

# WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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# WINDY CITY TIMES' 2018 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

WEEK ONE OF TWO

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Cleve Jones reflects on Milk, 40 years after his death  
Photo of Harvey Milk by Jerry Pritikin

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**WINDY CITY TIMES ARTS & THEATER WEEKLY**

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**SEEING i2i**

**A look at local LGBTQ org**

Photos courtesy of i2i



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a cradle song

A SPECIAL TEN-PART SERIES FROM AUTHOR MARK ZUBRO  
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## WINDY CITY TIMES

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## STRAIGHT UP

Paula Abdul (left) answers some inquiries in 10 Questions with Vic.  
Photo by Austin Hasgrave

## FILM STUDIES



Mark S. King (above) said that there's a short film people should watch for World AIDS Day.  
Photo courtesy of King

## ICE, ICE, BABY

Gaywheels.com has cold-weather tips to keep your car running.

## THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Nicole Maines, Taron Egerton and Maya Rudolph.

plus  
**DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

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# U.S. Supreme Court to conference on big three

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Three big LGBT cases will be part of a private discussion at the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday, Nov. 30, when the justices meet to “conference” about what appeals to hear in the coming months.

All three cases test the limits of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on “sex.” Two of the three ask if “sex” should be read to also prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. The third asks whether it should be read to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or “transgender status.”

At least four justices must vote to accept an appeal before the court will schedule the case for argument.

The likelihood of the court taking one of these cases is fairly strong, primarily because there is a conflict among several circuit courts as to whether Title VII can be read to include sexual orientation and/or gender identity discrimination. But with the newly constituted Supreme Court having a much more conservative slant, it is probably more likely that—if four justices want to hear an appeal—they will be seeking an opportunity to narrow the protective reach of Title VII, rather than expand it to LGBT people. In that regard, the justices are more likely to take a case brought by an employer. Those include:

—*Harris Funeral v. EEOC* (from the Sixth Circuit): This appeal comes from an employer in Michigan and asks if “gender identity” or “transgender status” are covered under “sex” discrimination in Title VII. The employer, Harris Funeral, fired a long-time male employee after he began transitioning to female and refused to wear a man’s business suit supplied by the funeral home.

The employee, Aimee Stephens, first took her complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which ruled in her favor. The Sixth Circuit said “sex” discrimination in Title VII includes “transgender” discrimination. On appeal to the Supreme Court, the funeral home argues that its dress code applied equally to men and women and that the courts do not have the authority to say that “sex” includes “gender identity.” The reason the word “sex” was added to Title VII, says the funeral home, was to ensure “equal opportunities for women.” This case may be the most attractive to the conservative justices because they could deny protections to transgender employees and all LGBT people by simply claiming the lower courts have no authority to expand the definition of “sex” in federal law. The Sixth Circuit includes Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee.

—*Altitude Express v. Zarda* (from the Second Circuit): This appeal comes from an employer in New York, challenging a Second Circuit ruling that Title VII does cover discrimination because of sexual orientation. The case involves a recreational parachuting company, Altitude Express, that fired one of its trainers, David Zarda, after

learning he was gay. Zarda died before his lawsuit could be resolved, but his sister has pursued his claim. The Second Circuit covers New York, Connecticut, and Vermont.

The third case before the Supreme Court conference this month is one brought by a gay employee who lost at the lower level:

—*Bostock v. Clayton County* (from the 11th circuit): This appeal comes from a gay man in Georgia, challenging an 11th circuit decision to dismiss his Title VII lawsuit. Gerald Bostock was a child-advocate employee of the Clayton County Juvenile Court System for 10 years, and all was fine. Then, in 2013, he joined the Hotlanta gay softball league and urged other players to consider volunteering for the county agency. Within six months, his office was audited, someone publicly complained about his playing in the gay softball league, and he was fired. The county said he was fired for “conduct unbecoming a county employee;” Bostock said he was fired because he is gay. Bostock filed suit, saying his firing violated Title VII.

The 11th circuit (which covers Georgia, Florida and Alabama) dismissed the lawsuit, saying it had already ruled that “sexual orientation” discrimination is not covered under Title VII. At the Supreme Court, Bostock’s attorney acknowledges that the 11th Circuit has previously ruled that “sexual orientation” cannot be read into “sex” discrimination, but he argues that other circuits have ruled it can. He also argues that the Supreme Court’s 1989 ruling in *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins* requires courts to read “sex” discrimination to include gender-based stereotypes. And he argues that the 1998 Supreme Court decision in *Oncale v. Sundowner* underscored that “sex” discrimination had to be read more broadly.

The 11th circuit ruled as recently as last year that Title VII does not prohibit sexual orientation discrimination. The employee in that case, *Evans v. Georgia Regional*, appealed to the Supreme Court but the court simply refused to accept the appeal for review.

The Seventh Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in favor of sexual orientation discrimination (*Hively v. Ivy Tech*), but the employer did not appeal to the Supreme Court. So, LGBT people in Seventh Circuit states (Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin) can press a Title VII claim, as can those in the Second Circuit and Sixth Circuit; LGBT people in the 11th circuit cannot.

Meanwhile, similar cases in other circuits are percolating up, putting pressure on the Supreme Court to settle the dispute nationally.

The court could announce as early as Monday, Dec. 3, whether it will—or won’t—hear any or all of the appeals. It could, and often does, re-list some cases for conference at a later date. Two of the three cases were originally scheduled for September but were rescheduled after the third case was given more time (until Oct. 24) to file briefs. Now, all three are on the conference list.

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Aimee Stephens, the plaintiff in *Harris Funeral v. EEOC*.  
Photo by Charles William Kelly/ACLU

## Trump asks Supreme Court to rule on trans military ban

The Trump administration has asked the U.S. Supreme Court Nov. 23 to quickly hear a challenge to President Donald Trump’s policy that bans most transgender individuals from military service.

So far, district courts across the country have blocked the policy from going into effect. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments in one challenge earlier this fall; the D.C. Circuit will hear arguments in early December, CNN.com reported.

The U.S. Supreme Court rarely gets quickly involved in cases, usually waiting until both lower courts from various areas of the country have ruled on them.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi vowed to “fight this discriminatory action.”

“The great majority of people in this country recognize that transgender people who can meet the same standards as others should have an equal opportunity to serve,” said National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) Legal Director Shannon Minter in a joint statement from NCLR, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders

(GLAD) and Equality California. “Allowing President Trump’s ban to be implemented would upend thousands of lives and weaken our Armed Forces.”

“The Trump administration is trying to frame the successful policy of including transgender troops not just as a failure, but a failure that is so severe that the Supreme Court must weigh in on an emergency basis. Its assertion makes a mockery of the evidence. Transgender service members have compiled a two-year record of achievement serving America on the front lines. They are proving every day what military leaders and medical professionals told us: that inclusive service strengthens the U.S. military and makes our country safer,” said Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center, in a separate statement.

Lambda Legal Counsel Peter Renn added in yet another press release, “This highly unusual step is wildly premature and inappropriate, both because there is no final judgment in the case, and because even the preliminary issue on appeal has not yet been decided. It seems the Trump administration can’t wait to discriminate.”

The CNN.com item is at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/23/politics/military-transgender-ban-supreme-court/index.html>.





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# Howard Brown editors publish 'holistic' resource on TGNC health, aging

BY JAKE WITTICH

A new book edited by professionals from Howard Brown Health aims to make information on transgender and gender nonconforming people as they age more accessible to healthcare providers.

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Health and Aging, which Springer published in November, addresses the lack of educational resources for healthcare and research professionals about transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) people as they age.

"This book is the first of its kind, [giving] providers who serve folks from the TGNC community a resource with holistic information on TGNC people who are getting older that is all in one place," said Cecilia Hardacker, director of education at Howard Brown Health. Hardacker co-edited the book with her colleagues Kelly Ducheny, director of behavioral health services, and Magda Houlberg, chief clinical officer.



Left to right: Cecilia Hardacker; Kelly Ducheny; Magda Houlberg.

Photo courtesy of Cecilia Hardacker

people as they grow older," Hardacker said. "We put this book together because we envision a world where people can live their healthiest and happiest lives well into their old age."

According to Hardacker, 10,000 people turn 65 in the United States every day, and that's expected to continue until 2030, but the country's healthcare and social service systems are not prepared to serve that many elderly people.

"All those issues—housing, social support, basic caregiving—need to be solved with LGBTQ and specifically trans communities in mind," Hardacker said. "This book is just a tiny piece of that very big puzzle."

According to Hardacker, the book's primary audience is healthcare providers, including geriatricians, primary care physicians, psychologists, public health officials and social workers, but it was written in a tone that makes it accessible to TGNC community members who may also find the resource valuable.

"We wanted to make sure people who aren't well-acquainted with the community could pick up the essential information, but we also wanted to make sure people from the community could participate in writing it," Hardacker said. "My favorite part is the last chapter, where we invited trans and gender nonconforming people to write directly to healthcare providers about what's important to them. Those stories are powerful."

Stefanie Clark, a trans woman who describes herself as a "renaissance woman and activist," contributed a passage about her experiences in healthcare since coming out as transgender at 68 years old. In it, she details her journey from finding a new primary care physician to receiving transition-related services at Howard Brown

Health and searching for a trans-friendly hospital when she needed knee-replacement surgery.

"Just putting the rainbow flag on your front door doesn't show that you're welcoming to transgender people," Clark said. "It just shows you've checked something off on your box that human resources sent."

Clark said when she was looking for hospitals to have her knee-replacement surgery, her main fears were potential discrimination from a roommate or staff member. The hospital was able to accommodate her with a semi-private room with no roommate, but she said she was still fearful of the staff potentially discriminating against her.

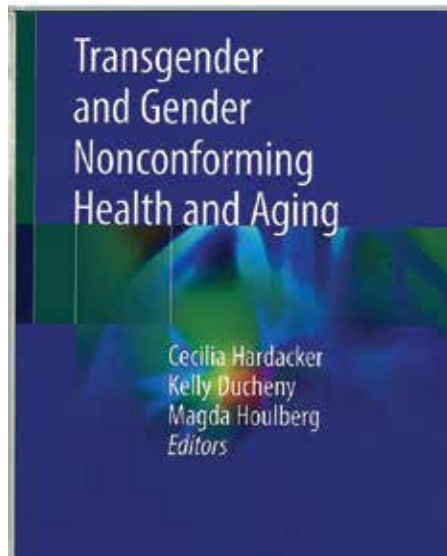
"Fortunately, the staff was very responsive," Clark said. "My records were marked with my preferred pronouns, and in the combined 12 days I

was there, I was only misgendered once, which I think it was a heat-of-the-moment mistake or a new employee. That's a sign the hospital really cares."

Hardacker said she hopes readers will approach the book with an "open heart and open mind" to consider how they can incorporate its guidelines into their work.

"It's clear how much thought and care went into writing this book, and I hope readers see that and use this as a resource for their day-to-day practices," Hardacker said.

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Health and Aging can be purchased online at <https://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319950303>.



The publication contains five chapters written by various interdisciplinary healthcare experts. Each chapter explores one of five critical topics relating to trans and gender nonconforming people's health, including foundational information needed to understand the experience of TGNC people, mental and behavioral health issues, social service considerations, concerns for nurses and long-term concerns for care providers.

Hardacker said most medical resources about transgender and gender nonconforming people are focused on younger populations, so this book aims to provide a resource for people who are looking to support TGNC people as they get older.

"The general belief is that for TGNC folks, especially trans women of color, the life expectancy is around 35 years old, but we're interested in being defiant of that notion and being able to support

## 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, Northwestern 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>.

## City committee to discuss trans bill

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.



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Feminism meets coffee-table books in 'HERstory,' 'Revolution'

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

**The Revolution is Female**  
 Author: Kristen Blush  
 \$61; Blush; 128 pages

**Modern HERstory**  
 Author: Blair Imani  
 \$17.99; Ten Speed Press; 208 pages

What does Trump's America mean for feminism?

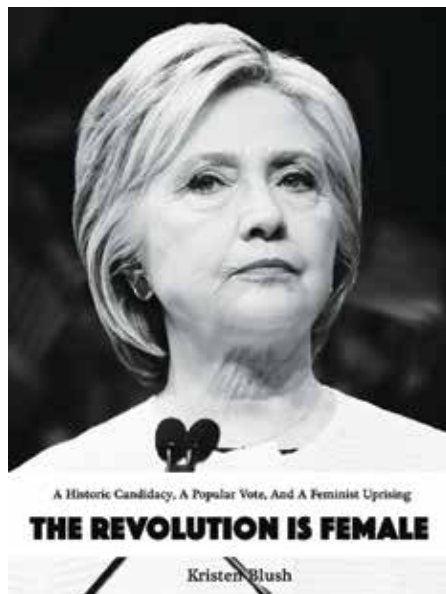
For one, the rise of activism among women who previously didn't know their senators' names. Trump-era feminists are also becoming more cognizant of privilege, be it white, cis, educational or monetary. Both photojournalist Kristen Blush and activist Blair Imani are spreading the gospel of intersectional feminism through their coffee table books.

Blush's *The Revolution is Female* chronicles the early days and long-term effects of Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign. Imani's *Modern HERstory* profiles 70 women and nonbinary individuals who've contributed to society in ways that are often overlooked. Both are vibrantly styled and beautifully written, and make great gifts for feminists and allies of all ages.

*Revolution* is divided into three sections: "I'm With Her" looks at the Clinton campaign, from the early days of the Democratic primary to general election voting in November 2016. As you'd expect, these photographs radiate hope, in the joyous face of former President Bill Clinton and in enthusiastic supporters getting a glimpse of the woman they hope will be President. The second section, "Resist," has a different but no less vehement energy as new activists join women's marches and other protests throughout the country. Young girls in pink knitted hats proudly show off their Hillary buttons and marchers tote signs saying "Females Are Strong As Hell."

In the book's final section, "Onward," the protests continue—one particularly powerful image shows four students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School holding signs on the White House lawn, black duct tape over their mouths. Peppered with essays from various activists, Blush's book fosters a strong sense of optimism. Viewing the ramifications of Clinton's unprecedented campaign gives the reader hope that one day, we will see a woman in the Oval Office.

*Modern HERstory* takes a wider look at female and nonbinary contributions to society. The book features profiles (written by Imani) and illustrated portraits (by Monique Le) of a wide range of historical and contemporary icons, from trans activists and Stonewall Riot instigators Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, to writer-comedian Issa Rae and rapper Missy Elliott. Each profile contains career highlights as well as obstacles the person had to overcome: for example, Elliott's abusive homelife, author Roxane Gay's childhood trauma and transgender activist Jazz Jennings' childhood spent living under an identity that didn't feel quite right. Most of these

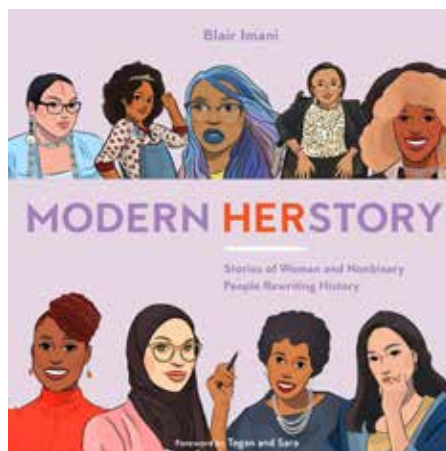


"herstorical" figures are of color, many are queer or transgender, and all have made great strides in science, literature, pop culture and activism. The stories are both informative and easy to read, and Le's colorful illustrations make each subject seem larger than life.

Imani herself is Black, Muslim and queer, and founded the education resource platform Equality for HER, as well as working with GLAAD and other high-profile organizations. *Modern HERstory* attracted the attention of its publisher, in fact, thanks to a Tweet from actor and former Reading Rainbow host LeVar Burton. Like *The Revolution is Female*, *Modern HERstory* is both informed and enthusiastic, celebrating trailblazers in an accessible, aesthetically pleasing manner and promoting feminism the way it should be: diverse, accepting and most of all, intersectional.

**The Revolution is Female is available at [RevolutionIsFemale.com](http://RevolutionIsFemale.com).**

**Modern HERstory is available at all online retailers, or at <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/576347/modern-herstory-by-blair-imani-foreword-by-tegan-and-sara/>.**



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# David Orr reflects on four decades of politics

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Outgoing Cook County Clerk David Orr, whose last day on the job will be Nov. 30, admitted that he couldn't help but be bittersweet about stepping down from the office he's worked in since 1990.

"I think it's time, with nearly 40 years in public office," Orr said. "It's a little emotional at times—you think of all the stuff you're going to miss, but it's good for me. It's a great time [for others] to be in public office, if you're progressive-minded. Forgetting the Trumpism, there is a 'wave' out there, it wasn't just in this last election. ... People are understanding that we've got to fight this racism. We've got to start dealing more honestly with this inequality."

Orr announced in mid-2017 that his current term would be his last; he said at the time he was reluctant to undergo potential primary challenges as well as another four-year term should he have won. Prior to becoming county clerk, he'd been the longtime alderman of the city's 49th Ward, which is primarily made up of the Rogers Park neighborhood. He was inducted as a friend of the LGBT community into the Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame—now the LGBT Hall of Fame—in 2012.

Orr was famously acting mayor of Chicago for what he said was "a long week" following the death of Mayor Harold Washington in 1987. Over the course of the '80s he was an instrumental figure in a movement of independent Democratic alderman who opposed the "Machine" politics that were a holdover from the administration of Mayor Richard M. Daley, who died in 1976. When Washington was elected in 1983, 29 aldermen dug in their heels and refused to work with City Hall; ultimately a progressive caucus majority that Orr led was elected in 1986.

"It was an exciting time," Orr recalled. "It was hard for Harold and a lot of the rest of us that so many Democrats decided to desert the party because of his color. Things like that were frustrating, but it was exciting [then]. A lot more was accomplished than people realize. History is often written by the winners. When [Mayor Richard J.] Daley came to office in '89, a lot of people wrote that nothing good came between when Richard M. Daley died in '76 and young Richie came to office in 1989. That's obviously bad history, but history is written by the victors."

Washington inspired Chicagoans to pay attention to City Hall more than previous politicians had before, he added. The mayor and his allies faced stalwart opposition who were able to dominate local news coverage.

"People were glued to the news," he said. "When people had to confront both a mayor who was a reformer and an African-American, it helped, even though it was painful at times. It helped to shape people's understanding of race relations. ... When it is addressed in the right way, people began to change their minds and

change their attitudes. It was difficult, but a lot got done."

Reforms that were supportive of Chicago's LGBT community were part of Orr's and his allies' platforms even then; Orr even recalled a rumor from the '80s that he and Washington were lovers. The County Clerk credits his awareness on LGBT issues to attorney/activist Mike Kreloff, whose mid-'70s campaign to be 49th Ward alderman Orr managed, as well as various progressive constituents Orr met in Rogers Park while on the City Council himself.

"To Mike's credit, we publicly supported the Human Rights Ordinance, the concept of it, way back then," Orr noted. "I credit mostly him for that. It was not a popular thing to do. ... That was when I started to pay attention to that. Mike lost that particular election. But by '79, things switched: Mike was the campaign chairman and I was the aldermanic candidate, and so it was easy for me. I was in touch with people on City Council who wanted to help move that ordinance."

He added that a key part of winning political victories is understanding political power, something he felt some activists were not astute about.

"We were discussing the Human Rights Ordinance in '80 and '81, and even before I got to the Council," Orr explained. "Activists would say, 'Don't call a vote—we're not ready. If you call a vote, it'll lose and it'll never pass.' As the years went by, some others and I began to think, 'That is a B.S. strategy.' A lot of aldermen said they were supportive, but really weren't. My advice was to call a vote; you have to find out if these people were really with you. You have to understand politics with accountability ... If politicians have their way, they'll avoid having to take tough stands."

During his time as County Clerk, Orr took a number of actions that were in support of marriage equality, most notably refusing to legally defend his office when his office was sued over gays' and lesbians' then-inability to marry.

"I think they knew that when they sued," he said. "We're not supposed to conspire, but we all knew each other. The [movement] leaders had a pretty good guess that if I was sued, I would not defend that. The State's Attorney was okay with it, so I think it helped, but it was mostly the movement that was responsible [for winning marriage-rights]."

