


WINDY CITY TIMES

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Tom Bachtell (center) and his illustrations of Donald Trump (left) and Ruth Bader Ginsberg.
Photos from Bachtell


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LALA THOMAS
Trans woman subject of
In the Life.
Photo from Thomas

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'SANTA,' BABY
Sidetrack hosts annual
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Joseph Stevens Photography



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DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Illustrator Tom Bachtell talks about art, late partner

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Brie Larson in Captain Marvel.
Photo by Marvel Studios

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'WRONG' WAY

WCT reviews *The Play That Goes Wrong*.
Photo by Jeremy Daniel

ACT TWO



Gay actor/artist/author Thom Bierdz discusses his most recent book: *Young, Gay and Restless*.
Photo courtesy of Harlan Boll

MIDLIFE CRISIS?

Phyllis Cohen writes about coming out to your kids in midlife.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Chloe Grace Moretz, Elton John and Lena Waithe.

plus
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Artist Tom Bachtell on exhibit and late partner Andrew Patner

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Self-taught artist Tom Bachtell's work is currently featured in a exhibit, "Tom Bachtell in AdventureLand," at AdventureLand Gallery, 1513 N. Western Ave. The free exhibit opened Dec. 7 with an evening reception and will run through Saturday, Dec. 29.

"The show consists of 20 years of my caricature work," said Bachtell. "There are 30 portraits that cover politics, art, music, dance, writing, pop and history. Mostly black and white, with some color

work—Abraham Lincoln to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Jackie Kennedy to Donald Trump, Pablo Picasso to Lou Reed and Mark Zuckerberg. Most of the work was done for the New Yorker. I have created limited edition prints of the images."

This is the culmination of a lifelong career as an artist that began as a child sitting at the kitchen table drawing with his siblings after trips to museums.

"I never had much interest in art classes at school, but I loved drawing," said Bachtell. "My childhood kitchen table is still a place I



Tom Bachtell illustration of Mavis Staples.
Illustration courtesy of Bachtell



Tom Bachtell.

Photo by Jennifer Greenberg

constantly return to in my mind. I was also obsessed with cartoons in the New Yorker, and was swept away by the atmosphere they conjured and evoked. After I graduated from college, I realized what an essential part of my life drawing was, and I instinctively knew I could make a career of it. That is when the hard work started. I have been learning my craft and art ever since."

Bachtell explained that he double-majored in music and English as an undergrad at Cleveland's Case Western Reserve University. He said a liberal-arts education was valued more when he was going to school so he was able to pursue it, whereas today college costs make it harder for people to do so. Bachtell said his broad education has contributed to his success as a cartoonist.

"I was academically engaged, and loved math, science, music and writing," said Bachtell. "I studied piano, played tennis and danced. I was a beautiful little nerd."

Bachtell's first illustration job was for the Chicago Tribune and since then his work has been featured in numerous publications, most notably the New Yorker's Talk of the Town and other sections of the magazine.

When asked to describe his New Yorker work, Bachtell said, "They are part of a classic tradition of lively, witty line drawings that goes all the way back to cave paintings. They are meant to enter-

tain, inform and work with text—incorporating caricature and expressing ideas. I work mostly in brush and ink and do them by hand. They suggest earlier styles of cartooning and illustration; artists such as Peter Arno, James Thurber, Saul Steinberg and Japanese ink drawings. I work under tight deadlines, and usually have just a day or two to complete a drawing."

Of the numerous other publications where Bachtell's work has been featured, he said the best experiences have been with Entertainment Weekly, GQ, Town & Country, L'Uomo Vogue, the Chicago Tribune and the Boston Globe.

Bachtell's illustrations can also be found in the Robert Trachtenberg book *When I Knew*.

"Robert and I also recently completed a new Mahjong set, the Trach/Bach, for the Crisloid board game company," said Bachtell.

Bachtell recently drew his late partner Andrew Patner's portrait for the frontispiece of a new book that will be released next spring, *A Portrait in Four Movements: The Chicago Symphony under Barenboim, Boulez, Haitink and Muti*. (Patner passed away in 2015.)

The book features interviews Patner did with Chicago Symphony Orchestra's conductors/music directors—Barenboim, Boulez, Haitink and Muti.

"I drew Andrew as I pictured him interviewing someone—engaged, curious, chasing ideas, thinking critically and always on the cusp of a brilliant and funny story," said Bachtell.

Bachtell explained that he met Patner in an unlikely setting, at a party in the '80s where everyone was wearing black.

"Except for Andrew, who was in a colorful bow-tie," said Bachtell. "He had barely opened his mouth when I fell in love with him. I had a sense of him in an instant. Andrew and I were together for 25 lively years and our interests were very much in sync, so it is hard to pinpoint any particular moment that was the most meaningful or memorable. We both loved observing, laughing and thinking about people and the world."

"Andrew was always traveling, whether he was rummaging around China or stopping into J.J. Peppers to pick up newspapers. I do not know that I ever mastered his ability to act like he owned the joint, but he did teach me that art and conversation can be passports to absolutely anywhere. Thanks to Andrew, I met people from all over the world and through all walks of life."

In recognition of his impact on the community Bachtell was inducted into Chicago's LGBT Hall of Fame in 2016—an event he called a "great honor."

"The Chicago LGBTQ community is very good about celebrating its own, in all our variety," said Bachtell. "There is a lot of support here. I also love the unique civic spirit of the Center on Halsted which, along with the Hall of Fame, is very Chicago and American. I am grateful to be a part of the community."

Outside of working on his illustrations, Bachtell can be found swing dancing and playing chamber music. When asked what advice he would give others, Bachtell said, "Eat right but also treat yourself to pie occasionally. Do not forget to exercise and vote."

For more information about the exhibit, visit <https://adventurelandgallery.info/>. See <https://tombachtell.com/home.html>.

CTA agrees to pay for transgender man's surgery

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) will pay for the surgery needed by a male transgender employee after the city agency and its insurance provider initially refused, saying such procedures were only covered for patients with cancer.

Russia Brown has worked as a bus operator for CTA since 2016, the same year he began his transition process. He sought approval for insurance to cover a bilateral mastectomy.

"I assumed that the surgery would be covered since CTA is such a large [agency]," he said. "But about three or four months before my surgery date, I received an email from my surgeon's assistant, saying that the insurance rejected the surgery because they only cover bilateral mastectomies if you have cancer."

Brown spoke with a counselor with Howard Brown Health "to see what other options were out there," he recalled. "We discussed paying out of pocket or seeking my own insurance, but I didn't want to do either of those. Those are much, more more costly."

He was told, in fact, that the surgery would cost \$30,000 were he to pay out of pocket. That counselor later called Brown back with positive news, however.

"He said that he spoke with my situation with



Russia Brown.

Photo courtesy of ACLU of Illinois

CTA, and he just so happened to be an attorney," Brown recalled. "He said to give CTA a call, that they might be able to help me. So I did, and they sent CTA a letter on my behalf. To my surprise, CTA agreed immediately. There was no pushback

or anything. They just said, 'Okay, we're going to start covering this as of November 1, 2018.'

The surgery was supposed to take place this past October, but, owing to the insurance complication, it has been delayed until March 2019.

"From the time that the letter was sent, CTA's response was very fast," Brown said. "They said that they pride themselves on being an organization that's diverse and providing their employees with the best care."

"Federal and state law requires insurance policies to pay for necessary medical coverage, including treatment for employees who are transgender," said Carolyn Wald, staff attorney at ACLU of Illinois, which assisted Brown. "We congratulate CTA for changing their policy and making the CTA a better work place for all of its employees."

Gerber/Hart exhibit to honor AIDS stamps

In commemoration of the release of the U.S. stamp that honored the Red Ribbon for AIDS Awareness, Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, 6500 N. Clark St., will host an exhibit that will honor awareness stamps from around the world.

The exhibit will open Thursday, Dec. 13, and run through February 2019. These stamps are part of Gerber/Hart's Norman Sandfield Collection. The opening presentation will take place at 6:30 p.m.

This December marks the 25th anniversary of the 1993 Red Ribbon for AIDS Awareness U.S. postage stamp.

See GerberHart.org.

Gay man sworn in as new commissioner

Kevin Morrison was among those sworn in as Cook County commissioners in the Cook County Board Room on Dec. 3.

Morrison is the first openly LGBTQ and youngest Cook County commissioner. He also made history by flipping a Republican District blue for the first time after defeating the chair of the Illinois Republican Party, incumbent Cook County Commissioner Tim Schneider.



Kevin Morrison.

Photo by Serhii Chucky

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GET TO THE CENTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Thrift shop exhibits AIDS artwork by homeless youth

BY ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

December usually means holiday cheer, hot cocoa and family gatherings. For Monarch Thrift Shop in Avondale, at 2866 N. Milwaukee Ave., it also means honoring World AIDS day—for the entire month.

The thrift shop's latest addition to its display windows has one holiday angel made out of red cloth for a dress, a pearl necklace, Christmas lights and tree branches—all used items from the store. These often ignored or discarded materials can create a piece of art that people will stop to look at and react on, according to Mireya Fouche, merchandise manager at Monarch, which is known for its efforts in restorative justice, helping disadvantaged communities and reducing recidivism.

That is what the angel represents—the beauty within the broken or tarnished parts of someone or an issue—according to Fouche.

“That speaks volume for World AIDS day,” Fouche said.

The angel is part of a partnership art exhibit called “In True Form,” which shares poems, draw-

ings and two angels made from homeless youth who are HIV-positive. Its aim is to show the community and youth that art can be healing and can spread awareness to people who may still see the stigma of the illness. Funded by the World AIDS Foundation, the art was created by 19 youth ages 17 to 22 from the Covenant House of Chicago, with help from Fouche's other work as founder of One Heart One Soul, a traveling art program that serves homeless youth.

Fouche said she wants people to see that it is not a death sentence to live with HIV/AIDS, and it does not mean unhappiness. Creating a space for conversation and understanding of the topic is a central part of the exhibition—one that Fouche said should be much more exposed. It includes harsh statistics about HIV/AIDS that have been shocking to some but are needed to show the gravity of the issue, she said, adding they prove discourse around AIDS needs to continue.

“There is still a lot of stigma connected with it so with that it is hard for people to want to get tested to find out if they are HIV positive,” Fouche said. “So, if we can do what we can to alleviate that portion and actually have these



Monarch's artwork.

Photo by Ariel Parrella-Aureli

conversations, we can make it a trending topic to get tested and understand the status.”

“In True Form” is on display at the thrift shop and the Corner Project, an art gallery space a block from the store, at 2912 N. Milwaukee Ave. Artist Lynn Basa, of Corner, offered Fouche more space to show the artwork because she was moved by the mission of the exhibit, Fouche said.

“The artwork the youth created is out of the conversation we had surrounding World AIDS day and those are hung up at the Corner,” Fouche said.

Although the exhibit is already up, Fouche said the youth who created it have not yet seen its finished product. To her, the real “unveiling” of the exhibit will be when they come to the store and see their work on display.

“It's one thing to create it and it's another to know people are going to see it,” Fouche said of the artists. “It takes a lot of courage and vulnerability with creating art but the youth are com-

pletely geeked about it.”

Some of the poems on display tell emotional journeys of accepting the illness, moving past it and starting fresh, along with how it has affected daily life and what the youth have learned from their struggles. Sharing their broken pieces and turning them into beautiful art is the grand metaphor of the exhibit, Fouche said. It is an uplifting message to a negative perception and a goal to bring into the new year.

“If we can make these hard topics beautiful, I feel like more people will be involved, engaged and aware,” she said. “The partnership with Monarch, One Heart One Soul and the Corner Project is like seeds being planted for greater things to come in 2019.”

The exhibit runs through Monday, Dec. 31; visit <https://logansquarist.com/calendar/in-its-true-form-art-installation-for-world-aids-day/>.

Report shows most budget-friendly LGBTQ campuses

Student Loan Hero commissioned a report that spotlights the most budget-friendly LGBTQ college campuses in the nation.

This report features schools that offer LGBTQ-identifying students a safe and supportive learning environment, without breaking the bank.

Eastern Illinois University is listed as one

of top five affordable schools for out-of-state students. Others on the list include the University of Minnesota-Morris, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and Princeton University. For in-state students, the top five places are the University of Washington (Seattle campus), the University of Maine at Machias, Purdue University, California State University, Northridge and the University of Minnesota-Morris.

The full list is at <https://studentloanhero.com/featured/most-affordable-lgbtq-friendly-colleges-universities/>.



Angel at Monarch Thrift Shop.

Photo by Ariel Parrella-Aureli

IN THE LIFE

Lala Thomas

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Lala Thomas' life has been shaped by working hard, fighting for what she wants and speaking her mind on a myriad of issues. All that has translated into her personal and soon-to-be business brands—Talented Lala.

"Talented Lala is also to let people know that I am multi-talented and can do whatever I put my mind to," said Thomas. "This includes acting, dancing, writing, directing, radio hosting and being an entrepreneur."

One of the ways Thomas is doing this is through her pinback button business called Talented Lala Buttons. Thomas has created over 120 buttons depicting LGBTQ and women's empowerment messages that she calls "funny, shit talking and motivational."

"I even have my own collection called Talented Lala Merch," said Thomas. "This includes a hat, keychain, button and a shirt. Talented Lala Buttons has been doing so well with sales and people even bought my buttons from other states and countries which I did not expect."

Thomas is selling these buttons to raise funds for a performing arts center she wants to open in Chicago—Talented Lala Performing Arts Center. Her desire to create this space is rooted in the fact that she was not always welcomed into other people's performing arts spaces. Thomas wants everyone to have access so they can "reach for the stars."

"My center will be a big change for Chicago artists," said Thomas.

Another way Thomas has expanded her brand is through her internet radio show that she started a month ago—Talented Lala Radio. Thomas has interviewed local artists Noiramad and FurGuson



Lala Thomas.

Photos courtesy of Thomas

and has a segment where she talks about trans issues, equality, the state of the world and changes in music over the years as well as what has happened in her life that week.

Recently, Thomas wrote a screenplay called "Life Problems" centering on six young adults with various life struggles.

"Some characters try to hide these struggles while the others are reaching their breaking point," said Thomas. "I wrote it because the situations they are facing you see in real life including teen pregnancy, abortion, navigating life as an LGBTQ+ person, homelessness, drug and alcohol use, raising kids as a single parent, bullying, suicide and love."

Thomas is currently awaiting financial backing to produce the play and said everyone should "be on the lookout for it."



Talented Lala buttons.

Stats

- Age: 22
- Preferred pronoun(s): she/her
- Sexual orientation/gender identity: Trans woman
- Profession/day job: Program Support Specialist and High School volleyball coach
- Favorite TV shows: Chicago P.D., Quantico, Criminal Minds and SWAT
- Favorite movies: Hunger Games 1 & 2, Avengers, Halloween (2018), The Parent Trap (1998) and The Other Women.

—Favorite musical artist: "Nicki Minaj is my idol and always will be. She taught me so much because of her boss personality. She made me realize I should not be afraid to get called a bitch. Because of her, I know my worth."

—Favorite thing to do: Play volleyball

—Personal mantra: "People are so scared of a woman's success and especially a trans woman's success."

To make a donation to Thomas' arts center, visit <https://ca.gofundme.com/TalentedLalaPerformingArtsCenter>.

NRA settles with 'The Bean' artist

The National Rifle Association (NRA) has agreed to remove an image of the Millennium Park sculpture "The Bean" from a 2017 video, The Chicago Tribune reported.

Titled "The Violence of Lies," the video—with NRA spokeswoman and conservative commentator Dana Loesch—uses a picture of the sculpture as Loesch speaks about former President Barack Obama.

British sculptor Anish Kapoor, who created "The Bean," had filed a copyright-infringement lawsuit against the NRA. "We are pleased to declare victory over the NRA. They have now complied with our demand to remove the unauthorized image of my sculpture Cloud Gate from their abhorrent video 'The Violence of Lies,' which seeks to promote fear, hostility and division in American society," Kapoor said in a statement.

The Tribune article is at <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-anish-kapoor-nra-the-bean-ad-20181206-story.html>.

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Trans author talks 'gender outlaws,' prison breaks in novel

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

The New York Times called Jordy Rosenberg's debut novel, *Confessions of the Fox*, "[a] mind-bending romp through a gender-fluid, 18th-century London ... a joyous mash-up of literary genres shot through with queer theory and awash in sex, crime, and revolution."

If the book sounds unusual, it is.

