shapes and sizes you might ever want were in that store. There were stores specially for action figures, or boy and girl dolls, or board games, or little kids games, or big kids games, music stores, just a myriad of children's delights. There was another store for trucks, and one for cars, and one for trains, and another for fire engines, and on and on from the end of the bridge up to the very top to the castle's drawbridge.

The toys on the Isle were never brand new. These were toys that had been loved and used, or too frequently abused and scorned, many often simply outgrown and neglected. Lost in sandboxes. Misplaced and mislaid. Toys rejected by kids. Toys



whose kids grew up and no longer loved them. Sold in garage sales. Designated for the trash as unwanted or unfixable. Broken toys. Toys with manufacturer's defects. Forgotten or stolen. Overlooked under front porches. Left in the rain. Thrown out and dumped in disgraceful landfills.

No matter their story or background, all misfit toys were welcome here, everyone had a place.

They were delivered from all over the world, from toy boxes, attics, garages, basements, back rooms, and emptied storage spaces.

Many of the toys came to the island in the arms of an army of retired teachers and

librarians who spent their remaining years now dedicated to bringing smiles to children's faces. Mostly, these people were old and kindly and alone, or people with aged and wrinkled faces who lived in homes where their memories were nearly gone. They came, their arms filled with broken toys that they brought to this last refuge.

From the toys they carried, these people caught snippets of remembrance of happier times when they'd known the joy of toys as children.

All helped find the toys and bring them in hopes that these once loved objects would find a new home. All were volunteers. A few were permanent residents who

lived behind or above their stores. A very few dwelt in the castle high above. When they were young, some of these people just came to work or help deliver toys for a few weeks during their vacations.

If you purchased a toy on the Isle and went back the next day to the magical store, and searched for the same aisle that led you away, and the same secret portal that led to the bridge, it was never there. If you returned with greed in your heart just to take more, the memory of the Isle of Misfit Toys faded forever.

If you treasured your toy and were grateful for what you had, the memory remained pure and whole.

When a child talked with a proprietor of a store on the Isle of Misfit Toys, every one of them spoke with him or her in their own language, a Babel of joy. It was one of the bits of magic present on the Isle.

Most importantly, on the Isle of Misfit Toys, on the last day before Christmas they let the poor, homeless, little boys and girls come to the Isle and pick toys for free.

It was always a special, perfect day for the forgotten and neglected, both toys and children alike, to have at least a few moments for the possibility of happiness.

The goal of the Isle of Misfit Toys was to bring smiles to children's faces and delight to the heart of a toy.

In your heart you really had to want them, not just be greedy for things you didn't deserve. That's how you got to pick toys. Some small, some large.

End of part six. Part seven coming next week.



"A Cradle Song is my very favorite of Mark Zubro's books. Tender, full of insight and love, it made me cry—but they were happy tears."

—*Jeanne M. Dams,*
author of the *Dorothy Martin*
mysteries

"A Cradle Song is a wonderful, heartwarming story, and just right for Christmas. Open this present and enjoy!"

—*Barbara D'Amato,*
author of the *Cat Marsala*
series and the recent
Other Eyes

A Cradle Song will be available soon as an ebook and as a paperback online and from **Unabridged Bookstore** in Chicago and **Outwords Books** in Milwaukee.

Mark Zubro is the author of thirty-six books and seven short stories. He has won the Lambda Literary award for *A Simple Suburban Murder* and been nominated eight other times. All are available as ebooks and most as paperbacks online or at **Unabridged Bookstore** in Chicago and **Outwords Books** in Milwaukee.

Alyson Stoner.
Photo courtesy of Stoner

Alyson Stoner: Actress/singer/ dancer talks Ms. Jackson, acting and coming out

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Being in the glare of the spotlight—especially for those who have been in the public eye since childhood—can be harsh.