The litigation came to a head even after LGBT Illinoisans won the right to marry in the state legislature in 2013. Gov. Pat Quinn signed the legislation in November of that year, but marriages could not actually begin until the following summer. That winter, some LGBT individuals in Cook County with health issues asked courts to marry ahead of time and won, ultimately leading to all Cook County LGBT residents winning that same right on Feb. 21, 2014.



David Orr.  
Photo by Matt Simonette

Orr performed some of the marriages himself. Speaking that day before the nuptials of Theresa and Mercedes Santos-Volpe, two of the original plaintiffs, Orr joked, "These two have been suing me for years."

Reflecting on the marriage fight, Orr said, "It shows how quickly things change. You get a power-base and it spreads quickly."

His advice for incoming Clerk Karen Yarbrough is ensuring cultural competency to effectively serve all Cook County residents.

## Marriage equality remains in Bermuda, falls in Taiwan

It was a mixed weekend for same-sex marriage advocates as they won a legal battle in Bermuda Nov. 23 after the country's government attempted to have the Court of Appeal define marriage as between a man and a woman only, The Royal Gazette reported. However, in Taiwan, LGBTs lost, by wide margins, voter referenda in Taiwan Nov. 24 regarding marriage equality, as well as concerning curricula on same-sex issues in elementary and middle schools.

The Bermuda court dismissed the government appealed former Chief Justice Ian Kawaley's 2017 ruling that allowed same-sex marriage.

However, the government may apply for the

"I don't think it will be a problem [with Yarbrough in office] but I'd say to continue important training of staff so that they understand issues related to race, human rights and other things, and make sure any prejudices or nervousness people have in the office get worked out. Make it clear: This is your job. ... I think things are set there, which is good, but you always want to make sure that you can get [staff] to buy in and understand the law, so it is smooth."

matter to be heard via the Privy Council in Britain within the next 21 days. If the council agrees to hear the case, the body could grant a stay.

In Taiwan, the national referendum (available at <http://referendum.2018.nat.gov.tw/pc/en/00/0000000000000000.html>) showed that when people were asked, "Do you agree that marriage defined in The Civil Code should be restricted to the union between one man and one woman?," more than 7 million agreed while only 2.7 million voted no.

Moreover, when Taiwanese voters were asked, "Do you agree that the Ministry of Education should not implement the Enforcement Rules for Gender Equity Education Act in elementary and middle schools?," about 6.7 million people concurred while 3.2 million voted against it.

The Royal Gazette item is at <http://www.royalgazette.com/court/article/20181123/government-loses-same-sex-battle>.





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## IN THE LIFE

# A look at i2i's core leadership team

COMPILED BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Invisible to Invincible: Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago (i2i) has seen many changes to its leadership team since its founding in 2005.

The group, according to its Facebook page, "celebrates and affirms Asian/Pacific Islanders who identify as LGBTQQA in the Chicago area."

i2i has held many events over the years including, most recently, a No Cop Academy Brunchraiser, Palestinian Struggle 101, a Queer Asian/American Storytelling workshop and Samcha Chicago: A Gathering for LGBTQ Koreans.

Currently, the core leadership team consists of seven individuals (one of whom has asked to remain anonymous) who deal with communications, logistics, programming and the group's finances.

Here is the leadership team:

—Lexi Chu



All photos courtesy of i2i

Your background/mini-bio: "I am a Chinese-American woman who was born and raised in Chicago and is allergic to dogs but still loves them."

Preferred pronoun(s): She/Her

Sexual orientation/gender identity: Bisexual transgender woman

Neighborhood: Rogers Park

Role within i2i: LGBTQQA Families Gathering Group lead with Tri-C. Liaison between i2i and #NoCopAcademy.

Reason why you joined i2i: "The i2i community helped me so much when I found them including teaching me what it meant to be API and how important it is to have allies around you. I joined so I could give back to i2i what they gave me."

Your profession/job: Emergency medical tech-

nician- basic

Favorite snack and/or dessert: Chocolate ice cream

Favorite thing to do in Chicago: "Go to the beach when it is warm. Likewise, complain about the cold in the winter months."

Dream vacation location and why: "Hong Kong. The only time I have been there was when I was a little kid, much too young to remember. If I go back now, I will be able to appreciate it much more."

—Liz Haas



Your background/mini-bio: "I am a multiracial Chinese/white American who grew up in the Chicago area."

Preferred pronoun(s): She/her or they/them

Sexual orientation/gender identity: Gay/queer, gender nonconforming woman.

Neighborhood: "I live in the Northern suburbs."

Role within i2i: Co-treasurer

Reason why you joined i2i: "When I was in my senior year at Smith College in Massachusetts, I heard about i2i from Professor Laura Fugikawa, who used to teach at University of Illinois, Chicago and found the Queer Asian American Archive there. When I moved back to the Chicago area after graduating, I was interested in finding community with LGBTQ+ Asians and Pacific Islanders, so I sought out the group, and the rest is history. This year, I also joined the Queer Asian American Archive project as a volunteer."

Your profession/job: Non-profit development/fundraising

Favorite snack and/or dessert: "Taro bubble

tea, probably—but it is a hard choice."

Favorite thing to do in Chicago: "Seeing plays. I love the theater scene here."

Dream vacation location and why: "Somewhere with mountains, so maybe Colorado and I have a close friend who lives there, which helps."

—John Kaleekal



Your background/mini-bio: "I am originally from Lenexa, Kansas, and lived in South Korea for two years before moving to Chicago last September."

Preferred pronoun(s): He/Him

Sexual orientation/gender identity: Gay/queer and cis male

Neighborhood: "I live in suburban Aurora but I commute to the city every day for school at the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) or work in the Medical District."

Role within i2i: "I help with general programming and planning."

Reason why you joined i2i: "I wanted to connect with the queer/trans Asian American community in Chicago. Growing up, I never found a space that catered to this intersectionality of my identity (queer Malayalee/South Indian) so I found the space to be very healing and helpful. I have been able to make strong connections in Chicago that have served as my chosen family."

Your profession/job: "I am currently an MPH/MBA candidate at UIC's School of Public Health and the Liataud School of Business. I also work in HIV research for LGBTQ+ adolescents and young people at the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center. I work on the Keeping it LITE study."

Favorite snack and/or dessert: "I love jalapeno chips."

Favorite thing to do in Chicago: "Outside of spending time with my queer API community, I really enjoy going to art museums/galleries and also dabble in amateur Instagram photography."

Dream vacation location and why: "I really want to check out Switzerland. I think growing up in Kansas makes me over-appreciate mountains because they were non-existent there and also here in the Chicago area."

—Sunjay Kumar



Your background/mini-bio: "I am a mixed Indian diasporic American. I grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, but I have been in the Chicago-land area my entire adult life."

Preferred pronoun(s): He/him or they/them

Sexual orientation/gender identity: "I am queer in both senses."

Neighborhood: Uptown

Role within i2i: Co-treasurer

Reason why you joined i2i: "My first year out of university, I was looking for ways to get more involved in social justice activism. One of my roommates, Anne Watanabee (who was also a core member), told me about some things that i2i was doing. Everyone was so welcoming when I came to i2i gatherings that I decided to stay involved."

Your profession/job: "I am a software engineer at a social impact start-up called Edovo building education and communication tools for people who are incarcerated."

Favorite snack and/or dessert: "During the summer, I was eating a lot of flash-frozen berries and other fruit to keep cool. Now that it has gotten chilly, I have been drinking more hot tea."

Favorite thing to do in Chicago: "I love going to some of the smaller museums like the Museum of Contemporary Photography or the Museum of Mexican Art. They often have really cool exhibits that change frequently and deal with more complex topics than the larger museums can tackle."

Dream vacation location and why: "With winter on its way, I really want to visit some place warm that has good food like Singapore, Hyderabad in India or Naples, Italy. Really anywhere on the Mediterranean coast. Nice, France would be nice, too."



—Phyllis Liu



Your background/mini-bio: "I am a second generation Taiwanese-American mover and creator exploring gender, culture and generational heri-

tage in the queer and/or Taiwanese diaspora."

Preferred pronoun(s): They/them  
Sexual orientation/gender identity: Grey-ace/  
who knows/gender nonbinary  
Neighborhood: Uptown

Role within i2i: "I coordinate social events, like the bi-monthly potlucks, and manager our social media including our Facebook page. I recently organized the 'Who's on Core' introduction series. Within the core team we often overlap responsibilities to support each other since i2i is a volunteer-based organization."

Reason why you joined i2i: "API's who are queer/trans—they exist. Discovering the i2i community felt like an exploration and a homecoming at the same time. Politically, i2i also holds my same values of liberation, visibility, education and solidarity. I learn from our community members every day, and they consistently inspire me."

Your profession/job: Executive assistant at Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago

Favorite snack and/or dessert: "I love eggs (in practically every form) and Taiwanese bubble tea."

Favorite thing to do in Chicago: Biking

Dream vacation location and why: "Taiwan because my family, my ancestry, my dreams and my culture. I have been back there four times, but there is still so much I have not explored and experienced."

—Kris Tendilla



Your background/mini-bio: "I am a Philipinx-American who has worked as a national organizer for immigrant, racial and reproductive justice."

Preferred pronoun(s): She/her or they/them

Sexual orientation/gender identity: Queer

Neighborhood: Rogers Park

Role within i2i: "I have played a major role

in our organizing and political education work."

Reason why you joined i2i: "I wanted to build a loving and radical queer AAPI community. In a lot of ways, it is a political home for working on issues that are important to my community and the communities I am building solidarity with. I am committed to making i2i a space for queer and trans AAPIs to find community and grow."

Your profession/job: National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) Field and Campaigns Manager

Neighborhood: Rogers Park

Favorite snack and/or dessert: "I love mangoes".

Favorite thing to do in Chicago: "I love exploring all the different places I have lived in Chicago—Austin, Bridgeport and Pilsen."

Dream vacation location and why: "I would love to visit my family in the Philippines since I left there when I was a baby. My family lives in a beautiful rural mountain area in the Northern part of the Philippines."

**Upcoming events include an LGBTQ APIs and Families Gathering meeting and a potluck social gathering for i2i members and others in January 2019. For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/2121188414876564/>.**

See <https://www.facebook.com/i2iAPIPride/>.



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# Transgender Day of Remembrance event recalls lives lost

BY MATT SIMONETTE

In her opening remarks at Center on Halsted's Transgender Day of Remembrance observance on Nov. 20, the Center's Director of Gender Equity and Inclusion Vanessa Sheridan said that the occasion was "an opportunity to commemorate those who we've lost lost ... and draw strength from each other."

The Center's Hoover-Leppen Theatre was filled to capacity for the occasion, which largely pays remembrance to trans persons who have been killed in the previous year. The names and images of the 22 trans people killed so far this year were projected on the theater's screen before the presentation began. After her remarks, Sheridan read the names of the victims aloud, then rang a small bell. Pastor Joy Douglas Strome lit a candle for each of the individuals as well.

Among the speakers was Elise Malary of Equality Illinois, who reflected on transgender activism, noting the contributions made by Stonewall activists Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. She also thanked local activist Gloria Allen, who was in the audience that night, for giving "men-

torship, meals, etiquette training and, most of all, love."

"To know a trans woman is to know a superhero," added activist and Broadway Youth Center Youth Development Project Manager Channyn Parker. "The fact that she is still standing here today is a miracle."

Two recent murders have been fresh on the minds of transgender Chicagoans, those of Dejanay Stanton, who was killed Aug. 30, and Ciara Manaj Carter Frazier, who died Oct. 3. Parker questioned whether, on the Day of Remembrance, whether the community was more intentional in venerating the dead than holding up those who are left behind.

But she quickly added that a number of circumstances require that those who've been lost never stray far from the community's thoughts, since law enforcement ultimately seems indifferent to solving crimes that befall the community: "Not since 1999 has the murder of a Black trans woman been solved. ... We are living in an epidemic."

Parker mentioned numerous ways that individuals could support transgender women of color, among them were that white trans women, could

The letter is at [http://www.illinoisattorney-general.gov/pressroom/2018\\_11/Final\\_Ltr\\_to\\_Azar\\_and\\_DeVos.pdf](http://www.illinoisattorney-general.gov/pressroom/2018_11/Final_Ltr_to_Azar_and_DeVos.pdf).

## Illinois marks five years of marriage equality

Five years ago—on Nov. 20, 2013—Illinois became the 16th state to legalize same-sex marriage when marriage equality legislation was signed into law.

The U.S. Supreme Court issued its historic ruling requiring all states to issue same-sex marriage licenses on June 26, 2015.

State Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago), who co-sponsored the legislation, said in an Illinois General Assembly press release, "We took an important step five years ago. We must ensure we do not lose ground and in fact make progress in the fight for full, equal rights for same-sex couples."

Although the law did not take effect until June 1, 2014, Chicago couple Vernita Gray and Patricia Ewert made history Nov. 27, 2013, when they became the first same-sex couple to be married in Illinois. The women—well-known LG-BT-rights activists—were granted an expedited marriage license because Gray was living with terminal breast cancer, and her last wish was to marry her longtime partner. Gray died March 19, 2014, less than three months before the law took effect.

Since then, Cook County has recorded more than 10,000 same-sex marriage licenses.



Channyn Lynne Parker at Center on Halsted's Transgender Day of Remembrance event. Photo by Matt Simonette

do more to stand up for their Black and Brown sisters; community members could be more supportive of drag performers; men who love trans women should no longer be shamed; and lawmakers could be called to action in states where

"trans-panic" is still a legal defense. Illinois, she noted is one of just three states where it is not.

"Guilt without action means nothing," said Parker. "Show up and do something."

## Advocates seek gov't accountability in death of trans asylum-seeker

Transgender Law Center (TLC) and the Law Office of Andrew R. Free announced that they have filed a notice of wrongful death tort claim in New Mexico—the first step, they said, in holding all parties responsible for Roxsana Hernandez's death accountable.

Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project-BLMP and Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement (Familia), who have advocated for an end to detention for trans and queer migrants, joined TLC and the private law office.

"An independent autopsy report reveals that Roxsana was shackled for a long time and very tightly, enough to cause deep bruising on her wrists," said Lynly Egyes, TLC's director of litigation, in a statement. "She also had deep bruising injuries consistent with physical abuse with a baton or asp while she was handcuffed, according to an examination of the tissue by an independent expert board-certified forensic pathologist."

"In the final days of her life, she was transferred from California to Washington to New Mexico, shackled for days on end. If she was lucky, she was given a bottle of water to drink. Her cause of death was dehydration and complications related to HIV. Her death was entirely preventable."

Hernandez was a Honduran transgender asy-

lum-seeker who arrived with a caravan that Diversidad Sin Fronteras organized. She arrived in Tijuana and sought asylum by presenting herself at the San Ysidro port of entry in May. She ended up being held in U.S. Customs & Border Protection custody in a holding area, and she became increasingly sick, the advocates said.

"This last week, as many people across the country enjoyed a warm dinner with their family, the Trump Administration is considering basically signing execution orders for the LGBTQ migrants in Tijuana awaiting their opportunity to seek asylum," added BLMP representatives Dora King and Jerome Jones.

## Ald. Daniel Solis announces retirement

Chicago Ald. Daniel Solis (25th Ward)—who served in the position for 23 years—announced that he plans to retire at the end of his term, ABC 7 Chicago reported.

"After 23 years representing the greatest community in Chicago, it's time to enter a new chapter in my life and pass the baton of public service to another. Chicago's challenges are many, but our capacity to meet them is unlimited and I know that the citizens of the 25th Ward will make their voices heard in this upcoming election season," Solis said in a statement.

The article is at <https://abc7chicago.com/politics/25th-ward-alderman-daniel-solis-to-retire-after-23-years/4755214/>.

## AG Madigan joins pro-trans coalition

Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced she joined a coalition of 20 state attorneys general urging the Trump administration to abandon efforts to adopt a definition of "sex" that would exclude transgender and gender nonconforming individuals from the protections of federal civil-rights laws.

Officials in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reportedly were considering adopting a definition of sex as an immutable, binary biological trait determined by or before birth—and that the Department was urging other agencies to do the same.

In their letter to the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar and U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, Madigan and the other attorneys general assert that "despite clear evidence of the serious harms that discrimination continues to inflict on the transgender community, the Administration seems intent not only on rolling back existing federal civil rights protections for this vulnerable population, but also denying transgender people even basic recognition."

The other state attorneys general who signed the letter include Maura Healey (Massachusetts), Xavier Beccera (California), Russell A. Suzuki (Hawaii), George Jepsen (Connecticut), Josh Stein (North Carolina), Josh Shapiro (Pennsylvania) and Barbara D. Underwood (New York), among others.





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# Remembering Harvey Milk

EXCERPT BY CLEVE JONES

Nov. 27 marked the 40th anniversary of the death of Harvey Milk. Below is an adapted excerpt friend and activist Cleve Jones sent to Windy City Times from Jones' book, *When We Rise*, to mark the occasion.

I woke up early on November 27, 1978 and got to City Hall before my boss, San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk. I was a student intern and eager to impress Harvey, who was also a friend and neighbor on Castro Street.

Unfortunately, Harvey was less than impressed by my diligence as I had forgotten to bring back to the office a file that I'd taken home with me. Harvey sent me home to retrieve the file.

Walking down Castro Street an hour later, a bus slowed down to stop at 18th Street. A woman I recognized from the Women's Building yelled at me out of the bus window, "Cleve, it's on the radio, they shot Mayor Moscone." Clutching the file, I jumped into a taxi. As the cab sped down Market Street, I wondered who "they" were. I figured it was either death squads from People's Temple or the cops.

The driver dropped me off on Van Ness Avenue at the western side of City Hall. I ran in, seeing the police swarming around the Mayor's office on the other side of the building. The cops frightened me and I ran up the stairs. The Board of Supervisors was on the second floor and each Supervisor had a small office opening to a private hallway that ran parallel to the public hallway. There was a passageway that connected the ornate Supervisor's Chambers to the reception area and the hall to the individual offices.

Harvey had given me a key to the passageway and as I let myself in I saw even more police officers running up the stairs. I felt panic in my chest and turned left towards the offices, looking for Harvey when Dianne Feinstein and an assistant rushed past me. Feinstein's sleeve and hand were streaked with dark red.

I looked down the hallway and saw Harvey's feet sticking out from Dan White's office. I recognized his second hand wingtip shoes immediately.

Then my memory shifts to slow motion.