Confessions is a work of speculative historical fiction about a real-life thief named Jack Sheppard, notorious for prison breaks, who may or may not have been genderqueer. Author Rosenberg is a transgender professor at University of Massachusetts who teaches and researches 18th century history and queer/trans theory. "I was interested in exploring a retelling of his life, which had to do with this idea of him as a gender outlaw," Rosenberg said via phone.

The novel is a narrative of Sheppard's adventures running parallel with that of a transgender scholar who is researching the famous thief. "The scholar finds a manuscript and thinks it might be the only official memoir of Sheppard," Rosenberg said. "He begins to footnote it throughout, because most of it is told in underworld slang. So he starts footnoting to translate some of these terms, and these footnotes begin going off the rails."

Rosenberg continued, "You start to realize the person who's footnoting is maybe not as trustworthy as a narrator, and their interventions in the text become another sort of plot. The scholar's footnotes become an obsessive diary of his struggle at a corporate university, his woes of the breakup he's gone through and at a certain point, he decides to steal the manuscript and disappear. He's obsessed with authenticating whether or not Sheppard was trans."

Art imitates life: In researching and writing *Confessions*, Rosenberg "became obsessed with the way [Sheppard]'s genderqueerness was really central to the way he was represented as a kind of outlaw figure." He said, "Often people would write that he was small and lithe, and very attractive to women and could escape from small spaces. He was an object of desire and a beacon of resistance, and also crucial to people as a figure [fighting] the systems increasing intensification of early police forces and institutions of confinement."

Is Rosenberg trying to argue that Sheppard was, in fact, genderqueer? Not even close.

"I was interested in intensifying these connections in a fictional way: this intersection of resistance to the prison system and police, and gender nonconformity," he said.

Privatized prisons. Daring escapes. (Possibly) genderqueer criminals. All told through the lens of an unreliable narrator with plenty of baggage of his own. To put it mildly, *Confessions of the Fox* is an ambitious novel.

And for a trans author like Rosenberg, getting anything published that's not a memoir, is a feat in itself.

"There isn't as extensive of a record with big mainstream publishing houses, of publishing fiction by trans authors," Rosenberg said. "A lot of editors my agent and I spoke to were much more comfortable with the idea of publishing a trans memoir because they have models for it. They know how to sell it."

Rosenberg and his agent persisted and won out, not only signing a deal with Random House's One World imprint, but collaborating with book editor Victory Matsui, who is nonbinary.

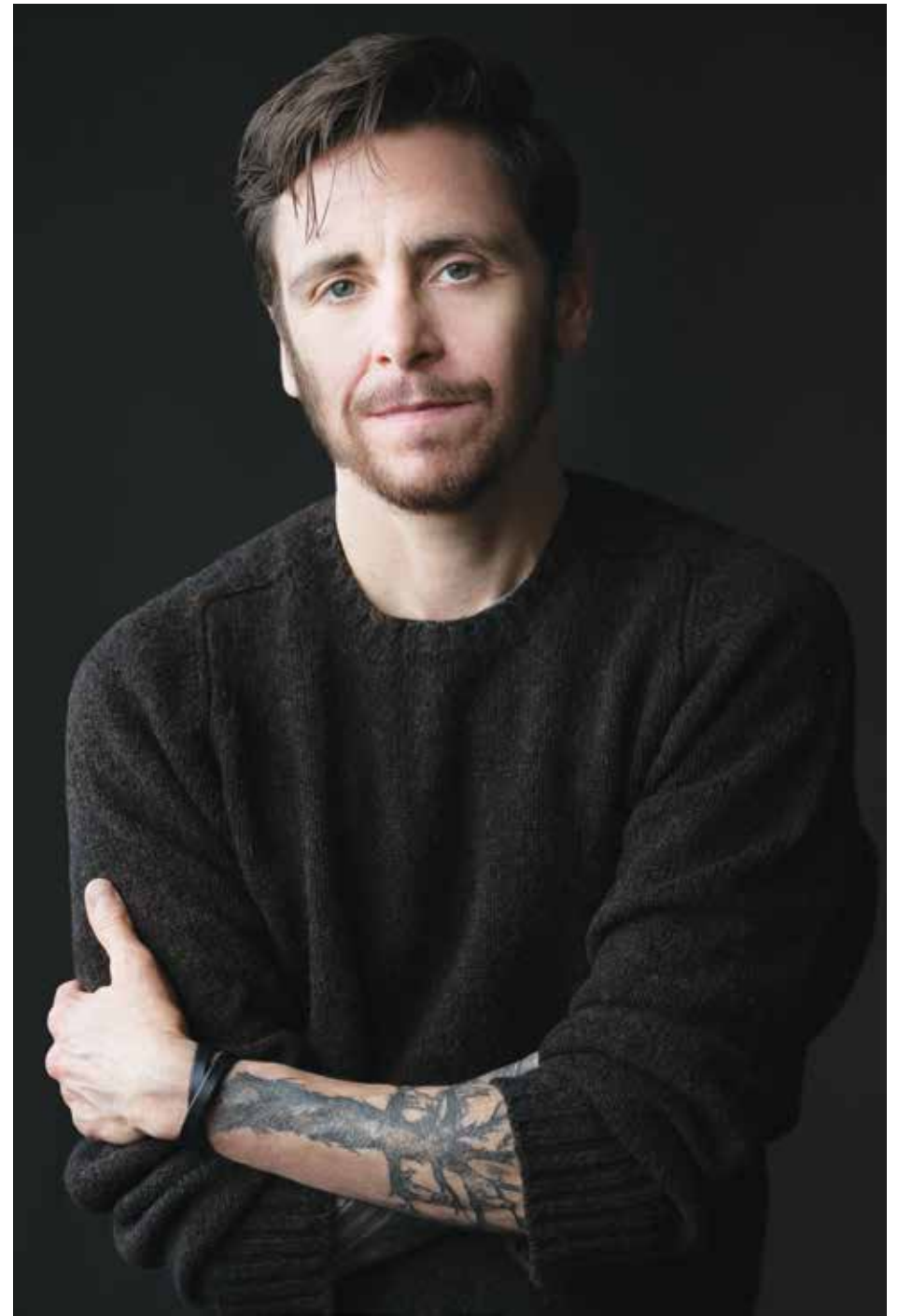
"I was so moved after talking with them, both Victory and [One World publisher and editor-in-chief] Chris Jackson," Rosenberg said. "Trans people are often expected to subject themselves as case histories. But Chris and Victory had a very powerful orientation to supporting fiction and the capacity to speculate."

"It was very important for me to work with Victory," Rosenberg continued, "not just because they got the genderqueer [subject matter], but also because Victory is amazing at thinking editorially. We were trying to do a complex thriller structure in both the body text of the novel and the footnotes. Both Victory and Chris got the gender and sexuality stuff. It really freed us up not to ask questions of transness and just get into details about the plot unfolding. Sometimes working with a genderqueer editor means you can focus on other aspects of the work."

Confessions was indeed a lot of work, but that didn't deter Rosenberg. In fact, the speculation about Sheppard inspired and motivated the author. As a professor and historian, he had access to both primary source research about Sheppard and a lot of "anonymous hack work from people who were obsessed with him at the time." In the latter, Rosenberg discovered that Sheppard "was described as what we would now think of as genderqueer."

Sheppard was infamous in his day as a criminal who broke out of prison at least four times. After Sheppard was executed for a minor property crime in 1728—Rosenberg said, "he was such a folk hero...they wanted to make a spectacle of getting rid of him"—John Gay wrote *The Beggar's Opera*, about Sheppard's life. Two hundred years later, Bertolt Brecht penned *The Threepenny Opera*, about Sheppard's conflict with John Wilde, the head of what Rosenberg described as "London's biggest thief-catching ring at the time."

However, according to Rosenberg, "in neither of those do you really see that part of Sheppard's folk hero [status] was his possible genderqueerness. That was more in anonymous material from the period." Rosenberg said, "the whole time I had been experimenting with fiction writing on the side. At a certain point, once I'd published an academic book, I made a decision to take a



Jordy Rosenberg.

Photo by Beowulf Sheehan

chance with fiction."

Rosenberg's risks paid off: not only was *Confessions* a New York Times critics' pick, the novel has garnered raves from Kirkus, Publishers Weekly and acclaimed queer authors like Alexander Chee.

Meredith Talusan's review in online literary journal *The Rumpus*, however, stands out to Rosenberg as significant for the novel and trans authors as a whole.

"Meredith wrote a review as part of *The Rumpus*'s queer service project," Rosenberg said. "She was talking about the way in which our dominant narratives about what constitutes gender and transgender can be very Western and imperialist, and deliberately obscure the way gender has been constructed in other cultures and other times.

"Sometimes, we tie transness to narratives about surgical transition," he continued. "Her review pushed home to me that...it's important to strike a balance between research and speculation. It's really important for trans people to be able to encounter history and see what falls out of the dominant narrative."

"Let's license ourselves to do forms of resistance-speculating about what's gotten covered over. The process of writing is as much about freeing yourself as it is about being faithful."

Confessions of the Fox is available through Amazon and Barnes & Noble, and wherever books are sold.

For more about the author, visit jordy-rosenberg.com.

Providers launch statewide plan to stop new HIV infections

BY MATT SIMONETTE

AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), all in conjunction with numerous other agencies and organizations, officially launched their Getting to Zero initiative Dec. 3, and are asking the public to weigh in.

The project, whose kickoff at the DuSable Museum of African American History was timed to coincide with World AIDS Day a few days prior, aims to eliminate all new HIV-transmissions in Illinois by the year 2030, utilizing a two-pronged effort that both encourages at-risk Illinoisans to use the PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) interven-

tion and quickly directs persons with HIV to a continuum of care.

AFC President and CEO John Peller called Getting to Zero a “tremendous collaborative process” that’s the culmination of work on the parts of 100 people across the state, adding that, “What’s still amazing to me is that we can end the HIV epidemic in 11 years...but it’s going to take focused work and challenge business as usual.”

Peller acknowledged that myriad challenges remain, noting that recent data released by CDPH shows overall new HIV transmissions on the decline—with 752 new cases in 2017, the lowest number since 1990—but still are disproportionately high among young gay people of color in particular.



AIDS Foundation of Chicago President and CEO John Peller.
WCT archival photo

“That’s a very strong signal that we’re not doing something right,” Peller noted. He also named anti-gay and anti-HIV stigma as further challenges, as well as cultural competency among health and service providers. Furthermore, stakeholders will have to address intertwined cultural and social determinants of health, such as housing stability, access to transportation and employment.

In a statement accompanying the Dec. 7 release of CDPH’s data, CDPH Program Operations Director Jorge Cestou said, “We acknowledge that there is more work to be done to get to ‘functional zero.’ We also see this as an opportunity to strengthen our partnership and work even harder [toward] ensuring that all Chicagoans have equitable access to the care that they need.”

Getting to Zero stakeholders have published the draft plan and framework on the project’s website and are soliciting public feedback through Jan. 18 so as to address various community concerns that may have been overlooked and ensure the robustness of the project.

See gtzillinois.hiv/.

Day With(out) Art screening Dec. 15

Visual AIDS’ Chicago marquee screening of *Alternate Endings*, *Activist Risings* on Saturday, Dec. 15, at 7 p.m. at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.

After the screening, there will be a panel with Coleman Goode (AIDS Foundation of Chicago), Mary Patten (School of the Art Institute of Chicago) and Pamela Sneed (Visual AIDS board member); Visual AIDS Programs Director Alex Fialho will moderate the event.

Visit <https://mcachicago.org/Calendar/2018/12/Screening-Day-Without-Art-ALTER-NATE-ENDINGS-ACTIVIST-RISINGS>.

‘Activists and Icons’ at Holocaust Museum through June 23

“Activists and Icons: The Photographs of Steve Schapiro,” an exhibit at Skokie’s Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, will run through June 23, 2019.

Schapiro, a Chicago-based photographer, has works that have been featured in publications such as *Life*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, *Vanity Fair* and numerous others. The exhibition’s 46 large-format photographs tell the story of seminal moments in history from the March on Washington (1963) to Robert Kennedy’s presidential campaign (1968).

Visit <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/activists-and-icons/>.

Study: Young Black men have higher HIV rates, despite less unsafe sex

A new Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine study says that young Black men who have sex with men (MSM) are 16 times more likely to have an HIV infection than their white peers—despite more frequent testing for HIV and being less likely to have unsafe sex.

The study was recently published in the *Journal of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndromes*.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concluded that, if these rates persist, one out of every two Black MSM will become infected with HIV at some point in their lives, compared to one in five Hispanic MSM and one in 11 white MSM.

“We have known from prior studies that this paradox exists — black young MSM engage in fewer risk behaviors but have a much higher rate of HIV diagnosis,” said senior study author Brian Mustanski, professor of medical social sciences at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and director of the Northwestern Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing, in a statement. “Our study illuminates how HIV disparities emerge from complex social and sexual networks and inequalities in access to medical care for those who are HIV-positive.”

The study collected data from 1,015 MSM between the ages of 16 and 29 living in the Chicago metropolitan area. Findings included that:

- Black MSM reported the lowest number of sexual partners overall;
- Black MSM tested for HIV more frequently but were more likely to have a detectable HIV viral load if HIV-positive;
- Black MSM were more likely to report not

having close relationships with their sexual partners;

- Black MSM were more likely to report hazardous marijuana use, while white MSM were more likely to report high levels of alcohol problems; and

- Black MSM experienced greater levels of stig-

ma, victimization, trauma and childhood sexual abuse.

The study was supported by grant U01DA036939 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health.

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With Kavanaugh on the court, what now for LGBTQ rights?

VIEWPOINT BY JAMES ESSEKS

As the reality of a new and intensely conservative Supreme Court majority sinks in, some people are asking, "What's the use of fighting in the courts now? Aren't we just going to lose a lot of cases?"

Here at the ACLU, we have a clear answer: Staying engaged with the courts remains central both to making further progress for our community and to preventing opponents of LGBTQ equality from taking away the gains we have made over the past four decades. And yes, we will likely lose a bunch of cases, but we will win some as well.

Going forward, the LGBTQ movement needs to focus on three strategies: 1) We have to get used to being on defense, and to learn how to excel at it. 2) We have to choose our affirmative agenda carefully. 3) We have to keep our eye on the ultimate goal of our legal work, which is continually to move public opinion towards acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ people and our common humanity.

Defense. As a movement, we have spent decades strategizing about how we can use the courts to create a better world for LGBTQ people. And over the course of the last 20 years, we made some incredible progress through litigation. We won the freedom to marry, struck down bans on adoption or foster parenting by lesbians and gay men, and secured protection from employment discrimination for transgender people in big swaths of the country.

But we are not the only people who know how to use the courts to create change. Opponents of LGBTQ equality have their own plans, and they have already started filing cases to build out their hateful and destructive agenda now that the Supreme Court is more likely to side with them.

On the Saturday that Justice Kavanaugh was confirmed, conservative activists in Texas filed a case asking the courts to guarantee that any business with a religious objection to employing LGBTQ people can fire us with impunity. In Philadelphia, other activists have sued the city, arguing that they have a constitutional right to discriminate against LGBTQ people with taxpayer dollars. And still other anti-LGBTQ advocates have already asked the Supreme Court to take a case that could strip civil rights protections from hundreds of thousands of transgender people in America.

In the face of these cases, we have a choice: We can watch from the sidelines as our opponents do their best to get the courts to undo our prior victories and to create new horrors for our community. Or we can intervene in their lawsuits, argue for equality, and see if we can stop or lessen the harm they seek.

Bottom line: Even if we have limited chances



James Esseks.
Photo courtesy of Esseks

of advancing our own affirmative agenda through the courts, we can and must engage through the courts to stop our opponents' affirmative agenda.

Offense. There are some cases we can win. In the federal system, there are still many federal judges who are fair-minded, and Trump won't be able to replace them all, or even a majority of them. Since the Supreme Court takes very few cases, the reality is that many lower court rulings will stand. Those rulings will help LGBTQ people all across the country.

Where it's clear that an issue on our affirmative agenda will surely reach the Supreme Court, it may well make sense for us to continue to push cases raising that issue in order to create as many lower court wins on the issue as possible before the Supreme Court ultimately gets the question. That gives our movement the best chance of winning, even if the odds may stay long.