However, Alyson Stoner, 25—who many may remember as the dancing girl in Missy Elliott's videos such as "Work It," and who has been on TV shows and movies like *Phineas and Ferb* as well as the *Cheaper by the Dozen* and *Step Up* series—seems unaffected. Meeting recently with *Windy City Times* at Knickerbocker Hotel restaurant Nix (which this writer chose because of Stoner's fascination with Janet Jackson, who once stayed there), she seemed absolutely down-to-earth.

Mention Jackson, and Stoner became starry-eyed, like anyone discussing an idol. (She's also a huge fan of Michael Jackson, and people can see her tributes—as well as one to K-pop—on YouTube.) During this year's Billboard Music Awards, for example, Stoner was not only present but "ran up to the front of the stage" during Janet's tribute. "The cameraman kept giving me face time—and my family [went wild]. My mom said, 'I didn't know you were in the front row.' I said, 'I'm not, but I ran up here because Ms. Jackson-If-You're-Nasty was on stage.' We breathed the same air, and that's enough for me."

Regarding that Janet tribute, how did she choose which songs to feature from the icon's huge catalog? "We did a mixture," Stoner said. "Jared Jenkins is an incredible vocal arranger and producer." She also dropped other factoids about the video, such as the fact that she made the T-shirt Janet wore in her own "Pleasure Principle" video: "I took a Sharpie and colored in letters from the original 'Hawaii' on a shirt to make it look like Janet's. ... [The video] was a passion project."

Then the conversation turned to her beginning in show business, with an unexpected devel-

opment. "After I did the Missy Elliott video, it positioned me as a recognizable dancer," Stoner reminisced. But before one might think that was an advantage, Stoner added, "I stopped auditioning because it came down to an artist wanting a recognizable dancer, or just a dancer. So I wasn't able to do dance gigs. I don't mind because I enjoyed every moment I danced with Missy—and it opened other doors, like in film. For *Cheaper by the Dozen*, they saw my attitude in the video and hired me. Then I became an artist on my own."

However, this year was a really big one for Stoner as well—especially from a personal standpoint. In March, *Teen Vogue* published an essay she wrote entitled "How I Embraced My Sexual Identity," about the long journey to recognizing her own attraction to other women. (In fact, she was in town to attend the wedding of YouTuber Alex G and her wife.) And it seems that this life-changing event has informed her perspective on life in various ways.

"I was recently in Ethiopia," Stoner began. "I'm a criminal over there. [Homosexuality is illegal in the country.] So they, ironically, asked me to speak at their church. I wondered if they knew, because I didn't bring it up. I listened to how they said they wanted to suppress homosexuals and destroy their support network. I said 'When a group is oppressed, suppressed and repressed, they are going to grow stronger—and that support is how they're surviving. If anything, I encourage you to listen; whenever you encounter them, just listen—and not just with your ears. Observe their connections and that they're not ill-intended. Allow your heart to feel what it wants to feel.'"

It was interesting to hear this story for several reasons—including the fact that Stoner was kicked out of her church, "and it's in Los Angeles," she said. "You'd think they'd be more understanding of the spectrum." She added, "I wish—and I

MUSIC

can't deconstruct someone's theology and I don't want to project my own ideology—but I would love to give a bird's-eye view so people can understand that the American evangelical church of 2018 is influenced by capitalism and militarism, which aren't even based on the Bible."

Asked about how she came to reconcile her faith (which she mentions in the *Teen Vogue* essay) with her life, Stoner said she actually went to her mentor's mentor. "I went to this guru of sorts—a pastor who's in Illinois," she said. "He's really cultured, and he's shown me all of these different perspectives, and that's really cracked me open in terms of my consciousness. My heart and soul don't see labels any more."

Her new perspective is also shown in her newest video, for the song "Fool," which shows her in a relationship with a woman of a different race and build, embracing diversity. "There was something about Jasmine's essence that was grounded and lovely," Stoner said. "When I mentioned to my team that I wanted a female love interest, she was the only person I had in mind. I wasn't thinking about intersectionality. ... It was 'human first.' [Filming] was so comfortable."