*I float to the door of White's office and peer in. There is a cop there, on his knees, turning Harvey's body over. I see his head roll. I see blood, bits of bone, brain tissue. Harvey's face is a hideous purple. I feel all the air leave my lungs. My brain freezes. I cannot breathe or think or move. He is dead. I have never seen a dead person before.*

*I struggle to comprehend, and as my mind begins to understand what my eyes are seeing. The only thing that I can think is that it is over. It is all over. He was my mentor and friend and he is gone. He was our leader and he is gone. It is over.*

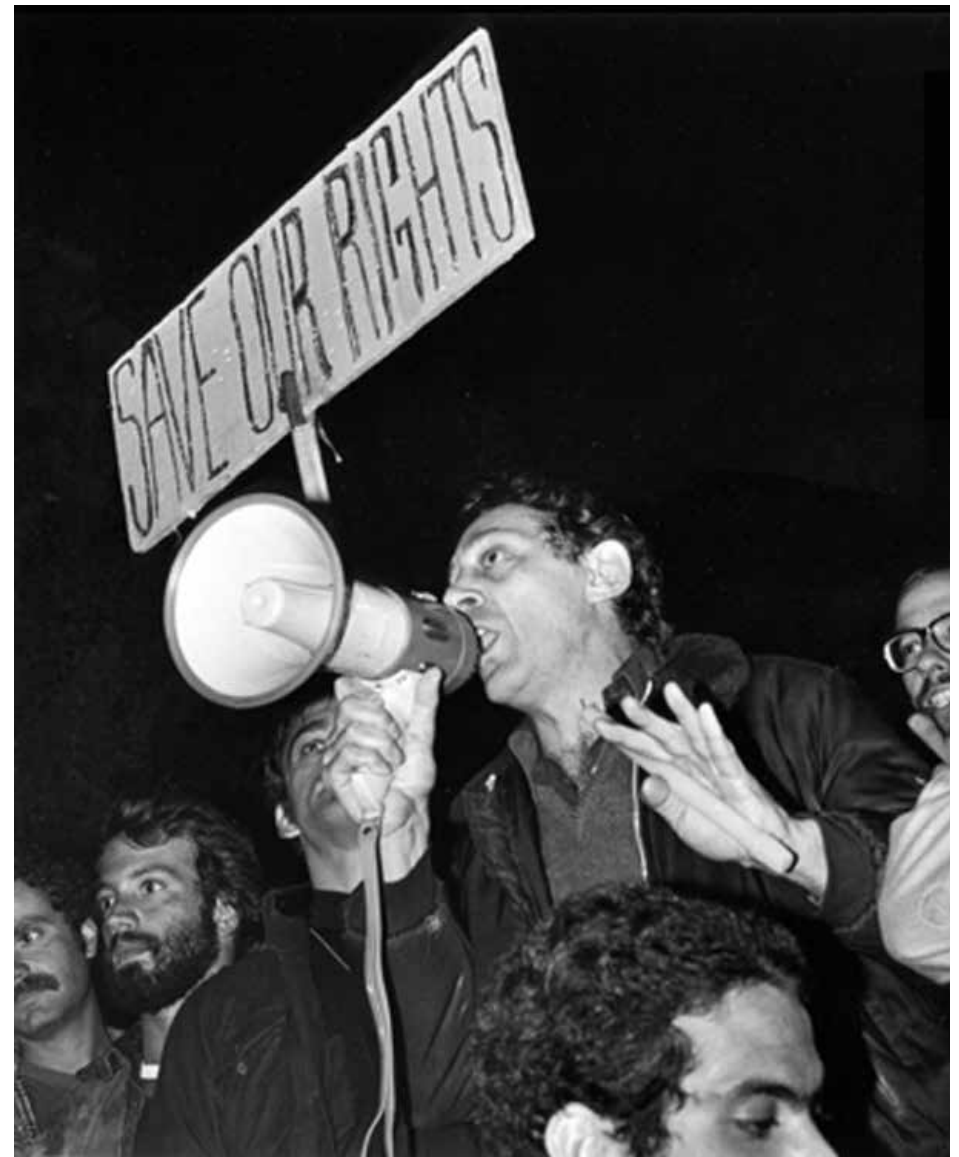
*We are there for hours, trapped in his little office as they bundle up his body. People come in. More cops. We find Harvey's old cassette player and the taped message he had recorded in anticipation of his assassination.*

*I'd known of the tape and teased him a bit, "Who do you think you are, Mr. Milk? Dr. King? Malcolm X? I don't think you're important enough to be assassinated." We press the play button.*

*And now he is dead and it is all over and we are listening to his voice tell us that he always knew that this is how it would go down.*

*This is what he expected.*

*This is what he was willing to do.*



Harvey Milk.

Photo by Jerry Pritikin

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*This is what had to happen.*

*And all I can think, all I can say to myself is, "It's over. It's all over." And then the sun goes down and the people begin to gather.*

*They come from all over the Bay Area: young and old; black and brown and white; gay and straight; immigrant and native-born; men and women and children of all races and backgrounds streaming into Castro Street—Harvey's street—faces wet with tears, hands clutching candles. Hundreds, then thousands, then tens of thousands fill the street and begin the long slow march down Market Street to City Hall, a river of candlelight moving in total silence through the center of the city.*

There were songs and speeches but I remember none of them. I stood there in Civic Center Plaza in the midst of an ocean of candlelight, in front of the building where Harvey died, in the middle of the city he had come to love and that had come to love him back in equal measure. And now it was all over.

My friends and I walked slowly back to Castro Street. Police cruisers lined Market Street and followed the returning marchers but they kept their distance. Had they been closer we might have

heard what they were hearing: over the police radio, the cops were singing.

*"Oh Danny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling.  
From glen to glen and down the mountain side...  
Oh Danny Boy, Oh Danny Boy, I love you so!"*

I was wrong. It wasn't over. It was just beginning.

Today, over 500 members of the LGBTQ community have been elected to public office. We serve as members of the House of Representatives and the US Senate. We are Mayors and City Council members. We serve on School Boards and State Legislatures. We are Governors and judges and county supervisors.

Harvey would be proud of the progress we have made but he would also warn us that everything we have gained could be swept away. He would caution us to be on guard, to build coalitions and to care for each other. He understood that no victories are necessarily permanent and that we must all be vigilant. In the face of right-wing extremism and growing division, he would talk of hope and a better world to come.

Forty years later, Harvey Milk lives.



# World AIDS Day events in Chicago

COMPILED BY MATT SIMONETTE  
AND ANDREW DAVIS

A number of community organizations are hosting events this weekend in observance of World AIDS Day, which officially takes place Dec. 1. Below are some of them:

## Wed., Nov. 28

—Roosevelt University will host a series of campus-wide events for a day of Education, Ad-



## World of Chocolate will be Nov. 30.

Photo of 2017 event by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)

vocacy, and Action for those living with HIV and in support World AIDS Day. Events will include an advocacy letter-writing campaign, free confidential all-day testing and a community panel. See [https://www.roosevelt.edu/news-events/events#!view/event/event\\_id/10697](https://www.roosevelt.edu/news-events/events#!view/event/event_id/10697).

## Thursday, Nov. 29

—At the Stand Up for Red event at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., attendees sample signature bites from Chicago's most creative chefs while sipping cocktails designed specifically for the event. Organizers also engaged Chicago's creative community to curate site-specific music, performances and art installations that respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The event takes place from 5:30-9:30 p.m. See <https://bit.ly/20JNXUO> for tickets.

—The dance performance Volledig: Emptied of Shame: Full of Life represents the stories of the artists who experienced living through the AIDS Crisis, how they survived it, and how they are living in a world that still stigmatizes HIV and doesn't provide individuals with equal care. Performances begin tonight—and continue Nov. 30 and Dec. 1—at 7 p.m. at Links Hall, 3111 N. Western Ave. Tickets are available at <http://eventbrite.com>.

—The University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) will mark the day 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at its College of Nursing, 845 S. Damen Ave. See <https://today.uic.edu/events/uic-world-aids-day-2018>.

## Friday, Nov. 30

—AIDS Foundation of Chicago's signature fundraiser World Of Chocolate goes at 6-9 p.m. at Revel Fulton Market, 1215 W. Fulton Market. Purchase tickets at <http://aidschicago.org/chocolate>.

## Saturday, Dec. 1

—Vida/Sida will hold its 30th-anniversary gala and World AIDS Day commemoration 6 p.m.-12 a.m. at Gallery 3949, 3949 W. Armitage Ave. There will be a red carpet, cocktails, dinner, dancing and more—and attendees should dress to impress. Tickets are \$40-\$50; visit <https://www.puertoricanchicago.org/new-events/2018/12/1/vida-sida-30th-anniversary-gala>, email [ricardoj@prcc-chgo.org](mailto:ricardoj@prcc-chgo.org) or call 773-698-7438.

## Sunday, Dec. 2

—The 10th Annual World AIDS Day Fashion Show, this year featuring designer Michel'Le Forrest and music by DJ Hugo H, starts at 6 p.m. at The Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave. W. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. See <https://bit.ly/2D1pxt2> or call 773-779-2399.

## Monday, Dec. 3

—The one-day conference "Our Stories Are Here: Coming Together to heal and Get to Zero" explores innovative HIV and care strategies, traverses the intersections of racism and injustice faced by communities most vulnerable to HIV and debuts the draft plan for Getting to Zero Illinois. It takes place from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at DuSable Museum of African-American History, 740 E. 56th St. RSVP at <https://bit.ly/2Sbr6n8>.

—Alphawood Foundation hosts a reception marking the release of the Art AIDS America Chicago Catalogue. Doors open at 6 pm. At 6:30 p.m., a program includes brief remarks, readings from the catalogue by contributors, musical selections by RECOVERY EFFECTS and a special performance by performance artist Karen Finley. The event takes place at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St. Tickets can be purchased at <https://bit.ly/2Bx2PCM>.

## Friday, Dec. 7

—To mark the 30th Annual World AIDS Day, AIDS Healthcare Foundation will host an evening with musical guests and entertainment such as Frankie J and Jermaine Dupri. The event will take place at Lacuna Lofts, 2150 S. Canalport Ave., 6-10 p.m. See <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/world-aids-day-chicago-tickets-52629233454>.

Additional events are listed on Page 38

## This Week's Featured Properties



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## letters

*Congresswomen, civil-rights leaders, Black trans women release statements demand protections for Black LGBTQ community*

WASHINGTON—In honor of Transgender Awareness Week ending Nov. 17, the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) and the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls (CCBWG) released statements calling for the end of gender-based violence and the rising epidemic of discrimination, abuse and violence against Black transgender and LGBTQ/same-gender-loving people, especially Black trans women.

Congressional partners—including Yvette Clarke (D-New York), Robin Kelly (D-Illinois) and Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-New Jersey)—joined NBCJ Executive Director David J. Johns, and Londyn de Richelieu, a member of the NBJC Black Transgender Advisory Council, to raise awareness and called on other high-profile, civil-rights and progressive leaders and organizations to join the fight to protect Black transgender people, women and girls and to:

—Recognize anti-transgender violence and gender-based violence;

—Support justice for crimes committed against Black transgender and gender-nonconforming people; and

—Act to stop the epidemic of gender-based violence against Black transgender women and gender non-binary Black people.

The group also called on the government to pass the Equality Act (HR 2282) to advance more robust hate crime laws at every level of government and to invest in public funds to support cultural competency of first responders—police officers, ambulatory care and firefighters, among others—to help prevent and better respond to violence against Black transgender and gender non-binary individuals. This follows a Federal Report Card produced by the NBJC that highlights the importance of the Equality Act and related legislation as well as documenting actions (or lack of actions) taken by each branch of federal government to address the unique contributions and needs of Black LGBTQ people.

“We must ensure the equal protection of ALL Black people under the law and that includes Black transgender and non-binary people,” said David J. Johns. “This is especially important because Black transgender people and Black non-binary people are victims of hate crimes at disproportionate rates. If you care about the liberation of Black people you must understand the importance standing up for, and speaking out against, rampant violence, terrorism or policies that allow for both. Period. Let us never forget the words of sister Fanny Lou Hamer who reminds us, none of us are free until all of us are free..”

**\*\*FULL STATEMENTS\*\***

—Congresswoman Yvette Clarke: “Earlier this week, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released hate crime statistics for 2017 revealing an increase of 17 percent in reported hate crimes from the previous year. One in four transgender people have

been assaulted simply because they are transgender. The majority of deadly attacks against transgender people are against women of color. These numbers are both staggering and disturbing. This Transgender Awareness Week, let us reaffirm our commitment to ending the epidemic of gender-based violence impacting Black transgender women and gender non-binary Black people. I stand with my transgender brothers and sisters and look forward to working together to build a world of love, compassion, and respect for all..”

—Congresswoman Robin Kelly: “Already this year, 22 beautiful people have been taken from us because of who they were. It’s time to pass the Equality Act and prevent that list from growing any longer. Sadly, one factor contributing to these murders is our nation’s unsafe and out-of-date gun safety laws. Eighteen of the 22 people were killed with guns. Our failure to enact commonsense gun safety laws has made it easier for people with hate-filled hearts to turn their hatred into gun violence and murder..”

—Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman: “I co-founded the Caucus on Black Women and Girls to raise awareness for the challenges all Black women face—straight Black women, transgender Black women, gay and queer Black women—because we know that we are strongest when we stand together and help one another rise. Our transgender sisters are targets right now, and it is more important than ever that we stand with them. Throughout my time in Congress I have been steadfast and deliberate in my efforts to extend civil rights and legal protections for transgender Americans, from introducing the Customer Non-Discrimination Act to extend civil rights protections for LGBTQ people in public accommodations, to my resolution calling on Congress to elevate the voices of sexual abuse victims, including the transgender community. I am a proud cosponsor of the Equality Act and will continue to work with leaders like NBJC to protect all LGBTQ people from discrimination, abuse and violence..”

—Londyn de Richelieu, National Black Justice Coalition Black Trans Advisory Council: “It took many years of triumphs and tragedies to gain the courage to pick up the pencil of self-identity and to think the government is attempting to erase my audacious work of art is violence..”

—David J. Johns, Executive Director, National Black Justice Coalition: “If you care about the liberation of Black people you must understand the importance standing up for, and speaking out against, rampant violence, terrorism or policies that allow for both. Period.

“I engage in an alarming number of conversations with Black people who do not understand why they must care about and be engaged in the fight to ensure that transgender and gender nonbinary rights are protected, to take a stand against gender-based violence and to champion intersectional social justice—and why it must happen at every level, ever day.

“When the Black community catches a cold the Black LGBTQ/SGL community catches pneumonia. Legal discrimination compounds everyday forms of

racism and oppression Black people feel and impacts all of our families. Regarding law enforcement and social attacks, we should be clear: attempts to police the bodies of Black transgender and gender non-binary people will also result in additional terrorism inflicted upon all Black people.

“This year alone, we have already seen at least 22 reports of transgender people fatally shot or killed by other violent means. Of the 22 transgender people whose murders have been reported, at least 16 of those individuals were Black (15 Black transgender women and one Black transgender man). In the state of Florida alone, five Black transgender women have been killed this year.

“Each year, in the United States, Black transgender and gender nonbinary people are murdered and we seldom acknowledge it. All Black people are capable of learning how to build better relationships with the members of our community who are most neglected and ignored..”

“Too many of us think that the work of ensuring the fundamental human and civil rights of Black transgender and gender non-binary people is someone else’s work. While the NBJC, the nation’s only civil rights organization intentionally and unapologetically dedicated to the intersections of racial justice and LGBTQ equality, accepts the unique responsibility to lead in this space, we must remember that none of us are free until all of us are free..”

**The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) is America’s leading civil rights organization dedicated to the empowerment of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender loving (LGBTQ/SGL) people, including people living with HIV/AIDS.**


*The National Black Justice Coalition*

*Law and border*

On Nov. 25, the U.S. Border Patrol violently attacked a crowd of migrants, including women, infants and small children, who were on the Mexico side of the U.S./Mexico border at San Ysidro. Those attacked were among the estimated 5,000 persons hoping to apply for asylum and to enter the U.S. Some have been waiting at the border crossing for six months.

Instead of providing relief and compassion to those in need, and protecting the rights and safety of those awaiting their chance to apply, the U.S. government has rained violence down on them. ICIRR calls upon our 18 Representatives in the U.S. Congress, along with Sens. Duckworth and Durbin, to protest loudly and demand an immediate cessation of this provocative and unwarranted attack on migrants and refugees, before the U.S. forfeits entirely its reputation as a haven for the oppressed and a land of opportunity.

*Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights Executive Director Lawrence Benito*



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# THE NEO-FUTURISTS

## MARK THREE DECADES IN CHICAGO

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Cast of the 2014-15 Neo-Futurist production of *Burning Bluebeard*. Photo by Evan Hanover

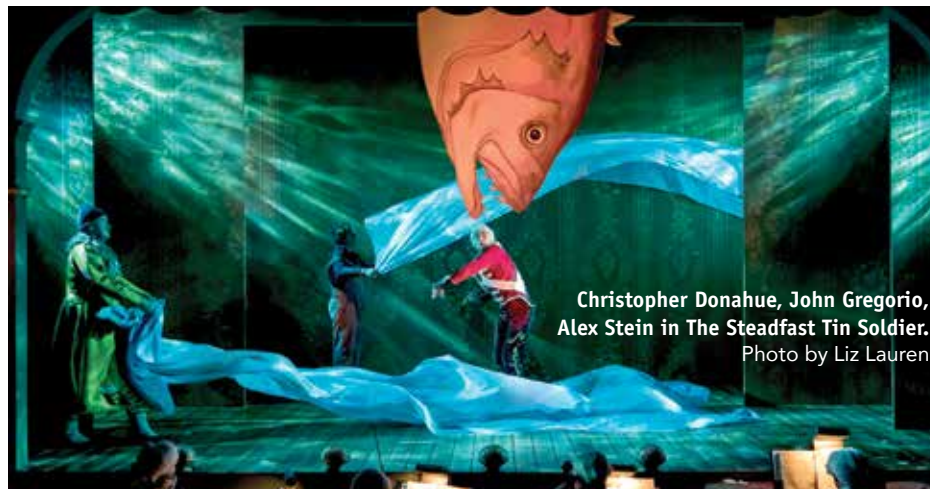
## THEATER REVIEW

**The Steadfast Tin Soldier**

Author: Hans Christian Andersen  
 At: Lookingglass Theatre Company,  
 821 N. Michigan Ave.  
 Tickets: [lookingglasstheatre.org](http://lookingglasstheatre.org) or  
 312-337-0665; \$45-\$85  
 Runs through: Jan. 13

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

For the discerning child, or jaded adult, Lookingglass Theatre has managed to avoid a treacly holiday production and inject some bitterness and heartbreak into a slot reserved for fluffy fairy



Christopher Donahue, John Gregorio, Alex Stein in *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*. Photo by Liz Lauren

tales. With Mary Zimmerman and her artistic team at the helm, Hans Christian Andersen's *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* make good on an unspoken promise to be like nothing you've ever seen.

In *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, we follow a broken soldier figurine (Alex Stein) that is discarded by a fickle child, and must then face off against a maniacal Jack-In-The-Box Goblin (Anthony Irons), a bureaucratic sewer rat (John Gregorio), street toughs, a hungry fish and a no-nonsense Nursemaid (Christopher Donahue) before he is reunited with the toy ballerina (Kasey Foster) he loves. The production uses puppets, dance, and circus feats to get the story across; everything but words uttered aloud. It's a Victorian style pantomime complete with voluminous wigs and a chamber orchestra, but don't let that scare away

Turn to page 23

## THEATER REVIEW

**Q Brothers Christmas Carol**

By: Q Brothers Collective and Rick Boynton  
 At: The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 800 E. Grand Ave.  
 Tickets: 312-595-5600 or c  
[ChicagoShakes.com](http://ChicagoShakes.com); \$30-\$52  
 Runs through: Dec. 30

BY SARAH KATHERINE BOWDEN

There was a time when mashing together hip hop and theater traditions might have seemed absurd to the Chicago theatergoer.

But thanks to the Q Brothers Collective and its ongoing creative partnership with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, their high-energy fusion of the two art forms has been celebrated since

long before Hamilton came to town. Q Brothers *Christmas Carol*—now in its fifth production with Chicago Shakes—brings comfort and joy to the audience using clever musical homages, while displaying impressive and heartfelt performances.

The basic story of *A Christmas Carol* remains unchanged in this reinterpretation that includes dancehall music, rock ballads, dubstep, and some great Run DMC beats—all spun by Kiernan Pereira. Pushed forward into the twenty-first century, Scrooge (John Hoogenakker) is still a tight-fisted old miser who won't let his beleaguered worker Bob Cratchit (Postell Pringle) turn up the thermostat in their office, and he still won't hear of attending his nephew Fred (Jackson Doran) Christmas party. When his long-dead business Jacob Marley (JQ) visits to warn him he will be visited by three spirits, Scrooge greets his redemption kicking and screaming.

Directors GQ and JQ take full advantage of The

Yard's ability to transform. Scott Davis' set remains a Christmas light-decked thrust, but rather than surround the actors with stadium seating, the directors and designer had cabaret tables installed, lending a marvelous club energy to the performance. It allows the audience to view the show as a concert where anything can happen. Hoogenakker runs through the tables greeting viewers at the end of the show and, throughout, the Q Brothers wink and nod at audience members who are getting into their groove.

The Q Brothers make a fantastic ensemble, each man jumping from character to character in *A Christmas Carol* with humor and dedication. It is particularly fun to see Pringle have to play Cratchit and his daughter Martha in the same scene, using the excuse of smelling what's cooking to hide his face from the audience and play both voices. JQ plays Tiny Tim as a pint-sized emcee in the making, and his *Ghost of Christmas Present* pokes fun at Macklemore without drag-

ging the guy. Doran is a lot of fun as Scrooge's burnout friend Dick, and he radiates good cheer as Fred. Hoogenakker is a delightfully sour nerd, and it is to the actor's credit that we easily perceive the hidden grief that is often only hinted at in Scrooge's backstory.

