

# WINDY CITY TIMES

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


**VOL 35, NO. 01** **OCT. 2, 2019**

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## BY THE BOOK

LGBT History Month launches with a look at LGBT bookstores.

Photo of Ed Hermance courtesy of Hermance



**6**

## ON THE DOCKET

Pivotal LGBT Supreme Court cases await.

Photo of Plaintiff Aimee Stephens by Charles William Kelly



**4**

## INCLUSIVE

LGBTs part of the flock at Kol Hadash.

Photo of Rabbi Adam Chalom courtesy of Kol Hadash



**8**

# RAP IT UP

WCT examines the local queer hip-hop scene



**PAGE 18**

Local rapper KC Ortiz.  
Photo by Julia Hale

# HURRICANE BIANCA

Talking with Bianca Del Rio



**PAGE 14**

Bianca Del Rio.  
Photo by Rene Koala

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## INDEX

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NEWS	
Preview of Supreme Court cases	4
Foundation calls for officer's suspension	5
LGBT History Month item: LGBT bookstores	6
Kol Hadash touts being LGBTQ-inclusive	8
Bisexuality Day; trans locker room policy	9
Viewpoints: Lassiter; letter	10

## ENTERTAINMENT/EVENTS

Theater reviews	12
Not a drag: Bianca Del Rio interview	14
Chicago Magic Lounge	15
Latinx LGBT exhibit launches	16
Jonathan Van Ness visits Chicago	17
FEATURE: Chicago's queer rap scene	18
NIGHTSPOTS	19
Classifieds	21
Calendar	22

## UPCOMING 2019-20

## WINDY CITY TIMES PRINT DATES:

Oct. 16	Feb. 5	May 27
Oct. 30	Feb. 19	June 10
Nov. 13	March 4	June 24
Nov. 27	March 18	July 8
Dec. 11	April 1	July 22
Dec. 25	April 15	August 5
Jan. 8	April 29	August 19
Jan. 22	May 13	Sept. 2

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## 'CLOSET' CASE

Gerber/Hart Library and Archives held its benefit, "Out of the Closets and Into the Archives."

Photo (left) by Melissa Wasserman

## DRAG REEL



Drag queen extraordinaire Detox chats with Windy City Times.

Photo courtesy of Voss Events

## GOURMET DINING

WCT has cultural roundups of Bon Appetit Presents Chicago Gourmet, and EXPO CHICAGO.

## THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Fiona Apple, Frank Ocean and Tyler Perry.

plus  
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

## This Week's Featured Properties



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# Supreme Court preview: 'The stakes could not be higher'

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Here's the blunt reality: The U.S. Supreme Court's rulings on three cases it will hear arguments about Tuesday, Oct. 8, could have the most profound consequences yet on LGBT people.

The three cases ask whether an existing federal law that prohibits discrimination in employment "because of sex" applies where discrimination is motivated by an employee's sexual orientation or transgender status.

The existing law in question is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That law states: "It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer [of 15 or more people] to ... discriminate against any individual ... **because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.**"

LGBT legal activists say that discriminating against an employee because his or her spouse or sexual partner is of the same sex constitutes discrimination "because of ...sex." They say discrimination against an employee whose gender identity differs from the sex attributes ascribed to them at birth constitutes discrimination "because of ...sex."

Attorneys on the other side, which includes the Trump administration, say Congress did not intend to include sexual orientation and gender identity under "because of ...sex," and sex discrimination is when "members of one sex are exposed to disadvantageous terms ... to which members of the other sex are not exposed."

Both sides believe an explicit reading of the law favors them.

"If the Court reads the Title VII statute properly—and simply applies the literal words on the page—we will win," said Jenny Pizer, senior counsel to Lambda Legal which has submitted friend-of-the-court briefs on behalf of the gay and transgender employees in the three cases. "Having the Supreme Court confirm that understanding...will have enormous, powerful deterrent and remedial effects." And because similar language is used in federal laws covering housing, education, credit, and health care, said Pizer, a win in these Title VII cases "will be tremendous precedents for future litigation in those areas."

"The stakes for our community could not be higher," said Jon Davidson, chief counsel to Freedom for All Americans and former national legal director for Lambda Legal. Davidson characterized the three cases before the court as "the most consequential cases for LGBTQ people since the Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality and the most important cases about transgender people ever heard by the high court."

The Alliance Defending Freedom, a group that has spearheaded numerous lawsuits to diminish equal protection for LGBT people, has been send-

ing out e-mails telling its supporters that the decisions will have enormous consequences, too. ADF says that, if the court allows "sex" to include "gender identity," the result could "undermine equal opportunities for women and girls" in athletics, force women's shelters to accept men, and force schools to "open locker rooms, restrooms, and showers to men who claim a female identity."

Many Supreme Court observers expect the trio of Title VII cases to be the most watched cases of the 2019-20 term, which begins Monday, Oct. 7.

So, what are some of the most important things LGBT people need to know about these upcoming cases?

## When all this will happen and how to watch it

The arguments will begin at 10 a.m. ET on Tuesday, October 8, at the U.S. Supreme Court. The first hour will be spent on two cases involving sexual orientation discrimination; the second hour will be spent on transgender discrimination. People who live in the Washington, D.C., area can spend many hours waiting in line and maybe get into the court chambers to see and hear a few minutes (seats reserved for visitors are rotated). The proceedings are not televised, so the next best bet is to read a transcript of the arguments, which will be made available at [supremecourt.gov](http://supremecourt.gov) later in the day. And audio recordings are available at the same site later in the week.

## The three cases and their basic facts

There are three cases, all involving Title VII.

Two ask whether Title VII covers sexual orientation discrimination. They are *Altitude Express v. Zarda*, from New York and the Second Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, and *Bostock v. Clayton County*, from Georgia and the 11th Circuit. Arguments in these two cases have been consolidated and will be discussed in the first hour.

The *Zarda* lawsuit began in 2010, when a Long Island skydive company called Altitude Express fired one of its instructors, Daniel Zarda. The company said it fired Zarda over a customer service problem; Zarda said it fired him because he disclosed to a jumper that he was gay. Zarda filed a lawsuit and, though he died in a skydive accident in 2014, his estate carried on the litigation with the help of Lambda Legal. They won at the Second Circuit, but the employer has appealed to the Supreme Court.

The *Bostock* lawsuit began in 2013 when the Clayton County Juvenile System in Georgia fired a long-time employee, Gerald Bostock, after he openly acknowledged joining a gay softball team. The county said it fired him for "conduct unbecoming a county employee;" Bostock said it fired him because he is gay. The 11th Circuit dismissed his lawsuit, noting it had previously ruled sexual orientation is not covered until Title VII. Bostock appealed to the Supreme Court.



Aimee Stephens, the plaintiff in one of the trials.

Photo by Charles William Kelly

The third case, which will be argued in the second hour, involves discrimination based on transgender status:

*Harris Funeral v. EEOC* originated in 2014, when funeral home director and embalmer Aimee Stephens filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Stephens said the Harris Funeral home fired her after seven years on the job two weeks after she informed the employer she would be transitioning from male to female. The funeral home said it fired Stephens because Stephens refused to abide by the company's dress code, requiring that male employees wear a company-furnished men's business suit. The EEOC found Harris Funeral in violation of Title VII, and the Sixth Circuit agreed. Harris Funeral appealed to the Supreme Court.

## The prospects for victory or defeat

To win at case at the Supreme Court, one must have the support of at least five justices. In the past, LGBT people could pretty much rely on getting that majority from the court's four generally liberal justices (Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan) and the moderate Justice Anthony Kennedy. Kennedy, in fact, became legendary for providing the critical fifth vote—on marriage equality and striking down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). He also led six-to-three majorities in striking down sodomy laws and laws seeking to gut non-discrimination ordinances.