Talking about her personal circle of friends, she said, "A lot of people I know in the LGBT community are pretty outspoken, and I am pretty quiet. I was wondering if I was hiding—but I realized that being quiet is my superpower."

"I can't allow the past to distract me from the evolution," she added. "You can be enamored of your recent successes instead of remembering how big the world is and [constantly] learning."

For more about Stoner, visit her official page on Facebook.

Oriental to be renamed after Nederlander

Broadway In Chicago announced its plans to honor the late James M. Nederlander—the legendary Broadway theater owner and producer, patriarch of Broadway and champion of Chicago's Downtown Theatre District—by renaming the Oriental Theatre as the James M. Nederlander Theatre.

The new marquee and signage will be unveiled as the Nederlander Theatre on Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2019, with the opening of *Dear Evan Hansen*.

James L. Nederlander, now president of The Nederlander Organization, said in a statement, "The renaming of the theater on Randolph, in honor of my father, is something he would have been so proud of, as he had a love for Chicago that manifested in his steadfast support of Chicago's theatre community until the day he died. I am lucky to have inherited his love for Chicago and I am moved by this acknowledgement of his work on Broadway and his commitment to Chicago as a beacon for theatre across the country."

Dramatists has leadership changes

Chicago Dramatists announced it has accepted the resignation of Executive Director Vanessa Bamber. Bamber will continue in her position until Dec. 31, according to Ajitha Reddy, president of Chicago Dramatists board of directors, in a statement.

No replacement has been named to date but the board is working with playwrights, associates and alumni to fill the management position and to begin a search for a new artistic director.

Separately, Chicago Dramatists announced it has added two new members to its board. Will Dunne, resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists, will join the board this month as a network playwright and Writers Studio representative. Additionally, Michael J. Keating—president of Vertical, Incorporated—joined the board in August and will head development and fundraising.

For nearly 40 years, Chicago Dramatists has supported the development of new plays and playwrights. It is the only comprehensive playwright development center of its kind in Chicago.

See ChicagoDramatists.org.



BILLY Masters

"Broadway's Disastrous 'King Kong' is a \$35 million crime against puppets."—Rex Reed's headline for his review of King Kong: The Musical. I haven't read any further, so don't ruin it for me. But do you think he likes it?

Usually I wait till the end of my Thanksgiving column to give thanks. But you know what? I'm thankful right off the bat. I'm thankful to be alive, and I'm thankful you're reading this column. And, well ... that's it. Typically I'm a greedy bitch, but that just about covers it.

Everyone is talking about Michelle Obama's biography, which seems to be the book Mr. Obama would have written if he were free to say whatever he'd like. But you know, U.S. presidents used to maintain a certain level of decorum and discretion. Be that as it may, Mrs. Obama can say whatever she'd like—within reason. One section stood out for me. On the day the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, LGBT folks were celebrating in front of the White House. Michelle wanted to share the historic day with her daughter, Malia. She tried to sneak out of the White House (as if) to join the festivities—not considering she wasn't wearing any makeup ... or shoes! She whipped herself together, and went out incognito with Malia. She wrote, "We just took it in. I held her tight, and my feeling was, we are moving forward. Change is happening."

Jussie Smollett is enjoying having a fiancé on Empire. But it almost turned out quite differently. He said, "There was talk about Jamal having a white boyfriend and I said, 'Fuck no!' Not for any reason except we have a responsibility and we have such a beautiful opportunity to show two black men in a relationship together, in a healthy relationship. But it was important and that wasn't anything against white men. It was just a thing of ... this is what I wished I had seen as a kid because if I had seen certain things as an adolescent, I would have had a much different understanding of who I am in an earlier space." I'm still confused—would he date a white guy or not?