We can also move parts of our agenda forward through state courts, as we did for years in cases about marriage and family law. For example, we are currently seeking Medicaid coverage for gender-affirming health care through the Iowa state courts, and are optimistic about a favorable ruling from the Iowa Supreme Court. Such a ruling would be immune from interference by the US Supreme Court, and at the same time would help

us with the Medicaid coverage issue before other state high courts.

Culture change. The final reason to stay engaged with litigation is that it's a marvelous tool for telling stories, and telling stories is a core part of how we create change in America.

The ultimate goal of our legal advocacy is to change the way America thinks about LGBTQ people. If everyone in America already understood, valued, and embraced the common humanity of LGBTQ people, the problems our community is facing would be greatly reduced. To get there, we need to help people all across the country move past their lack of knowledge, their fear, and the stereotypes about us they have been taught since childhood. We do that by ensuring that our community can tell its stories again and again, in ways that will be noticed, will penetrate, and can lead to deeper understanding.

Court cases are fabulous ways to focus the country's attention on the stories we need it to hear. Gavin Grimm taught the nation just how harmful it is to be excluded from the common

boys' restroom that all the other boys used, just because he is transgender. Edie Windsor made the country understand the indignity of being told by the federal government that her marriage to Thea, her wife of two years and partner of 44, didn't count. And Charlie Craig and Dave Mullins showed us all how humiliating it was to be turned away from a business that is open to the public simply because they're a gay couple.

We need more Gavins, Edies, Charlies, and Daves, because stories like theirs—and spokespeople like them—are how the country learns to relate to us and our daily lives.

So while we may not win as many cases in the future as we have in the recent past, the courts remain an essential battleground for our movement. They are a place for resistance, for achieving pockets of progress, and for telling our stories so that we can continue to move America forward towards justice for LGBTQ people.

James Esseks is director of the ACLU's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & HIV Project.



DignityUSA's Marianne Duddy-Burke.
Photo by Kate Sosin

DignityUSA condemns Pope Francis' book

Pro-LGBTQ Catholic organization responded to Pope Francis' new book, *The Strength of a Vocation*, in which the pontiff is quoted in recent news reports as saying that gay people should not apply for or be admitted to the Catholic priesthood or religious communities because "in consecrated and priestly life, there is no room for that kind of affection."

DignityUSA Executive Director Marianne Duddy-Burke released a statement saying, in part, "It is very damaging and unsupported by the facts for the Pope to suggest that gay people are less able than others to commit themselves to religious and ministerial life, or that they are somehow a threat to the church and its members."

"His comments reinforce negative and long discredited stereotypes that have led to discrimination and violence against our commu-

nity. Furthermore, they are demeaning to all the lesbian sisters and gay priests and brothers who have faithfully served the church for decades, and to all who are currently preparing for such ministries.

"Would it not better serve the needs of the People of God as their chief shepherd if the Pope were to focus his attention and words on a broader vision of celebrating all expressions of humanity in dedicated service to the Church?"

Baton to relocate to Uptown

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Longtime River North nightclub Baton will relocate to an Uptown location on Broadway in Spring 2019, owner Jim Flint announced Dec. 5.

In a statement, Flint said that, "As the years have passed, the River North Area of Chicago has become one the hottest areas in the city and I am thankful to have been a part of that growth. ... Unfortunately, the area has surpassed us, and after 50 years, I felt it time for me to move on.

"Upon learning of my plan to close the club in early 2019, I was approached by several people who wanted me to keep the name and the reputation of the Baton going, so after a lot of thought and consideration, I have agreed allow them to take it forward."

Flint added that he will be involved with the nightclub in the new location only in an advisory capacity, but that he would continue to greet guests on the weekends.

"It is the people and all who have supported the club through the years that I love the most," Flint said.

The Baton relocation comes just as the previously Wicker Park-based Double Door also announced plans to move to Uptown's \$75 million entertainment district as well.

Wrightwood 659 celebrates social justice, architecture

BY KERRY REID

The Chicago Architecture Center isn't the only major new venue dedicated to celebrating architecture in the city. A new space in Lincoln Park, Wrightwood 659, promises to be a place of contemplation and study not only of architecture, but of social justice.

Designed by Japanese Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando from the brick shell of a former apartment building, the space was founded by longtime LGBTQ activist and philanthropist Fred Eychaner of Newsweb Corporation and architectural historian Dan Whittaker. Although the current exhibit, "Ando and Le Corbusier: Masters of Architecture" (running through Dec. 15), focuses on the building's creator and one of his primary influences, the space will also make room for art focusing on social issues and engagement.

Eychaner, whose Ando-designed private home sits next to the new gallery, is also president of the Alphawood Foundation. Wrightwood 659 will continue the mission of Alphawood Exhibitions, a subsidiary of the foundation, which brought groundbreaking exhibits such as Art AIDS America and Then They Came for Me (a documentary exhibit on the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II) to the old Alphawood Gallery venue on North Halsted. (That space is now a bank.)

The plan isn't to have a permanent collection. Rather, there will be two exhibitions a year, alternating between socially engaged art and architecture. Lisa Cavanaugh, director of Wrightwood 659, said "We will evaluate each opportunity as it

arises. There is no plan to have a permanent curatorial staff. Rather, we will act opportunistically to present exhibits that promote our values and seek out curatorial resources to support those opportunities."

Ando, a self-taught architect, has long cited the Swiss-French Le Corbusier (who was born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret) as an inspiration. One of Le Corbusier's interests was providing better living spaces for workers in cities through urban planning. Like Ando, he also favored reinforced concrete as a building material and horizontal bands of windows that created sanctuaries of light. Both elements are integral to the new gallery.

The exhibit fills all three floors of exhibition space—18,000 square feet—at Wrightwood 659. (The ground floor is for administrative offices.) Ando stripped out the interior of the former 30-unit apartment building, leaving only the original brick façade and inserting a new steel and reinforced concrete skeleton. The old bricks were re-used for the walls and an open concrete staircase rises through the soaring atrium. (Ando added a fourth floor to the original three-story structure.)

The second floor, devoted to Le Corbusier, traces his development from his "Purist" works of the 1920s to his design for the Assembly of Chandigarh in 1954, capital of the Haryana and Punjab states in newly independent India. Furniture, paintings, drawings, photos and models (including over 100 miniature maquettes of Le Corbusier projects created by Ando's students) provide an expansive overview of his work,



Architect Tadao Ando.

Photo by Mitchell Canoff

from private homes to housing developments to chapels. Informative wall panels point out the groundbreaking aspects of his work, such as open floor plans and rooftop green spaces, still championed today.

Le Corbusier's unsavory connections with Fascist publications and beliefs are glancingly referenced, which might seem counterintuitive in a space dedicated in part to social justice. Recent books have wrestled with whether he was a true believer or an opportunist. How much that influences how one views Le Corbusier's work today is

a good question, though it seems quite apparent that it is his artistic vision and not his politics that inspired Ando's work.

A profile in *Habitus Living* earlier this year by Belinda Aucott called Ando "a great advocate of social and environmental causes." He donated the \$100,000 purse from his 1995 Pritzker Prize to the orphans of the Kobe earthquake, which occurred that same year.

One can see Le Corbusier's influence on Ando in the third and fourth floors of the space, devoted to Ando's work. One room is given over to a large-scale model of his Benesse Art Site on the Japanese island of Naoshima. Projected video on large curved screens behind the model (which features a curvilinear wavelike base suggestive of sand dunes) bring images of the land and nature into focus as we contemplate the collection of museums designed by Ando for the island. It's reminiscent of the Chandigarh development in some ways.

Three of Ando's most prominent American commissions—the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis, the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas—are represented by large-scale exhibit features work focusing on what citizenship and belonging means today. In fall of 2019, the space will present work by Japanese painter Tetsuya Ishida.

Meantime, the space itself is a work of art from one of the most influential living architects.

Wrightwood 659 is at 659 W. Wrightwood Ave. Admission is by advance reservation only—no walk-ins permitted. Information and reservations available at Wrightwood659.org.

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**Dana
RUDOLPH**

MOMBIAN LGBTQ children's book gift guide

It's time for my annual roundup of some of this year's best LGBTQ-inclusive children's and middle-grade books! This is one of the first years when (happily!) there were more books published than I can include here, so please visit mombian.com for a longer compilation.

Elementary

When We Love Someone We Sing to Them/Cuando Amamos Cantamos, by Ernesto Javier Martínez, is a lyrical bilingual book celebrating both the love between two boys and the supportive relationship between the boy and his father. Pura Belpré Honor Award winner Maya Christina Gonzalez deserves equal credit for her vibrant illustrations.

Prince & Knight, by Daniel Haack and illustrated by Stevie Lewis, isn't the first queer prince fairy tale for this age, but it might be the best, and stems from a partnership between LGBTQ advocacy organization GLAAD and Bonnier Publishing USA.

In the second book from the partnership, Jack (Not Jackie), by Erica Silverman and illustrated by Holly Hatam, a young girl comes to understand and accept that her sibling, whom she thought was a girl, is really a transgender boy. Their parents are supportive of Jack's identity throughout.

When the protagonist of Jessie Sima's Harriet Gets Carried Away dresses up like a penguin and goes to find party hats for her birthday, she falls into an adventure with a group of actual penguins. Can she find the way back to her two dads in time for the party? A joyful book celebrating the power of imagination.

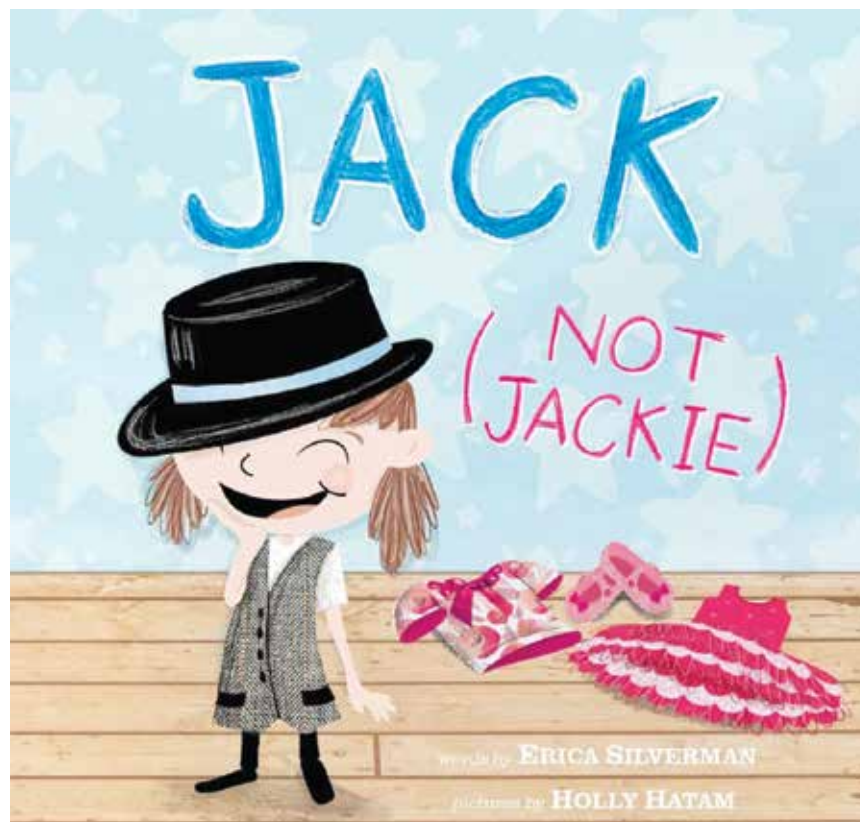
The True Adventures of Esther the Wonder Pig, by Steve Jenkins, Derek Walter, and Caprice Crane, illustrated by Cori Doerrfeld, is based on the true story of a two-man couple who adopt what they think is a mini-pig—but who grows to 600 pounds and whom they love despite some mishaps.

The gorgeously illustrated Julian Is a Mermaid, by Jessica Love, tells of a gender creative, Latinx boy imagining life as a mermaid. One day, his supportive abuela takes them to a festival of grown people dressed as mermaids (modeled after the actual Coney Island Mermaid Parade).

Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag, written by Rob Sanders and illustrated by Steven Salerno, is an inspiring biography of Milk that stresses his friendship with Gilbert Baker, who designed the rainbow flag as a symbol of inspiration.

Middle grade

The Lotterys More or Less, by Emma Donoghue, continues her series about two same-sex couples



(one male, one female) jointly raising their seven children. Their nine-year-old middle child, Sumac, feels responsible for organizing their winter holiday celebrations, but an ice storm brings complications for the diverse family and community in this fun holiday-themed romp.

The Magic Misfits: The Second Story, continues actor Neil Patrick Harris' series starring a diverse group of "misfit." friends with skills in the magical arts, including Leila, who has two dads. When a famous psychic and a couple claiming to be Leila's birth parents arrive in town, the friends must uncover the truth while learning to rely on each other. Puzzles and how-to magic tricks are sprinkled throughout.

In You Don't Know Everything, Jilly P., by Stone-wall Award-winning author Alex Gino, Jilly, a White and hearing 12-year-old, struggles to support both her new baby sister who is Deaf, and her online friend, a Deaf, Black boy her own age. An aunt who is Black and raising two children with her wife is among those offering guidance. Gino digs into the impact of systemic racism, including the shooting of a Black teen by police, and how White people must work towards dismantling it.

Hurricane Child, by Kheryn Callender, is the lyrical story of 12-year-old Caroline Murphy, born during a hurricane in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Her mother has left her and her father, her classmates bully her, and she has visions of a mysterious spirit. Then she feels a growing attraction to a new girl at school. Caroline must figure out what these parts of her life mean as another storm bears down.

The tornado that destroys 12-year-old Ivy's home in Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World, by Ashley Herring Blake, serves as a metaphor for the discon-

nection she feels from family and friends and the "giddy and trembly." feelings she has around classmate June. A warm story about finding oneself while searching for connection with others.

Set in 1977, Shannon Hitchcock's One True Way tells of Allie Drake, trying to find her place at her new middle school in North Carolina after her parents' separation. When she and another girl fall in love, they must deal with the prejudice of Sam's conservative Christian parents, Allie's overprotective mother, the bigotry promulgated nationwide by actor Anita Bryant, and the ramifications for two of their teachers, another a same-sex couple.

In Drum Roll, Please, by Lisa Jenn Bigelow, 13-year-old Mellie spends two weeks at band camp while dealing with her parents' divorce, her best friend deserting her for a boy, and having a crush on another girl, while wondering if she can really be a drummer. It's mentioned that she's had crushes on boys, too; she's not labeled "bisexual," but could very well be. An insightful first-person narrative of self-discovery.

The Prince and the Dressmaker, a graphic novel by Jen Wang, begins in Paris at the dawn of the modern age. Sixteen-year-old Prince Sebastian's parents are hoping to dress him a bride, but he knows his love of wearing dresses will make him unsuitable. He finds support in one loyal servant and in a dressmaker with dreams of her own. A tale as fresh and textured as the dresses in it.