But Kennedy retired last year and, with the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, the new court has a solid five-person majority of very conservative justices. The new justices include Brett Kavanaugh, whose answers around LGBT issues during his confirmation hearing were alarmingly evasive to LGBT activists. They also include Neil Gorsuch, who wrote an article criticizing "liberals" for filing lawsuits on "everything from gay marriage to assisted suicide" to achieve their "social agenda."

Hence, the prospects for victory have diminished in the past year, to say the least.

## Precedent favors a pro-LGBT outcome

One thing leaning in favor of the LGBT parties in these cases is precedent—previous Supreme Court rulings—in two cases.

In one case, decided in 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that discrimination based on sex included discrimination based on gender-based stereotypes. The case was *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, in which a female employee at the accounting giant Price Waterhouse was rejected for partnership because some the top officials at the firm considered her too masculine. The Supreme Court plurality said the employer's refusal to promote the woman was "motivated by stereotypical notions about women's proper deportment" and that it constituted a violation of Title VII unless the employer could prove "by clear and convincing evidence" that it would have refused the promotion regardless of the employee's gender.

In the second case, decided in 1998, the Supreme Court, led by conservative Justice Antonin Scalia, said Title VII's prohibition against sex discrimination, including a prohibition against sexual harassment, could be used to protect an employee from sexual harassment by an employee of the same sex. The case was *Oncale v. Sundowner*.

The caveat: while lower courts must abide by U.S. Supreme Court precedent, the Supreme Court itself does not. The court has famously reversed precedent in cases involving segregation, interracial marriage, and, corporate financing in elections. Most relevant here, of course, is that the Supreme Court, in 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas*, reversed its 1986 ruling in *Bowers v. Hardwick* which had upheld state bans on same-sex sexual relations.

## Complications and consequences abound

Relatively speaking, the Supreme Court moves slowly and prefers to leave the driving to Congress. It took 17 years for the Supreme Court to acknowledge that *Hardwick* was "not correct" and strike down sodomy laws with *Lawrence*. It took 17 years for the court to strike down the federal Defense of Marriage Act after it was enacted. And it took 43 years for the high court to rectify its dismissal of a marriage equality case in 1972 by striking down state bans on same-sex marriage in 2015.

But while this very large and slow-moving judiciary seemed to complete a full turn toward LGBT equality in 2015's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a headwind seemed to develop last year with the Masterpiece Cakeshop decision. The majority sent the case back to Colorado, saying the state's human rights commission had expressed "hostility" toward the religious beliefs expressed by a wedding cake baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a gay couple. Some LGBT activists felt that gave "dangerous encouragement" to business owners who might want to circumvent laws prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination simply by claiming religious motivation. Similar cases have since multiplied and will, no doubt, be before the Supreme Court soon.

But the consequences of a ruling about Title VII and sexual orientation and transgender status are even greater. Currently, only 21 states and the District of Columbia prohibit both sexual orientation and transgender discrimination in the

Turn to page 5



# Foundation calls on CPD board to enforce officer's suspension

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Lighthouse Foundation (LF) Board President Rev. Jamie Frazier called for Chicago Police Department (CPD) officer and Walsh Security owner Thomas Walsh Sr. to serve his 60-day suspension, of which he has appealed, during the Sept. 19 public comments section of the police board's monthly public meeting at the Chicago Public Safety Headquarters.

Civilian Office of Police Accountability Chief Administrator Sydney Roberts, Chicago Police Board (CPB) President Ghian Foreman, CPB Vice President Paula Wolff, CPD Superintendent Eddie Johnson and all of the board members were in attendance.

At the meeting, Frazier spoke about LF's mission "to advance justice for Black LGBTQ+ people across Chicagoland through empowerment, education and entertainment."

Frazier said the police board should enforce the suspension that former CPD Superintendent Garry McCarthy called for in 2015 after a two-year investigation into Walsh's behavior.

"On Nov. 29, 2013, while off duty, Officer Walsh physically assaulted a Black security guard named James Matthews at Lucky Horseshoe," said Frazier in his statement. "In [Independent Police Review Authority] IPRA's thorough 2015 summary report they sustained allegation number one for Officer Walsh. They affirmed that Walsh, quote, 'engaged in an unjustified physical altercation when he pushed James Matthews to the floor, causing an injury to his rotator cuff.'

"IPRA also sustained allegation number two for Walsh in that he used, quote, 'profanity and racially motivated language towards James Matthews.' IPRA found that Walsh said to Matthews words to the effect of quote, 'Fucking [N-word]. Don't you ever put your fucking hands on me. Who the fuck do you think you are, you fucking [N-word]?' and 'Get that fucking [N-word] away from me.'"

Frazier further said, "I urge you in this moment to get justice for James Matthews by bringing Walsh to justice."

Root and Branch Church of Logan Square Co-

Pastor Virginia White and Hyde Park Union Church Co-Pastor Sarah Lusche also spoke out in favor of enforcing Walsh's 60-day suspension at the meeting. No one spoke out against it.

White said her congregation stands "boldly for justice, loving wildly and indiscriminately" and that police board members were also charged with upholding justice. She said police officers should be allies in the fight for justice; however this is not the case due to the violence a number of CPD officers have committed against people of color like Matthews.

"This is why we cannot afford to let his unacceptable and shameful actions go undressed," said White. "As long as these allegations sustained against him languish in appeals we all lose."

White added that honoring McCarthy's 60-day suspension recommendation would restore some trust in the CPD.

"Let's do something and let's do it now," said White.

Following White's remarks, Foreman asked Johnson about the case and Johnson said "sorry this is the first time I am hearing about it and we will look into it."

Lusche spoke about her congregation's affirming policies and its long history of working for equity in Chicago. She said her church believes in extending its faith beyond their building to fight for justice and that includes asking that Walsh's suspension go into effect. Lusche added that as a citizen of Chicago and pastor in the city she is appalled that Walsh "has yet to face repercussions for his actions."

"I love this city and I have been called to serve the people of this city as best as I can," said Lusche. "I believe that Chicago can and should be a place where all people are valued and ... can flourish. Yet this vision cannot be realized if blatantly violent and racist behavior remains unchecked."

Lusche also told the board and attendees the case log number is 1066452.

Prior to Frazier, White and Lusche's remarks, Foreman expressed displeasure with Johnson for his failure to present an oral report about CPD's

marriage equality."

But there's an equally enormous consequence and message if the LGBT community loses.

According to Pizer, "If we lose either the sexual orientation cases or the gender identity/transgender status case, the consequences will be intensely dire in multiple ways. There will be a message that it's perfectly legal to fire or refuse to hire [or] otherwise to abuse LGBTQ people at work."

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Rev. Jamie Frazier.  
Photo by Carrie Maxwell

actions to the public at the meeting.

After the meeting, Frazier told this publication that CPB Executive Director Max Caproni gave him his card and would be in touch with him to discuss this matter further.

Frazier first spoke publicly about Walsh at a racial justice summit he spearheaded this past July 13 at Lincoln Park's St. Pauls UCC. At the summit, Frazier called on the Center on Halsted (the Center) to retract Walsh Security's contract due to Walsh's yet to be served suspension in light of the IPRA's findings.

At an Aug. 10 community meeting Frazier announced that LF and its Coalition of Allies for Racial Equality arm would focus on the Center's CEO, Modesto "Tico" Valle, because he has the power to rescind Walsh Security's contract, of which he has not.