On the whole, JQ's musical choices are inspired, with the *Ghost of Christmas Past* combining shades of Run DMC, LL Cool J, and earlier impresarios, while Scrooge develops smoother and more complicated stretches of rhyme over time. The only odd decision is Jacob Marley's performance of reggae music, mostly because it's a one-note joke on his name. But in a story that provides solid holiday cheer, a bit of anarchy, and a lot of heart, there's little to complain about—and much more to celebrate.

## THEATER REVIEW

**Mansfield Park**

Playwright: Kate Hamill  
 At: Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie  
 Tickets: \$30-88; [northlight.org](http://northlight.org)  
 Runs through: Dec. 16

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

What is the price of passivity?

Fanny Price (Kayla Carter) isn't allowed to say no. From childhood, when she's taken from her squalid home and placed with relatives at a massive country estate, she must talk, walk and dress like the rich. That's not to say Fanny is accepted by her family: with one notable exception, everyone treats her as a lifelong charity case. When it comes time for Fanny to make real choices, does she draw on her carefully guarded morality or continue to be a well-dressed doormat?

Maybe not your typical image of a Jane Austen story.

But *Mansfield Park* is exactly that. Austen's third novel has plenty of romance, intrigue and

beautiful dresses, but also explores the cost of living large through the eyes of the watchful, sensitive Fanny. Acclaimed playwright Kate Hamill brings this world premiere adaptation to Northlight Theatre, and also acts in the production as Fanny's foil, gossipy socialite Mary Crawford. Though *Mansfield Park*'s first act runs a bit long, Hamill's script coupled with Stuart Carden's direction eclipses the simple delights and biting social commentary of Austen's writing, updating certain aspects of the story while remaining true.

Hamill, one of the most-produced playwrights in the United States, has previously adapted Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Her love of Austen is apparent in every hushed lovers' conversation and piece of witty banter. What sets Hamill apart from other Austen adaptors is her ability to go one step further, setting a feminist tone that the author would likely love. Hamill's *Mansfield Park* further explores every woman's limited ability to say "no" in polite society, as well as the dark secrets behind most every wealthy family. Someone has to pay for those large houses and pretty clothes, after all.

Director Carden stages *Mansfield Park* like an elaborate dance: transitions involve quick

steps and rolling furniture pieces, and ballroom scenes are beautifully enhanced with Steph Paul's movement direction and Andrew Hansen's original score. The effect is both cinematic and theatrical, embodying the choreography the upper class must learn to keep up appearances and keep away demons, with varying degrees of success. Izumi Inaba's costumes are breathtaking, particularly symbolic animal disguises for act one's masquerade ball, the pastel floral gowns of Fanny's spoiled cousin Mariah (Anu Bhatt) and Fanny's beloved gold heart necklace, a gift from her brother and the one talisman she holds onto through the years.

As always, Northlight attracts actors who are the best of the best. Hamill's Mary is a standout, as is Nate Burger as Mary's roguish brother Henry, who decides to pursue Fanny as a way to amuse himself. Gabriel Ruiz's Edmund, Fanny's cousin and ally, is both gracious and gallant, and Bhatt's Mariah hilariously shallow. Only Carter seems a bit out of her element as Fanny, stumbling through her dialect and emotional arc as everyone else acts circles around her. Hiccups aside, Northlight's *Mansfield Park* is well worth the trip to Skokie: lush, gorgeous and surprisingly thought-provoking.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**The Safe House**, City Lit Theatre at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, through Dec. 16. The occupants of the title dwelling may be a three-generation white, het Norman Rockwell family in suburban Michigan on the surface, but author Kristine Thatcher's savvy filial dynamics render their needs—and solutions—applicable to all demographics. MSB

**The Nutcracker**, House Theatre at the Chopin, through Dec. 30. The House Company's adaptation transforms E.T.A. Hoffman's romantic fancy into a mythic tale of a household battling the sorrow threatening their holiday cheer, their resistance aided by clever reanimated toys, tuneful musical interludes, thrilling sword fights and scrumptious cookies. 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

**SnowGirls—  
The Musical**

Playwright: **Derek Van Barham (book),  
David Cerda, Scott Lamberty and  
Jeff Thomson (music)**

At: **Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St.**

Tickets: **\$20-30; BrownPaperTickets.com**

Runs through: **Dec. 30**

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

SnowGirls—The Musical is parody at its finest.

The latest world premiere from Chicago favorite Hell in a Handbag productions hits all the right notes. There are many allusions to its original source material *Showgirls*, the 1995 film that quickly progressed from box-office flop to camp classic. However, the ridiculous nature of *SnowGirls*, involving pole dancing, erotic coupling and plenty of backstabbing—where the main players are reindeer—makes the world premiere musical hilarious to everyone from *Showgirls* aficionados to those who have never seen the movie. Director and choreographer Jon Martinez and a stellar cast embrace the silliness as only Hell in a Handbag can, and *SnowGirls* is one hour and forty-five minutes of raunchy holiday fun.

Boston Conservatory graduate Harper Leander is Snowmi Malone, a reindeer who arrives at the North Pole with stars in her eyes (at least, when she's not throwing an epic tantrum). Snowmi quickly befriends kind Santa Claus groupie Jolly

(Brittani Yawn), who has a job at the hottest theater in town. Can a chance meeting with star Ice Crystal Connors (Sydney Genco) get Snowmi out of her seedy strip club gig and into the big leagues?

In the world of *SnowGirls*, Mrs. Claus (Erin Daly) struts around in tight dresses lambasting her alcoholic, impotent spouse, while Rudolph (Max McKune) guides the new strippers with a highly suspect and admittedly problematic set of ground rules. (Hint: they involve keeping Rudolph, er, happy.) Writer Derek Van Barham is both intimately familiar with the original *Showgirls*—*SnowGirls* has Versace jokes aplenty—and smart enough to emphasize the broader aspects of what's essentially a backstage story with more raunch. Music from Scott Lamberty, Jeff Thomson and Handbag artistic director David Cerda is fun and catchy, ranging from Ice Crystal's sultry, profane solos to Snowmi's soulful ballads. Martinez's staging and choreography boasts many callbacks to the original without alienating those who haven't seen it.

*SnowGirls'* costumes alone are worth the ticket price, thanks to Kate Setzer Kamphausen's penchant for tight-fitting crushed velvet, glittery antlers and platform boots. Though Leander is a far stronger dancer than she is a singer, and perhaps the composers could have better accommodated her limited vocal range and lack of breath support, her Snowmi is a lovely babe in the bawdy woods. Daly's powerful set of pipes and onstage fearlessness are an ideal match for Mrs. Claus, and Grant Drager is sleazy perfection as the scheming Zip, who woos Snowmi with his



Harper Leander and Grant Drager in *SnowGirls*.  
Photo by Rick Aguilar Studios

smooth figure-skating movies.

The show, though, belongs to Genco. Her Ice Crystal Connors would make Gina Gershon proud, from southern-fried dialect to faux-lesbian kisses. Genco moves through every scene as if she owns it, and in fact she does. Even when she's not spouting double entendres, Genco projects everything the character is: once an innocent youth herself who's had to claw her way to the top to survive.

*SnowGirls* is neither fun for the whole family nor the faint of heart. For adults who love sex jokes and Christmas, it's a spectacular way to escape family members or treat visiting friends. Prepare yourself for reindeer nipples, sultry kicks and sociopathy—*SnowGirls* and its scheming protagonists are here to stay.

## SPOTLIGHT

When you're pondering which of myriad *Nutcrackers* to shell out for this season, don't overlook A & A Ballet's Art Deco *Nutcracker*, starring out American Ballet Theatre dancer Jose Miguel Sebastian as the *Nutcracker Prince*. Featuring Tchaikovsky's iconic score but set in the Roaring '20s, choreographer Alexis Kremnev's staging includes 175 dancers. Performances are Nov. 30-Dec. 2 at the Studebaker Theatre, 410 S. Michigan Ave. Tickets are \$30-\$50; visit [Acenterfordance.org](http://Acenterfordance.org).



PR photo of Jose Miguel Sebastian

# STEPPENWOLF FAMILIAR

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# The Neo-Futurists mark three decades

Cast of the 2014-15 Neo-Futurist production of *Burning Bluebeard*. Photo by Evan Hanover



BY KERRY REID

Thirty years ago, the Neo-Futurists opened a late-night show that became first a cult favorite, and then an institution. And though *Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind* changed its name two years ago after a dispute with founder and former artistic director Greg Allen, the Neos continue to churn out more new scripts (albeit super-short ones) than any other company in town.

The late-night show, now called *The Infinite Wrench*, largely follows the template set by “*Too Much...*”: thirty short plays, all created by the ensemble in an ever-changing line-up, to be performed within one hour. The aesthetic is randomness (the running order is determined by audiences shouting out the numbers next to the titles in the program, and the admission price by rolling dice), risk and realness. The goal is a “fu-

sion of sport, poetry and living newspaper.” The Neo-Futurists also have branches in New York City and San Francisco performing their version of *The Infinite Wrench*.

Current artistic director Kurt Chiang, who joined the ensemble in 2008 and took his current position in 2015, said “We’re the granddaddy of the indefinable theater.” Indeed, it’s always been easier to describe the Neos in terms of what they are not: namely, NOT a sketch or improv company.

They’re also not solely defined by the late-night show. For many years, they’ve presented prime-time shows created within the ensemble (which has encompassed more than 70 people since the company’s founding). More recently, they’ve started fostering these shows through the Neo-Lab, which offers one ensemble member per season a commission to develop work through what Chiang called “a long-term public-facing

## THEATER

process.”

The first Neo-Lab show, Tif Harrison’s *Saturn Returns*, opened in 2016. Since then, the company has presented Kirsten Riiber’s *Tangles & Plaques*, based on her work with Alzheimers patients. (The show recently won an NEA grant to tour colleges and healthcare training institutions.) Next up, in March, is Nick Hart’s *Remember the Alamo*. Meantime, Ida Cuttler’s *Comfortable Shoes*, which combines running and the narrative structure of *1,001 Nights*, gets a public workshop presentation on Thursday, Nov. 29.

The interests of the ensemble drive the prime-time eclecticism. “As far as prime-time shows, because of our aesthetic and the fact that we’re not playing characters, that lends itself in a way to talk about history or ideas,” said Chiang.

Over the years, the performers have also drawn upon a wide range of styles in creating their short pieces and the prime-time work. Lisa Busceni, one of the earliest “*Too Much*” ensemble members who still performs with *The Infinite Wrench*, was a National Poetry Slam champion in 1992. Her recent pieces in *Wrench* felt reminiscent of poetic monologues she did in the earlier days. Jay Torrence, a former ensemble member, brought an interest in physical theater and clowning, as seen in his full-length devised piece about the 1903 Iroquois Theatre fire, *Burning Bluebeard*. (The show, first produced in 2011, plays Dec. 26-31 at the Neo-Futurists in a co-production with the Ruffians.)

“When you do a full-length work, you really are allowed to bring to the table all of these different influences you’re exploring already,” said Torrence. Cuttler, who was in the lab process for Riiber’s *Tangles & Plaques*, said “It’s definitely a newer thing, when you’re used to making shorter plays with a quick turnaround, to sit with an idea and actually be able to work on devising and try-

ing things and having them fail.”

In the viral digital age, even the short topical pieces that go into *The Infinite Wrench* each week run the risk of feeling stale. Chiang said “You have to change the nature of your vitriol. To make quote-unquote political work or a play that is speaking toward the greater world situation; you’re not the smartest quote anymore. You’re not the first response by a long shot.”

Instead, the work in *The Infinite Wrench* often focuses on what managing director Kendall Karg calls “creating imagery you’ll go home with it.” In a recent performance, the ensemble sat in a line and passed handfuls of water to one another while meditating on how much easier it is to opt out of the political process when one has privilege. It created an apt metaphor for “trickle-down” power—those who have the most “water” don’t think about preserving access for people struggling to get just enough to survive.

Those politics are also reflected in how the company is run. Karg told *Windy City Times*, “One of the first things the board president and everybody interviewing me said was ‘You have to really be ready to collaborate with the artists. They’re your boss. They’re going to impose consensus model techniques when you work with them.’”

Today, that model still guides the company and its larger commitment to the neighborhood. “This place is always spoken of as the center of community,” said Karg. “People feel that they’re at home here. They meet up with their friends here. We have proposals on that stage all the time.”

“We’re a baffling place,” said Chiang with a laugh. Perhaps. But the Neo-Futurists have every intention of keeping audiences baffled for another 30 years.

The Neo-Futurists will offer a special 30th-anniversary performance of *The Infinite Wrench* on Sunday, Dec. 2, 7 p.m. at the Neo-Futurist Theater, 5153 N. Ashland Ave. Information and reservations at 773-878-4557 or Neofuturists.org.

## THEATER REVIEW

### Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Playwright: Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice

At: Citadel Theatre, 300 S. Waukegan Rd, Lake Forest

Tickets: 847-735-8554, ext. 1, or Citadeltheatre.com; \$45

Runs through: Dec. 23

BY KAREN TOPHAM

You’ll never get me to agree that the small stage of Lake Forest’s Citadel Theatre is a great space for putting on large cast musicals, but if you’re going to do one, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* is an excellent choice.

Director Robert Estrin obviously thought so, and he has brought us a *Joseph* with a top-notch cast that has enough talent to help us to overlook the necessity for repetitive and sometimes a bit stagnant staging that comes with fitting 12

brothers (and their father), an eight-person children’s choir, a five-member female dance chorus, a five-piece orchestra, two narrators and a partridge in a pear tree (Kidding!) on a stage that is nowhere near expansive enough to accommodate them.

Somehow Estrin and choreographer Jake Ganzer even manage to get a couple of raucous dance scenes going but, for the most part, there is a lot of standing on stairs and platforms, though that doesn’t detract at all from the quality of the show, for this is one show that is all about the music. And Citadel comes through with shining (techni) colors. As the titular dreamer, Jacob Barton is thoroughly impressive. His mellifluous singing voice, his everyman appearance, his solid acting, and his congenial attitude serve him well, and he even plays guitar (one of several cast members to add to the orchestra). Barton is simply perfect even in such dichotomous songs as the cheerful “*Any Dream Will Do*” and the plaintive “*Close Every Door*.”

In addition to Parker, Estrin has cast not one but two narrators, and both Carmen Risi and Laura Thoresen are wonderful, whether telling the story to the children’s choir, leading us through the various scenes or dancing along with the



**Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.**

Photo by North Shore Camera Club

rest of the cast. Both actresses have remarkable voices, which is a hallmark shared by this entire cast. The brothers and father Jacob (JP Thomas) have a lot of fun with such numbers as “*One More Angel in Heaven*” and “*Those Canaan Days*,” and I honestly couldn’t envision composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice ever expecting a cast to enjoy these signature songs more.

But when Thomas steps out from behind his (intentionally) ridiculous beard to become Pharoah, that’s when things really get all shook

up. Thomas’ Pharoah may not be the best Elvis impersonator ever to shine on a stage, but he’s certainly a ton of fun. Speaking of beards, one of the most wonderfully unexpected visual gags in Estrin’s repertoire comes when the children’s chorus dons fake beards to become the “hairy bunch of Ishmaelites” to whom the brothers sell *Joseph*. He also does some fabulous things with the “fab five,” as the female chorus is dubbed. Go, go, go Estrin!

The whole thing plays out on a nicely designed set by Eric Luchen that takes full advantage of the available space and is flexible enough for varied looks. Diane D. Fairchild’s lighting design is stellar, and Bob Boxer’s sound design is flawless (though one mic—unfortunately *Joseph*’s—did get a bit wonky the night I saw the show). Sarah Lake Rayburn’s costume design takes cues from past productions of the play but adds some nice touches. And Ryan Brewster’s music direction is top-notch.

This is a *Joseph* that ought to provide a well-deserved huge holiday hit for Citadel. And when they bring out the dreamcoat one last time, you’ll be cheering right along with everyone else for this powerful cast and this delightful production.



## THEATER REVIEW

# It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!

Playwright: Adapted from the 1946 film (screenplay by Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett, Frank Capra and Jo Swerling), based on the short story *The Greatest Gift*, by Philip Van Doren Stern

At: American Blues Theater, Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.

Tickets: 773-654-3103;

AmericanBluesTheater.com; \$19-\$59

Runs through: Jan. 5

BY KERRY REID

It's somehow fitting that American Blues Theater's annual radio-play presentation of *It's a Wonderful Life* is second only to the Goodman's *A Christmas Carol* as the longest running annual holiday show in the city. Charles Dickens may have been first out of the box with a holiday narrative about an unhappy man finding out the real meaning of life—with supernatural assistance—but Frank Capra's film covered it in American tropes.

Gwendolyn Whiteside's staging hews closely to the company traditions, from the "audiograms" that audience members write for loved ones to be read during the show, to the milk and cookies served by the cast in the lobby afterward. Jingles by Michael Mahler promoting sponsors (including



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

ComEd and Fahlstrom's Fresh Fish Market) and a shout-out to a veteran remind us that WABT (as

the fictional radio station is called) is as invested in good old American capitalism and patriotism

as the citizens of Bedford Falls.

This show has a fair amount of schmaltz sprinkled in. (The phrase "Capra-corn" exists for a reason.) But dark times require light and love, and that is what the American Blues ensemble provides in abundance, along with holiday songs and 1940s pop standards. Camille Robinson, who also plays Mary Bailey with easy charm, brought down the house before the house lights went down with *Someone to Watch Over Me* and Dara Cameron, who plays Violet and Zuzu, found wistfulness amid the cheer with *I'll Be Seeing You*.

Brandon Dahlquist's George doesn't go quite as dark as past incarnations I've seen. But he and the rest of the cast do a fine job of honoring the original roles without resorting to mere mimicry. John Mohrlein, the only cast member to have been with the show every year, delivers a delightful double whammy as sneering Mr. Potter (who to my ears has more than a little Dick Cheney in his demeanor) and as fluttery Clarence. Ian Paul Custer and James Joseph fill out most of the rest of the male roles, including Harry and Uncle Billy, respectively, with quicksilver aplomb. Matt Edmonds' announcer/pianist and Shawn J. Goudie's solid foley work keep the radio-play conceit in high gear without overpowering the story.

Ironically, George's financial problems are solved mostly by his millionaire pal Sam Wainwright coming through. Capra wasn't advocating socialist revolution, even though George says, "There's enough in the world for everyone's need, but not everyone's greed." But the spirit of radical compassion that saves George's soul is something we can all use this time of year.

Jonathan Van Ness  
AND FRIENDS

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## Transgender man talks of survival, HIV, self-acceptance

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

When listening to Brian Belovitch recount the first 30 to 40 years of his life, it's hard not to wonder how he survived it all. He admits that his journey almost killed him.

It's ironic because so much of that journey was about survival, making choices based on how to stay safe and also trying to make those around him comfortable with his identity.

He spent his teens identifying as queer and experimenting with drag, ultimately deciding to transition to a woman and living the next decade and a half as Natalia "Tish" Gervais, and eventually retransitioning and settling back into his life as Brian Belovitch. Today, Belovitch uses the pronouns he, his and him "out of convenience."

More assured about his identity and with the wisdom of many decades, Belovitch set out to write a memoir about his life and the identities he adopted along the way, with the ultimate hope of helping others struggling with their identity.

In *Trans Figured: My Journey from Boy to Girl to Woman to Man*, Belovitch talks about recognizing he was different as a child, struggling with that difference in his teen and young adult years, making the decision to transition to female and the efforts he undertook to live his life as fully as he possible, and inevitably discovering that no matter what he did he always ended up feeling "frustrated and disappointed." In the end, his retransition back to male and social progress helped him discover his identity and settle into

## BOOKS

the life he is living today.

"From early on, in my own innocence, I thought it was great that I felt different, or looked different, or acted differently than most other boys my age, but later on in my life it turned against me," he said.

Belovitch said by puberty the negative messages were so strong that he also began to think there must be something wrong with him.