Then there's Jaden Smith, who is going somewhere Daddy never went. At a recent show, he said, "I just want to say Tyler, The Creator is the best friend in the whole world and I love him so fucking much. And I want to tell you guys something—Tyler doesn't want to say, but Tyler is my motherfucking boyfriend, and he's been my motherfucking boyfriend my whole fucking life. Tyler, The Creator is my fucking boyfriend. It's true!" Or is it? Tyler, The Creator (a name I'm fairly confident doesn't appear on a birth certificate) can be seen shaking his head offstage. Then Jaden tweeted, "I told everyone you can't deny it now." Tyler responded with a post of his own (and don't get mad at me—I'm just quoting him): "hahaha you a crazy ni--a man." Part of me believes this. Part of me doesn't. Part of me doesn't have a clue who Tyler, The Creator is. And part of me thinks this is a bunch of straight guys laughing about being gay ... which brings us back to Will.



"Bi" the way, Michael C. Hall has something to say.

Photo of Hall in Kill Your Darlings courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

It wouldn't be the first gay rumors about Tyler, The Creator (and let's hope I don't ever have to type those three words again). Last year, he wrote a song extolling the virtues of Timothee Chalamet. In "Okra" (get ready to sing along), he rapped: "Tell Tim Chalamet to come and get at me, skin glowin', clear of acne." Now, there's a talent. I bet even Cole Porter wouldn't know what to rhyme with acne—let alone Clearasil! Still, it's nice to see Tyler doesn't have a type.

Didya know our acting attorney general has a secret about his private parts? Back in 2014, Matthew Whitaker was on the advisory board of World Patent Marketing Company, which developed a toilet for well-endowed men! Their research showed that well-hung guys' penises dangle into the water when they sit on a toilet. "The average male genitalia is between 5" and 6." However, this invention is designed for those of us who measure longer than that. I estimate that a 12" distance is adequate enough for most well-endowed men. An 'extra long' (XL) version can always be created if needed." This product would be right up Barbara Corcoran's alley on Shark Tank. The company was shut down after it allegedly bilked "thousands of consumers out of millions of dollars." Think about this toilet next time you hear someone say Dump Trump.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Victor in Detroit. "I just read that Michael C. Hall says he's bisexual. Didn't you write about this years ago?"

Apparently I knew before Mikey did. In an interview with The Daily Beast, he said that appearing in Cabaret made him aware of it: "I think there's a spectrum. I am on it. If there was a percentage, I would say I was not all the way heterosexual. I think playing the Emcee required me to fling a bunch of doors wide open because that charac-

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ter I imagined as pansexual. Yeah, like I made out with Michael Stuhlbarg every night doing the show. I think I have always leaned into any fluidity in terms of my sexuality." He added, "I've never had an intimate relationship with a man." Now, I don't want to call Michael C. Hall a liar, but I think he's a big fat liar—just my humble opinion.

As a bonus, we'll give you a nude nobody asked for. You all watch Will & Grace. And you all know Jack's biological son, Elliot. In the film In a Relationship, actor Michael Angarano appears naked and shows off his assets—if you're into that kinda thing. Check him out on BillyMasters.com.

When our cornucopia runneth over, it's time to end yet another column. In addition to thanking our readers, I want to thank the publications, proofers, lawyers, webmasters and everyone at BillyMasters.com—the site that celebrates giving each and every day. In fact, I'll give you whatever you want—if I can. Send your requests to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I brave my bountiful butt in another blizzard! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Talking with Travelle's chefs; dining news

BY ANDREW DAVIS

There was a time when dining at a hotel's restaurant was almost an afterthought.

How times have changed. Many hotels across the nation now boast at least dining establishment that features upscale dishes that warrant repeat visits.

Among such spots is Chicago's **Travelle at the Langham** (330 N. Wabash Ave.; TravelleChicago.com), which features plenty of items with innovative twists.

Recently, Windy City Times talked with Travelle Chef de Cuisine Jeff Vucko and The Langham Executive Chef Damion Henry (who oversees all



Chef de Cuisine Jeff Vucko and Executive Chef Damion Henry of Travelle.

Galdo Photography

culinary operations within the hotel—including its 15,000 square feet of banquet space, Travelle, Pavilion, in-room private dining and exclusive Club Lounge) about what distinguishes the food at the spot—and they both cited a determination to raise standards.