On Sept. 3, LF sent Valle a letter, signed by a

host of community leaders and others that detailed LF's concerns about his leadership and the Center's relationship with Walsh Security.

Since then, LF has received a letter from Valle that stated, in part, "I will send dates at a later time to arrange a meeting for you and two of your leadership to meet with myself, the Center's board chair and a representative from the Center."

Frazier told this publication that he sent an email response on Sept. 20 to Valle expressing his dismay that a firm meeting date with the Center was not offered in their letter.

To view the Sept. 3 letter, visit <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScHzhto5JTH0hp8oseB-JJ0Xx6wDpT-A4CgV7jmdjewQjpsnA/view-form>

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

## SUPREME from page 4

workplace.

"If we win," explained Davidson, "all LGBTQ people will be protected no matter where they live."

A victory would "also be [a] resounding confirmatory statement that anti-LGBTQ discrimination is wrong," said Pizer.

"It's impossible to overstate the ameliorative influence of such statements," she said. "Witness the profound changes in social attitudes post-

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## LGBT HISTORY MONTH

# Authors and activism: A history of LGBT bookstores

BY JASON VILLEMEZ

"It was unbelievably fun," Ed Hermance said about his time operating Giovanni's Room, one of the first queer bookstores in the world. "You weren't there for the economics, and it would be exhausting if you were in it for the politics. We were starved."

Until the 1970s, when LGBT publishing first began and activists like Barbara Gittings pushed for representation in libraries, the few queer books available were limited mostly to anti-gay medical texts. So, as the first wave of bookstores like Giovanni's Room opened, getting ahold of quality LGBT titles was a necessity. According to Hermance, "Every book in the store from 1973 into 1976 the owners had bought for cash at a wholesaler in the West Village, where Craig Rodwell helped them pick out the few dozen titles available on gay subjects." When Hermance and Arleen Olshan bought Giovanni's Room in 1976, the two continued to make trips to New York and received the same guidance. "[Craig] knew everything, really."

Rodwell, who had moved to New York in 1958, did much more than help booksellers like Hermance find stock. A longtime activist and organizer, he opened the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop in 1967, the same year as the Stonewall Inn about a mile away. The store occupied a space on Mercer Street in the heart of New York University, and for those students and professors who passed by, everything could be seen. "Unlike most gay bars," said Ellen Broidy, one of the first to work in the bookshop, "the Oscar Wilde had a standard-issue plate glass window, so once you were in, you were visible from the street. We actually had more than one 'customer' say they were there doing a sociology or psychology project."

As the first of its kind, the shop served as part-bookstore and part-meeting space, housing meetings for the Homophile Youth Movement

and a bulletin board for group and event listings. On the shelves were titles ranging from lesbian pulp fiction to poetry to psychiatric texts that disputed the anti-gay establishment. Broidy, who co-organized the first gay pride march along with Rodwell, remembers well the Alma Routsong novel "Patience and Sarah," which generated excitement at the time "because nobody died at the end."

Within a few years, the shop increased its offerings and Rodwell opened a second store on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, right in the center of the city's gay beating heart and surrounded by the counterculture that infused the activism of the era. Visitors included locals and tourists, people from abroad and writers such as Tennessee Williams and Patricia Nell Warren, who gave readings.

Another of the Oscar Wilde's early visitors was Jearld Moldenhauer, a Cornell University student who traveled from Ithaca during school breaks to peruse the shelves and walk the Village streets. Moldenhauer founded the Cornell University Student Homophile League in 1968 and, after moving to Canada a year later, the University of Toronto Homophile Association. He was disappointed that Canadian bookstores failed to stock the new wave of post-Stonewall books, so he ordered the titles himself and began to sell them out of his knapsack at various community meetings. The knapsack period was the first for the Glad Day Bookshop, which then operated out of Moldenhauer's apartment along with The Body Politic, one of the country's first gay periodicals.

"The reality was that I was a full-time gay radical," Moldenhauer said, "one who wore many hats at the same time." After finding a more permanent space for Glad Day Toronto, he went on to open a Boston location in 1979, the same year that A Different Light in Los Angeles was co-founded by his former staff member. After early success, iterations of A Different Light soon appeared in San Francisco and New York. Lambda Rising, which first opened in Washington D.C. in 1974, followed a similar expansion strategy, creating a store in Baltimore and later on in Norfolk and Rehoboth Beach.

The shops, which supported each other by sharing news and ideas, became cornerstones of the communities they served, hosting political organizations and providing safe spaces for people to explore and embrace their sexuality. Such inclusiveness, along with the spirit of anti-war, anti-establishment revolution that fanned out before and after Stonewall, encouraged others to build upon the idea started by Rodwell and the Oscar Wilde. By the mid-1980s, queer bookstores were in more than 20 cities across North America, as well as venues in Germany, France, Australia, the Netherlands and the U.K.

Gay's The Word, London's queer bookshop, opened in 1979 on Marchmont Street, a few blocks from the British Museum. Like the Oscar



Ed Hermance standing in front of Giovanni's Room in the 1980s.

Photo courtesy of Hermance

Wilde and all of its brethren, the shop and staff endured harassment both verbal and physical, so much so that wooden shutters were put up each night to protect the windows. But the extent of the threats did not begin nor end with bricks: Her Majesty's Government had a larger, more dangerous legal threat aimed at the store.

In 1984, customs officers raided Gay's The Word on multiple occasions and confiscated all imported publications. The shipments, many of which had come from Giovanni's Room (who had begun wholesaling to stores abroad), included 144 titles such as novels by Gordon Merrick and Armistead Maupin, "The Joy of Gay Sex" by Charles Silverstein and Edmund White, a French weekly newspaper, and a 14th-century devotional book authored by a nun. The shop's directors and assistant manager, whose homes were also raided, faced 100 charges including "conspiracy to import indecent and obscene material." It took two years for the case to go through the courts before the staff was acquitted. During a pre-trial hearing, the leader of the operation admitted that officers were given guidelines to confiscate work dealing with homosexuality.

Such seizures, which relied on archaic customs laws, happened to bookstores in other countries, including Glad Day and Little Sister's Bookstore in Vancouver—both took their cases through Canadian courts. The censorship came during a time when queer booksellers distributed items that could be found no place else, including information that much of society wished to remain hidden.

In the early years of the AIDS crisis, most medical and government establishments refused to share the most up-to-date information for fear

of promoting or associating with homosexuality. Groups such as ACT-UP created pamphlets that explained transmission, symptoms and how to get tested. Giovanni's Room printed a bibliography of all known books on the disease. A person caught with such literature, even if they were not infected, could be fired from their job or ostracized in their community, so bookstores such as Gay's The Word, according to longtime manager Jim MacSweeney, gave people a protected environment to take in the information.

"Sometimes, when people came in and asked about different books, they were also perhaps outing themselves as being HIV-positive, knowing that they were doing it in a safe, non-judgmental space. At the height of the epidemic, when newspapers and society were savage in their fear and loathing of gay people and people affected by HIV/AIDS, we managed to retain our sanity and provide a welcoming environment."

The AIDS crisis reminded the community to rally around each other, both in times of celebration and in times of stress. Throughout the late '80s and early '90s, as queer bookstores continued to help people weather the storm, a new generation of publishers and writers came into its own. Giovanni's Room often hosted up to 50 writers a year, including stalwarts like Rita Mae Brown, whose novel "Rubyfruit Jungle" went on to sell over 1 million copies, Alan Hollinghurst and Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore. LGBT publishers like Alyson Books began to widen their scope of releases to include history texts, more work by queer women and children's books. Classics like "Giovanni's Room" (the novel), which at times had fallen out of print in the U.S., were reprinted and celebrated. And openly gay celebrities wrote memoirs, among them the diver Greg Louganis, whose 1995 effort "Breaking The Surface" became the top seller for many queer bookstores that year. Many store owners recorded their highest sales ever during the decade between 1987 and 1997.