"It was definitely a combination of messages I was barraged with from my parents, siblings, teachers, friends, etc. I just kept receiving this message from those people that some how there must have been a mistake about my gender, or whatever it was, I was wrong," he said.

By his mid to late teens, Belovitch had begun calling himself queer, but he did not fit into the "macho" image adopted by many gay men at the time. And he definitely didn't feel safe in the world around him.

Ultimately, Belovitch decided to transition to female, believing it was his best chance at being able to be himself and also at survival. At the time he committed fully to the decision, beginning hormones, growing out his hair and eventually getting top surgery.

His years living as a woman did not bring the relief he had hoped for. "I'd gone and done almost everything I wanted and thought I should do as that person, and every road led to a dead end, which was completely frustrating and extremely disappointing," he said, adding, "I spent an incredible amount of time and energy trying to be something that I wasn't."

While struggling with his identity once again, Belovitch was diagnosed with HIV. He said living as a trans woman with HIV was the scariest time of his life.

"As a trans woman in the '80s, testing positive for HIV, that was the most frightening. That was



Brian Belovitch.

Image from Skyhorse Publishing

scariest than becoming trans and then coming out as a gay man at 30 something," he said.

Belovitch's decision to write about his journey had a lot to do with wanting to ensure future generations don't forget the struggles of the past and to help those who are struggling with their gender identity today.

"That is one of the reasons I wrote the book, for historical accuracy and to include my own personal experiences about my gender transitions, and also so that parents and kids and anyone questioning their gender could look at my journey and take whatever they need from it. Is it a cautionary tale, a heroic tale? Whatever they need to take from it. I think it's an important

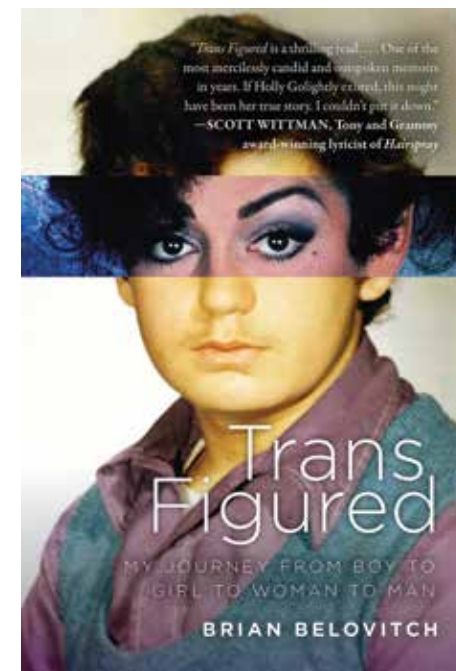
contribution that I can make. Thank god I can remember it all."

Belovitch said parents today should support their children and let their children discover their identity at their own pace. "Let them figure it out and take a step back and only intervene when you have to."

Looking back, he said he doesn't really have regrets, but he does wish he'd had support early on so maybe he could have avoided the pain that he went through.

"I'm the perfect example, if someone had just guided and supported me and listened and let me be who I was, maybe I could have avoided the problems later on if I'd had more support."

**Trans Figured: My Journey from Boy to Girl to Woman to Man** is available now through Skyhorse Publishing.



## Ripe: Letters, by Alan Semrow, seeks to redefine relationships

BY JOE FRANCO

People live in a world of relationships.

When one hears "relationship," that person may think boyfriend, spouse or girlfriend. Alan Semrow's latest book seeks to expand one's understanding of what a relationship actually is.

Ripe: Letters is a collection of missives to men—actual men, fantasy men, men Semrow knows, men Semrow wished he'd known. Beginning with a letter to "Birthday Guy," Semrow immediately invites the reader deeply into his own life. His description of a liaison the morning of his birthday is honest and says exactly what many others might think but never admit—even though this is a one-off meeting, they really like the guy.

Semrow's letters seem to grow in maturity right along with him. Later, we meet the "Great White Buffalo." Whoever this man is, Semrow is smitten



Alan Semrow.  
Photo from Semrow

and although their time together is notably brief and long-distance, he acknowledges it with the same kind of respect often accorded long-term relationships: "Even if it was the last time, it was the perfect ending." Semrow gives respect to his feelings and candidly admits that yes, he may have fallen in love and that's okay.

"I noticed the moments we share with people," Semrow told Windy City Times. "Many men I know could be very flippant about their one-night stands, but I just didn't see that as being realistic." Semrow admitted that he could not disregard others in that way, saying, "We are going to have those real moments. They should be humanizing and vulnerable."

Semrow added, "Even in very brief interactions with another, you have some kind of feeling. This collection of letters is just how I felt."

The inspiration for Ripe was not a singular event, saying, "I had read Dear Mr. You by Mary-Louise Parker, a book where she writes letters to the men in her life that have changed and influenced it, and I liked that style." Semrow acknowledged that after his first book he felt misunderstood and out of place, "I wrote three books in between my first book, Briefs, and Ripe—and

none had what I wanted." Semrow found that letter-writing seemed easier than typical prose or a novel. "I wrote a letter for Chosen Magazine and the editor, Christopher Hyde, encouraged me to go with them," he said. "So I did."

When asked if the men who anonymously appear in Ripe would be reading the letters, he said, "They are aware of it and will likely be reading them," adding as a joke, "Here's my Taylor Swift song." Yet, Semrow's work is nothing like a Taylor Swift song. They are positive tributes to men who have made an impact on his life during a time of significant self-discovery. Ripe's narrative arc follows a man looking for his voice. Both the author of these letters and Semrow himself seem to have found it.

**Ripe: Letters** is currently available on Amazon. Alan Semrow's work can also be read at ChosenMagazine.com.





## BOOK REVIEW

**Death Checks In**

by David S. Pederson

**\$18.95; Bold Strokes Books; 235 pages**

REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

It's a nice little getaway.

That's all you wanted: two days alone, just you and your amour, with nothing to do but follow your whims. It would be perfect, idyllic—until it wasn't, and Responsible You won out over Romantic You. As in the new novel *Death Checks In*, by David S. Pederson, it's back to work.

Detective Heath Barrington had it all planned out: he and his boyfriend, Officer Alan Keyes would take the train from Milwaukee to Chicago, grab a cab to the downtown area, check into the Edmonton Hotel, and enjoy a wonderful weekend.

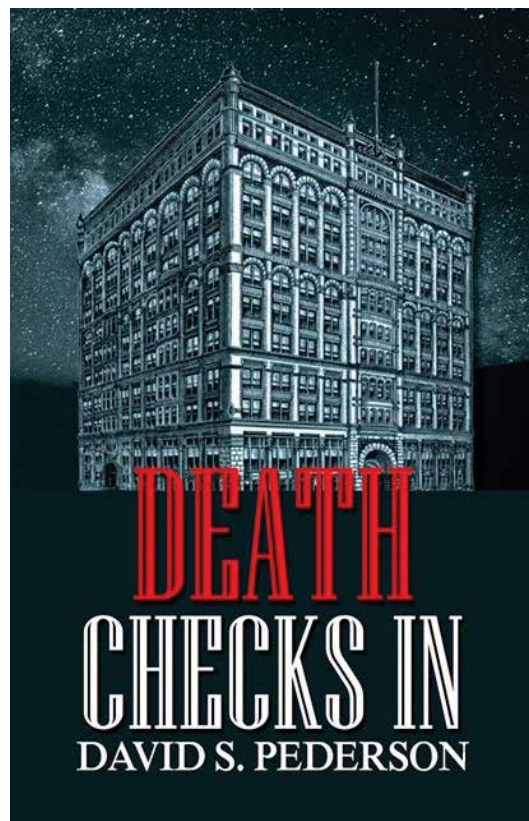
It was 1947 and being gay could get a man in trouble, but Heath knew there'd be more anonymity for him and Alan in a larger city. The weather would be perfect for exploring nightclubs and sightseeing; there was plenty of entertainment nearby and a live show with a band inside the Edmonton. That, of course, meant that Alan would need a tuxedo so Heath offered to purchase one for him—which was when the men met Victor Blount, haberdasher.

Blount was a small man with a French accent and a dramatic way about him. He said he was an expert tailor, that he dabbled in photography, and that he could secure "discreet" entertainment for Alan and Heath. That was odd, but Blount wasn't the only character at the Edmonton: the hotel's assistant manager was a blustery guy who had his eye on one of the regular guests, a "full-figured," flirty widow from New York. A dotty old lady from nearby came to the Edmonton often enough for waitstaff to know her preferences. And the one-eyed piano player and his songstress-wife left an impression on Heath by arguing loudly with Blount, who seemed to be overcharging them.

Two days. That's plenty of time for a romantic rendezvous, had Heath left work alone. But when Blount was found dead in his back room with "W" scrawled on the floor in his blood and a spool of green thread in his hand, two days was also long enough to solve a crime...

Strictly looking at *"Death Checks In"* as a mystery, it's not bad. That it's a noir whodunit is nice, the main characters are familiar from past books, it has that old-black-and-white-movie feel you know you love, and it's sweetly chaste, in a late-1940s way.

## BOOKS



Charming, in other words.

But tedious also describes this novel just as equally since a lot of its action comes through dialog, of which there too much and in too much fussy, stiff detail. It's wordy and it feels like filler. It doesn't help that author Pederson added an eccentric old woman in this story, who constantly clucks like a chicken.

Yes, that's written into numerous sentences. No, it's not fun.

Overall, if you can avoid doing that "speed it up" movement with your hand, or if you like noir mysteries that are more on the light side, only then will this book fit. For you, then, *"Death Checks In"* is a worthwhile getaway.

Want more? Then look for *Death Comes Darkly* and *Death Goes Overboard*, both by David S. Pederson.

is in a class all his own as the stoically fussy Nursemaid who's grimace goes unbroken except to fend off a smitten fishmonger. Anthony Irons and John Gregorio are apt clowns, puppeteers, and uproarious villains in their many iterations, and Alex Stein and Kasey Foster are masterful as the broken soldier and ballerina, just trying to find their stride in an awkward, but supportive dance relationship.

This production takes a lot of risks in a season that tends to be overly saccharine for all tastes, but there's one notable risk the artistic team didn't take: handing a differently abled role to a differently abled actor. There's whimsy in stitching "Missing" on a character's pant leg, but I'd argue there'd be even more whimsy (as well as power and inclusiveness) in seeing performers unite to physically support an actual differently abled actor. But, as Hans Christian Andersen might say, life does not guarantee you the ending you want, so you'd better learn to make the best of things.

## REVIEW from page 18

your digitally-connected youngsters. These players have some modern Thriller-claws, Moonwalks and more in their back pocket.

Puppet designers Blair Thomas and Tom Lee have set loose a stunning array of foam creatures and masks that evoke slippery fish and giant reaching toddler hands. Director Mary Zimmerman and Props designer Amanda Herrmann have translated tougher-to-grasp concepts into narration monogrammed into handkerchiefs or spelled on childrens alphabet blocks, and it's nothing short of delightful. Actors bound quickly from portraying tree ornaments to guard rats in nimble and colorful costumes by Ana Kuzmanic.

The story rests largely in movement—dancing, preening, slow-motion battles, and sometimes just the biggest maniacal grin a performer can muster. Christopher Donahue

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# Lakeside Pride show spotlights 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

BY VERNON HESTER

On Nov. 17, The Lakeside Pride Music Ensemble presented "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," a symphonic concert celebrating LGBTQ soldiers and veterans who served during the time that policy, also known as DADT, was in place (1993-2011).

The event—which took place at DePaul University's Holtschneider Performance Center—was the second in a series of concerts by the ensemble to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the Stone-

## MUSIC

wall Riots, in June 2019. The first concert, "Love and Marriage," was held Oct. 13 and celebrated wedded bliss for people of all genders. The DADT event also featured a raffle and a silent auction.

After a presentation of colors by representatives from the Chicago chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, there was a presentation of a military-themed repertoire with select



compositions by gay and lesbian composers. Among the out composers on the program were Aaron Copland (Hoedown from "Rodeo"), Julie Giroux ("Hands of Mercy") and Samuel Barber ("Sure on This Shining Night"), along with Ottorino Respighi ("Pines of Rome"), Gustav Holst ("Second Suite in F"), John Williams ("Hymn to the Fallen"), John Philip Sousa ("Black Horse Troop"), Robert Lowden (Armed Forces Salute) and Claude T. Smith ("Eternal Father, Strong to Save"). Much of the evening was conducted by music director Kyle Rhoades, with some segments led by assistant conductor Nick White and guest conductor "Moe" McPherson.

Just before intermission, Rhoades received The Founders Award from the Lakeside Pride Music En-

semble Board Chair Bradley Fritz and Vice Chairwoman Melissa Terrell.

Upcoming Lakeside Pride Ensemble performances regarding the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots include "Pay it No Mind" (The Lakeside Pride Chamber Ensemble featuring ResonaTe, Chicago's transgender choir honoring Marsha P. Johnson) on Jan. 6; "New York New York" (The Lakeside Symphonic Band in celebration of the culture and heritage of New York City) on April 6; "Fiesta de Baile" (The Lakeside Ensemble Latin Band acknowledging the Latinx population as a major part of the LGBTQ-rights movement) on May 5 and "Stonewall: Love and Liberation" (The Lakeside Ensemble Jazz Orchestra) on June 1.



Left: Lakeside Pride vice-boardmember Melissa Terrell, conductor Kyle Rhoades and board chairman Bradley Fritz. Right: AVER Chicago color guard.

Photos by Vernon Hester



Rufus Wainwright.  
Photos by Vernon Hester



Echo and the Bunnymen.



Rachel Eckroth.

## CONCERTS

# Rachel Eckroth, Rufus Wainwright; Jonathan Jackson, Echo and the Bunnymen

BY VERNON HESTER

As November drew to a close, we witnessed a torrent of old-school queer favorites coming to town for a pile up of sentiment and nostalgia far removed from the homey vibe of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

First through town was out troubadour/composer Rufus Wainwright on his All These Poses Tour, which hit The Vic Theater on Nov. 20. The show focused on his self-titled debut (Rufus Wainwright, DreamWorks Records, 1998) and

sophomore album (Poses, DreamWorks Records, 2001), and gave him the chance to entertain a sold out house for two and a half hours.

Wainwright told stories about his family (folk singers Kate McGarrigle and Loudon Wainwright III), his admiration for Leonard Cohen, writing an opera, and visiting sites around Chicago the previous afternoon. (He enjoyed The Art Institute of Chicago, where he got turned on by a painting and indulged in Swedish meatballs at Ann Sather.) Apart from singing many favorites and one new song ("The Sword of Damocles," which he dedicated to President Trump), Wainwright also

displayed a queer flair with his wardrobe, which included coats made from unidentifiable materials. (One floor-length coat looked like it was entirely made of crow feathers while another looked like it was made of a variety of bits of Christmas gift wrap.) Opener Rachel Eckroth started the evening off with songs from her new album, When It Falls (available through band camp), which highlighted her subtle though melodious and intense vocals.

On Nov. 24, '80s Brit New Wave rockers Echo and the Bunnymen filled The Vic Theater in support of their new The Stars, the Ocean, and the

Moon (on BMG Records) while tossing in a mix of hits and favorites from their 35-plus-year career.

Passionate solo artist Jonathon Jackson had the misfortune of being the opener since, regardless of his compelling and hypnotic performance, the audience loudly ignored him and talked through his set. Offering a hearty helping from his new EP, Enation-A Shock to the System (available via band camp), he managed to leave a positive impression despite his having to fight the audience to be heard.

Heads up!!! During December, look for shows by William Elliott Whitmore (Thalia Hall, Dec. 13), Esperanza Spaulding (The Vic, Dec. 5), queer joke-punkers Bev Rage and The Drinks (with gay faves Bleach Party at The Sleeping Village, Dec. 18.), and celebrated guitarist Richard Thompson for a two-night stand (Thalia Hall, Dec. 7-8).



# On her own terms: Melissa DuPrey's work in the age of reckoning

BY ADA CHENG

Melissa DuPrey—whose work has always been about centering disfranchised communities and who recently emceed 2018 Chicago Women's March—will be bringing her solo performance, "SEXomedy 2.0: The Second Coming" to Chicago Dramatists, 1105 W. Chicago Ave., on Nov. 29-30.

For DuPrey, SEXomedy 2.0—a response to current debates on female sexuality, body positivity and identity politics—is a long journey marked with the need for healing, coming to terms of oneself, and the celebration of female sexuality and sensuality since returning to Chicago from Houston in 2010 after a traumatic event.

"SEXomedy 2.0" reflects almost a decade of growth as a human being, an activist and a performing artist. Extending some of the themes she explored in the original "SEXomedy" in 2013, DuPrey delves deeper into more pertinent issues in response to the particular demands of our time. As she told Windy City Times, "'Sexomedy 2.0: The Second Coming' is a hybrid of different things. It takes the best of the original SEXomedy, a hypersexual, hyper-liberatory body positive, sex-positive anthem to female liberation. 'SEXomedy 2.0' is the version 2018 wants to see and it ventures into queerness, kinks, hook-up culture dominated by male power, [sex] inclusive of trans people, [a] critique of porn shaped by heteronormativity, and centering woman at the forefront of the pleasure as opposed to a body that the society pushes us to and defined by porn."

In this new version of her solo performance, DuPrey aims to deconstruct the myths about female sexuality and sensuality. It ventures into "intimacy, sexuality, sensuality, and navigating the dating world as we have it now dominated by the apps. It is out of the lens of an intersectional women of color perspective," DuPrey said.

DuPrey said she intends this performance to be in direct conversation with various movements of our time: "I am trying to elevate the idea of dismantling the patriarchy and male privileges. What we are seeing is men in power, specifically cis white men in power and the kind of silencing that comes along when people are abused. 'SEXomedy 2.0' has always been about empowering women, for women to say I am in control of my sexuality, I am in control of my circumstances, and I have the power to define consent in relationships."

How does DuPrey deal with queer topics differently in this version? She said, "I have always been politically pro-queer. If you look at my art, my track records, I have always been, first and foremost, most welcome the queer community. In this version, I will explore queerness differently, with more embeddedness as opposed to proximity. At the end of the day, my art is about intersectionality and this is the layer that I haven't been able to bring in yet. This performance is a reflection of my growth these past five years on this aspect."

**For tickets:** <https://sexomedy2.brownpaper-tickets.com/>.

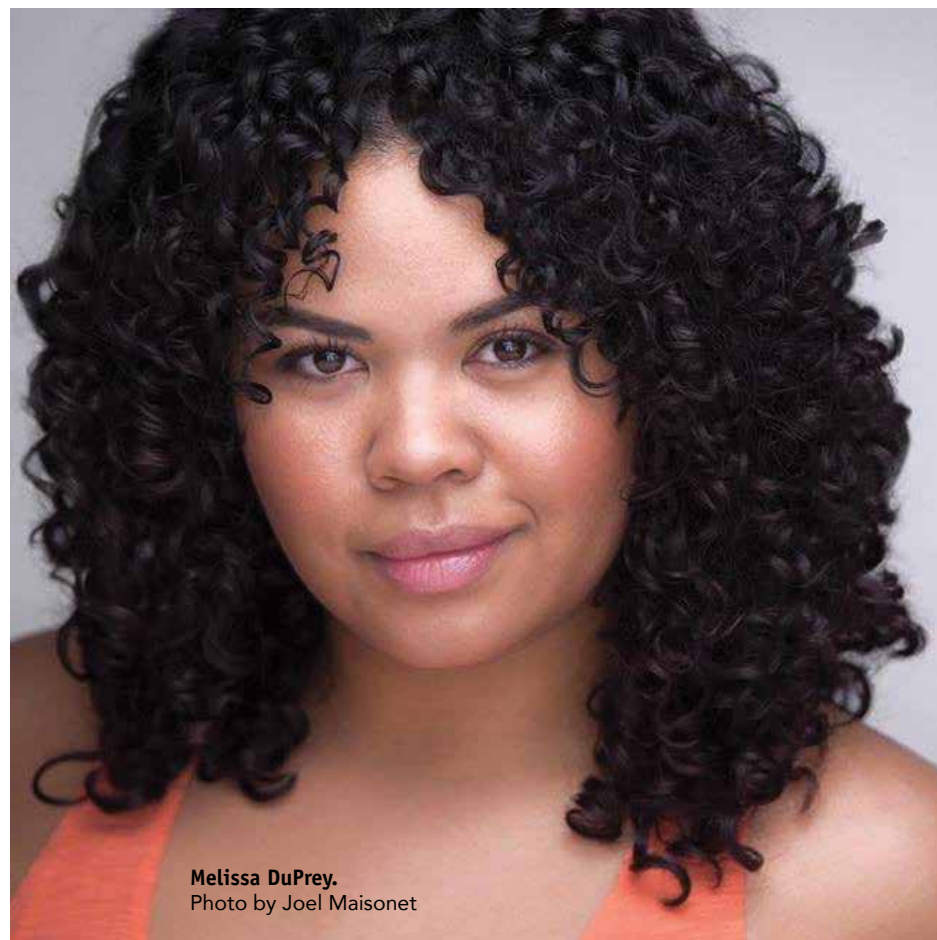
(Wed.-Thursday, Dec. 26-27; \$38-\$52).  
See CityWinery.com.