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

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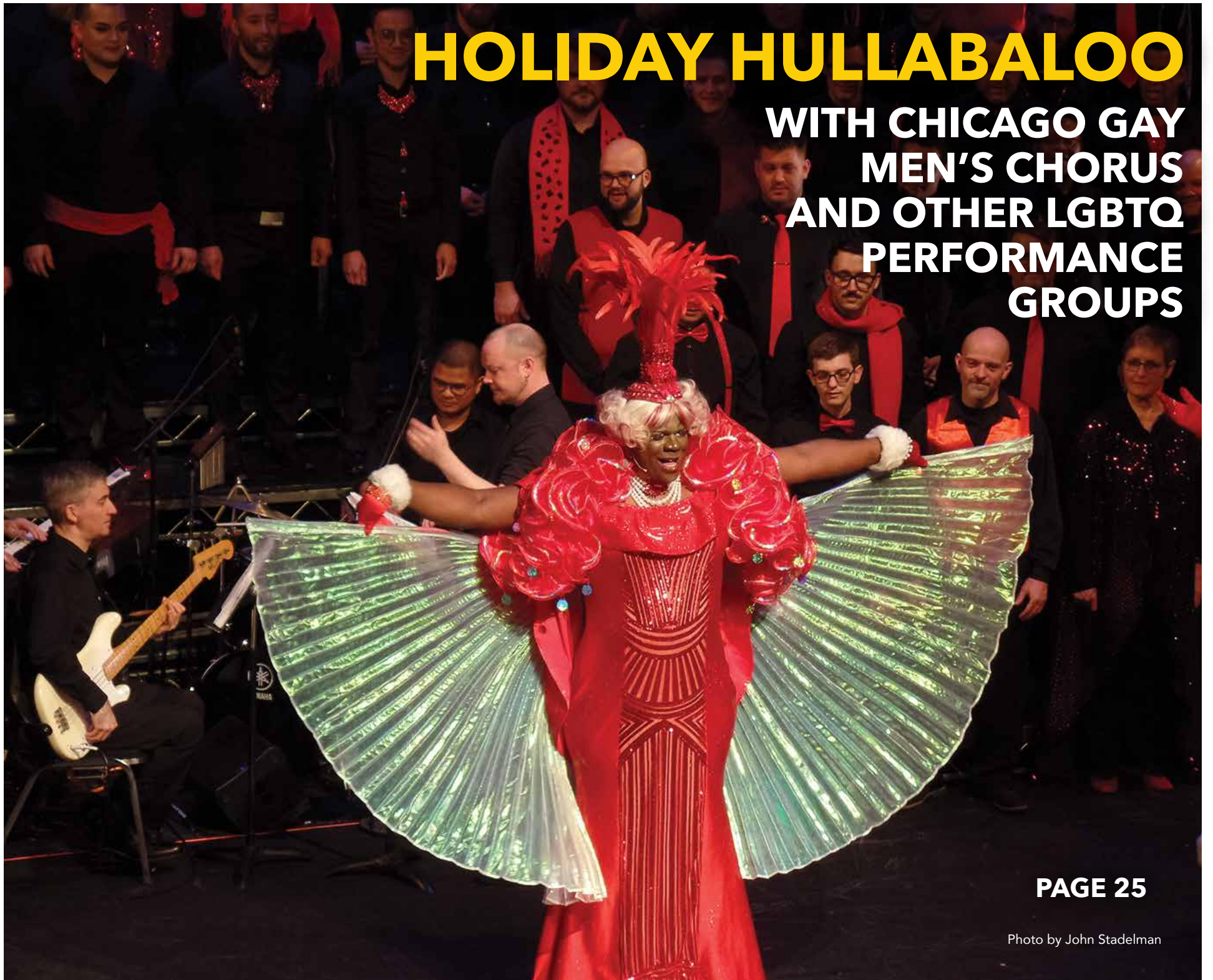
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HOLIDAY HULLABALOO

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MEN'S CHORUS
AND OTHER LGBTQ
PERFORMANCE
GROUPS



PAGE 25

Photo by John Stadelman

THEATER REVIEW

Twelfth Night

Playwright: William Shakespeare
At: Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Ct., Glencoe
Tickets: 847-242-6000;
WritersTheatre.org; \$35-\$180
Runs through: Dec. 16

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

In Shakespeare's mostly rollicking romantic comedy *As You Like It*, a country maiden resisting an ardent suitor is warned, "Sell while you can, you are not for all markets."

This caution might apply to Michael Halberstam's radical interpretation of Shakespeare's other mostly rollicking romantic comedy, *Twelfth Night*, which won't be for all tastes despite impeccable and thoughtful execution. Its somber temper generally eschews frivolity, despite bright and sunlit lighting (John Culbert, lighting design) against a vibrant blue ocean framed by classical arches (William Boles, scenic design) and sporting a dozen colorful floral-patterned

costumes (Mara Blumenfeld, costume design). There is silliness, yes, but little frivolity.

Perhaps it's the slightly disturbing set, with its stark row of white arches crying for paint and suggesting (it must be intentional) the surrealist architecture of Giorgio de Chirico's paintings. Perhaps it's the famous opening lines of Duke Orsino (Matthew C. Yee), "If music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, The appetite may sicken, and so die," spoken not to music but to a violent storm, maybe the very storm that shipwrecks twins Viola (Jennifer Latimore) and Sebastian (Luce Metrius).

Perhaps it's the matter-of-fact, controlled delivery of most dialogue, almost never giving voice to the emotions being expressed, and deliberately avoiding comic business and raucousness. Perhaps it's the clown, Feste, richly portrayed by William Brown (in a long-hoped-for return to acting) as older and definitely more world-weary than usual. Perhaps it's the chilling narcissism of Sean Fortunato's brilliantly (and literally) buttoned-up Malvolio, all the more incongruous a buffoon in his devastating self-deception.

It's all these things, actually, and more besides

in an interpretation in which grand emotions—especially, but not only, love—are madness and self-deception; madness in which thunder and lightning are music, sexuality is ambivalent (long recognized in the play), gender is fluid, the great of society seem slighter and less worthy than those they rule, and life never seems to strike the right balance between black sobriety and florid extremity (so brilliantly represented in the costumes). Even composer Josh Schmidt's wonderful, Spanish-flavored original music—much of it feelingly sung by Brown—prefers languid tempi and long melody lines over peppy tunes and upbeat rhythms.

So this isn't the vivacious, often-boisterous comedy many regard as the defining quality of *Twelfth Night*, and probably not the production for 10- or 12-year-olds who've never seen it before; but you'll be rewarded if you go with that in mind and let it "play on" for you, although you might experience a tinge of sadness at the end.

Other principals in the fine cast are Kevin Gudahl (Sir Toby), Scott Parkinson (Sir Andrew), Andrea San Miguel (Olivia) and Karen Janes Woditsch (Maria).



Jennifer Latimore, Matthew C. Yee in *Twelfth Night*.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

The Second City
107th Mainstage
Revue: Algorithm
Nation or
The Static Quo

Writers: Ryan Asher, Tyler Davis, Jeffrey Murdoch, Emma Pope, Nate Varrone, Kimberly Michelle Vaughn
At: The Second City Mainstage, 1616 N. Wells
Tickets: 312-337-3992 or SecondCity.com;
\$31-\$58; Open run

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

Exceptional sketch comedy is a painstaking gift. Think about why your favorite comics are so endeared to you; they are some combination of fearless, present and vulnerable, which are hard qualities to maintain, just ask Dave Chappelle or (gulp) Louis CK. The team behind Second City's newest Mainstage Revue are exactly the vulnerable luminaries we need, and their work is inviting and generous. *Algorithm Nation or The Static Quo* is a reminder that sketch comedy can be touching, disturbing and cognizant of our fraught, dumb world.

In this comedic onslaught, a HAL-style artificial intelligence with a soothing voice is prompting scene after scene, based on information scrubbed from the Second City audience, but there's a bug in the system, and sketches have begun taking on violent, wildly inappropriate qualities. This machine is finding the humor in white allyship, police violence, anti-feminists, and Instagram shills; it's turning beloved characters like Charlie Brown into cold-blooded assassins, or a gathering of *Lost Boys* (from the movie *Hook*) into malnourished cannibals. What a hilarious nightmare! Someone is going to have to take action to stop



Cast of *Algorithm Nation or The Static Quo*.

Photo by Todd Rosenberg

this glitching software ... specifically, someone from the audience.

Director Matt Hovde has crafted a virtually non-stop performance that keeps the seams between each segment airtight. You'll barely have time to blink before the next performer is onstage mugging in a sequined jacket. This production adheres to that important Arrested Development tenet of rewarding attentive audience members with call-back bits and returning characters. And, if you're sitting somewhere handy, chances are you'll be given a task, like shouting out a place, solving a word jumble, or taking the reins of the show entirely—no pressure!

This troupe is woven tighter than an accent rug, and each of them are integral; Jeffrey Murdoch is a perfect creepy middle-school boyfriend, creepy stepdad and all-around weird, clammy

presence. (It's the mustache.) Emma Pope arranges sweet girlfriend and romance author facades just to watch them crumble under mountains of human oddness. Kimberly Michelle Vaughn is a bolt of lightning with the ideal energy to pull off spunky tweens, White House interns and unstable dancing brides. Nate Varrone won't stop until he's inspired a potent mix of disgust and pity, no matter who he plays; talk show host, man fulfilling his ultimate sexual fantasy, etc. Tyler Davis has a way of luring you in with sweet & sensitive energy, then adding a steady drip of incredulity, urging you to swim in deep intellectual waters. Finally, can I gush about Ryan Asher? She is so distinct, it's going to make you double over and wet yourself. It's the kind of madcap joy that is great on its own, and elevates everyone around her.

THEATER REVIEW

Stomp

By: Luke Cresswell and Steve MacNicholas
At: Broadway Playhouse at
Water Tower Place, 175 E. Chestnut St.
Tickets: BroadwayInChicago.com; \$39-\$84
Runs through: Dec. 30

BY SARAH KATHERINE BOWDEN

Stomp is a symphony of sound made out of items stretching from industrial oil drums to household objects like matchboxes. The show has been touring for almost 20 years, and its continued success likely comes from the performers' theatrical explorations of mundane, everyday objects.

Developed by co-directors Luke Cresswell and Steve MacNicholas, *Stomp* features performers who at first casually move about the warehouse-like stage space, using push brooms to sweep up dust, before organically discovering dance

and noise, with their bodies and the wood and bristles becoming vital instruments. This sound experiment evolves into play with rubber tubes, metal sinks, shopping carts, plastic bags, and in one surprising turn, a banana peel.

Dancers Kayla Cowart, Jonathan Elkins, Desmond Howard, Alexis Juliano, Guido Mandozzi, Artis Olds, Jeremy Price, Crystal Renée, Ivan Salazar, Cade Slattery, Steve Weiss and Joe White form an exuberant ensemble, allowing their individual personalities to shine through in moments of humor and surprise.

Much is made of a dancer completing a crossword while others make music with their mouths and their own crumpled newspapers. One member of the ensemble constantly muscles his way around the others. Another does half-baked magic tricks. Still another vies for the attention of a fellow musician by blowing air into a plastic bag and squeaking a straw stuck in a soda cup. The purpose of the piece is to play, and each performer brings a distinct creativity and timing to their Buster Keaton-like bits.

As much as the show is about discovering hu-

mor and creating music with unexamined objects, the relationship between the actors and the audience remains paramount. After sweeping across the stage with brooms and turning matchboxes into maracas, the performers integrate the viewers into the theatrical event. One cast member claps out a rhythm, and gestures expectantly at those seated in the dark until those in the seats clap back. The audience becomes part of the resulting dance routine, creating a theatrical experience with the artists onstage.

The magic of *Stomp* is heightened because we see the effort with which the performers ply their craft. They collapse in the performance's final moments, after drumming on every available surface on the set. In the opening number, I spotted bristles flying off the push broom of one dancer. When sawdust is spread on the floor, it calls to mind a meatpacking plant or lumber mill, and the intense physicality on display rewards the viewer with exhausting creativity and innovation.



Matt Crowle in *The Santaland Diaries*.
Photo by Eric Scanlon

THEATER REVIEW The Santaland Diaries

Playwright: Steve Scott, adapted from the essay by David Sedaris
At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.
Tickets: \$15-45; GoodmanTheatre.org
Runs through: Dec. 30

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

Ebenezer Scrooge has nothing on Crumpet the Elf.

In 1992, David Sedaris debuted his essay “The Santaland Diaries” on National Public Radio to thunderous acclaim. Even if you’ve never thought—or don’t care—about what really goes on behind the scenes of department store Santa displays, this dark, witty piece based on the author’s real-life experience remains positively magnetic. After over two decades, Joe Mantello’s hit adaptation of the Sedaris essay makes its way to Goodman. Though a few jokes haven’t aged well, to put it mildly, *The Santaland Diaries* is a hilarious, dirty, worthy counterpoint to Goodman’s *Christmas Carol*.

As a broke actor and new New Yorker with an encyclopedic knowledge of soap operas and no discernible skills, Sedaris needed a job but didn’t want to “dress as an object and hand out leaflets.” On a dare from his roommate, he called Macy’s in Herald Square to answer a job ad. When asked “full time or evening and weekend elf?” Sedaris answered the former, and was thrust into a world of windowless rooms, vomit-infested mirrored corridors and a brightly-lit hellscape of crying children and obsessive parents.

Simply put, Crumpet the Elf was born: a snarky green velvet-clad sprite who made wry observations over cigarettes on his breaks and directed tourists to pop superstar Phil Collins, visiting Macy’s Santaland with his daughter.

Now a best-selling essayist and renowned speaker whose engagements regularly sell out worldwide, Sedaris has honed his razor-sharp, oddball sense of humor. *The Santaland Diaries* is a precursor to the forthcoming literary legend,

and Mantello’s adaptation (directed by Goodman Artistic Associate Steve Scott) is a fast-paced, 70-minute deep dive into the gritty side of holiday cheer. Scott never misses an opportunity for an uncomfortable laugh or a teeth-sucking, cringe-inducing moment.

Only a few bits don’t translate to the 2018 audience: At one point, Crumpet compares Christmas-hungry New Yorkers to the special-needs population, and uses the “r”-word to do so. Though Scott had the decency to have actor Matt Crowle wince repeatedly when he said the word, he and Mantello would have done better to cut the bit altogether. Sedaris wrote the essay in a different era, but older scripts must accommodate the time the audience is living in now.

Despite this hiccup, *The Santaland Diaries* is a fun fit for Goodman’s “alternative” Christmas show: edgy enough for younger audiences, with a few gentle moments for the older. Though the one-actor show can be produced with practically no budget, Kevin Depinet has a grand time with the set design, creating a textbook winter wonderland with giant candy canes, twinkling lights and a velvet throne for Santa, of which Crumpet makes liberal use.

Chicago actor Matt Crowle is a worthy Sedaris substitute. Displaying the charisma he’s shown throughout the city and on Broadway, Crowle shuffles around in ridiculous green velvet slippers, lighting a smoke as he details everything from flirting with fellow elves to dealing with the casual racism of parents who want an “American” Santa. (Three guesses as to what that means.) Crumpet may be worlds away from Bert in *Mary Poppins*, whom Crowle portrayed at Mercury Theater Chicago last season, but the actor’s inherent charm and impeccable timing still translate. All in all, *The Santaland Diaries*, which Goodman warns is “for mature elves only,” is just over an hour of welcome Christmas sarcasm. Fair warning: Those who’ve worked in holiday retail will need a post-show drink—or six.

CRITICS’ PICKS

Buttcracker: A Nutcracker Burlesque, (Sub) version Productions at Reggie’s Music Joint, through Dec. 26. Fan-dancing snowflakes, a glass-eating “Calavera Catrina” and a Tim Curry-ish Drosselmeyer highlight this just-for-adults gender-fluid body-positive spoof of the classic ballet. MSB

The Revolutionists, Strawdog Theatre, through Dec. 29. Lauren Gunderson deconstructs the French Revolution with feminist fury, artful analyses and enough insider comedy for a dozen time-travel epics. 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

The Q Brothers Christmas Carol, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, through Dec. 30. Even in Year Six, this 90-minute rap/hip-hop version of the holiday classic still is a cheeky, edgy, mile-a-minute delight. You’ll smile and tap your toes. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Sullivan

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The Joffrey Ballet. | Photo by Cheryl Mann.

Hyde Park has the season's biggest, coolest Nutcracker

BY SHERI FLANDERS

The holiday season is here, which means the arrival of *The Nutcracker*, the ubiquitous holiday classic staged by dance companies around the world.

Beloved as Tchaikovsky's popular music may be, bringing something new to the same, rote performance year after year can be a challenge. This year, however, the Hyde Park School of Dance has a few new tricks hidden in its satin pointe shoes for its *Nutcracker* this weekend at Mandel Hall.

To celebrate its 25th anniversary season, this year's *Nutcracker* will feature a 175-member company and will feature a blend of hip-hop, ballet and modern dance, infusing the piece with new excitement and style.

"Some of these older stories need to be addressed in a current context for them to survive," says Hyde Park School of Dance Founding Artistic Director August Tye, who is also the ballet mistress and choreographer for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Initially worried that traditionalists might dislike the change, Tye pushed boundaries nevertheless. "People are ready for something new, something culturally current," Tye said.

Under Ty's direction, various choreographers are responsible for different scenes that unfold as a

DANCE

young girl travels to a fantasy land filled with dancing sweets from around the world. Dance instructor and choreographer Jonathan St. Clair is responsible for the Battle scene, which unfolds between the titular toy and a host of feisty mice.. St. Clair has infused the scene with hip-hop elements.

The traditional war scene between the Mouse King and the Nutcracker has been reimaged as a dance-battle, set against a version of Tchaikovsky's score combined with a Hip-Hop beat that St. Clair mixed himself. Ty says that they wanted to send the message to youth that "you don't have to solve a problem with swords and guns. We still hit the mouse with the shoe, though!"