Dorothy Allison, whose 1992 novel Bastard Out of Carolina was a finalist for the National Book Award, credited LGBT bookstores with shaping her work and her life.

"I well remember the Oscar Wilde Bookstore in downtown NYC, wandering in there as a sort of baby dyke and being closely observed by the gay man behind the counter. I was concerned that he thought I was a shoplifter but actually he was admiring my leather jacket. That was a tiny but wonderful bookstore. Without gay and lesbian bookstores, and the many feminist bookstores of youth, I would never have found my people, my community, never had the encouragement and commentary of other gay and lesbian writers. I would not be who I am without those voices, those closely watching eyes, those critical and understanding perspectives," said Allison.

In the mid-'90s, as the first HIV drug cocktails emerged, chain booksellers like Borders had spread across the country and, coveting a foothold in a burgeoning market, opened gay and lesbian sections in their stores. Their proliferation caused the number of LGBT bookstores to reach its tipping point. The subsequent decline, felt in full by the late 2000s and hastened with the arrival of online bookselling, led numerous

## SIDEBAR

### Chicago's bookstores

Chicago has a couple longtime LGBT bookstores as well. **Women & Children First** (5233 N. Clark St.; WomenAndChildrenFirst.com) started in 1979, and is now one of the largest feminist bookstores in the country, stocking more than 30,000 books by and about women, children's books for all ages, as well as LGBTQ fiction and non-fiction.

**Unabridged Bookstore** (3251 N. Broadway; UnabridgedBookstore.com) opened in 1980, and is known for its knowledgeable staff as well as the staff's handwritten personal recommendations.

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# Kol Hadash Congregation embraces LGBTQ inclusivity

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation, which is housed inside North Shore Unitarian Church in Deerfield, has been a leader in LGBTQ-inclusivity since its founding in 2001. The congregation emerged from the now-defunct Congregation Beth Or and celebrates Humanistic Judaism. And yet, this year they have made changes to become even more welcoming.

"Humanistic Judaism has always prided itself on being inclusive and welcoming: from our founding in 1963, we have celebrated interfaith marriages and families, accepted those who self-identified as Jewish regardless of which parent or grandparent, if any were Jewish, and for many years have been LGBTQ inclusive," said Kol Hadash Rabbi Adam Chalom. "Our rabbis have happily celebrated same-sex commitment ceremonies and now weddings for decades. I myself enjoy officiating at same-sex weddings, in part because it is not radical to celebrate loving commitment between two individuals."

Chalom said Kol Hadash's founding rabbi, the late Sherwin Wine, was gay and partnered for more than 20 years, and brought his Humanistic Judaism thinking into the congregation's practices—blending Jewish culture with a Humanistic and secular philosophy of life.

"Kol Hadash practices Humanistic Judaism by replacing worship with human knowledge, responsibility, and action because it is about people, not prayer," said Chalom. "We connect with our Jewish heritage through holidays, life cycle celebrations, history, languages, music, food, literature and the arts—everything that is part of culture. And we emphasize the power people have, independent of supernatural authority or intervention, to understand and improve our world individually and together."

The congregation's motto is "Doing Jewish Differently." Chalom explained that this means that Kol Hadash celebrates Jewish inheritance but does not act as "museum curators who must keep everything the same."

Chalom said the services include traditional, new and modified traditional texts that celebrate Humanistic beliefs and the educational programs focus more on Jewish history and culture than memorizing texts so students can explore what they think rather than learning what to think.

"Another thing we do differently is most traditional High Holy Day liturgy looks above and beyond for divine apology and forgiveness, while ours looks out at each other to repair our relationships and inside ourselves to come to terms with our strengths and our failures," said Chalom.

"I am really proud to work at Kol Hadash, both as a Jewish person and a queer person," said Kol Hadash Office Administrator Jeremy Owens. "The space they offer for Jewish people who do not want to force themselves into the more traditional Jewish mold of Conservative or Reform Judaism is a real revelation. Why chant along with old songs and prayers that say things you do not

believe, just because Jews have been doing it forever?"

"Kol Hadash is a truly inclusive space for those of us who crave a Jewish connection, without having to worry about the old outdated gender rules/roles, or judgments on sexuality, or even judgments on a complicated religious background. It is a place for everyone."

Two outward ways Kol Hadash shows its LGBTQ-inclusive Humanistic Judaism is through the Pride flag at the entrance to its ceremonial space and gender-inclusive bathroom signs. Chalom explained that their membership forms have member one and member two instead of husband and wife and have modified the model wedding the second and third grade Sunday school class performs as a part of the lesson on Jewish life cycle ceremonies to include both opposite-sex and same-sex couples.

Chalom said the congregation's confirmation class students (the youth group) visit other religious institutions and have discussions afterward, middle school students study the ways LGBTQ people (along with other groups) were persecuted during the Holocaust, fourth and fifth grade student's lessons on heroes will also include LGBTQ people and the entire school has a new anti-bullying awareness initiatives to create a more welcoming environment.

Additionally, Kol Hadash's social media accounts will be posting messages to raise awareness on important LGBTQ-specific dates like National Coming Out Day and the start of Pride month every June.

Another way Kol Hadash has embraced the LGBTQ community is with the Jewish coming of age ceremony where in addition to gender-specific Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs, there is a non-binary, gender-neutral B Mitzvahs.

"In terms of our B Mitzvahs, it is important for our students to feel like they are making their Jewish connection their own," said Chalom. "Rather than be assigned a traditional Torah reading by the date of their celebration, our students choose the focus of their presentations: it could be Torah reading, or another reading from Hebrew literature like later in the Bible or modern poetry, or it could be a topic or individual from the wide sweep of the Jewish experience paired with a Hebrew reading."

Larry Deutsch, his then wife and daughters Cathy, Leigh and Loren became early members of Congregation Beth Or and made Humanistic Judaism their belief system. They moved to Kol Hadash upon its founding.

"The beauty of the Humanistic Bar/Bat Mitzvah is that it offers the student a chance to fulfill a project, not only read a Torah portion," said Larry. "One granddaughter raised monies to build a bridge for Nicaraguan school children to cross the water swollen river, in the Monsoon season, so they could attend school. Other grandchildren's projects were equally stimulating."

Deutsch has been with Bill Parker for 30 years and five years ago Chalom officiated their wed-



Christina Frum and Alana Knapp's 2015 wedding, with Rabbi Adam Chalom officiating. Photo courtesy of Kol Hadash

ding.

"Following our ceremony, another granddaughter, while crying, delivered a stirring discourse on how a New Trier male classmate would now know that he would be able to marry and enjoy a full life as a gay man with no religious or state limitations," said Larry. "That is what Kol Hadash offers."

Victoria Ratnaswamy and her family joined Kol Hadash for many reasons including that it was a good philosophical fit.

"We like the way that questions and issues are explored," said Ratnaswamy. "We did not have to pretend to believe or recite things that did not make sense to us. Likewise, we knew that our children would be experiencing a rich curriculum in Sunday school which also reflected our values. Our family also knew that we would be embraced for exactly who we were. My husband and I come from different backgrounds and neither is more worthwhile. We do not downplay aspects of our identities that differ from Humanistic Judaism."

"It is great to be able to enjoy the company and relationships we have formed in an LGBTQ-inclusive setting that has evolved over the years. I never doubted that my pansexual daughter would be fully embraced and valued as a member of this community."