## Kahlo works at Glen Ellyn campus in 2020

College of DuPage, in partnership with the McAninch Arts Center and Cleve Carney Art Gallery, expanded upon the plans to host the largest private collection of works by Frida Kahlo at the Cleve Carney Art Gallery and throughout the Glen Ellyn campus in summer 2020.

The exhibition, entitled "Frida Kahlo—Works from the Dolores Olmedo Collection," will be the most comprehensive presentation of Kahlo's work displayed in the Chicago area since 1978.

The 26-piece collection, on loan from the Museo Dolores Olmedo, features an array of oil paintings and works on paper spanning the life of Kahlo. Best known for self-portraits highlighting themes of identity, politics, sexuality and death, Kahlo channeled her childhood and personal struggles into her art and became an iconic figure and symbol of female empowerment, individual courage and Mexican pride.



Melissa DuPrey.  
Photo by Joel Maisonet

## City Winery's December shows: Macy Gray, more

Singer Macy Gray and former American Idol finalist Kris Allen are among those slated to perform at City Winery, 1200 W. Randolph St., in December.

Gray—whose signature raspy voice is featured in "I Try," one of the biggest singles of 1999—will perform Friday-Saturday, Dec. 28-29. Her most recent album is entitled Stripped. Tickets are \$55-\$75 each.

Allen is bringing his second holiday album, Somethin' About Christmas, to City Winery on Tuesday, Dec. 4, and is hosting a VIP meet-and-greet. Tickets are \$25-\$35 each for the show, and \$50 each for the meet-and-greet.

Some of the others scheduled to perform at City Winery include Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter Syleena Johnson (Friday, Dec. 7; \$35-\$55 each), Los Lobos (Sunday-Thursday, Dec. 9-12; \$65-\$78), Art Garfunkel (Friday-Saturday, Dec. 14-15; \$85-\$125), jazz vocalist Kurt Elling (Wed.-Thursday, Dec. 19-20; \$45-\$58) and blues singer Shemekia Copeland

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# Steve Kasperski: Knocking it out of the park

BY ROSS FORMAN

Steve Kasperski had a memorable summer on the softball fields, claiming championship medals in two of the most prestigious international events.

The 56-year-old Kasperski—who lives in Hyde Park and Melrose Park, and has been playing gay softball in Chicago since 1991—went to the Gay Games in Paris in early August with a San Francisco team, with the squad winning the bronze medal. Then in early September, he was playing for the Philadelphia Triple Play Master's Division team in the annual Gay Softball World Series in Tampa Bay, and his team was named co-champions after the final game was rained out.

"I had mixed emotions when we won the Master's [Division] this year. I was happy that we won, but disappointed that we were denied playing the final game due to rain," he said.

Kasperski was born in Chicago and grew up in Cicero. After living out of state for almost 20 years, he returned to Chicago in 2001—and he now works in the justice system for Cook County.

"I [started] in [the] Windy City Athletics [gay sports league] in 1991 when my partner then played tennis and volleyball," Kasperski said. "One day they needed a volleyball player and I was the one on the court diving for balls. Jim Flint, of Annex 3 at the time, asked me if I ever played

## SPORTS

third base. [Sure enough,] I joined his [softball] team that spring and have played in softball leagues ever since.

"After that first year on Annex 3, I played on MSA Sidetrack. In 1992 while playing for Sidetrack I had to work at a horse track in Kentucky. I would drive seven hours from Kentucky every week to play softball in order to keep my spot on the team and go to the [Gay Softball] World Series."

Kasperski's softball career also included time with Chicago Hunters, and he coached that team at time, too.

"I like changing things up, playing with different players," he said. "At one time, I thought I



Steve Kasperski.  
Photos from Kasperski

had a pretty good idea of most C-Division player's hitting tendencies, which made me a good defensive player. I also made wonderful friendships over the years from softball. We would travel to [multiple] tournaments a year and have a blast."

Kasperski also has played tennis, basketball and volleyball in gay leagues—and he truly cherishes the fields of play.

"Sports creates social opportunities. Tournaments offer a chance to travel, room with and get to know people better. There are so many guys [who] I got to know better [through sports]," Kasperski said. "Some of my favorite moments include winning our first tournament the first time I went to one with Annex 3 in Birmingham. There were other good moments too, including winning as a manager. Beating other Chicago teams in tournaments and playing on Saturday in the World Series [also are fond memories]."

"My nephew, who is straight, played a couple of tournaments with my team last year. He finally got to experience the fun that I always talk about. One of the best things about softball is when my son comes to the games. He loves to support us and has his favorites on my old team, [the] Sidetrack Black Widows. He often gets my glove ready for me when it's time to go back into the field after batting. He offers me a review of my play after the game just like I do with him. He adopted some of our team slogans and sense of quick wit. Each team I played on welcomed him into the dugout and included him in an age-appropriate way.

"I will always be grateful to all of them as well as opposing players who did the same. I have a picture of when he was 2-years-old at my games. He says he remembers that day. I am sure it is the love and fellowship expressed regularly before, during and after our games that he remembers."

Kasperski's softball career dates back longer than some foes in CMSA's Open Sunday Softball League were even born. Heck, this was his 24th Gay Softball World Series.

"Winning [the Series title this year] was good, but the run in Chicago on the Spin team was even better for me," he said.



Karamo Brown.  
Photo courtesy of Royce Carlton

## Karamo Brown in Evanston Dec. 5

Queer Eye culture expert Karamo Brown will give a talk, "Know Thyself: Using Your Uniqueness to Create Success," on Wed., Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. at Evanston Township High School Auditorium, 1600 Dodge Ave., Evanston.

Brown began his television career in 2004 as a housemate on the MTV reality series *The Real World*, becoming the first openly-gay African-American on reality television. In 2014, he joined the Oprah Winfrey Network to host and produce its first digital show, #OWNShow. Brown then became a host and producer for HuffPost Live, and a recurring guest host of *Access Hollywood Live*.

He then joined the "Fab Five" cast of Netflix's 2018 reboot of *Queer Eye*, a makeover series set in Atlanta that won three Emmy awards this year, including Outstanding Structured Reality Program.

The event is sponsored by Family Action Network (FAN), in partnership with Counseling Center of the North Shore, Countryside Day School, Fusion Academy, New Trier High School D203, the New Trier Parents' Association and The Family Institute at Northwestern University.

See [FamilyActionNetwork.net](http://FamilyActionNetwork.net).

## CGMC's 'Hullabaloo' Nov. 30-Dec. 2

Chicago Gay Men's Chorus (CGMC) will celebrate 35 years of making music with its upcoming holiday show, "35th Anniversary Holiday Hullabaloo." The show will take place Nov. 30-Dec. 2 at three different venues.

The chorus will be joined by 10 additional Chicago-based LGBTQ+ performing arts organizations, including About Face Theatre, Allegrezza, Artemis Singers, Chicago Spirit Brigade, Chicago Tap Theatre, GayCo, Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles, Lakeview Orchestra, Pride Films & Plays and Windy City Gay Chorus. With 22 musical numbers performed by members of 11 organizations, CGMC will contribute 150 singing voices with 20 dancers.

"Holiday Hullabaloo" will be performed Nov. 30 at 8 p.m. at the Harris Theater for Music & Dance; Saturday, Dec. 1, at 8 p.m. at Skokie's North Shore Center for the Performing Arts; and Sunday, Dec. 2, at 7 p.m. at Chicago's Beverly Arts Center. Visit [cgmc.org/](http://cgmc.org/) holiday for more information and tickets.

### Now batting ... Steve Kasperski

—**Favorite baseball team:** Chicago White Sox. "I still recall my gramps taking me to a bat day [at old Comiskey Park] when [Dick] Allen was the [team's] star. They broke my heart chasing the Oakland A's in 1972. I loved the Sox in 2005," when the team won the World Series.

—**On pro athletes:** "I'm not really impressed by athletes in general. I don't remember getting an autograph [as a kid]. I admired those men and women who overcame barriers to succeed. I loved to watch Tiger Woods when he was on top of his game, [and] am enjoying his comeback. I can appreciate Jim Abbott, too."

—**In the stands:** Kasperski has attended the U.S. Open and White Sox playoff games.

—**More softball memories—on flights to, from tournaments:** "Mark Vild would do a recap of the tournament on flights. Once, he and I made little dolls representing each player. He brought his out on the plane and did impressions of our team play. Travelers and flight attendants wanted to know more about the dolls. I should have known this was no ordinary group of guys during my first tournament. Once, on the plane, I went to the bathroom, and when I came out, the guys on Annex 3 were passing my boxers around the plane."

—**Speaking softball:** "The level of [softball] play has really improved [over the years]. We used to have a competitive and non-competitive division. Now we have six divisions. The top-tier (B and C Divisions) have



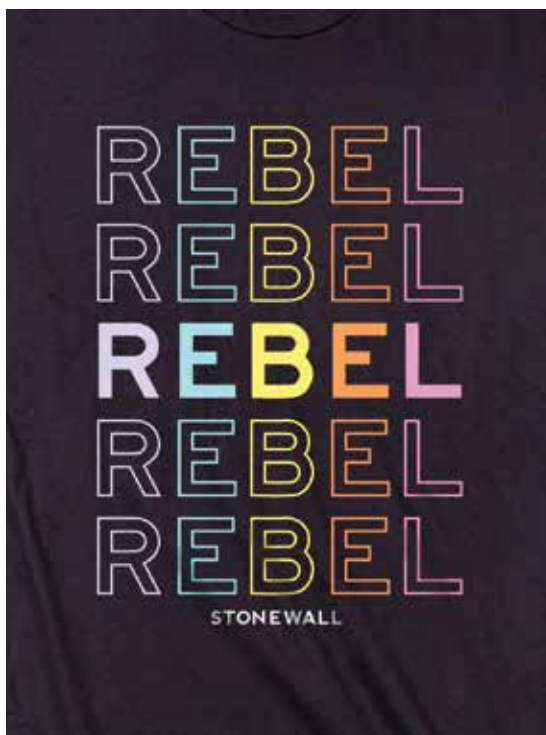
some talented players. Beside growth in numbers, the tournament play has really expanded. There are tournaments throughout the year. Finally, like pro sports, the equipment is better, which helps player's performance. And, the players are fitter and stronger."

—**No gay, but play:** "There is disagreement regarding the number of straight players allowed on a team [in the gay leagues]. I'm of the opinion that we should have no restrictions; we should be as inclusive as we can be."



# WINDY CITY TIMES' 2018 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

## WEEK ONE



### Rebel yell

As many know, the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots is next year, and this cool “Rebel” T-shirt—which out Oscar-winning screenwriter Dustin Lance Black designed—marks the occasion in a colorful way. (\$27; <https://www.omeze.com/made/dustin-lance-black-rebel-tee>)



### All the world's a stage

Chicago's **Steppenwolf Theatre Company** has brought back its highly popular holiday gift-card special—and it's just in time, as upcoming productions include *Familiar*, written by Danaï Gurira (of *The Walking Dead* and the film *Black Panther*); *La Ruta*, written by Isaac Gomez; and *Ms. Blakk for President*, by ensemble members Tina Landau and Tarell Alvin McCraney. (Various prices; [steppenwolf.org/holiday](http://steppenwolf.org/holiday))

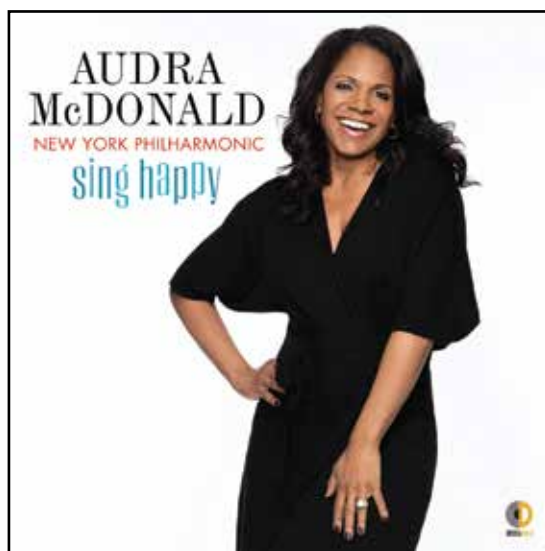
### Watch it

No doubt you've heard of those subscription clubs in which new items are sent to you each month. **Watch Gang** sends cool timepieces to choose from—and, yes, watches are back in style. Also: A big bonus with this great present is that for no additional fees, the recipient will also have the chance to win a Rolex, Tag Heuer and Seiko every week. (Starting at \$29; <https://app.watch-gang.com/members>)



### Sing a song

**Audra McDonald** brings her rich voice to the CD *Sing Happy*—her first solo release with a full orchestra (in this case, the New York Philharmonic) and featuring her singing Broadway numbers she's never recorded. (\$12.59)



### Pop life

Snacks rarely gets better than what Chicago mainstay **Garrett Popcorn** offers. This holiday, make someone's day with the Hot Cocoa CaramelCrisp® Mix, which features Cocoa CaramelCrisp covered in fine Belgian milk and dark chocolate and mixed with classic CaramelCrisp; or the O Christmas Trio Gift Set (three petite tins filled with Garrett Mix, Hot Cocoa CaramelCrisp® Mix and Buttery items). (\$35-\$39.95; <https://www.garrettpopcorn.com/>)



## Hot dates

The naughtiest calendar is out yet again (for the seventh year). Yep, the **2019 Orthodox Calendar** is here, and the theme this time is "Equal Rights. We can Do It!"—and there are some hunky guys throughout the calendar to make sure the sights are pleasant as we persevere. (Approximately \$22; Orthodox-Calendar.com)



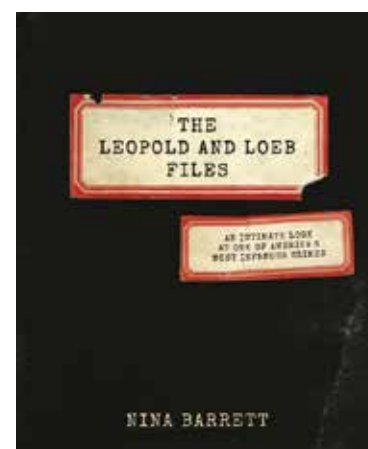
## So fresh, so clean

Think about this: The typical cellphone has 18 times more bacteria than a public restroom. This is why **PhoneSoap** is practically essential—during the 10-minute cycle it works on your phone, the device kills 99.99 percent of household germs. I don't know how I lived without this. (Starting at \$59.95; <https://www.phonesoap.com>)



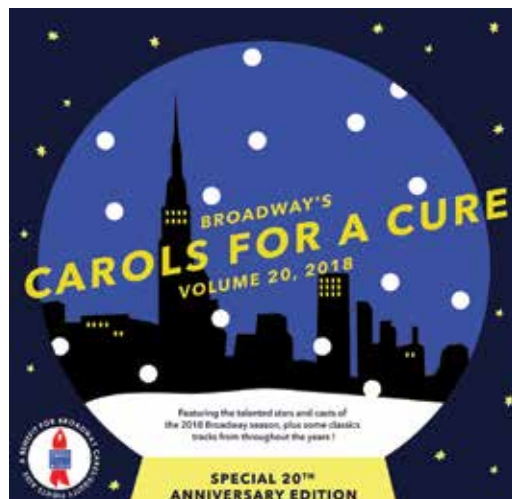
## Book it

Nina Barrett's **The Leopold and Loeb Files** includes a history of Chicago's 1924 Leopold and Loeb murder case, and includes a variety of source materials, including court transcripts, psychological transcripts, evidence photographs, and more (\$35; <https://www.amazon.com/Leopold-Loeb-Files-Intimate-Americas/dp/1572842407>).



## New York, New York

**Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS** is out with a new holiday two-CD compilation featuring stars from the leading shows on Broadway. This newest edition features 28 tracks from the companies of Mean Girls, Dear Evan Hansen, Hamilton, My Fair Lady, Pretty Woman and more. (\$25; [BroadwayCares.org](http://BroadwayCares.org))

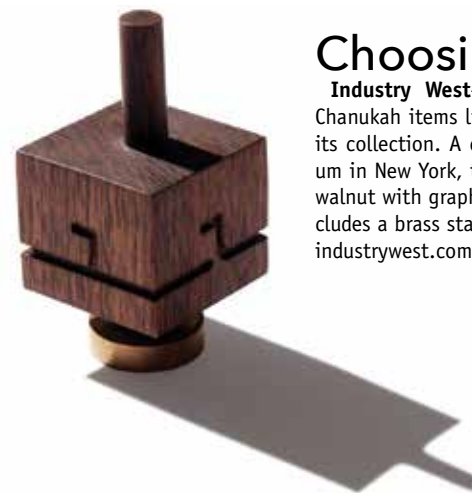


Left: Ariana DeBose of *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*. Right: Ben Levi Ross and Taylor Trench of *Dear Evan Hansen*.