"We keep challenging ourselves," said Henry, who landed here after being in Jamaica, Miami and New York City. "We keep setting the bar. We get five stars, but we don't settle. We want to be the best restaurant in the city.

"There are the big boys, like the Book Group

and Lettuce Entertain You, and hotels like the Four Seasons. I like eating at those places, but we want to be in the conversation as well. We want to be the giant-busters and be the giants of the city ourselves."

"We definitely challenge ourselves and we don't want to be comfortable," echoed Vucko, who even was involved in the insurance business at one point, but who said he followed his dream of owning a restaurant. "Never stop."

Vucko and Henry have both been involved with Travelle since it opened in 2013—so why have they remained with this establishment, when so many other people seem to quickly and continuously jump from one culinary spot to another? "The space itself is gorgeous, and I

feel like it's on tier with a luxury brand," Vucko said. "I also went through two chefs de cuisine, and learned a lot. We competed in [the culinary competition] Cochon555 and we won this region—twice." He also talked about embracing Chicago's Green City Market—so much so that Travelle has hosted a Green City Market dinner series for the past three years.

From the start, The Langham "was sold as a luxury, five-star dining experience," Henry added. "A lot of times you hear that, but it doesn't come to fruition. But here, the best talent in the country is here, and the backbone of that is still here."

And the talent these chefs exhibit was apparent during lunch, when I was fortunate enough to try a hearty serving of creamy barley risotto and a perfectly cooked lamb burger. However, there is one experience Vucko described that warrants a return visit.

"There's this 32-ounce tomahawk chop that we bury in salt and put in the oven. Then we crack [the salt shell] tableside, in front of the guests. Then we light a torch and give it a little sear," he said. This writer had heard of fish being prepared that way—and it comes out tasty, without retaining the salt.

Travelle is definitely on its way to being included in those conversations Henry mentioned.

Turn to page 29



Travelle's barley risotto.

Photo by Andrew Davis



BERLIN

The witchiness of Coven.

Joseph Stevens Photography



BIG CHICKS

Saturday fun.

Photos by Jerry Nunn

DISH from page 28

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

Dining news

—On Wednesdays, Schaumburg's **Tokio Pub** is offering, for \$12, any combination of three burgers—including the Tokio Sunrise Burger, Eruption Burger and the signature Ramen Burger—with any of the eight beers for 24 pairings. See <http://tokiopub.com/>.

—The **Dearborn's** pie program includes a choice of key lime (graham cracker crust, key lime curd, vanilla cheesecake, toasted meringue), Dutch apple (traditional pie crust, Granny Smith-and-gala apple filling, streusel topping), brown sugar pumpkin (traditional pie crust, spiced pumpkin custard, mascarpone whip cream) and bourbon pecan (butter crust, caramelized pecans, brown sugar, bourbon). Pre-order by calling 312-384-1242 at least 48 hours in advance. Pies are \$35 each and are available now through Jan. 2.

—**Sable Kitchen & Bar** has a kitschy Christmas pop-up bar, **Miracle**, that will take over its cocktail den with "Miracle at Sable Kitchen & Bar" on Nov. 23-Dec. 31. In collaboration with Cocktail Kingdom, **Miracle's** cocktail menu of 10 Christmas-inspired libations and two shots will be served in festively ornate glassware by Beverage Director Jenee Craver. A launch party will be held Friday, Nov. 23, 5-7 at 505 N. State St. and guests are urged to wear ugly holiday sweaters; visit

SableChicago.com.

—Launching on Black Friday and running through the holiday season, Lincoln Park spot **Gemini** will offer its ZooLights prix fixe special, including two courses and Santa's Cookies and a hot beverage to-go (\$36). Starters include the

chef's seasonal soup of the day, and Gemini Salad or mini-chorizo empanadas, followed by a choice of lasagna bolognese, rainbow trout provencal or steak frites. See GeminiChicago.com.