For the uninitiated, the dance elements of hip-hop include breaking (which consists of acrobatic moves tied together with toplocks, downlocks and freezes), and popping and locking (which contrasts sharper, jerky movements with smoother moves.) St. Clair said he loves "seeing young people manifesting their greatness...learning to cultivate their skills and talents at a young age."

"Breaking is self-driven. It doesn't happen the same way ballet happens. With Breaking, you go



Hyde Park Nutcracker.

Photo by Marc Monaghan

on an inventive, investigative process. ... Plan, do, repeat," St. Clair said. Dance has helped him as a parent, as a teacher, and with skills such as drawing and cooking, St. Clair added. When he tried to make a low-sugar version of peanut-butter cups from scratch, for example, his hip-hop training helped him investigate the cooking process until it worked correctly. "You get a feel for process. You don't always need to have a teacher. Separate your identity from your performance. Separate your identity from your outcomes," he

said.

The large cast is representative of the Hyde Park neighborhood and the legacy of the dance school, featuring students from all different backgrounds, including young dancers who perform pre-show, and senior dancers who have passed through its doors over the years.

The school lets the diverse student population know that dance could be a career. When asked about the success of Misty Copeland, Tye says that two of her most exceptional dancers of color did not get accepted to prestigious companies, even though they were great candidates. "The world has not changed even though there is Misty Copeland [the first African-American female principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre]. Companies are looking for diversity, but it is still not enough," Tye said.

Olivia Gotsch, 18, started taking lessons with the Hyde Park School at age 4 and worked her way up through the ranks. She'll dance as the Snow Queen in this year's performance.

"Dance and ballet get a negative reputation because of the narrow-minded definition of what makes a dancer," Gotsch said, noting the restrictions on body size and the fact that ballet's traditional pink tights and shoes aren't representative of every skin tone. The Walter Peyton High School Senior said she finds the Hyde Park Dance School's program more inclusive, as well as a place of incredible community. "I've met some of my closest friends here, the people I rely on the most, who are predominantly women," she said.

Her favorite part of the *Nutcracker*? "When we're onstage warming up before the show with our stage makeup half-done...we've gotten here, we've put in the work, and now we're here to enjoy it."

The Hyde Park School of Dance's *Nutcracker* will be performed at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 14; 1 and 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 15; and 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 16 at Mandel Hall, 1131 E. 57th St. Tickets are \$10-\$40 each; visit HydeParkDance.org or call 773-493-8498.



THEATER REVIEW

Best of The Infinite Wrench 2018: 30 Years with The Neo-Futurists

At: The Neo-Futurists Theater,
5153 N. Ashland Ave
Tickets: 312-932-9950; Neofuturists.org
Special performance: Dec. 31

BY ADA CHENG

Who would have thought that the host of a 30th birthday party had prepared the best gift for all in attendance?

That's what's happening with the Neo-Futurists' Best of the Infinite Wrench: 2018.

The number 30 is the key in multiple ways: The Neos debuted their signature 30-plays-in-60-minutes production 30 years ago (Friday, Dec. 2, 1988 to be exact). Three decades later, the Best of the Wrench included playlets with titles such as "This play has some kinks," and "the best part about spending the night in central indiana in a mansion built by and for the Ku Klux Klan (as a Black person on Black History Month)." (sic)

The evening featured Ida Cuttler's "Letter to My Grandfather," a touching and thoughtful piece Cuttler wrote to her grandfather about speaking different languages. The ensemble then took the audience on an emotional rollercoaster, de-



The Infinite Wrench cast.
Image by Joe Mazza-Brave Lux

livering a series of highly energetic, intense and fast-paced short performances. Some plays were emotional, thoughtful and reflective, such as Lily Mooney's "My naked play." Others (including Malic White's "How to Remove a Diva Cup") were highly comical and metaphorical.

The audience was not a passive observer. While the plays were rooted in ensemble members' personal history and biography, performers also find ways to engage audience members by bringing them on stage and integrating their personal stories. In Kurt Chiang's "Native Planting in progress.... Please watch for changes" and Nick Hart's "Dialogue," an audience member is invited to answer some questions, so their narrative can be incorporated into the plays.

The lineup was inclusive and diverse in terms of demographics, identities and backgrounds. It's particularly fantastic to see the alum Lisa Buscani's vintage plays, which breathe life into history and add depth to the evening.

The Neo-Futurists ensemble deliver a fantastic performance with The Best of The Infinite Wrench. It's their birthday, but the audience got the gift.

The Neo-Futurists will host a New Year's Eve version of Infinite Wrench on Monday, Dec. 31 at the Neo-Futurarium, 5153 N. Ashland Ave. VIP tickets for New Year's Eve performances are \$75 and include a 7 p.m. performance of Burning Bluebeard followed by food drink and poetry, followed by an 11 p.m. performance of the Infinite Wrench. The evening closes with a champagne toast. For more information, go to Neofuturists.org.

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T.R. Knight talks about upcoming 'Dream' role

T.R. Knight.
Photo courtesy of the
Chicago Shakespeare
Theater

BY KERRY REID

T.R. Knight might still be best known for his five-season run as Dr. George O'Malley on ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*—and for the infamous 2007 off-camera incident in which a homophobic slur from fellow cast member Isaiah Washington prompted Knight to come out as gay.

However, he got his start at an early age onstage in his hometown of Minneapolis at the Guthrie Theater, playing Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*. (Chicago actor Robert Scogin, who died recently, played opposite him as Bob Cratchit one year.) Since leaving *Grey's Anatomy*, he's done several plays in New York and elsewhere. Knight—who lives in Los Angeles with his husband, Patrick Leahy—now makes his Chicago stage debut as Nick Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Chicago Shakespeare, directed by the Guthrie's former artistic director, Joe Dowling. We caught up with him to find out what his life in the theater has been like, and how he thinks Hollywood is dealing with LGBTQ issues now.

Windy City Times: Your career in the Twin Cities started when you were five. What initially drew you to doing theater?

TRK: Knight: It wasn't a decision I made, because I was too young. But I think for a kid with not the best homelife at the time, I think it kind of had the allure of becoming another home. I realized I could escape life a little bit and become someone else. It still has its claws in me.

WCT: You were at the Guthrie during the last few years of their repertory company. How did working there shape your ideas of what you wanted to do in theater?

TRK: One of the people who taught me talked about that when you're a young actor, there's that question of you want to work, but where do you work and how do you start going about it? There's the school of thought that you take any job at all you can get just to learn. And he said one shouldn't take any job. You should work with the people you want to work with and try in some way, in any way, whether it's in the box office

or whatever, to work with the people that you admire.

So that's kind of how I tried to proceed. I did

THEATER REVIEW

Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins

Author: Michael Daily, from the book by Eric Kimmel

At: Strawdog Theatre, 1802 W. Berenice Ave.

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

Runs through: Jan. 5 (weekend matinees only)

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Hanukkah is over but *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* plays into early January, a refreshing new flavor in the large stew pot of holiday theater. It joins a limited subset of shows suitable for young children, as long as they can muster an attention span of about 50 minutes (probably as young as three). And you needn't know anything about Hanukkah except that it lasts eight days and you light candles, making Hershel about as religious as *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*.

Indeed, much like Dr. Seuss's celebrated story, *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* began life (in 1989) as a prize-winning illustrated children's book. Similar to *Grinch*, it concerns meanies who want to shut down the holiday and steal its joy. These particular goblins reside in Chelm, a legendary town of Jewish folklore where each citizen is wiser and more clever than his/her neighbors, meaning it's a town of fools. They ponder long and hard over such profound philosophical questions as "What happens to the hole after you eat the bagel?" Fortunately, the goblins of Chelm are on par with the humans and so they easily are tricked by a real trickster, Hershel of Ostropol (a hero of many Jewish folktales), who saves Hanuk-

work at the box office of a theater that I really wanted to work at in Minneapolis and I eventually got onstage there. Like Chicago, though Chicago's theater scene is much bigger, theater in Minneapolis is respected. I got to watch and learn from a lot of amazing people and also from people coming up from Chicago.

WCT: What does working onstage do for you that you don't get from film or television?

TRK: Theater was almost exclusively what I did until *Grey's*. I'm 45. So that is still the majority of my life. If I'm lucky enough to do something and have the time, and there's a pull, I hope to be lucky enough to do it.

There are also things that just can't be replicated or duplicated in a filmed performance. At the Court Theater, I saw *Frankenstein* by Manual Cinema. It's unlike anything I'd ever seen before. I'd never seen Manual Cinema's work and I still can't get over it. It's magnificent.

WCT: How did doing *Midsummer with Joe* come together?

TRK: With Joe, we last worked together 15 years ago, when we went to New York and we did *Tartuffe*. When you do a network show with 22 episodes or whatever per season, you get a two-month break. We had talked about a couple of things, but schedulewise, it never worked out.

I'd done *Midsummer's* with him 22 years ago playing a different character. An actor in Minne-

THEATER

apolis who has since died, sadly, Richard Iglewski, who everyone called Julio, was our Bottom in the production. I grew up watching him on the Guthrie stage. I remember when Joe initially asked me about this, I thought about how Julio was so perfect. He was an actor I'd admired both as an audience member when I was younger and then when I actually got to act with him for two seasons as a company member at the Guthrie. He was an acting hero of mine. It's just like one of those actors where you think "No one can ever do that role again." He was so brilliant. I just didn't think I could do it. How do you approach something when one of your heroes plays the role?

Luckily, I am very different in size. I'm a short little hobbyist guy. Julio was very tall and a very striking figure. Physically, that helped. I think so much of my fear about doing it went away because creating the world with your fellow mechanicals is what's so fun about this. There are thousands of actors in Chicago who could do as good or better and I'm very aware of that and very thankful.

WCT: How do you think the landscape in Hollywood is changing for LGBTQ artists?

Turn to page 19



Jon Penick and Harmony Zhang in *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*.
Photo by Collin Quinn Rice

kah and also wins himself a pot of gold.

The brief play begins and ends with spritely original music and song by Jacob Combs in klezmer style, which has been likened to Jewish Dixieland, played on guitar, clarinet, violin, flute and tambourine. The players engage the audience with bits of tumbling, juggling and clowning, presenting themselves as a rag-tag band of traveling players asking to present the tale of Hershel in exchange for a night's food and lodging. The rest is easy from there as Hershel tricks a different goblin for each night of Hanukkah. However, the adapters are too smart to portray all eight days, and so condense it to days 1-3 and 8.

As directed by Jacqueline Stone, it's all childlike in wonder, occasionally childish in action

and performed by six actors clearly enjoying themselves, without the least bit of condescension towards kids. The good guys win and there are bagels and cream cheese in the lobby. What more could anyone want?

This world premiere adaptation could turn into an annual holiday presentation if Strawdog would slightly enlarge it. There could be a touch more story—it will be fine if it's 10 minutes longer—and adding some special effects and stage magic would help a lot. Another song or two would be great, especially some type of signature music for the goblins and for Hershel.

NOTE: *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* is performed at weekend matinees ONLY, Saturdays and Sundays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

BOOK REVIEW

Honor Girl/Lost Soul, Be at Peace

by Maggie Thrash

\$14.99; Candlewick Press; 267 pages (Honor Girl)

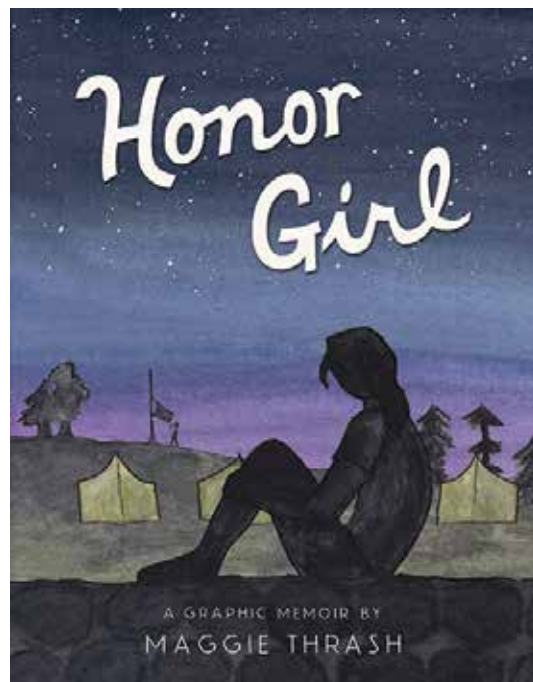
\$18.99; Candlewick Press; 190 pages (Lost Soul, Be at Peace)

REVIEW BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

There is no loneliness like teenage loneliness.

Even those who experienced their “glory days” in high school often admit to frequent feelings of isolation, even depression. For Maggie Thrash, high school was far from glorious. The daughter of a federal judge and a genteel housewife, she had everything, “a beautiful home, financial stability, opportunities galore.” but as a closeted queer girl in the South, Maggie felt like nothing. Her first book, *Honor Girl*, is a graphic memoir that vividly illustrates her flirtation with an older counselor at her exclusive Christian summer camp. *Honor Girl* was a finalist for both the Lambda Literary Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, garnering positive reviews from award-winning authors and celebrities like Ira Glass. *Lost Soul, Be at Peace*, is Thrash’s new follow-up, taking place eighteen months after the events of *Honor Girl* in Thrash’s Atlanta home.

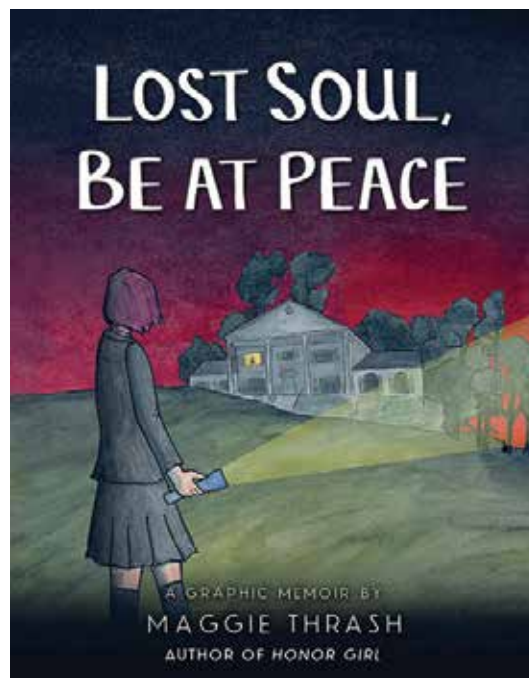
Before penning graphic memoirs, Thrash worked as a staff writer for *Rookie*, Tavi Gevinson’s wildly popular online magazine geared at teen girls. It’s safe to say Thrash always had the experiences of her younger self on the brain. In both *Honor Girl* and *Lost Soul*, she does the artistic equivalent of ripping open her own heart. Parts of each are so relatable they’re cringe-inducing, especially Mag-



KNIGHT from page 18

TRK: The more people that come out publicly, I think that is what changes the landscape. I respect that everyone has to do it on their own time and everyone has their own story. But it’s got to be a wonderful release to finally be able to be honest.

BOOKS



gie’s interactions with her counselor crush Erin, and her near-obsessive attachment to her gray cat, Tommi.

Maggie is intelligent, but never quite lives up to her potential, flunking her Honors English class and disappointing both her parents with her lack of ambition. She earns top marks in riflery in summer camp, only to keep one of her father’s guns under her bed in Atlanta. “just in case. When Tommi disappears, literally inside the massive family home, Maggie is at a loss, and begins to experience visions of a boy her age named, yes, Tommy. In recounting these memories, Thrash mines the depths of her tormented teen self and emerges with buried treasure: relatable moments for every adult who, back in high school, felt like they just didn’t belong where they were.

As an artist, Thrash favors thick black lines and bright colors: Maggie’s purple hair in *Lost Soul* is a sharp contrast to the darkness of her thoughts. Images of Maggie’s sweet gray feline, the glow of a lantern at her Kentucky girls’ summer camp, passed notes from her secret high school girlfriend, practically jump off the page, begging the reader to notice. Thrash’s pictures pair perfectly with the voice of her high school self: smart, but desperate and sad, wanting more than anything to be understood and accepted. Really, didn’t we all feel that way once?

Both *Honor Girl* and *Lost Soul* are fast-paced and addictive, easily devoured in one or two sittings. Thrash’s books are a shining example of the graphic memoir as an innovative way of storytelling. Each book can be read separately or out of order, but read together, both convey the unique experience of queer teens: the knowledge that they’re on the verge of something big, and the glimmers of understanding as to what that something is.