Photos by Genevieve Rafter Keddy

## Choosing my religion

**Industry West**—known for furniture—has added Chanukah items like the **Marmol Radziner dreidel** to its collection. A collaboration with the Jewish Museum in New York, the unique dreidel is crafted in solid walnut with graphic cutouts of Hebrew letters and includes a brass stand for display. (\$100; <https://www.industrywest.com/marmol-radziner-dreidel.html>)



## A cut above

One of the best-known knife companies in the world, **Wusthof** has items for the chef in your life. The three-piece plum charcuterie and cheese set includes a 5" soft-cheese knife, 5" sausage knife and 4" pate knife; and then there's the Classic Santoku Hollow Edge 7-inch, which is great for starchy vegetables. Martha Stewart would be proud. (\$99.99-\$139.99; [wusthof.com](http://wusthof.com))







## Smooth like SILQ

Office furniture (including those for the home) have come a long way—and just in time to save your back. **Steelcase's SILQ chair** has been advertised as the first chair designed to intuitively respond to the human body—and after testing it at the spot at Merchandise Mart, I'm a believer. You find yourself instantly sitting correctly. (various prices; <https://www.steelcase.com/products/office-chairs/silq/>)



## Simply the chess

Chess, you say? Absolutely, especially with **Square Off chess board**—a magical/spooky item in which you can play against anyone around the world, as the pieces move by themselves. Players can also compete solo against the board's AI mode, selecting from 20 skill levels ranging from beginner to grand master. (\$369 and \$449; Amazon and SquareOffNow.com)

## Hair apparent

When it comes to hair care, **YANTRA** products are pretty cool. All YANTRA products are made to be unisex and formulated for use on all hair types. In addition, 10 percent of every purchase going to one of YANTRA's charity partners of the customer's choosing. (\$40-\$60; <https://yantrabeauty.com/>)



## Pet stop

Think of **Pawscout** as a smarter pet tag. Among other things, Pawscout alerts owners on their smartphone if a pet gets out of the designated area, and even lets all users in the area know if your pet goes missing so they can help you find it. In addition, it keeps a digital profile of medical records, owner information, behavioral issues and other items. (Starting at \$9.95; <https://pawscout.com/>)



## Brew-hoo

Your favorite coffee lover will go crazy for the newest **Keurig** items, such as the Keurig® Special Edition K-Café Single Serve Coffee, Latte & Cappuccino Maker and the Keurig® K-Mini PLUS Single Serve Coffee Maker. Eventually, he/she/they may stop going to that popular coffee shop, saving some money. (\$99-\$199; <https://www.keurig.com>)



## Playing footsies

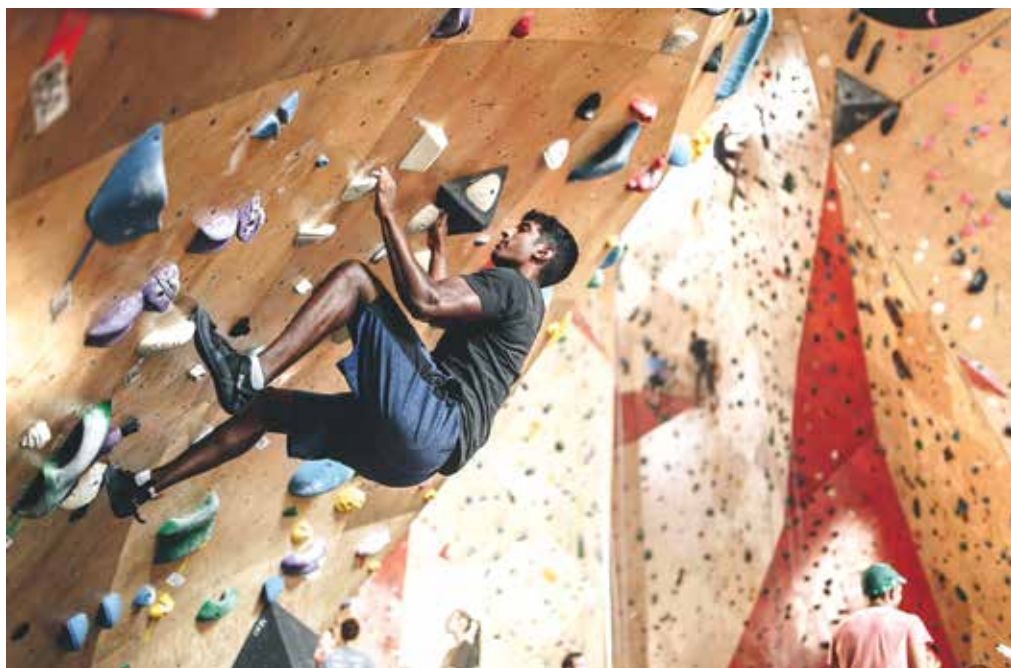
When the weather outside is frightful, your **Footsac** recipient will be toasty, thanks to this blanket that has an 18-inch pocket in which they can tuck their feet. And you can choose varieties such as owl phur, mousse swirl phur and more. (Starting at \$112.50; <https://www.lovesac.com/search/accessories/throws-blankets-footsacs>)



## Comics relief

With the box-office receipts of superhero movies showing no signs of declining, it's likely you know someone who's into Superman, Wolverine, Wonder Woman, Black Panther or some other world-saving character. **Graham Crackers** (advertised as the number-one comic-book store in Illinois) has hundreds of selections to satisfy your inner (or outer) nerd. (Various prices; <https://www.grahamcrackers.com/>)



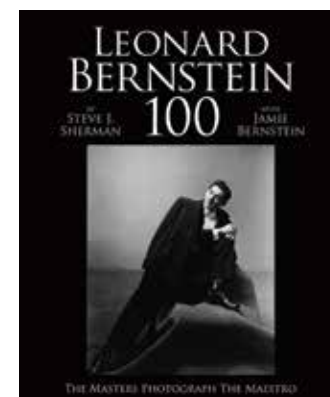


## Climb every mountain

Certain truths are unavoidable—including the fact that slews of people start the new year with fitness goals. (Whether they stick with them is another matter.) Chicago's **Brooklyn Boulders Chicago** offers a wide range of rock-climbing and fitness classes, including yoga and mat-based courses. It's an innovative way to tackle the, ahem, two pounds one might gain over the holidays. (Various prices; <https://brooklynboulders.com/chicago/>)

## Maestro, if you please

The coffee-table book **Leonard Bernstein 100: The Masters Photograph the Maestro** features the out cultural icon through the lenses of photographers such as Richard Avedon, Felicitas Timpe and Henri Cartier-Bresson. (\$40; out Dec. 11)



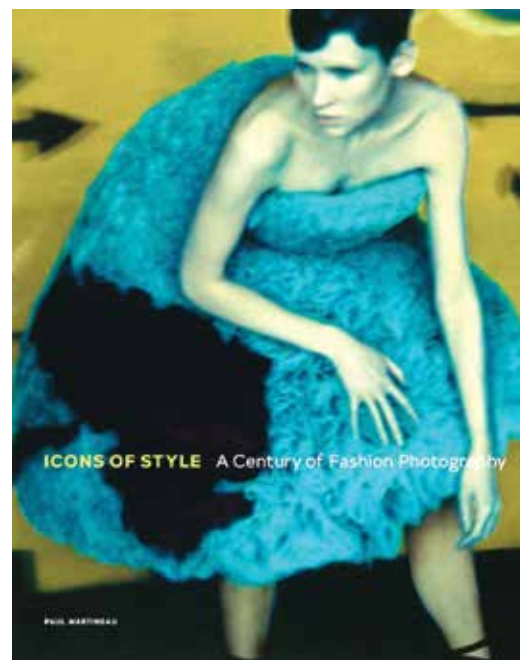
## How sweet it is

**Gigi's Cupcakes** knows how to make some delicious cupcakes (in sizes of signature, classic and mini)—but it also has cheesecake cupcakes, brownies and more. By the way, there is a Wilmette location if you want to shop locally. (various prices; <https://gigiscupcakesusa.com/>)



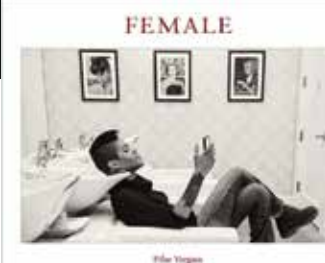
## Spirited away

You can't go wrong with serving **Mionetto's classic Prosecco DOC Treviso Brut** this holiday season. With notes of honey, , and acacia blossom, this wine can be served chilled on its own or used to create your own holiday cocktails—and it seems that so many people enjoy prosecco throughout the year, and there are also Mionetto's signature DOC Treviso Brut Prosecco in mini-bottles as cool stocking stuffers. (\$4-\$14; <https://usa.mionetto.com/>)



## 'Style' guides

**Icons of Style: A Century of Fashion Photography**, by Paul Martineau, is an informative, lavishly illustrated survey of one hundred years of fashion photography, including more than 300 photographs, including Man Ray and Herb Ritts. However, another book that warrants buying is **Female**, in which Chilean photo-journalist Pilar Vergara captures the uniqueness and diversity of transgender women and their vital contributions to the world from a human-rights perspective. (\$45-\$65; <https://shop.getty.edu>)



## ROCKABYE BABY! Who Runs the World



featuring lullaby renditions of

★ beyoncé ★ madonna ★ rihanna ★ sia ★ taylor swift ★  
★ janet jackson ★ missy elliot ★ katy perry ★ ...and more!

## Lullaby the way

The CD **Rockabye Baby! Who Runs the World** serves a dual purpose: It provides lullaby versions of songs by Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Missy Elliott and more, and it instills girl power at an early age. (\$16.98; <https://www.rockabyebabymusic.com/products/who-runs-the-world>)



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# A Cradle Song: Part Seven

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 Seven.**

## Chapter Eight: The Music Store

The store Erik lived in was on the Isle of Misfit Toys. On the day he was brought here, Erik managed to see that a multitude of stores lined the landward side of the road that spiraled from the glittering bridge and wound around and around the massive pile of rock up to the mighty castle that rose from the peak of the island.

The music store with Erik in it was about two-thirds of the way up the path. To enter, you walked through an oaken door that was carved on both sides with musical notes, scales, clefs, sharps, and flats.



Inside, the lights hung from the ceiling and were covered with lampshades that caused soft yellow emanations to bathe the scene in golden light. The wooden floors matched the oak of the door. Aisles branched off at sudden angles, as if triangles, circles, ovals, and odd-shaped polygons were the guiding light of the builder.

Sometimes, the aisles inside the store seemed to extend as far as the road from bridge to castle. As if the stores could expand forever so there was always space as the poor, unused, and unwanted toys accumulated.

The shelves in the music store stretched from floor to ceiling from the front of the store to the back. All were at least a foot and a half deep.

Innumerable drums cluttered the aisles so it was almost impossible to walk straight down an aisle, and sometimes you had to strain to reach over or around them to catch a glimpse of all the instruments

on all the shelves.

Some of the instruments in the music store, like many toys in other stores, came from the manufacturers broken, battered, or torn. Some had suffered from years of abuse in cruel or indifferent homes. Some had been rubbed shiny by tiny hands of boys and girls now all grown up. Some had been used to make mesmerizing and beguiling music by loving hands and lips. Many of the instruments were now just tired and wanted to rest.

The little harmonica knew they were all the same in their deepest hearts no matter their kind or current dysfunctions. Inside each instrument, no matter how well hidden by time or suppressed by misuse or exhausted by joy given, was the heart of music and the desire to bring harmony to the world.

The proprietor of the store was a spry old man, thin and tall, almost cadaverous, his cheeks sunken, his chin pointed. The scruff of his goatee around his chin and mouth was snow white as were the last few wisps of hair on his head. He had sharp brown eyes that knew things about the ways of the human heart, both good and bad. It lent him wisdom and an ocean of sadness as if his knowledge had bent his heart the way it had bent his bones over the many years. But you didn't see despair in his eyes, just the twinkle that came with the profound joy of living.

The proprietor's favorite day of the year was Christmas Eve. Because on the Isle of Misfit Toys the day before Christmas was different. All the other days, anyone could come and purchase a toy, but on this day, any poor, abandoned, or needy child could come to the Isle and choose a toy to take with them. A free toy to cherish for as long as they wished.

In the music store, the children most always took the shiny ones, even if their music was twisted, warped, and awful.

And still the bullies among the instruments brayed on in hopes of being chosen.

Some of them were from the lists of toys dangerous to children. These were in a special category and were meaner than all

the other toys. When those toys talked far into the night after their shop owners had left, they often boasted about how tough they were. That all the other toys were wimps, and then bragged about the children they'd hurt and maimed. They openly laughed at the toys that were on the ten most safe toys list.

The little harmonica rarely had anything to do with them. There weren't that many dangerous toys in the music store, but over the years when he'd encountered them, he'd been very afraid. He didn't know what the mean toys were capable of.

Erik had never been picked, barely ever been noticed. He had been huddled on his shelf so long that some days he had a hard time remembering how happy he'd been in the hands of the last little boy.

These days, he tried to comfort the frightened little car, make things better for the tiny little thing.

## Chapter Nine: Luke

A horde of fighters from the other side rushed out of the night. In seconds, the camp was overwhelmed.

Once captured, Luke lay on his face on the ground. He understood their language. Some of them bragged about killing and winning the night. A few talked about how clever they had been. One kept warning them that they'd better leave before a counterattack began.

They'd come to the medical compound and seized all the drugs and medicine they could find. Luke saw that they were beginning to leave. He tried to raise himself up on his elbows. The nearest attacker bashed Luke with the butt of a gun. Luke fell back. He saw the killer raise the rifle to hit him again.

Then the tent was filled with shouts. He heard them begin to fight about killing any prisoners or taking them as hostages.

One of the enemy reminded the others about the band of cloth on his arm that identified Luke as a medic. Another one of them shouted orders.

Luke was seized by the armpits and stood up. After they bound his hands and feet, they dragged him to the back of a truck and threw him in. They tossed his medic bag and the stolen drugs in with him.

Other wounded men from the enemy were tossed in with him almost as roughly as he had been.

As they drove through the night, he could hear the men around him moaning and calling out in pain. His own head ached from where he'd been struck. He touched the spot with his hand and it came back daubed with blood. He shook his head to try to clear it. He thought it likely that he had a concussion. He willed to keep himself awake.



Wherever his body touched the bed of the truck, he felt the blood from his companions in misery seeping into his clothes. If he was unbound, he'd have tried to help them. His wounded leg throbbed.

Through the night, they drove on rough and rutted roads. Each wild jostle caused the men to cry out. Luke could see that some around him slept. Or maybe they'd died. He dare not think about them or what might happen to him next.

Captured and frightened, what got Luke through the night was thinking about his wife and two children. He imagined their faces and promised himself and them a million times that he would return to them.

All night long, they drove without stopping. He could hear the rumble of other trucks. None of them turned their lights



on. Above him, he could see stars and a sickle moon.

Luke didn't remember falling asleep. He awoke with a jerk as dawn was breaking. From his prone position in the bed of the truck, he looked over the edge. On all four sides tall mountains loomed. They were in some distant valley.

When the trucks turned off their engines, Luke found the silence the only comforting thing. The bitter cold seemed to penetrate his very bones.

Luke worked for months, thinking every day would be his last. Since they were shorthanded, they made him use his medical skills on military and civilian alike. His wounds sometimes ached. His knee often stiffened in the cold. For a long time, every once in a while, he felt dizzy. But he healed better than many he treated. He was grateful for even being alive.

His conscience racked him with the notion that he was fixing these men up to go out and kill more. But he'd had enough training to know that healing was his vocation, not killing. Eventually, they came to trust him enough that they brought local people to him. Men, women, and children who had no other medical services.

After they learned he spoke their language, Luke was often given the task of translating.

It was always cold in a camp where he now helped all the wounded and ill.

The nights were the worst. Few lights were lit for fear of an attack. The same thin blankets served for prisoners, wounded, or warriors. The rations for prisoners were slim. Medicines and drugs appeared

in fits and starts. He used what he had on hand. Some of the locals taught him a few techniques of their own folk medicine. He was grateful when these procedures worked.

But every day, Luke thought of his wife and children. In a corner of his heart, he hoped against hope that he'd be rescued somehow and brought back to them. Through the cold nights and meager provisions, he struggled on.

As the bitter days wore on, he knew it was getting close to Christmas. On normal days, Luke tried to greet the world with kindness. He knew that you had a choice when you met people. With his family, he was always most patient. Although they were poor, Luke had always tried to make this holiday special for them.

He wanted to gather them together on their shabby old couch in their little apartment. As Christmas neared, he missed the preparations, the warmth, the closeness. He wished he could sit with them and watch the lights on their little tree.

Each day that passed seemed to be another eternity that made the dream more and more impossible. The days began to blur together in pain and agony. While somewhat better, his leg wound hadn't healed completely.

One day when Luke thought it must be a week before Christmas, the leader of the forces holding him entered the medical tent. He'd learned over time who the leader was.

Outside, the wind howled. The tent sides shuddered and flapped. Nearly horizontal snow rocketed by.



With the leader were his usual henchmen toting their dark and deadly weapons. This time, the leader also had a woman and a child with him. Luke saw that it was a little boy about Matthew's age. The leader held the boy in his arms. He brought the child to a cot and motioned Luke over.

The leader said, "My son is very sick. The locals cannot cure him. You must do so." He took his gun off his shoulder and pointed it at Luke. "Cure him or you die."

Even in the cold, Luke began to sweat. He said, "I will do my best."

"Better than your best."

"All that I can."

They stretched out the child on a cot. Luke examined him carefully. The child was very sick. His body was alarmingly warm.

Luke imagined many things. What if this

was his son? What if he couldn't cure him? Would they really kill him? He'd seen others dispatched on the whims of some of the guards. He suspected he'd only been spared because of his knowledge.

Luke quickly realized he was likely only a few bits short of the medicine that the boy desperately needed. He thought the boy had Indigenous Fever. A local disease the natives had never been able to combat or cure. If he told them what he needed, would they raid some village or compound and kill to get a cure? When they raided, did his captors care which side of the fight the attacked people were on? Would people die as a result of some decision of his?

**End of part seven. Part eight 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.



The design exhibit takes up one large event hall on the fourth floor of the Chicago Cultural Center.

Photos by Ariel Parrella-Aureli



## Loop historical exhibit spotlights Black designers

BY ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

Margaret T. Burroughs was an instrumental designer in the South Side Black design community who bridged global divides, design interests and created nurturing environments for artists and designers to thrive. She co-founded the DuSable Museum in 1961 and was largely a part of establishing the South Side Community Art Center in 1940, along with William McBride.

These figures are just some of the Black designers featured in the Chicago Cultural Center's new exhibit "African American Designers in Chicago: Art, Commerce and the Politics of Race."

It opened Oct. 27 and will remain until March 3, 2019. The exhibit is part of Art Design 2018, a collection of exhibits and events that celebrate Chicago's design and art community's past and present. This exhibit brings together art and design from more than 30 Black designers who started in the 1900s—a time when Chicago, and America at large, harbored bias toward Black professionals. The gallery focuses on influential designers creating an alternative narrative to the design history of the city at a time when white-controlled unions and craft guilds prohibited Blacks from entering design trades.

The expansive exhibit has rows of glass-covered tables with advertised posters, cartoons, books, magazines, dioramas, architectural signage, graphic designs, beauty advertisements and old

artifacts made by Black designers—many who contributed to Chicago's culture as a prominent place for Black designers in this country. They made it somewhere Black designers could expand and share their craft, according to the exhibit's brochure. "This exhibition celebrates the lives and works of African-American designers, who created a future for the 'Negro artisan' beyond what [civil-rights activist W.E.B.] Du Bois could envision," it said. That vision, said the brochure, was something Du Bois said in 1912: that there were not many skilled African-American laborers



## ART

in Chicago. "The Negro artisan is losing," Du Bois remarked.

The artistic boom that erupted from Black designers by the middle of the century was due to design strongholds such as the South Side Community Art Center, the Art Institute of Chicago, Ebony magazine and more. The exhibit features art from these institutions; Jet magazine and Johnson Publishing Company represented an age of modernity in the Black design community and further established Chicago as an empowering design environment.

Lake View residents Tim O'Hagen and Julie Osbourne visited the exhibit's opening reception Nov. 2 and found the exhibit to be a strong historical lesson on the importance of Chicago's



Posters from the late '30s and early '40s by unknown Black designers.

Photo by Ariel Parrella-Aureli

design community.

"It touches on the Chicago Expo, Sears, Ebony magazine—institutions that are really important for history and Chicago's place in the world," O'Hagen said.

For Osbourne, the exhibit showed a new perspective to history of her own lifetime.

"It is interesting because it brings a certain amount of history that I was not familiar with," Osbourne said. "I was alive but I was a kid; I didn't know about it."

The Great Depression's effect on Black designers was an event she found particularly interesting because it showed the difficulty they had in getting jobs after the industries shut down. While that may sound similar to others seeking employment after the Depression, racism toward Blacks and their fear of not being accepted into the mainstream birthed safe spaces for Black designers to still be creative.

Marjorie Stewart Joyner was one Black artist who used her talent to cater to Black consumers and bounce back from the Depression. Her work was one that struck Osbourne, and the exhibit gives Joyner a whole glass table that showcases her hair-care products to Black women and men with catchy photo of models and loud text. According to the brochure, Joyner was the first Black woman to graduate from Chicago's A.B. Beauty School in 1916, and her hair products influenced the beauty culture industry.

O'Hagen said the exhibit reminded him of all the talent in Chicago and its influence past and present.

"We were really here and are a manufacturing and design center," he said. "It goes back many decades and African-Americans were part of it and not recognized for their talents."

The gallery has work from Black SAIC graduates who went on to create different mediums of art that impacted the Chicago design community, such as McBride, Charles Dawson and William Knight Farrow. Other notable designers include Thomas Miller, a designer at Morton Goldsholl Associates who designed the famous Motorola logo and TV commercials for 7Up and Hamburger Helper. Robert S. Pious, who created posters for the American Negro Exposition in Chicago in 1940, has posters in the show and Emmett McBain, an assistant art director at Playboy, designed record covers and posters of poems and quotes from prominent Black activists. Another Black designer who tied music and art together was Sylvia Abernathy, who designed covers for Denmark Records and the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

Curated by Daniel Schulman, Chris Dingwall and Tim Samuelson, the exhibit has been 10 years in the making, acknowledged the curators in the brochure. They also acknowledged the timing of the exhibit; 10 years ago, design scholars and the public did not give much thought or awareness to Black designers.