—Starting the week of Nov. 26, **Ina Mae Tavern & Packaged Goods**, 1415 N. Wood St., will offer

daily specials. They include kids eating free on Mondays, Yakamein Tuesdays (yakamein being a Southern soup similar to ramen), All-You-Can-Eat Shrimp Wednesdays (the shrimp being \$35) and Fried Chicken, Beer and Bingo Thursdays. See <https://www.inamaetavern.com/>.

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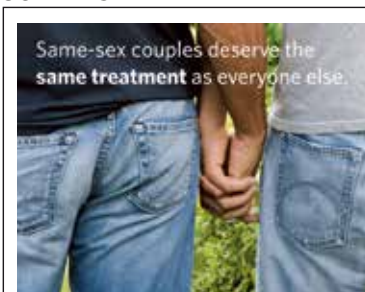
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WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Nov. 21

Thanksgiving is a Drag... All Building Event Drag show and disco, quality time with your queer family. Get ready to dance and laugh it all away with: Bambi Banks, Dusty Bahls, Lucy Stooles, Nasty Bois, Tenderoni, Travis Fiero, Valentine Addams, Willy LaQueue and hosts Nico, Dominic Ferrera & Kristen Kaza. Doors 9 p.m. 10:00pm Metro Chicago 3730 N Clark Chicago

Friday, Nov. 23

Trans/Gender Affirming Name Change Mobilization Hosted by Transformative Justice Law Project. Volunteers will assist Cook County residents with filling out the documents required for a name change. Last Friday of every month in room 1202. 9:00am - 3:00am Daley Center Plaza 50 W Washington St Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/transformativjusticelawproject/>

SexuWellness For women and TGNC individuals, a wide variety of sexual and reproductive health-related services like chest/breast exams, mammogram referrals, pap tests including HPV screening and pelvic exams, STI testing, birth control prescription, IUD placements. Fourth Friday of every month. whs@howardbrown.org 5:00pm - 8:00pm Howard Brown, 6500 N. Clark, Chicago 773-572-8359 <http://howardbrown.org/womens-health/>



'NIGHT' MOVES
Nov. 23-Dec. 30

Vicki Quade is front and center as Christmas Bingo, It's a Ho-Ho-Holy Night returns to Chicago.

Photo courtesy of Quade

Christmas Bingo, It's a Ho-Ho-Holy Night The comedy has been a fixture in Chicago since 2012. Through Dec. 30. \$30 8:00pm Royal George Theatre 1641 N Halsted St Chicago 312-988-9000

Saturday, Nov. 24

Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago Weekly run/walk. Followed by brunch. 9:00am Kwagulth Totem Pole Addison & Lakeshore Dr. <http://frontrunnerschicago.com>

Vienna Boys Choir Annual Symphony Center appearance, a joyful program of traditional and contemporary vocal se-

lections entitled Christmas in Vienna. 2:00pm Chicago Symphony Center (Orchestra Hall) 220 S Michigan Ave Chicago <http://cso.org>

Ravenswood Holiday Small Business Saturday Hundreds of locally-owned businesses come together to show off their best products. Ravenswood Holly Jolly Trolleys will now be transporting shoppers free of charge. Complimentary gift guide and canvas tote at the Welcome Station 11:00pm - 5:00pm Welcome Station, 1813 W. Montrose Ave.

Tuesday, Nov. 27

LGBTQs for Lori LGBTQ+ community of Chicago raising resources necessary to spread Lori's message of an equitable and inclusive Chicago. 6:30pm - 8:00pm The Meeting House, 5025 N Clark St., Chicago http://act.myngp.com/Forms/-6776591152294458368?fbclid=IwAR1zJcYufHWVCjB5Sf2QfJEU1cDkRD_7fA21Pxcd_ILf5A6QGkcOch0Qb68

Wed., Nov. 28

TheT: Web Series Screening Set in Chicago, the T follows a young trans woman and queer Black man as they learn how to be best friends in the wake of their romantic relationship, and Jo's transition. Hosted by Keeping it LITE. Free RSVP 5:30pm - 9:30pm Chicago Cultural Center 78 E. Washington St. Chicago <http://www.thetwebseries.com/Tickets>: http://www.facebook.com/events/2571478436203560/?active_tab=about