Chalom said many of these changes came about due to a leadership project training program Keshet, a national organization working for LGBTQ inclusion and celebration in Jewish life, held last

summer in Chicago.

"We were able to evaluate what we were doing well, what needed improvement and the 'unknown unknowns' that we did not even realize needed fixing," said Chalom. "This resulted in updating our website, program descriptions and designating an all-gender restroom and initiating Pride month programming this past summer."

This year's Pride-focused events featured GenderCool Project Co-Founder and LGBTQ advocate Gearah Goldstein in June where she spoke about her journey and what GenderCool does to support transgender youth and author Rebecca Makkai in August who talked about her Chicago 1980s AIDS epidemic-focused novel, *The Great Believers*.

Chalom explained that they held these public Pride programs because it was the right thing to do, not for potential membership growth. He said they plan on doing Pride month programs going forward and will participate in the newly created Buffalo Grove Pride parade next June.

As for Chalom's message for the wider world, he said "I hope people who live mostly secular lives yet connect with Jewish culture realize that there is a way of being Jewish that celebrates who they are, what they believe and how they live their lives."

**To book Chalom as a wedding officiant, visit [Pridezillas.com/listing/humanistic-rabbi-adam-chalom/](http://Pridezillas.com/listing/humanistic-rabbi-adam-chalom/). See [KolHadash.com](http://KolHadash.com) for more information.**

## AUTHORS from page 6

outlets, including A Different Light, Lambda Rising, and the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, to permanently shutter.

"It was devastating when Borders opened in Philadelphia," Hermance said. "Virtually every issue of the Inquirer [newspaper] had some story that included Borders. Something like a dozen bookstores in Center City closed."

The shops that remained were forced to adopt new strategies to survive. Several decided to

open café spaces and sell items far-removed from queer books. Giovanni's Room, which nearly closed for good in 2014, was purchased by the nonprofit Philly AIDS Thrift and now operates as part-thrift shop, part-bookstore. And a number of shops launched fundraising campaigns within their communities to help encourage sales, donations and sponsorships.

**Read the extended version of this piece—as well as other LGBT History articles (including one on LGBT celebrities in media)—online at [WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://WindyCityMediaGroup.com).**



# Mayor Lightfoot issues Bisexuality Day proclamation

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Mayor Lori Lightfoot issued a proclamation Sept. 23 recognizing the International Day of Bisexual-ity Visibility in Chicago.

In the proclamation, Lightfoot acknowledged community partners who worked “in support of public policy changes that advance the visibility and civil rights of bisexual, pansexual, queer and fluid people in an effort to better LGBT health outcomes, and urge all residents to support and educate themselves on the topic.”

The proclamation was officially released the morning of Sept. 23 in a press conference at City Hall. Among those who delivered remarks were Robert Fotjik, senior aide to Lightfoot; Elizabeth

Harrison of the Chicago Bisexual Health Task Force; and Chicago Department of Public Health LGBTQ Health & Outreach Liaison Antonio King.

In her remarks, Harrison said, “The signing of this proclamation is a major step for bisexual visibility and celebrating bisexual-plus people and communities in Chicago.”

She further noted that “bisexual erasure is harmful to the mental and physical health of bisexual people. ... Bisexual visibility is a key portion of bisexual health and I profoundly believe that increasing bisexual representation, bisexual-specific services, and inclusion of diverse bisexual people will improve our community’s health and even save lives.”

Harrison later told Windy City Times that it’s

important for the LGBT community to remember that bisexual folks have been active in their movement since the beginning.”

She added, “When you think about Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, they were both bi. ... There has been a lot of erasure in the mainstream LGBT organizations. They are not always inclusive of bi people and their specific needs. To me, the proclamation was a really big deal, because a lot of mainstream organizations came together and said, ‘We recognize this is really important—bi visibility is really important to us.’”

Jim Pickett, director of prevention advocacy and gay men’s health for AIDS Foundation of Chicago called the proclamation, which was first presented locally in 2018, “an important opportunity” to call attention to disparities and stigmas experienced by bisexual people, who frequently endure discrimination not just from straight individuals, but certain elements within the gay and lesbian communities as well.

“If you can’t be whoever you are wherever you are, you’re not free,” Pickett said.



Elizabeth Harris.

Photo courtesy of AIDS Foundation of Chicago

## District 211 to mull crafting transgender locker room policy

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Officials from Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 said Sept. 19 that they’ll need more time to determine logistics of a policy that would permit transgender students to use the locker rooms corresponding to the gender with which they identify, according to reports.

School board officials at a crowded meeting that night determined that they were not likely to create a policy in time for its Oct. 17 meeting, when such a policy change would likely originally have been voted on, Daily Herald re-

ported.

A special meeting was called in October to address the policy, but that would push back the date of a likely vote to November or later. But one area rights advocate nevertheless said he was confident about the eventual outcome.

“The board moved forward, and seemed to be committed to the policy,” Ed Yohnka, ACLU of Illinois’ director of communications & public policy, told Windy City Times. “What seemed to be in question were in terms of what the implementation would look like.”

ACLU has been representing a transgender District 211 student, Nova Maday, who said that she was denied equal access to the girls’ locker room; Maday’s suit, filed in 2017, came about two years after yet another contentious local episode, when the Obama administration threatened the district’s Title IX funding over another

transgender student who had been denied public accommodations access.

The district cut a deal with the administration to grant that first student access to girls’ locker room changing facilities. That deal, in turn triggered a lawsuit from local parents and anti-LGBT activists in 2016. That suit was dropped in 2019. Maday, conversely, sued saying that the 2015 policy decision only was applied with respect to the original student not the student body as a whole. She has since graduated.

Cook County Commissioner Kevin Morrison weighed in on the potential policy change in a statement.

“Bathroom and locker-room policies that restrict students use of facilities that correspond with their gender identity are harmful and put transgender and gender nonconforming students (TGNC) at greater risk for bullying and harass-

ment,” said Morrison. “As a graduate of Conant High School, I am personally familiar with the incredible education and opportunities that District 211 provides students. However, I believe that we as a community set the tone and have shared responsibility to create a safe learning environment and protect all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. District 211 can and should do better for TGNC students, and I strongly urge the Board of Education to approve the policy change to allow unrestricted access.”

“What’s important is that we’re moving forward,” said Yohnka.

Daily Herald’s article is at <https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20190919/district-211-board-says-it-needs-more-time-on-transgender-locker-room-policy>.

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## viewpoints



**Jonathan  
Matthias  
LASSITER**

## Ignorance and shortsightedness lead us to the Supreme Court

We will always find ourselves going back to the courts to fight for inclusion until we place the needs of the most vulnerable people first.

Those in the mainstream are less inclined to protect those who they view as furthest away from the mainstream. People who are working-class, poor, immigrant, transgender, ethnic/racial minority, or disabled are most often seen as those non-mainstream people. The fight for marriage equality (i.e., the legal recognition of same-sex marriage by the federal government) is an example of shortsighted legislation that only benefited the most socially acceptable among the vulnerable. These socially acceptable members are often white, cisgender, middle- and upper-class, and male. Marriage equality was praised as the signal of freedom for (LGBTQ+ citizens).

However, this legislation bestowed (mostly economic and property) benefits only on those who chose to get married. It did not provide benefits to those who did not want to get married. It also provided little advantage to those who did not own substantial property and financial assets. It did nothing to address other forms of widespread legal discrimination. In fact, workplace, healthcare, and

housing discrimination still drastically hinders the lives of LGBTQ+ citizens. Black transgender women are maybe the most vulnerable as they are also subjected to extremely high levels of violence.