"Only recently had scholars of African-American culture attended to the commercial arts as a site where Black people intervened in the shaping of history—their own and the nation's—in what is now dynamic field of inquiry," the curators wrote.

The exhibit is on the fourth floor of the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St. For more information, see [https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp\\_info/designers.html](https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/designers.html).





## BILLY Masters

"Me in the clouds searching for @ZacEfron's nudes."—Gus Kenworthy's caption for an Instagram shot looking at the sky. Silly boy, you won't find nudes of Zac Efron up there. You'll find them on BillyMasters.com.

Gossip doesn't take a holiday—even on Thanksgiving. While your beloved Billy was nibbling on assorted legs and thighs, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade featured two women kissing. And? I mean, it's 2018 ... there must have been more to it than just that. Nope, apparently that was it. People online were going berserk after a same-sex smooch between two female cast members from the Broadway musical *The Prom*, a show about a group of actors saving a high school prom after the PTA threatens to cancel the event if a lesbian couple attends (I haven't seen it yet, but I hear it's great.) When the ladies locked lips on live TV, life imitated art and a few vocal people expressed their outrage. One tweet tickled me: "Millions of small children just watched two girls kiss and had their innocence broken this morning.." Two things: 1) I'd be shocked if the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade had 1 million total viewers, let alone millions of children, and b) Are kids really shocked by two women kissing?

In a story that will put the tingle back in your loins, my pal **John Wesley Shipp** has wonched his considerable assets back into tights to once again play *The Flash*. "Billy," I can almost hear you crying, "doesn't he play the father of *The Flash*?" Oh, how soon they forget. Back when James Van Der Beek barely had his first pubes, Shipp was the eponymous Flash for CBS. Yes, now he plays the father. But in the '90s, our super-heroes were much hunkier. For the fifth annual "Arrowverse" crossover, "Elseworld," will feature characters from *The Flash*, *Arrow* and *Supergirl* in a CW spectacular. The event takes place over three nights, Dec. 9-11, introduces *Batwoman* and *Lois Lane*, and features Shipp in tights for the first time since 1990. Well, there was that night I spent with him in Toledo back in 2011—but that's another story.

Someone else used to tight clothing is **Jeff Rohrer**, who was a Dallas Cowboy during 1982-89. The former linebacker not only came out as gay, but married his partner of two years, Joshua Ross (facialist on *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*). Jeff is the first member of the NFL to be in a "known same-sex marriage." He told *The New York Times*, "If I had told the Dallas Cowboys in the 1980s that I was gay, I would have been cut immediately. It was a different world back then; people didn't want to hear that."

You'll recall that 102-year-old **Olivia de Havilland** is fuming at **Ryan Murphy** and FX Networks over how she was portrayed in *Feud*. Despite lower courts ruling with the network, Livvy wants to take the case to the Supreme Court. FX is trying to block her, saying that her case is unworthy of the highest court in the land. Her lawyers think otherwise, saying, "Like the Colorado baker whose First Amendment rights allowed him to re-



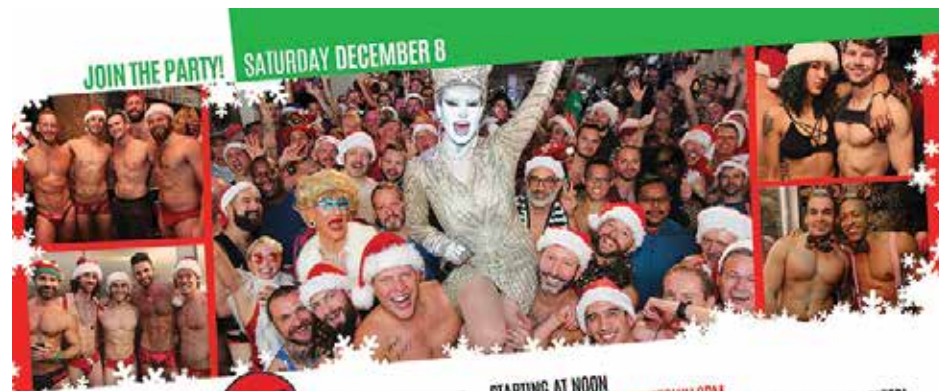
Zac Efron (above) was the subject of a naughty Gus Kenworthy tweet.

Photo by Patrick Lewis/Starpix

fuse to design a cake that expressed a message he did not believe, Miss de Havilland has a right to prevent false words being put into her mouth in a docudrama, just as with any other form of publications." I hate anyone comparing Olivia to a homophobic baker, but if it gets her in front of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I'll allow it.

Remember **Danny Roberts** from *The Real World: New Orleans*? Way back in 2000, he was dating someone in the military whose face was blurred—back then you could be drummed out of the service for being gay. We hadn't heard much about Danny in recent years—except for an erect nude photo of dubious veracity which you can still find on our website. Roberts recently slipped back into the spotlight via an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, where he revealed three things: 1) He's living in NYC, 2) he's adopted a 2-year-old girl, and 3) he's HIV-positive. Apparently he found out his HIV status in 2011 after passing out and waking up in a pool of blood. While he doesn't go into detail about the passing out or pool of blood, he said this about his status: "The last thing I ever want is pity. I just want people to know and be aware. I knew so little myself so I get it."

Brace yourselves. It's time for "*Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions*." Each week between now and Christmas, I'm going to share items that I think would make great gifts for people on your list—both naughty and nice. To kick things off, we turn to **Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS**. Each year, this organization releases a special Broadway Legends ornament. In the past, these have all been legendary ladies. This year, BC/EFA kinda breaks with tradition by featuring **Harvey Fierstein**. Of course, he's in his "Hairspray." regalia, so he still fits in. Not only is it gorgeous, but it helps raise money for this great charity. You can pick up one (or a dozen) at **BroadwayCares**.



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org.

Perhaps you'd prefer something you can sink your teeth into. Then, I'd recommend the **Golden Girls Breakfast Cereal**. Is there anyone reading this column doesn't have a few people who you'd like to thank for being a friend? And what better way to thank them than to sit down to breakfast with Rose, Blanche, Sophia and Dorothy? The cereal is a multigrain flavor, blue-hued (like Sophia's hair), and available at Target and Target.com.

Speaking of things in a bowl, we hear that **Chaka Khan** will be the grand marshal for the Rose Bowl Parade. She's even going to be on the float! Of course, I suspect it'll be hard to tell where the dress ends and the float begins.

When everything's coming up Chaka, it's time to end another column. Before we hit New Year's, we've got scads of celebrating to do at **BillyMasters.com**—the site that can stuff more than just your stocking. Send your questions to **Billy@BillyMasters.com** and I promise to get back to you before de Havilland says, "Let them eat cake!" Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.





# the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in  
WINDY CITY TIMES

## SAVOR

### Talking with Will Song of bopNgrill

BY ANDREW DAVIS

In Chicago's restaurant scene, it can be tough to survive with just one establishment.

However, Will Song has been pretty successful, with two locations of the fast-casual Korean restaurant bopNgrill (<https://www.bopngrill.com/>)—one in Rogers Park and the other in Lake View. (Now, he's also part-owner of the Evanston chicken restaurant 10Q, along with Chicago clothing store Belmont Army owner David Yoo, according to The Daily Northwestern.)

Song recently talked with Windy City Times about various aspects of bopNgrill—including a legal tussle that took place a few years ago.

**Windy City Times:** I can imagine that you're pretty busy, with all these restaurants.

Will Song: Yes—I am very fortunate.

**WCT:** Tell me about how bopNgrill came to be. I understand you sank your life savings into it.

WS: [Laughs] Yeah. I was working in different kitchens in Chicago; my last gig was working at Sunda. I was there for about a year and a half as a sous chef, and I decided to try something on my own.

I looked into opening a restaurant, but realized it's very expensive. I guess I was kind of naive thinking that I'd get into this without any real capital. I thought that dream would die pretty soon because I didn't have any money.

One day I was in Evanston visiting a friend at Northwestern [University]. I took Church Street back home and I saw a sign that had "Mr. Burger" on it, and stopped in because I was hungry. Long story short, after ordering—and it took about 30 minutes to get my food even though I was the only one in there—the owner found out what I did for a living, and asked if I wanted to buy the restaurant. When I got home, I started thinking, "Maybe I should do this, because I could probably get it cheap." Also, it was across the street from Evanston [Township] High School, which has two

or three thousand students there. So I bought the business for about \$10,000 and opened two weeks later.

So I thought I better brush up my resume because there was no business at this restaurant—but, for whatever reason, it got better. [The Evanston location of bopNgrill closed in 2012.]

**WCT:** I saw a picture of you with chef Guy Fieri. What's the story behind that?

WS: So, that was when the executive producer [of the TV show *Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives*] called our [Rogers Park] location, saying they'd be in Chicago filming. When I first got the call, I thought, "This is the worst prank ever. Why would you do this to me?" [Interviewer laughs.] But the person said, "No—we're really coming, and we'd like to feature you." Three months later, it aired. We were very lucky; that pretty much put us on the map.

**WCT:** The restaurant has also been featured in *Men's Journal*. Does that mean the food is good for you? [Laughs]

WS: [Laughs] I guess so! That was a little bit of a shock when they said, "We like to feature this burger in *Men's Journal*."

**WCT:** How would you describe the cuisine?

WS: It's just things I grew up eating all the time. At home, I was eating rice and meat. At school, I was eating burgers, hot dogs, pizza and fries. That was kind of how the menu turned out, initially.

**WCT:** Does the menu change?

WS: Yeah—we try to put specials here and there. But I think one of the biggest challenges I've faced in the last few years is that when you have more than one location, it's hard to maintain the quality control. The workforce you hire is sometimes entry-level, so you have to make sure you keep up the quality as you're growing.

**WCT:** For people who have not tried Korean food, how do you recommend navigating the menu?

WS: Even though Korean food is pretty popular now in the States, it's still not common for people to try kimchi or the other basic staples. So one thing I wanted to push was making some of the traditional ingredients and dishes mainstream, like tofu or bi bim bop, which is like Korea's answer to the burrito bowl. If you like it, great—maybe you'll go to a traditional Korean restaurant and try a full onslaught of ingredients.

**WCT:** And there was an umami burger that bopNgrill had—but then a legal problem

Turn to page 37



Left: bopNgrill's Will Song (right) with Guy Fieri. Right: bopNgrill's kimchi burger. Photos from Song

## Sidetrack's OUTspoken! Series: December's featured storytellers



Emma Alamo



Ada Cheng



Shawn Cobb



Xander Krohn



Roger McCaffrey-Boss



Raphael Michael Sangel

The December edition of *OUTspoken!* LGBTQ storyteller series takes place Tuesday, December 4, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St. Doors open at 6 pm, stories begin at 7.

See [www.outspokenchicago.com](http://www.outspokenchicago.com) for more info.

—**Emma Alamo** grew up in Florida. She escaped to Chicago by way of Baltimore and has since established herself as a writer, storyteller, and leatherworker. Her stories have been featured on the *Risk!* and *Lenny Says* podcasts, and her leather harnesses have been featured on the bodies of babes across the world.

—**Ada Cheng** is a professor-turned storyteller and performing artist. She debuted her first solo show, *Not Quite: Asian American by Law, Asian Woman by Desire*, in January 2017. Ada is the producer and the host of the storytelling/podcasting show, *Am I Man Enough: A Storytelling/Podcasting Show*, where people tell stories to critically examine the culture of toxic masculinity and the construction of masculinity and manhood.

—**Shawn Cobb** has worn many hats over the years, working jobs ranging from forklift operator to cosmetologist and pretty much everything in between. He finally settled in at the railroad where he has worked as a mechanic for over 14 years. Also, a published Sci-Fi author, Shawn has always been passionate about writing and illustration; however it was through *Toastmasters* that he found his voice as a storyteller.

—**Xander Krohn** is excited. He is also a storyteller, writer, and graduate student originally from Texas.

—**Roger McCaffrey-Boss** has worked in the Chicago LGBTQ Community for more than 40 years, serving the legal needs of individuals, same-sex couples, and LGBT organizations. Over the past 30 years, he has published weekly legal advice columns that help members of the LGBTQ Community to know what their legal rights are and how to defend them.

—**Raphael Michael Sangel** was born and raised in the Philippines and currently works as a nurse in Florida. Previously a competitive member of his university's choral group, he grew up a fan of Gene Kelly movies and imagined himself dancing to the music in the movies himself.

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## DISH from page 36

surfaced. Isn't "umami" an everyday word? I could see a problem, maybe, if you had a **Beyonce Burger**.

WS: [Laughs] Of course—and "umami" is an everyday word. So that lawsuit was a few years back. We're a little dinky restaurant in Chicago, and this larger spot knocked on our door, saying, "You're infringing on our trademark." I asked my attorney and he said, "Don't worry about it."

So they sued—and I had to hire an attorney and deal with [legal processes]. When you're a company that large, you can do whatever you want to a little dinky place.

You can't trademark "umami," but you can trademark "umami" and "burger" together. But I wasn't calling my [sandwich] "Umami Burger." My attorney said, "You have a great case, so how much money do you have to litigate this case because they have deep pockets. ... I'd advise you to settle. Yeah, you'd probably win—but at what cost?"

[Settling] was the hardest thing. We had to settle and move forward. I didn't know I'd have to deal with lawsuits, taxes, payroll, compliance and other things; I just wanted to cook—but that's just one component. There were so many issues I didn't understand at first. Things can get pretty vicious.

**WCT: But if you want to name a burger after us, feel free.**

WS: [Laughs] Let's do it—The Windy City Times Burger!

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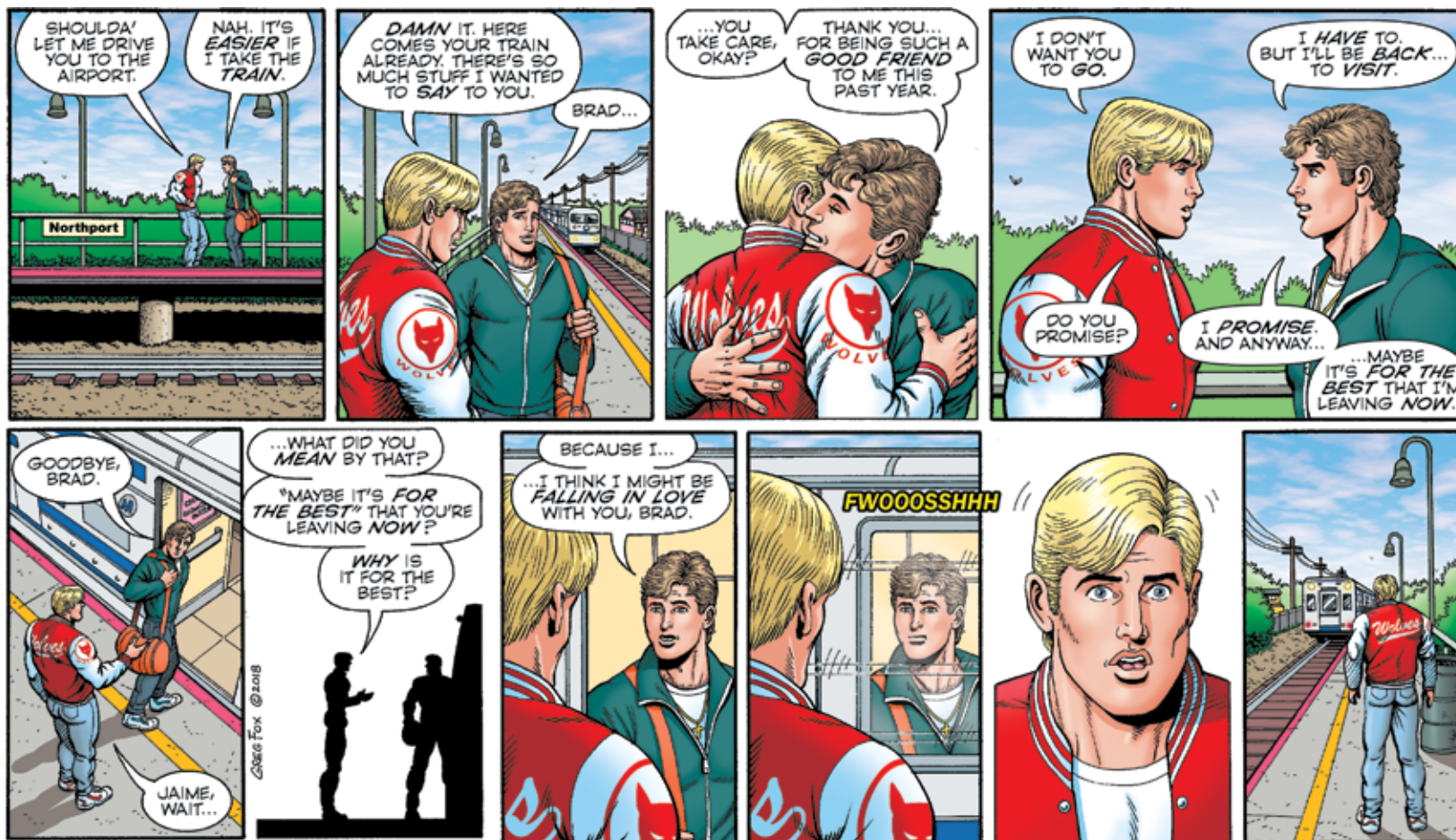
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# KYLE'S BED & BREAKFAST

by Greg Fox





# WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**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](http://www.facebook.com/events/2571478436203560/?active_tab=about)

**World AIDS Day: Past, Present and Future** Some of Chicago's founding members in the fight against AIDS speak about what it was like in the beginning, talk about how things have changed and what the future holds. Food and drink. 4:00pm - 6:00pm Rush Hospital, Main Lounge Room 500, 1653 W. Congress Parkway <http://www.facebook.com/events/315005612660232/>

**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



## THE JANE EVENT Friday, Nov. 30

Actress Jane Lynch (above) will perform "A Swingin' Little Christmas" with Kate Flannery.  
Photo by Jake Bailey

Joint, 2105 S. State St. <http://www.thebuttcraackerburlesque.com>

**Lakeview East Tree Lighting Ceremony** Celebrate the holiday season with Lakeview East. Free to the public. 6:00pm - 8:00pm 3460 N. Broadway <http://lakevieweast.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>

**Melissa DuPrey, SEXomedy 2.0: The Second Coming** Response to current debates on female sexuality, body positivity and identity politics, delving into hook-up culture dominated by male power, porn shaped by heteronormativity and more. 7:30pm Chicago Dramatists 1105 W. Chicago Ave. Chicago <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/COMEDY-On-her-own-terms-Melissa-DuPreys-work-in-the-age-of-reckoning/64807.html> Tickets: <http://sexomedy2.brownpapertickets.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=895>

7853&trid=5c1c5a5c-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 Hulabaloo with Chicago Gay Men's Chorus About Face Theatre, Allegrezza, 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. Continues through Dec. 2. 8:00pm Harris Theater for Music and Dance 205 E Randolph Dr Chicago <http://cgmc.org/holiday>

**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/>

**Saturday, Dec. 1**

**World AIDS Day Service** World AIDS Day Service. Honoring and remember-

ing those who have passed, supporting those living with HIV including family and friends. Current state of HIV/AIDS in the community. All are welcome. 5:00pm - 7:00pm A Church for Me, 7366 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL <http://www.achurch4me.org>

**Vida/Sida 30th Anniversary Gala & World AIDS Day Commemoration** Red Carpet & Cocktails. 7-9pm: Dinner & Program. 9-12am: Dancing & Cocktails. Featuring the music of La Orquesta Leal. \$40 advance, \$50 at door. 6:00pm - 12:00am Gallery 3949 3949 W Armitage Avenue Chicago <http://www.puertoricanchicago.org/new-events/2018/12/1/vida-sida-30th-anniversary-gala>

**Sunday, Dec. 2**

**She100 Brunch Presentation Meeting & Social** Collectively increase the power of queer women in the LGBTQ community by combining our resources to fund and support organizations that empower our community. Time:TBA TBD <http://www.she100.org>

**Tuesday, Dec. 4**

**OUTspoken monthly storytelling evening** OUTspoken occurs on the first Tuesday of every month, new storytellers, stories from the perspective of LGBTQ persons Doors 6pm 7:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago

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