Working Women of Color: Three Films Three films outline the history of women of color in trades, demonstrate the great progress they've achieved since the era of Rosie the Riveter during World War II but also the ground that remains to

be covered. Post screening discussion. 6:00pm pin Chicago Women in Trades, 2444 W. 16th St. Rear of the building, 3rd FL. <http://www.facebook.com/events/349748725773698/>

The Buttcraacker: A Nutcracker Burlesque Twist on the original ballet highlighting the world of burlesque, boylesque, drag, magic, fire spinning, sword balancing, ballet. \$20-\$40 plus all you can eat buffet for \$10 8:00pm Reggies Music Joint, 2105 S. State St. <http://www.thebuttcraackerburlesque.com>

Thursday, Nov. 29

Stand Up For Red Indoor Street Fest Sample signature bites from creative chefs. DIFFA has engaged the creative community to create site-specific music, performance and art responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. 5:30pm - 9:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://diffachicago.org/event/E625709206>

Volledig: Emptied of Shame: Full of Life The stories of the artists in this project - what they experienced living through the AIDS Crisis, memories of those lost 7:00pm Links Hall 3111 N. Western Ave Chicago <http://www.eventbrite.com>

Friday, Nov. 30

HIV Lunch n' Learn Gilead for World AIDS Day. Free Program 2:00pm - 3:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://community.centeronhalsted.org/pages/lunchnlearn?erid=8957853&trid=5c1cba5c-3646-4aa5-9dad-4f97dfdb4f60>

World of Chocolate Chicago's premier World AIDS Day event supporting the AIDS Foundation of Chicago's efforts. Signature creations of chocolatiers and chefs from over 23 of Chicago's hottest

restaurants, hotels and bakeries 6:00pm - 9:00pm Revel Fulton Market, 1215 W. Fulton <http://chocolate.aidschicago.org/ticketing/>

Twelve Chicago-based LGBTQ+ performing arts organizations perform together 35th Anniversary Holiday Hullabaloo with Chicago Gay Men's Chorus About Face Theatre, Allegranza, Artemis Singers, Chicago Pride Guard, Chicago Spirit Brigade, Chicago Tap Theatre, GayCo, Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles, Lakeview Orchestra, Pride Films & Plays, and Windy City Gay Chorus 8:00pm Harris Theater for Music and Dance 205 E Randolph Dr Chicago <http://cgmc.org/holiday>

When Adonis Calls Chicago Premiere Follows a correspondence between an accomplished author and a younger fan becomes an exploration of unbridled eroticism, demons, and secret longings. \$30 8:00pm Broadway Theater, Pride Arts Center, 4139 N Broadway <http://whenadoniscalls.brownpapertickets.com>

Jane Lynch, A Swingin' Little Christmas Golden Globe- and two-time Emmy-winning out lesbian actress Jane Lynch ("Glee") on stage with actress Kate Flannery ("The Office") First show 7:00. \$55/\$65/\$70/\$75 10:00pm City Winery Chicago 1200 W Randolph St Chicago <http://www.citywinery.com/>

Anthology Reading: The Long Term, Resisting Life Sentences Working Toward Freedom Contributors propose a range of far-reaching reforms and raise the even-more radical demand of abolition. Editors Erica Meiners and Jill Petty and contributors Tara Betts, Monica Cosby, Deana Lewis, and Maya Schenwar. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

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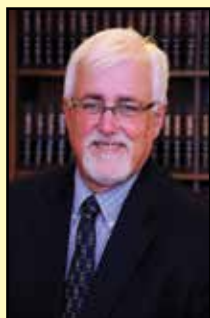
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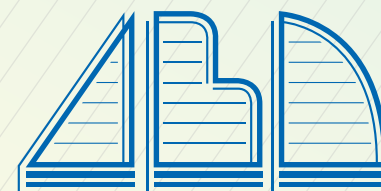
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