We should learn from our past shortsightedness. We need policies that start with those who are most discriminated against. Policies that protect these groups will also protect groups who have more privilege.

The Supreme Court has the opportunity to move us toward a world that protects the most vulnerable members of our society. Three cases (two focused on LGBTQ+ and one focused on transgender rights) will be heard by the Supreme Court on Oct. 8. These cases are: *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*; *Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda*; and *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. EEOC*.

The court will determine if current federal law, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, protects LGBTQ+ citizens. Based on the way Title VII is currently written, it does not seem to cover sexual orientation. It mentions sex but not sexual orientation. Sex is written about in the law like how we think of gender (i.e., male or female) not how we think about romantic and sexual attraction to a person of a particular sex or gender (i.e., sexual orientation). Thus, people who are LGBTQ+ may not be currently protected. However, with the law as written, it would seem that transgender people should be protected, given that the law does include sex (again written about like how we understand gender).

Regardless of the court's ruling, these cases highlight larger problems in the way we think about LGBTQ+ communities and their rights in the United States. First, we often only think of one LGBTQ+ community and not LGBTQ+ communities. We do not consider the ways in which legislation and protections may not be one size fits all. We often start with

legislation that only considers the needs of the most socially acceptable members of the LGBTQ+ communities. We must begin to consider the differences between LGBTQ+ sub-communities. Distinct LGBTQ+ communities are often affected differently by legal protections or the lack thereof.

Second, most people do not have a good understanding of the differences between sex, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Sex (e.g., male, female) is a label assigned at birth—sometimes before—usually by a doctor. This label is based on body parts (e.g., whether one has a penis or vagina). Gender is a label that dictates how a person should express themselves based on their sex. Sexual orientation is generally considered to be how people understand their romantic and sexual attractions to a person of a particular sex and gender. This is not the same as gender identity, which is how people mentally understand their own gender. These concepts are different things and have different implications for how people understand themselves and how we craft and interpret laws. More education is needed for our society. Otherwise, we may think we are being inclusive while we are (perhaps) unknowingly leaving out a lot of people.

Without focus on the most marginalized communities in society and a better understanding of LGBTQ+ concepts and definitions, we will not be able to effectively protect all LGBTQ+ citizens. The cases that will be heard by the Supreme Court show us how far we still have to go to ensure that all Americans are equally protected by the law. Only with equal protection can we all freely exercise our rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**Jonathan Mathias Lassiter, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist, author and public speaker. Follow him on Twitter at @matjl.**

## letters

### Attorneys needed

Dear Editor:

According to the report "The Justice Gap," low-income Americans receive no or inadequate legal help for 86 percent for their non-criminal legal problems. These individuals include senior citizens, veterans and those with disabilities. They may be experiencing housing problems or domestic violence, or they may be trying to obtain veterans' benefits, disability benefits or child support. Currently, there are not

enough volunteer attorneys in Illinois to help them.

This shortage of pro bono attorneys not only affects the number of low-income or disadvantaged people served, but also the disposition of justice. Studies consistently show that the outcome of contested matters often turns on whether a person has an attorney.

The Pro Bono Network (PBN) has been working since 2011 to combat this shortage by expanding the pool of attorneys available to represent those who cannot afford legal services. PBN recruits, trains, places and supports lawyers who want to be

of service but have limitations on their availability or resources. These include attorneys who are on career breaks, have retired, or are solo practitioners. The attorneys can work from their home or at a number of locations throughout Cook and DuPage counties. Malpractice insurance is provided.

For more information or questions, email sheila.pont@pro-bono-network.org.

*Linda Rio  
Pro Bono Network  
Executive Director*

**Send columns or letters to [Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com](mailto:Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com).  
Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.**



VOL. 35, No. 01, Oct. 2, 2019

The combined forces of Windy City Times,  
founded Sept. 1985, and Outlines newspaper,  
founded May 1987.

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(MAILING ADDRESS ONLY)

Windy City Times Biweekly; Deadline every  
Wednesday prior to street date  
OUT! Chicago's LGBTQ Visitor's Guide Online annual  
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# ARTS+THEATER

WEEKLY



**DON'T  
LOSE THE  
MAGIC**

**CHECKING OUT  
THE CHICAGO  
MAGIC  
LOUNGE**

**PAGE 15**

Paige Thompson  
(in white jacket).  
PR photo

## THEATER REVIEW

## Mother of the Maid

Playwright: Jane Anderson

At: Northlight Theatre, at the North Shore Center for the Arts, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie  
Tickets: Northlight.org 847-673-6300;  
\$30-\$89

Runs through: Oct. 20

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Dead Celebrities have always been prime targets for exploitation by adherents eager to impose their own agendas on luminaries no longer capable of refuting spurious claims. Female icons are particularly susceptible to idolatry/iconoclasm based in academic speculation, and none more so than Joan of Arc, the legendary superstar of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), who was later executed by the Roman Catholic church for the crime of heresy, but ultimately exonerated, declared a martyr in 1456 and canonized as a

saint in 1920.

In searching for a fresh approach to an origin-story previously explored by a diversity of biographers (among them, Mark Twain, George Bernard Shaw and rock musician David Byrne), Jane Anderson—herself, a youthful Maid-of-Orleans fan turned mother—might well have contemplated the childhood experiences leading the teenage prodigy to embark on her extraordinary career. Historical records document Joan's progress on the battlefield and on trial in the French courtrooms, but little is known of her upbringing in the remote Domremy region, populated by illiterate rural farmers.

The absence of evidence regarding Joan's early life allows Anderson to deviate considerably from both facts and legend: her Joan, for example, cites only Saint Catherine as her inspiration to the exclusion of other divine mentors on record, for example, while the language spoken in the Arc household—gruff papa Jacques, fussy mom Isabelle, mouthy brother Pierre—approximates a stilted faux-rustic idiom, further muddled by Brit-



Penelope Walker, Kate Fry in *Mother of the Maid*.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

ish censorship-laws neologisms ("fuggin" "shite" and the inevitably mispronounced "arse").

These minor annoyances would be negligible in service of dialogue conveying a modicum of enthusiasm for its subject, but although nearly two-thirds of Anderson's text is devoted to the Arc family swapping generic homefolksy banter (with Mrs. Arc addressing us in third-person narrator mode at times), not until the action moves to the palace, seat of actual power, are the stakes perceived to be high enough to justify concern—Anderson's, or ours—for the fates of agency-bereft commoners.

Is it a coincidence that the play's most well-

crafted scene is our final glimpse of Issy and Joanie weeping in each other's arms just before before the latter is dragged, terrified and screaming, to her doom? Is this image meant to invoke analogies to children in refugee camps separated from their parents? Are the post-war machinations of the 15th-century authorities who sponsor Joan's patriotic campaigns, only to betray her in the end, intended to remind us that all politicians are fundamentally untrustworthy? Was the exalted hero to countless generations of girls, in reality, merely a victim of rapacious opportunists?

Director BJ Jones and his company of actors, featuring exemplary audience favorite Kate Fry, boast impressive resumes attesting to their expertise at finessing scripts still in need of development—did you know that Joan's mother worked tirelessly to clear her late daughter's name, even appealing to the Pope himself? When even a play's author doesn't care enough about her characters to give us reason to care about them, too, why bother?

## THEATER REVIEW

## Hope: Part II of a Mexican Trilogy

Playwright: Evelina Fernandez

At: The Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave.  
Tickets: 773-697-3830 or  
TheDenTheatre.com; \$25-\$35  
Runs through: Oct. 27

BY SARAH KATHERINE BOWDEN

Nostalgia and harsh reality vie for dominance in Teatro Vista's Midwest premiere of *Hope: Part II of a Mexican Trilogy*, now playing as part of *Destinos*, the Third Annual Chicago International Latino Theater Festival.