As far as representation—it’s changing. But like anybody who is in the minority, none of us is represented the way we should be. Even women, who are NOT in the minority, aren’t being fully represented. It’s changing slowly. I’m an impatient bastard. I sometimes wish we could all get together – we groups that are not represented accurately or enough – in some magical way and change things quickly.

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John Barrowman.
Photo courtesy of Barrowman



NUNN ON ONE

Actor John Barrowman part of team that spins a Celtic tale

BY JERRY NUNN

Legendary Comics and Webtoon are running a new comic series called *Acurasian* rooted in Celtic lore.

Fresh from the minds of storytellers John Barrowman, Carole Barrowman and Erika Lewis, this new endeavor is stimulating readers who can watch it on an app on their various devices.

"*Acurasian*" means "one consigned to destruction, misery, or evil by a curse." Charlie Stewart, played by Barrowman, falls victim to a curse on his birthday. He sets out on adventure after discovering his ancestor made a deal with a god of war creating this curse.

Many will know Barrowman from *Doctor Who* and the spinoff *Torchwood* on BBC1, where he played Captain Jack Harkness. His role as Malcolm Merlyn in the CW drama *Arrow*, *The Flash* and *Legends of Tomorrow* landed him more loyal fans over the years.

His cinematic roles include *Zero Dark Thirty*, *The Producers* and *De-Lovely*. Musical theater credits include *Sunset Boulevard*, *Anything Goes* and *Miss Saigon*.

He just released a new movie called *Fireman Sam* for children, playing a villain, and is currently in the middle of releasing *Acurasian* to the masses. Also, Barrowman is slated to be at the Chicago pop-culture expo C2E2 next March in McCormick Place.

Windy City Times: Where in the world are you calling from?

John Barrowman: I am sitting in my kitchen in Palm Springs.

WCT: Talk about this new comic series *Acurasian*.

JB: It is a collaboration between myself, my sister Carole Barrowman and Erika Lewis. After Car-

ole and I did the Merlyn comic for DC, we wanted to do another series. Erika and I met when I was hosting the *G4 Attack of the Show!* While I was running around working, Carole and Erika were having wine and talking about Celtic stuff. We decided to collaborate on something together.

Carole and I were born in Glasgow, Scotland. I have a passion for legends that happen on that side of the pond. It is based on the battle of Culloden and centers around Bonnie Prince Charlie. It has Celtic gods and we have created our own characters.

The life of Charlie Stewart is ruined at one of his birthdays. It goes back to Bonnie Prince Charlie who made a deal with the Celtic God of War, Bregon. It changes the course of time. Every one of Charlie's descendants at their primary birthday has their life collapse around them because of this curse. That is why it's called *Acurasian*.

WCT: I don't want this curse!

JB: You don't, because if you have this curse three very powerful women will come into your life and destroy everything around you. You will have no clue why.

WCT: Are there plans for other seasons?

JB: Depends on how successful it is. We have decided to add to music to it and created a score. My hope is that it jumps to the television or cinema.

WCT: What LGBT characters are in it?

JB: One of the main characters, Nate, is best friends with Charlie—and is gay.

You don't know the sexuality of the sisters because what we wanted to be ambiguous with the rest of the characters. We have tried to make the sisters genderfluid. They are not all skinny waifs either. Not everyone has muscles.

We flipped the cards a bit because the women

objectify the men in this, which is kind of fun. We tried to cover everything. I am outspoken for the LGBTQ community in anything that I do. Anything we put out is going to represent the community in any way we can.

WCT: How do people keep up with this series?

JB: We are on chapter eight right now. It is free. They download the app and subscribe. They will get it every week.

WCT: When did you start reading comics?

JB: I started when I was living in Aurora, Illinois. I used to go to the Town & Country Drug Store and there were three spinning racks in the middle. There was one DC, one Marvel and the other was independent stuff. I would take them home, read them and put them in plastic sleeves.

WCT: I felt like a nerd buying a dirty magazine in my hometown drugstore when I would purchase comic books as a kid.

JB: I am a nerd myself and a geek. We would play in the basement with our Mego action figures. We would hide when we played unless it was sports, which was accepted by people at the time.

I am thrilled to go to conventions where it is not embarrassing anymore. I see thousands of people celebrating their nerdiness on a weekly basis when I travel all over the country. It is just amazing.

WCT: Any crazy requests from fans?

JB: The amount of threesomes I have been invited to is unbelievable. It's always the wife that investigates it with their husband just standing there in disbelief. Lesbians have come up to me and said they would turn just for me. I love that they respect the work I do, but still want to do me!

Billy Porter in *Pose*.
Photo by
Pari Dukovic/FX



'Versace,' 'Rhapsody,' 'Pose' get Golden Globe nods

The nominations for the 76th annual Golden Globes were announced Dec. 6 at the Beverly Hilton, with 25 categories spanning films and TV shows involving drama, comedy and animation.

In the TV categories, *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story* received nominations in several categories, including Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television, and Best Performance by an Actor in a Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television (Darren Criss). Penelope Cruz and Edgar Ramirez also garnered nominations for supporting roles.

Debra Messing scored a nod in the Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series—Musical or Comedy category for *Will & Grace*. Other nominees in that category include Kristen Bell (*The Good Place*), Candace Bergen (*Murphy Brown*), Alison Brie (*Glow*) and Rachel Brosnahan (*The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*).

Ryan Murphy's '80s transgender-focused drama *Pose* was nominated for Best Television Series—Drama. It will compete against *The Americans*, *Bodyguard*, *Homecoming* and *Killing Eve*. *Pose*'s Billy Porter also received a nod.

Regarding movies, *Vice* (about George W. Bush's second-in-command, Dick Cheney, and starring Sam Rockwell and Christian Bale) led the way with six nods. The Freddie Mercury-centered film *Bohemian Rhapsody* was nominated for Best Motion Picture—Drama and for its lead actor, Rami Malek. The movie itself will compete against *Black Panther*, *Black KKKlansman*, *If Beale St Could Talk* and *A Star Is Born*, which also scored nods for leads Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper. Cooper was also nominated for best director, and the movie's tune "Shallow" was among the Best Original Song nominees.

Also, Lucas Hedges and Nicole Kidman were among those nominated for leads in a film drama for the conversion-therapy movie *Boy Erased*.

Comedy-film nods went to *Vice*, *Crazy Rich Asians*, *The Favourite*, *Green Book* and *Mary Poppins Returns*. *The Favourite* (which has an LGBT-inclusive plot) also received nominations for Best Screenplay—Motion Picture and for lead actress (Olivia Colman) as well as supporting actress (Emma Stone and Rachel Weisz).

Sandra Oh and Andy Samberg will co-host the awards ceremony, which will take place Sunday, Jan. 6.

Windy City Times' WINTER MOVIE PREVIEW



Brie Larson in Captain Marvel.
Photo by Marvel Studios

BY JERRY NUNN

Escape the cold weather by hitting the warm movie theater, where sunny comedies, strong superheroes and unbelievably true stories can all be seen on the big screen. Many of the award-winning movies are out already as the holiday movie season winds down.

The strength of women in cinema continues to be celebrated in the months ahead, with a smattering of LGBT characters along the way.

December

Sexually fluid actor Lucas Hedges bounces back from *Boy Erased* with **Ben Is Back** on Dec. 14; the same weekend the new flick *Vox LoX* has Natalie Portman singing songs by Sia.

Rob Marshall brings the magical characters back for **Mary Poppins Returns** with Emily Blunt, Lin-Manuel Miranda and Dick Van Dyke opening on Dec. 19. This nanny has audiences divided on whether it will be the worth the wait.

Aquaman swims out solo from *The Justice League* and Jennifer Lopez struggles as a working woman in **Second Act**, both out Dec. 21.

On the Basis of Sex shines a spotlight on gender discrimination, as Felicity Jones plays Ruth Bader Ginsburg; the movie is out Christmas Day, Dec. 25. She falls in love with Marty, played by Armie Hammer, who enamored viewers in *Call Me By Your Name*.

January

Bathtubs Over Broadway opens Jan. 4 with guest stars such as Chita Rivera and Florence Henderson in a documentary about the hidden world of industrial musical theater.

Stan & Ollie finally have their big-screen biopic out Jan. 11, with Steve Coogan and John C. Reilly

starring as the comedy duo Laurel and Hardy.

Glass brings together several of M. Night Shyamalan's past projects Jan. 18, with out actress Sarah Paulson leading the cast of quirky characters.

February

What Men Want opens Feb. 8 with Taraji P. Henson as a sports agent who, after being hit in the head, can suddenly hear men's thoughts. The movie is a gender reversal of the 2000 film *What*



Isn't It Romantic?,
with Rebel Wilson,
Liam Hemsworth.
Photo by Michael
Parmelee

MOVIES

Women Want that starred Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt.

On the same release date, *Orange Is the New Black*'s Taylor Schilling plays a mother in **Prodigy**, trying to save her son's soul.

The week after, a third female leading film is again smacked in the head, this time turning Rebel Wilson's life into a romantic comedy with **Isn't It Romantic**, also starring the hunky Liam Hemsworth, with Brandon Scott Jones as her gay sidekick. This movie will be out for Valentine's Day on Feb. 14.

March

Tyler Perry's **A Madea Family Funeral**—in which Perry has said is his last film as the title character—will be out March 1.

Captain Marvel looks marvelous already from the trailer, with Brie Larson joining the Avengers franchise as the character with a mysterious past on March 8.

Unplanned has one of the youngest Planned Parenthood clinic directors in the nation changing her mind after being involved in almost 22,000 abortions. It will be out March 22.

Captive State is set in a Chicago neighborhood taken over by an alien force, and stars John Goodman and Vera Farmiga. It will be out March 29.

The spring brings a whole new crop of films, so be sure to read *Windy City Times* for upcoming coverage concerning the cinema.



A Cradle Song: Part Nine

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 Nine.**

Chapter Eleven: Matthew Part Two

Matthew entered the flower store. He wandered up and down the aisles. The woman at the counter smiled at him. Matthew found a beautiful metal red rose in a vase by itself. He gave it a gentle touch.

The woman was beside him. Matthew hadn't noticed her walk up. He yanked his hand away, but the woman gave him a gentle nod, yes. She spoke in a soft voice. "Here, it's okay to touch as long as you are gentle."

Matthew nodded. He understood gentle because that's the way his dad always was.

The woman continued, "You can take one gift for your mom."

"I don't have any money."

The woman repeated what he'd learned from the first woman who wore the sparkling crystal dress at the end of the bridge. "On this day, it is also true that each gift you pick for someone else is free. Only one for each person. You can take one gift for your mom, one for yourself, one for your baby sister, and one for your daddy. Don't take more, they'll all disappear. Pick carefully and take only what you can carry."

"This would be for my mom." Matthew hesitated. He felt a tear in his eye. He sniffled it back. "I don't know where she is."

The woman said, "If you take it, when you do see her, you will have it to give to her."

With warmth and gladness in his heart, he put the rose in his deepest pocket and left. Five stores up beyond the flower store, he came to one with dolls: pretty ones, plain ones, exotic ones, ones that looked like they came from foreign countries with different features and colors.

Matthew saw a tiny doll with a lace dress and golden hair. It would be perfect for his sister. He went inside. A portly man with a white beard smiled at him.

Matthew silently pointed out the little doll. Now, the man beamed and nodded. The clerk asked, "Do you need a bag, young man? Or a box? Maybe you'd like it

wrapped?" His voice was deep and sonorous.

Matthew shook his head and said, "No, thank you." He placed the little doll in the same pocket as the red rose.

Matthew continued on past so many stores filled with children's delights. It seemed to him that they were all magical. They were a little bit like the toy store that was a portal to the island, but these were a zillion times better. He didn't know if he'd ever have time to visit them all.

He stopped at the one with toy trains. He pressed his nose to the window. There was a miniature mountain with trains chuffing around different levels. And vast tracks with Super Chiefs and the Zephyr pulling long lines of cars behind their glittering engines. The tracks seemed to travel in miles of ovals, and swirls, and straight lines. But they were too grand for his little hovel. So he moved on.

Then he came to the music store. In an instant, he fell in love with the miniature instruments in the window. He eased himself through the door. Inside, many of the shelves were almost barren. A few had been picked clean by the throngs of children on this special day.

Matthew found himself peering into the depths of each shelf, reaching in and touching gently. Sometimes, he had to stretch and stand on tiptoes.

Matthew neared the back of the store. He peered into the last shelf near the bottom of a tall stack that soared to the ceiling.

Chapter Twelve: Matthew and Erik

Many of the other instruments on the shelf had been chosen as night deepened on Christmas Eve. It was the time of the year that the most light leaked back into Erik's little space.

The little baby harmonica heard the soft padding of small feet. He wondered who was left this late on Christmas Eve. He waited and hoped.

Then a shadow fell over his shelf.

In the opening, Erik could see a child's



face, with black hair, dark brown eyes, and a look of curiosity and warmth around his lips and eyes. Then a hand reached toward him.

As Matthew peered inside each shelf, he hunted for small toys. He touched different instruments but left each one without picking them up.

He came to Erik's shelf. Matthew's gaze searched into the dimness. His hand groped forward but missed Erik and Reginald.

Erik watched the little boy's sad eyes. Matthew looked and began to move away. Erik wished and wished for the boy to take one more look, to reach in one more time.

Matthew glanced back at the shelf. Moments later, Matthew returned close up, and he looked as carefully as he could. There was a glint in the dimness. He opened his eyes wide and reached in.

Matthew stretched and leaned as far as he could. He touched something of metal and wood and pulled him forward. Carefully, he picked it up and brought it toward him.

The little harmonica felt himself lifted up. A thrill ran through him. Moments later, Erik blinked in the bright light. He felt so thrilled to be moved at all, but now to be in the hands of a little boy, joy indeed.

He hoped the child would try to make music.

Matthew clutched Erik tight. He thought the little baby harmonica was the most perfect thing in the whole world. In the store's light, he saw it was a little bruised, and one end was worn, and there might be a bit of rust on the other end.

Matthew brought it to his lips and blew a note. A tiny sound emerged, the most gentle and warmest he'd ever heard music make.

He took his lips away and glanced around.

The white-haired woman who was behind the register looked over her eyeglasses and peered down the long aisle at him.

She smiled and nodded.

Matthew put his lips to the baby harmonica again.

The little boy played a few notes and the little harmonica sang with all his might. And the music they made filled the store with joyful noise.

Erik's heart trilled with happiness. Then great fear overtook him. What if he got put back? Every toy feared the same. Chosen. Thought about. Returned.

The boy stopped and glanced away, and waited, and then placed his lips back on the harmonica.

And they played a song together for a

few moments.

Erik trilled so mightily even some old trombones and tubas in the back of the store woke up.

The little harmonica had never felt such warmth and happiness. Now, he could finally sing for someone.

Matthew stopped playing, enfolded Erik in his hand, and turned to go.

Then Erik thought of Reginald. He wished with all his might for the little boy to check again.

Matthew hesitated. Once more, he gazed deep into the shelf. He saw a little yellow glint and reached. His hand came out with the little toy car.

Matthew looked at it in his open palm. It would be perfect for his dad. Now, he had one gift for each person that was important to him.

Reginald joined Erik in Matthew's hand. Reginald shouted, "Oh, joy! Oh, bliss!" They both snuggled deeper into Matthew's grip.

The harmonica felt himself being carried close to the boy's heart. Erik snuggled in as best he could. He was ready to play and sing for as long as forever.

Matthew carried them to the counter. The woman smiled and nodded again. She said, "Perfect," in a low and kindly voice.

Matthew smiled back. He tucked the little harmonica in his shirt pocket. He nestled the little toy car down next to it. All four gifts were now together.

Matthew had great joy in his bit of oddments. The only shadow on his heart grew on his passage back over the bridge. As he got nearer the far end, he knew for his

Christmas to be perfect, he'd have to have his family, someone to give these to. He clutched his treasures closer as he stepped off the near side of the bridge.

He walked back through the mainland toy store and out into the street. Once outside, Matthew realized he was back in winter cold. Stray flurries stung the night.

A block from the store, he saw three of the bigger boys who had robbed him before. He clutched at his presents and began to run.

The boys chased him. They were very fast.

At the next corner, the traffic was heavy. Matthew had to stop. Despair poured into his soul. After the glory and kindness of the island, he would lose what little he had.

He heard a soft creak behind him. Matthew turned.

It was the man in the wheelchair and Tawny.