Set during the Cuban Missile Crisis and lead-

ing into the last day of Kennedy's presidency, the play follows the Morales family as the members croon sweet love songs of the era while preparing for possible nuclear war and the more personal destruction of their nuclear family.

Gina (Ayssette Munoz) is the cynical eldest daughter of hard-working Elena (Cruz Gonzalez-Cadel) and shiftless, unfaithful Charlie (Eddie Martinez). While younger sister Betty (Janyce Caraballo) daydreams about romantic phone conversations with JFK, and her brothers Johnny (Nick Mayes) and Bobby (Joaquin Rodarte) fight over who between them is the bigger man, Gina puts all her energy into keeping a clear head and steering clear of Rudy (Tommy Rivera-Vega), a newly enlisted soldier who wants to build a life with her. Elena tries to make ends meet while Charlie skips out on bills and family responsibili-

ties while his brother, Enrique (Victor Marana), lends a supportive ear and potentially more.

Fernandez's script has the ring of real-life relationship conflicts, particularly when the siblings fight amongst themselves. Flights of fancy and bursts of torch songs fill out the world of the play, and co-directors Ricardo Gutierrez and Cheryl Lynn Bruce keep the energy high, calling on the actors to fully embrace the musical half of the show, which conflicts with Erin Peake's apocalyptic projection footage of 1960s duck-and-cover drills. During such moments of contrast, the production calls to mind flashpoints of cultural and political transformation.

However, the production loses steam in longer scenes when the characters have confrontations about faithfulness and pragmatism. Fernandez has a good ear for squabbling, but struggles to

lift the dialogue beyond its first level when ultimatums are delivered and the stakes are supposed to raise. Gonzalez-Cadel and Marana are tender together, almost as sweet as Muñoz and Rivera-Vega are, but the cast's sincerity cannot generate enough tension to motivate an audience to worry about what might happen next during this turbulent time. The audience I attended with deeply enjoyed themselves, and as a white woman, I am certain to be missing cultural context and lived experiences specific to this Mexican-American family. But the breeziness onstage, coupled with a lack of surprise, may undermine Teatro Vista's boisterous telling of a conflicted moment.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**Blue Stockings**, Promethean Theatre Ensemble at the Den, through Oct. 13. Jessica Swale's inspirational historical drama recounts the struggle of women seeking an education in STEM sciences against stodgy male prejudice at an elite university in 1897. *MSB*

**Something Rotten!** Marriott Theatre, Lincolnshire, through Oct. 20—Musicals and Shakespeare blend in this unashamedly derivative, anachronistic and irreverent comedy, in which Shakespeare's rivals try gaming the system by acting on predictions from a relative of Nostradamus. *SCM*

**The Great Leap**, Steppenwolf, through Oct. 20—A 5'5" Chinese-American basketball star, Tiananmen Square, international politics and rival coaches shape Lauren Yee's imaginative, impossible creation myth about Tank Man. Gregg Obrero dazzles as the b'ball prodigy. *JA*

**The Color Purple**, Drury Lane Theatre, Oakbrook Terrace, through Nov. 3—Director Lili-Anne Brown allows this speedy musical adaptation of Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning to properly breathe with great emotional performances and gorgeous singing. *SCM*

—By Mary Shen Barnidge, Scott C. Morgan and Jonathan Abarbanel

## THEATER REVIEW

## The Delicate Tears of the Waning Moon

Playwright: Rebeca Aleman

At: Water People Theater Company  
@ Steppenwolf, 1700 N. Halsted St.  
Tickets: 312-335-1650; Steppenwolf.org;  
\$25  
Runs through: Oct. 13

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Two stories are packed into this 90-minute world premiere, which launches the 3rd Chicago International Latino Theater Festival.

The first hour is a deeply compassionate personal story while the last 30 minutes is a political story only hinted at earlier. Story One is the rehabilitation of Paulina (Rebeca Aleman, the playwright), fighting back from devastating stroke-like brain damage. She's partially paralyzed and must reconstruct her cognitive functions, re-learning language and speech. Paulina's long term memories return only in bits

and her short term memory never fully recovers.

Rodrigo (Ramon Camin)—her genuinely concerned and devoted caretaker—reveals she was in a car accident, that she is an award winning journalist and they worked together. Paulina herself slowly recalls her mother, her daughter, her own childhood and pieces of poetry and song invoking the moon.

Performed with truth, these devastatingly painful and hopeful scenes are filled with struggle and small triumphs. You'll be misty eyed if you've ever nursed someone you love back from a stroke. Aleman's incredible face is beautiful even with the distortions of Paulina's injuries, her dark eyes shining and glistening with tears, her small smiles lighting the room as Paulina's wit and wits slowly return. Camin easily reveals how deeply Rodrigo loves her, long before he says so. Even his occasional impatience is tender and concerned. This is beautiful acting, directed by Iraida Tapias.

Eventually, the ugly, political truth emerges: Paulina crashed because she was shot in the head in an assassination attempt. An investigative journalist, she went rogue online with

an exposé of government and cartel corruption and complicity, when her paper fired her rather than publish the story. Rodrigo is nursing her in a safe house. Her young daughter has been spirited away to safety. Her mother, riding with Paulina, died in the crash.

This political story, alas, is too true. Journalists around the world are being threatened, arrested, tortured, maimed and murdered by repressive regimes, paranoid strongmen, militarists and criminal oligarchs with whom they share power and spoils. Even as I write this, it's happening in Mexico, where this play is set, and in Russia, Turkey, Brazil, Syria, Egypt, China, Indonesia, Venezuela and other nations. In the USA we have a President who hates the press and would get away with such repression if he could, but he can't get away with it ... yet.

As a theater critic who has been published internationally, I can bear witness to this play's political story. As a caregiver for a stroke patient, I can bear witness to the personal story as well, which is told in a surprisingly poetic way. *The Delicate Tears of the Waning Moon* speaks to me and sticks with me.



## THEATER REVIEW

## Bernhardt/Hamlet

Playwright: Theresa Rebeck

At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.

Tickets: GoodmanTheatre.org

Price: \$20-80

Runs through: Oct 20

BY KAREN TOPHAM

French actress Sarah Bernhardt was a powerful woman calling her own shots at a time when few women anywhere got to do so. As such, she is a perfect subject for a feminist play. But Theresa Rebeck's *Bernhardt/Hamlet* certainly is not at all political. It does not seek to change the world, though its tale of such a forceful and dynamic woman certainly seems timely in our modern, retrograde era. And this very funny and entertaining play, wonderfully directed by Donna Feore, certainly allows us to get to know its fascinating subject. Ultimately, though, Rebeck's script takes a too-sharp second act turn that destabilizes its focus.

Bernhardt was the most well-known actress of the late 19th century. She could pretty much choose the parts she wished to play, and she even owned her own 1,700-seat theater in Paris. But in 1899, Bernhardt decided that she was not being challenged enough and determined to take on the greatest acting test in all of theatre: the melancholy Dane, Shakespeare's Hamlet.

The first act of *Bernhardt/Hamlet* shows us the depth of her risk. We watch as Bernhardt, played



John Tufts and Terri McMahon in *Bernhardt/Hamlet*.

Photo by Liz Lauren

with all of the requisite fire, passion, and arrogance by Terri McMahon, works through scene after scene of the Bard's greatest play with her cast (including the always-great Larry Yando as French actor Constant Coquelin). It is a joy to be present as she delves deeply into the complicated text ("Unpregnant? Now you're just making up words"), questioning whether Shakespeare's "gift for poetry at times overwhelms the power of his playwriting."