They placed themselves between the advancing boys and Matthew.

The large boys laughed but slowed down. The man said, "No."

Tawny took a small step toward the attackers and growled.

The boys came to a complete stop. They looked to each other.

The man said, "Go." Tawny took another step toward them.

They turned and ran.

Matthew reached out to pat Tawny. The dog let him for a moment. Then dog and man trundled away.

Matthew whispered, "Thank you."

Minutes later, Matthew crawled into his

hovel. He added the tiny doll, Reginald, and the steel rose to his cache in the hollowed out brick.

Matthew sat up against the wall that had warmth. He brought the harmonica to his lips and together they made joyful music that drove back, at least for a little while, all the loneliness and fears of the night.

As Erik and Matthew sang together, the little harmonica felt this was right. He belonged here.

Chapter Thirteen: Luke

On the plane ride back from the war, Luke dozed fitfully. Most of the time he sat, wide awake, worried. He'd tried to contact his wife, but he'd had no luck. He should have been able to. The connection had gone through. The lines were clear, but he'd gotten no answer. As the plane neared its destination, Luke's fear grew that something was very wrong.

While sitting in his seat, Luke found himself pushing his right foot down on a non-existent gas pedal to try to make the plane go faster, desperate in his hope for more speed as the aircraft bucketed and swung through the night, more like Tarzan on a vine than an arrow to its target.

After each jolt, rattle, or dip, he might doze for a few moments. After a brief, disturbed nap, he'd jerked himself awake to find he'd once again been holding his foot down to the floor. He knew nothing he did could make their flight go faster. He would ease up on his foot, and then a few minutes later note that it was once again

pressed hard to the floor. He stared out at the brown earth racing by far below. The plane couldn't possibly go as quickly as he wanted.

They made stops on continents and in countries, he didn't care to know the names of. Men and women came and went. Then the plane was in the air again. This time, they'd be passing through deep night with lights far below.

At long last, the plane landed in his city. The late afternoon darkness descended on him. He had only one bag so he didn't have to wait.

Luke took several packed buses. He crowded his small ditty-bag under his seat. At his home, his key didn't work. He knocked, and a woman he didn't know answered. Beyond her, he didn't recognize any of the furniture. The smell of cooking that was unfamiliar wafted through the door.

Luke said, "This is my home."

The woman carried a tiny baby in her arms. She said, "I don't know who you are. We've lived here for quite a while. You better talk to the landlord."

Luke trudged to the basement.

"Gone," the landlord said. "They came and took them. She was sick."

"The children?"

"They aren't my children."

Luke didn't know how he kept his temper. "Where did they take them?"

"She was sick. Try the hospitals." The landlord slammed the door in Luke's face.

End of part nine. Part ten 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 is available now in paperback from **Unabridged Bookstore** in Chicago, **Outwords Books** in Milwaukee and also as an ebook or a paperback online at **Amazon.com**

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 SPORTING LIFE: Drew Ladochi

BY ROSS FORMAN

Win or lose, Drew Ladochi always has fun playing gay sports—always.

Take, for instance, the registration parties for gay softball tournaments. Ladochi's teams are the ones wearing blue wigs.

"I wanted something we could do that would be fun and start our weekend off right," said Ladochi, who has 14 blue wigs in storage—for safe keeping.

Wigs have escalated into bubble guns, sidewalk chalk, crazy legging Sundays, and whatever blue thing they can find, he said. "My team knows I prefer for us to have fun and this keeps us in good spirits."

Ladochi, 33, lives in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood and is an operations partner for a Pearle Vision franchise that will be opening this winter in Chicago. He has lived in Chicago for



Drew Ladochi.
Photos from Ladochi

eight years, moving here from Michigan.

His gay sports journey includes softball, kickball, beach volleyball, indoor volleyball, dodgeball and ultimate—all through the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA). He also has played bocce with Stonewall.

"I managed a [softball] team my first year playing because I was concerned I wouldn't be picked

for a team. I was able to put all of my friends on one team, but I didn't really know what I was doing," Ladochi admitted with a smile. "We had several practices before our season started that helped us learn how to play.

"I started playing gay sports after I witnessed the fun I could be having. My friend played on a team that was really friendly and all LGBT. I wasn't comfortable playing sports growing up because I was bullied by the other boys. [But] I saw this as an opportunity to participate and have fun.

"My favorite thing about gay sports is that I've been able to meet some really great people. I moved to Chicago and didn't really know anyone. I took a chance on joining a random volleyball team that turned into my new crew here. We do a lot together now, including 'family' vacations and dinners."

Ladochi's sporting journey also has included walking with CMSA in this year's Pride Parade—with one of his blue wigs and crazy leggings, of

course.

"It was awesome being able to see all that energy at the parade," he said. "It was entertaining watching the people on the CMSA float trying to get beads into people's windows and on balconies where people were watching the parade. Target-practice was the new sport we were playing that day."

Ladochi said his best sport is kickball, with basketball being his worst.

"I've become more confident in myself and have grown to love playing sports," he said.

Ladochi said he prefers to play third base in softball, but is willing to play anywhere, including on the bench, he said.

"I'm just here to have fun and get a couple games in," in the CMSA open Sunday softball league, he said.

"I started coaching in Chicago [in] 2012 with beach volleyball, followed by fall softball. I ended up coaching for dodgeball, kickball, [open Sunday] softball, and indoor volleyball over the years. I try to give people a chance on my teams if they want to join a league or try a sport. The only problem is making room for a new player when you already have a full roster. I am always willing to try and help a player find a team with the people I've met."



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**Extra innings with ...
Drew Ladochi**

—Favorite pro sports team: Chicago Cubs.

—Favorite pro athlete: Javier Baez

—Favorite pro sports stadium: "I don't really have one."

—If you could attend any pro sports event/game, what would it be?
"[The] Olympics, if that counts."





Gay chorus, LGBTQ groups mark holidays

BY JOHN STADELMAN

Dec. 2 marked the finale of the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus' (CGMC's) three-day "Holiday Hullabaloo" run. Partnering onstage with 10 other LGBTQ performing-arts groups at the Beverly Arts Center to deliver covers of classic holiday tunes with playful theatrics, an ensemble of more than 200 voices (and bodies) celebrated the holidays and community.

Highlights included "Wishing You A Drag Queen Christmas," performed by Micah McCain, Michael McGraw and Reggie Owens in blue, green and red attire; "We Three Kings," with solos by three stylish card-bedecked kings; "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," featuring dancing by chorus members in tutus and tuxedo shirts with monologist

MUSIC

Charles May regaling the woes of Christmas shopping; a humorous take on "Waltz of the Flowers;" a routine by the Chicago Spirit Brigade to "Go Tell It On the Mountain;" and, with The Lakeview Orchestra, an absolutely hilarious performance of "Hallelujah Chorus" featuring clumsy placard-wielding "silent monks."

The scope of this show was impressive and staggering in the number of bodies on stage, the wide variety of routines and set and costume design. The show ended with all 11 organizations teaming to perform "This Christmastide," followed by "A Wish" for the chorus alumni in the audience.



Chicago Gay Men's Chorus.
Photos by John Stadelman




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\$3 You Call It special excludes big beers, martinis, specialty cocktails, Red Bull cocktails & doubles





Carlo Chappelle.
Photo by Ana Serna

Carlo Chappelle: Born to sing

BY ANA SERNA

"Carlo is somebody who loves to sing with every ounce of his body," said Beckie Menzie. "There are people who sing because they want to be heard—and he's certainly somebody who wants

to share his music—or they want to be stars. Carlo loves to sing. He wants to sing."

Menzie, a longtime Chicago jazz performer, described her friend and colleague Carlo Chappelle passionately. Her enthusiasm is matched only by way in which Chappelle speaks of his musical ca-

reer since arriving in the United States from the Philippines almost 30 years ago.

"I was just 15 years old," said Chappelle. "My first professional performance was when I was 14 years old ... in the Philippines. I joined this professional group called PPF [People Precious and Few Choir] ... an established community choir. The year when I joined [1989], I was lucky because that was the time they decided to get into recording. So I was able to experience recording an album for the first time."

Then, at just 14, Chappelle also toured for the first time. According to Chappelle, he knew he was meant to be a singer since he was 10 years old and watching variety shows on television. It was a dream come true.

"From 1989 to 1991, [PPF toured] to come out with an album," he said. "That's when we got approved to live in the States. So May 14, 1991, is when we first landed here." Chappelle has been singing jazz all over Chicago ever since, including as a regular at the once iconic venue, The Gentry.

"I worked at [the gay bar] Gentry for 19 years. One of the things that I did there for one week short of 19 years was host a Sunday night open mic," said Menzie. "Gentry was predominantly a gay bar, and yet, people came in for the music and for the fun of it. There was an enormous sense of community and inclusion there despite what label you chose for yourself."

"That opportunity has been great for me because I've met hundreds and thousands of singers," said Menzie. "I met Carlo from that Gentry open mic."

Gentry eventually closed its doors. Menzie, however, continues to host open-mic nights both at Davenport's and Petterino's, which Chappelle still attends on occasion. Menzie also still accompanies Chappelle on the piano during his

MUSIC

performances from time to time. The two musical colleagues frequently perform, together and individually, at Davenport's Piano Bar.

Chappelle's most recent show, at Uncommon Ground on Sept. 29, was reflective of the niche but dedicated audience that Chicago jazz still holds today. Chappelle was joined onstage by one of his childhood idols, Tillie Moreno, the R&B vocalist known as "Manila's Queen of Soul." According to the Uncommon Ground Music and Programming Coordinator Rebecca Baruc, it was, by all analytical accounts, a successful show.

"On average, we have about 25-30 folks," said Baruc. The night of Chappelle and Moreno's performance, the Music Room at Uncommon Ground had substantially more attendees.

"I think it's really easy in our spaces to connect with the audience in our intimate spaces," said Baruc. Doing more with less, the Music Room at Uncommon Ground's small size and mostly wooden interior allow the acoustics to manipulate the cozy space in a unique way. Obviously aside from a piano and cabaret bar, it was the best setting for Chappelle's warm tone and high register. "It's a real, high-production concert but the performer gets to connect with the audience in a different way."

Chappelle has been passionate about singing since he was four years old, a trait he inherited from his mother, Cleotilde Centeno Quidlat. With over three decades of experiences, he is an act worth catching in any setting.

Carlo Chappelle will be performing a special holiday show at Davenport's Piano Bar on Sunday, Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15 each, and will be available for purchase at the door.



Janelle Monáe.
Photo by Jerry Nunn

Carlile, Monáe, Lamar get Grammy nods

The 2019 Grammy nominations were announced Dec. 8—and rapper Kendrick Lamar led everyone with eight nominations.

Drake scored seven, and Brandi Carlile and producer Boi-1da followed with six nods apiece. Drake, Carlile and Lamar were all recognized in the three biggest categories—album, song and record of the year—for their most recent albums.

Out musician/actress Janelle Monáe scored a nod for album of the year as well; other nominees include Cardi B, H.E.R., Post Malone, Kacey Musgraves and the artists behind the Black Panther soundtrack.

Among some of the other nominees in various categories are Taylor Swift (who got no major nods), Pink, Meshell Ndegeocello, Chris Stapleton, Kurt Elling, Carlos Vives, Bettye LaVette, Lee Ann Womack, Chris Rock, Linda Perry, Pharrell Williams and Donald Glover/Childish Gambino.

In the best new artist category, the nominees are H.E.R., Chloe x Halle, Luke Combs, Greta Van Fleet, Dua Lipa, Margo Price, Bebe Rexha and Jorja Smith.

The Grammys will be broadcast live from Los Angeles on Sunday, Feb. 10, on CBS.

Chicago to host Beard Awards through 2027

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and James Beard Foundation CEO Clare Reichenbach announced Dec. 10 that Chicago will continue to host the James Beard Foundation Awards—an annual event honoring the best of the best in the food and restaurant industry—an additional six years.

The James Beard Foundation Awards successfully made the move to Chicago in 2015. Currently slated to complete its run in 2021, today's announcement ensures that the James Beard Foundation Awards will call Chicago home each year through 2027.

In addition to the Awards, the City of Chicago, Choose Chica-

go and the Illinois Restaurant Association will collaborate with the foundation in its philanthropic endeavors, including student scholarships, partnering in both Chicago Eats Week and Chicago Restaurant Week, as well as JBF Taste America events, among other items.

The 2019 James Beard Awards celebrations will begin in New York City on Friday, April 26. The events will then move to Chicago, beginning with the Leadership Awards Dinner on Sunday, May 5, followed by The James Beard Awards Gala on Monday, May 6.

'Hedwig' tour in Chicago in 2019

John Cameron Mitchell—the Tony-winning, Golden Globe-nominated co-creator of Hedwig & the Angry Inch—will bring his rock spectacle to the United States for the first time, a press release noted.

For four exclusive engagements, Mitchell and his four-piece band will perform songs from his rock musical and share stories from 20 years of Hedwig.

The tour will stop at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave., on Feb. 22. Other stops will include Washington, D.C.; Boston; and New York City.

Mitchell will also preview songs from his upcoming 'musical podcast' Anthem: Homunculus, a 10-episode series with more than 30 new songs starring himself, Glenn Close, Patti Lupone, Cynthia Erivo, Denis O'Hare, Laurie Anderson and Marion Cotillard.

For more on the Athenaeum stop, visit <https://athenaeumtheatre.org/john-cameron-mitchell/>.



BILLY Masters

"It would not have been possible without the help of the president, who not only gave us the impetus for this reboot but provided us with fresh fields to plow daily that Diane English and our superb writing staff have cultivated fearlessly and with unique wit."—**Candice Bergen** graciously accepts her latest Golden Globe nomination for playing Murphy Brown.

As last week drew to a close, **Kevin Hart** said he was hired as host of the upcoming Academy Awards. Then the gays protested him as host of the Academy Awards. (I'm not going to recap why—look it up for yourself.) Then he resigned as host of the Academy Awards. Am I the only one who thinks it a bit, dare I say, queer that all this news has come from Mr. Hart himself and not The Academy? Maybe I should announce that The Academy asked me to host, but I've pulled out (as if). Here's another thing I'm wondering about: Is there a height restriction for hosts? I say if you're not tall enough to ride Space Mountain, you can't host the Oscars. But you can ride me. That's all.

I typically wouldn't have a **Fayewatch** item this early in the column. But trust me—this is no normal Fayewatch. Then again, there is no such thing as a "normal" Fayewatch. For the past few years, Miss Dunaway's professional output has been limited to a curious extended commercial for Gucci and shuffling onstage at two consecutive Academy Awards—thus ensuring her spot when it's time for the inevitable "In Memoriam" segment.

That was all a warm-up for her grand return to Broadway. Ah, the Great White Way. Faye hasn't appeared there since 1982—I believe she was 82 at the time. And she's finally found a vehicle to harness her unique talents, such as they are. She will star in *Tea at Five*, a one-woman show about—brace yourself—Katharine Hepburn! Well, when you think of people suitable to play dead grand dames, who else?

The press release indicates that the run will take place sometime next summer and will be a "strictly limited engagement." (I will refrain from the obvious joke.) Here's something the press release doesn't say—the first choice for the role of Miss Hepburn was the divine Charles Busch! And I should know: I was there. Back in 2011, Busch starred in a one-night-only performance of Matthew Lombardo's revised play, which was a benefit for the Ali Forney Center. Needless to say, he was magical. Charles was courted for a full run, but Busch marches to the beat of his own drum and declined. So, essentially Faye is replacing a fella in a frock. How curious—usually, it's the other way around.

I'm more than a bit intrigued by the cast of the national tour of *Falsettos*. One might think that Christian Borle and Andrew Rannells would be hard to top—well, not that hard. Then it was announced that the tour will star **Max von Essen** and **Nick Adams**, and more than my ears perked up. First off, they're both gay, which is always a



Charles Busch (above) beat Faye Dunaway to the punch, Billy says.

Photo by Michael Wakefield

plus. And Max is a leading man of the first order. He's been the stand-by for some great people (Ricky Martin in *Evita* and virtually everyone in *Les Misérables*) and, for a while, he was in the running for the real-life role of Mrs. Neil Patrick Harris—but that's another story. Nick, on the other hand, is more known for his body than his body of work—although that's mighty impressive as well. So for him to flex his thespianistic muscles in this role is a tantalizing prospect, indeed. Fingers crossed he's up to the challenge. With Eden Espinosa rounding out this luxurious cast, you have a great show that's not to be missed when it comes to a city near you.

CNN is gonna take another stab at making magic work between **Anderson Cooper** and **Andy Cohen** on New Year's Eve. I'll be DVRing (and scanning) because faithful fans know I always ring in the New Year with loved ones watching not one, but two Lindsay Wagner movies. This year we have two new films—the Hallmark Channel's *Mingle All The Way* (which has virtually the same plot as every other Hallmark Channel flick) and *Samson*, in which Lindsay plays the Biblical hero's mother. That Bionic Woman's got range!

Time for another installment of "*Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions*." This week, we're delivering the perfect 2019 calendar. I am happy to once again spotlight the work of the **Warwick Rowers**. This group of hot athletes has been raising funds through their calendar since 2009. Obviously the men change, but the standards remain high. The gay and straight rowers have twice been named UK Charity Calendar of the Year by whomever votes on these things...presumably a bunch of Brits. This year's calendar features a special guest—two-time Olympic rower **Robbie Manson** from New Zealand. And let's just say his openly gay oar is prominently featured. While we will share some of the more sizzling shots on *BillyMasters.com*, I'd suggest you grab the calendar quickly at *WarwickRowers.org*. And HURRY—I was gonna promote the Ben Cohen calendar, but it's already sold out.

Queer athletes bring us to our "*Ask Billy*" question from Stephen in Anaheim: "Remember all that talk about a sex tape of **Tom Daley** being

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SIDETRACK

shopped around? Whatever happened to that?"

That's a good question. Sure, we got quite a fascinating shot of his ass in the air waiting for ... well, whomever turned up. And there was that brief clip of him allegedly fondling his nether regions through underwear. But then, nothing. So I did a little digging and found quite a few still shots from a video that allegedly stars Mr. Daley and a rather hot bald bloke. Now, I cannot say that this is definitely Tom. For all I know, it could be one of those many Tom Daley look-a-likes with a strikingly similar body, similar hair and similar ass that is enjoyed with great gusto by a hot bald guy. I mean, anything's possible. Check it out at *BillyMasters.com* and decide for yourself.

When bald men are welcomed "Daley," it's time to end another column. If you're having trouble finding the perfect gift for that special someone, why not snag them a membership to *BillyMasters.com*—the site that's a great stocking stuffer. If you have a question, send it along to *Billy@BillyMasters.com* and I promise to get back to you before Faye convinces Warren to play Spencer. Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

'Pie in the Sky'; Heartland closing; Yugen opening

BY ANDREW DAVIS

A pizza dinner is a pizza dinner, until there's a special element added—like dining 1,300 feet high.

Skydeck Chicago (233 S. Franklin St.; theskydeck.com/)—located in the Willis Tower, the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere—offers a one-of-a-kind dining experience: "Pie in the Sky." The VIP dining experience takes place



Giordano's "Pie in the Sky."

Photo by Andrew Davis

after hours (starting at 9 or 11 p.m., depending on the time of year), so there's concern about foot traffic—and there are four tables, max, so only a few people get to roam the lofty floor and partake of the Chicago skyline from a vantage point few people acquire.

The table is not on the ledge, but on its edge, which still provides a magnificent view while enjoying dinner. (I personally think a lot of people would be freaked out if they actually

dined on the ledge.) By the way, said dinner is a three-course meal featuring Giordano's items, including salad, dessert (tiramisu or apple pan pie) and, of course, stuffed pizza for up to eight people. The pizza was delicious, the dessert was enjoyable—and Giordano's has some of the tastiest green tea I've ever had.

However, no experience is perfect, and this one had a couple snafus. The night my friend and I dined was particularly chilly, and the heat wasn't circulating; when we asked the waitstaff about making things warmer, we were told a different department was in charge and they really couldn't do much. Worse, we were informed the same thing regarding the light—or lack of it. I know the darkness helps with romance and visibility (of the city lights), but if it's truly a VIP experience, let's shed a little light on the subject. (Eventually, one of the friendly waiters procured three candles.)

But even with those snafus, this was a lovely and unique experience. You won't soon forget it. To make a reservation, call 312-875-9447 or email sales@theskydeck.com.

Heartland Cafe closing

Longtime Rogers Park fixture **The Heartland Cafe's** last day of business will be Monday, Dec. 31.

In a letter to people addressed as "family," owner Tom Rosenfeld wrote, in part. "There has been a lot of uncertainty hanging over us lately, with questions on the fate of Heartland. As you know, the Heartland building has been listed for sale and we are now pretty far along with a sale. We might be able to come back once the new owners build a new building, but that won't be for some time. So we have been reviewing new spaces. At this time, there are a few that might work and we are trying to work out details, but nothing is certain.

"No matter what happens next, we will need to close down for at least a few months. What we know now is that Heartland's last day of operation in our home for 42 years will be December 31.

"This has been such a hard moment to arrive at. We are so thankful to you, our community, for the steadfast support and love you have shown to

Turn to page 29



SIDETRACK

Charity: Check. Underwear: Check check!
Debbie Fox and Dixie Lynn Cartwright host the annual Santa Speedo Run, Sat., December 8, to benefit Center on Halsted.

Joseph Stevens Photography

DISH from page 28

the Heartland Cafe over 5 decades."

"Financially, I can't keep up with the building anymore," Rosenfeld—also an organic farmer and owner of Earth First Farms in Berrien Center, Michigan—told The Chicago Tribune in September. "We can't function like a normal restaurant. We're just spread out all over this building in all these small spaces."

The 9,600-square-foot building, at 7000 N. Glenwood Ave., housed the Heartland Cafe, Heartland Studio Theatre and Red Line Tap.



Executive Chef Mari Katsumura of Yugen.

Photos by Leigh Loftus

Yugen opens

One of the most anticipated local openings of the year has taken place at contemporary Japanese restaurant **Yugen**, 652 W. Randolph St.—complete with a Dec. 4 media event.

Inspired by Executive Chef Mari Katsumura's lineage, the word "yugen" means "the power to conjure indescribable appreciation for the simplicity of beauty," according to a press release. Katsumura has had experience in highly rated local spots such as Blackbird, Grace, Acadia and Entente.

Katsumura leads an all-woman team at the restaurant, working with Pastry Chef Jeanine Lamedieu and General Manager Morgan Olszewski.

Menu offerings include such items as crab rice, binchotan-grilled octopus, Japanese curry, cheesecake and more.

See YugenChicago.com.



Yugen.

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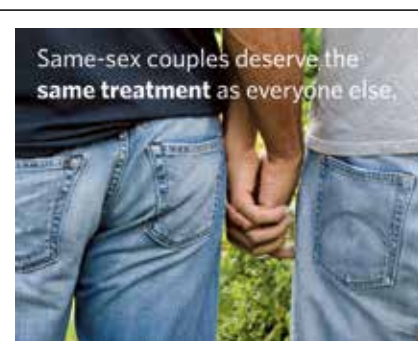
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'STRUT' show marks World AIDS Day

The 10th annual STRUT fashion show took place Dec. 2 at the Promontory.

The evening featured a runway fashion show with 14 different designers and boutiques as well as speakers ranging from AIDS activists to health-care organizations.

Regarding the fashion show, models of all body types and ages wore street wear, suits, underwear and more. The work was quite creative: One line was made by with the designer's father's cut-up sweatshirts, while another was structured to fit people of all sizes.

More than 300 people attended the event, creating a packed and lively audience for the show. Since its second iteration, the event has been organized by John Fleming, who brought in professional models and partnered with SAIC and Columbia Fashion School to feature the work of graduating seniors.

Additionally, there were tables selling accessories outside the fashion show space, and a table inside the show for the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC).

Photos and text by Brooke Nagler



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Dec. 12

Author Reading: Making All Black Lives Matter by Barbara Ransby Reading, conversation, and book-signing. From the perspective of a participant-observer, book maps the movement, the genealogy, roots in Black feminist politics and Black radical tradition. 7:00pm - 8:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Thursday, Dec. 13

Presentation opens exhibit of AIDS awareness stamps Norman Sandfield, whose significant collection of Red Ribbon and Rainbow Pride stamps resides at Gerber/Hart, will present on the 25th anniversary of the 1993 Red Ribbon for AIDS Awareness US postage stamp. Exhibit through February 2019 includes AIDS Awareness stamps from around the world. Free 6:30pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.gerberhart.org>

The Old Woman Broods Written in 1969 by one of Poland's most revolutionary and prophetic playwrights, a dark satiric look at one woman's grotesque struggle



UNICORN SIGHTING

Saturday, Dec. 15

The Unicorn Ball will take place at The Shapiro.

Photo from 2017 ball by Ed Negron

against an unchecked power leading the world to disaster. Through Saturday, Jan. 19. \$20 8:00pm Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland Ave. Chicago 773-384-0494 <http://www.trapdoortheatre.com>

Friday, Dec. 14

Queer Genre Fiction Book Group Each second Friday 7:00pm - 9:00pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.gerberhart.org>

25th Anniversary Nutcracker Hyde Park School of Dance (HPSD) offers fans of ballet, modern and hip hop its annual presentation of Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker, featuring more than 175 dancers. 7:00pm Mandel Hall University of Chicago 1131 E. 57th St. Chicago 773-493-8498 <http://hydeparkdance.org/tickets>

December OPALGA Potluck Holiday showtune singalong welcomes any pianists, vocalists or sheet music bearing participants. Collecting donations for Hephzibah children's Home. LG-BTQ and straight supportive friends invited. 7:00pm - 10:00pm Private Oak Park home. Contact organizers for location <https://www.facebook.com/events/1619030711738019/>

Saturday, Dec. 15

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

25th Anniversary Nutcracker Hyde Park School of Dance (HPSD) offers fans of ballet, modern and hip hop its annual presentation of Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker, featuring more than 175 dancers.

First show 1 p.m. 6:00pm Mandel Hall University of Chicago 1131 E. 57th St. Chicago 773-493-8498 <http://hydeparkdance.org/tickets>

Day With(out) Art 2018, Alternate Endings, Activist Risings. A marquee screening highlights the impact of art in HIV/AIDS activism and advocacy today with compelling short videos. Free with RSVP 7:00pm - 9:00pm Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago 312-397-4010 <http://mcachicago.org/Calendar/2018/12/Screening-Day-Without-Art-ALTERNATE-ENDINGS-ACTIVIST-RISINGS>

The Evanston Dance Ensemble's 22nd season A suite of three pieces, Moving On, Graduation Ball and "...my breath away..." 7:30pm Studio5 Performing Arts Center, 1934 Dempster, Evanston Tickets: <http://movingon.brownpaper-tickets.com>

Unicorn Ball The 2018 Unicorn Ball-Brave Space Alliance's largest annual fundraiser has been called the official queer "coming out" party of the year, as Brave Space celebrates trans liberation and power in the city. \$20-\$250. Visit "2018 Unicorn Ball" on Facebook or Eventbrite. 9:00pm - 2:00am The Shapiro, 1612 W. Chicago Ave.

Sunday, Dec. 16

Asians & Friends holiday party LGBTQIA organization annual holiday party with BBQ and comfort food. Be prepared to split cost of meal and order drinks

separately. Bring a gift, get a gift. RSVP to AngelChgo@aol.com or by phone. 5:00pm Piggery, 1625 W. Irving Park Rd. 312-409-1573 Tickets: <http://www.afchicago.org>

Pride Arts Center's "LezFest" showcase Presentation and celebration of queer female and non-binary performance artists 7:30pm Pride Arts Center, 4147 N. Broadway <http://web.ovationtix.com/trs/pe.c/10348755>

Monday, Dec. 17

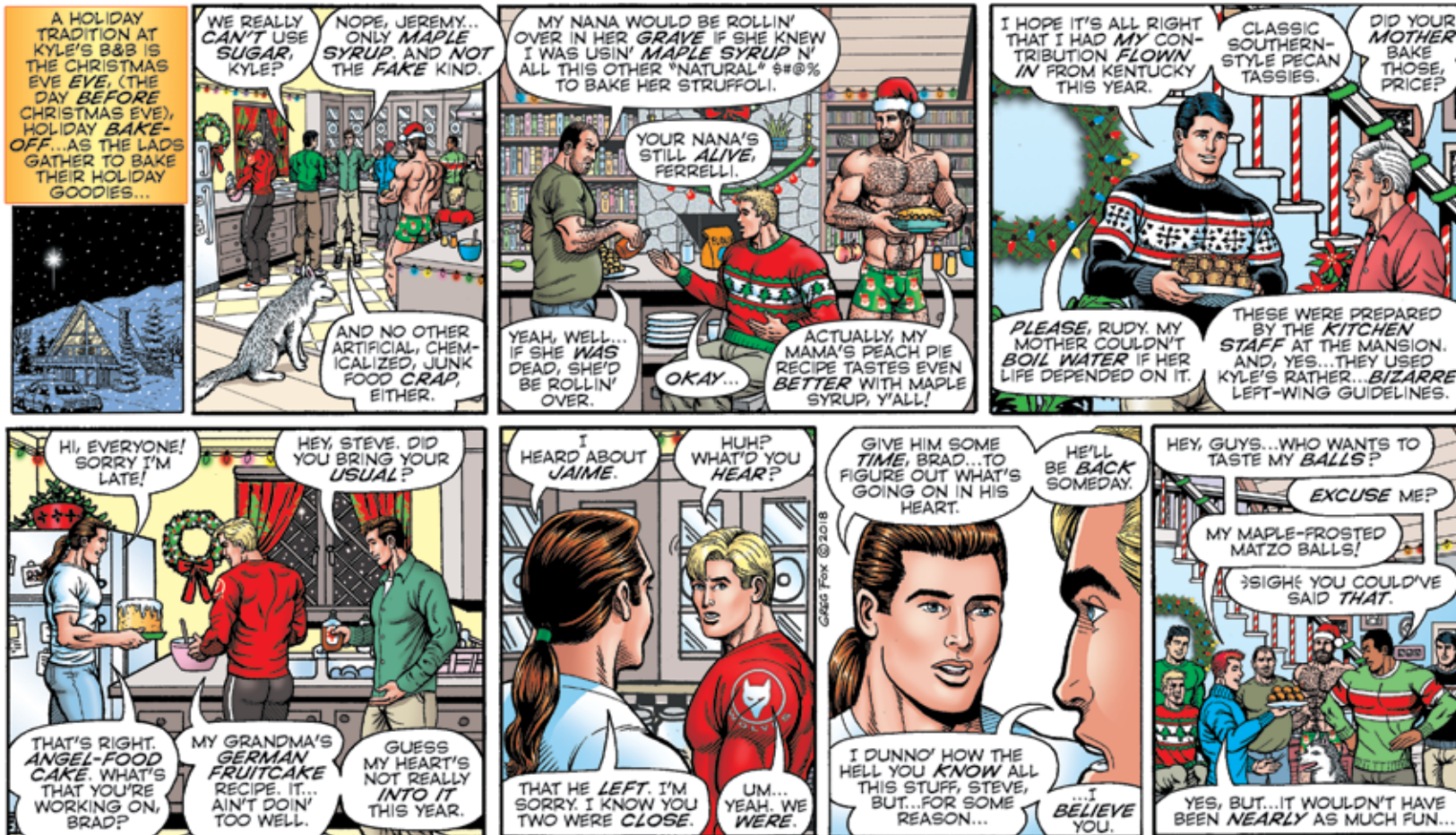
Bi/Queer Holiday Social Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago 7:00pm - 9:00pm Blaze Pizza, 953 W Belmont Ave., Chicago; <https://www.meetup.com/chicago-bisexual-queer-meetup/>

Wed., Dec. 19

Holiday Hootenanny Radio Hour Present A Cricket on the Mantle John and Dot are expecting a child, Tim and Mae are getting married, and almost everyone is home for the holidays. All seems calm and bright, until a mysterious drifter wanders into town, changing the course of everyone's Christmas plans. Pre-performance caroling begins at 7 p.m. 7:30pm Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. <http://anarchistfolk.wixsite.com/cricket>.

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by Greg Fox



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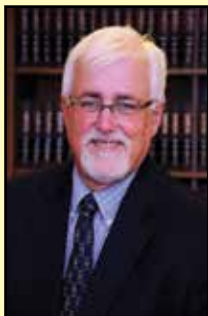
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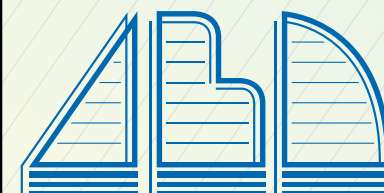
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