All of this struggle makes for a compelling and delightful opening act, but it is not the play's entire focus. Rebeck spends a lot of time fixating on an entirely invented affair with Edmond Rostand (John Tufts in a strong, varied portrayal

al), the French playwright of *Cyrano de Bergerac* who wrote several roles expressly for Bernhardt. Though Bernhardt was well-known to have had many affairs during her life, often with quite famous people, Rostand was not one of them, and unfortunately this subplot ends up derailing the play.

This occurs because Rebeck has Bernhardt request that Rostand re-write *Hamlet* in French and in prose, eliminating the excess of poetry that was getting in her way. (Bernhardt did use such a translation, but it was written by two other playwrights.) The result is that her Rostand is side-tracked from working on *Cyrano*. His deep

Turn to page 14

## SPOTLIGHT

We've all been around the block, right? You pick him up, then he hustles him who slaves for her who sleeps with them who tricks with him who sleeps with you. Austrian playwright Arthur Schnitzler didn't make it up when he wrote his once infamous 1897 sex play *La Ronde*. It's been adapted ever since many times and ways, and one popular version is *Hello Again*, the 1994 very gay musical adaptation by Michael John LaChiusa. If you don't find at least one appealing coupling, your libido probably is dead. This new production of *Hello Again* runs through Wed., Nov. 13, at the spiffy new Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre, 721 Howard St. (Evanston side, not Chicago side). It's directed and choreographed by Brenda Didier, with musical direction by Jeremy Ramey. 773-347-1109; theo-u.com

Photo by Austin D. Oie



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Bianca Del Rio.

Photo by Rene Koala



DRAG

## Bianca Del Rio vs. the World

BY ANGELIQUE SMITH

From Sydney to Singapore, Bianca Del Rio, the season six winner of RuPaul's Drag Race, has been spreading clown realness all over the globe with her "It's Jester Joke" tour. Now she's bringing her unmatched comedic timing and razor-sharp wit back to the United States with "the biggest ever solo drag stand-up comedy tour in North America" (according to a press release), making a stop in Chicago on Thursday, Oct. 10, at The Vic.

Bianca Del Rio: I am literally minutes before a show here, in Belfast, Ireland.

**Windy City Times:** We appreciate you taking the time! I'm a huge fan.

BDR: Well, you have incredible taste and I appreciate that.

**WCT:** This is your fourth solo comedy tour. What do you think you've learned from the first three?

BDR: To drink more. To keep myself intoxicated. Honestly though, you figure out scheduling, you figure out what works best on the road. Because it's a pretty rough schedule by choice. For instance, last night we were in Dublin, tonight Belfast and then tomorrow I'm in Toronto. I prefer a tight schedule because I find that I don't run out of steam. The momentum of the show works best when I keep moving.

**WCT:** Which tour stop has been your most memorable so far?

BDR: Two days ago, I was able to do Wembley Arena in London, which was insane. It was a

huge build-up leading up to it because it was an extremely large, 8,000 seat venue [for the] show, so it was quite wild to experience that on that particular stage.

I didn't realize how many people were there until the lights came on and then you go, 'Oh, my God!' Also, I'm really looking forward to New York this year because I'll be doing Carnegie Hall—which is something I think you always hope to get to do as a performer. Not that every other city isn't great—I'm grateful for all of them—but those two in particular have been big milestones for me.

**WCT:** Fan tweets about the show at Wembley kept mentioning the word "dark." What's so dark about your show?

BDR: That's just what the show is and I think that people that consider it "dark" are people that don't necessarily know me. As you grow as a performer, a lot of people may not know that I'm from Drag Race, a lot of people might not know my type of humor, not everyone has seen all of my tours.

It's interesting because you do get the conundrum of, if you continue to do the same thing on the same level, then your close fans will get bored with it. If you do something out of the box, then the other people don't know how to handle you. It's such a weird place to be. I guess to people who aren't aware of what I do, it might come across as maybe a little darker than other stuff; but, for me, it's exactly what I've thought but it's a build up to where you're going.

**WCT:** It's definitely a progression. What do fans in Chicago have in store with this tour?

BDR: Expect the unexpected, I always say. And my show, honestly, will change a bit politically in a few side notes. When I'm in the UK, I discuss Brexit and Theresa May, whereas in America, we've got Trump. Each night is a different show for me, you never know what's going to come out of my mouth and I never know how it's going to translate to an audience.

**WCT:** Are any topics off limits? Are there any lines that you're unwilling to cross?

BDR: No. Nope.

**WCT:** Well, that was an easy question to answer.

BDR: I think the minute that you start saying, 'I can't talk about this,' it becomes ridiculous. I am a man in a wig—I'm the biggest joke there is. Therefore, we should all be able to laugh at me and everything else around us. The world is a joke, you've got to find the humor in it. If not, you're going to be a depressed motherfucker.

**WCT:** When did you first find your inner clown?

BDR: I don't know if I found it or if it was found by others and they pointed it out. As a kid, I think a lot of the choices I made were out of the ordinary for a child. It wasn't until I was a teenager where I just embraced that this is who I am and what I do. It had nothing to do with being gay or wanting to be around boys or anything. It was just the fact that I was always considered different.

**WCT:** It's a pretty standard line in reality TV competitions to say, "I'm not here to make friends." As a self-proclaimed insult comic, how do you balance making friends—not just on Drag Race but with other famous people—with being true to your brand of comedy?

BDR: I think that with the people that know you as a person, it's pretty normal. You connect with people on a certain level, whether it's work or whether it's sharing the same ideas. I'm actually fascinated by the people I've met that are somewhat celebrities that have a squeaky-clean image and they're total cunts offstage. It's a completely different dynamic for me because I'm a cunt onstage, but I'm really nice offstage.

**WCT:** How did it feel to be ranked number one of the 100 most powerful drag queens in America by Vulture?

BDR: First of all, I find it laughable. Listen, it's lovely to be on the top of a list and for them to say that. But in the end, there's another list that says I'm the worst drag queen in the world. That's what you have to come to terms with, as lovely

as that gesture is, apparently the writer liked me a lot. So, thank you! But if you go around believing that kind of insanity, you're fucked. I appreciate the moment, but it doesn't mean shit past the first ten minutes it was written.

**WCT:** What's next for you?

BDR: Whenever you're in the middle of something that's huge, someone says, 'Well, what's next?' and you always go, 'Can't I just get through tonight?' What's next? I don't know! Hopefully, more work. There're always some things in the mix. At this moment there's not much that I can talk about specifically yet until they announce it.

**WCT:** I've read that there's going to be a Hurricane Bianca 3?

BDR: Obviously, Hurricane Bianca 3 is on the agenda. Just trying to find out when I can squeeze it in to film; hopefully, it will happen in 2020. We're plotting, planning and sorting for the next year. And obviously, I would love to continue touring because I love a live audience. I enjoy getting to see the world and seeing all of these fabulous people that think I'm funny.

**For tickets to the "It's Jester Joke" tour and more info, visit [TheBiancaDelRio.com](http://TheBiancaDelRio.com).**

## 'Andy Warhol's House' exhibit opening Oct. 10

Hilton | Asmus Contemporary, 716 N. Wells St., announced the addition of a new photo exhibit, Andy Warhol's House.

The exhibit, opening Thursday, Oct. 10, will feature David Gamble's photos of Warhol's house in New York City after death that provide an impossibly intimate look at the private life of the famed artist and include photos of his medicine cabinet, kitchen and living room—all untouched following his death.

The closing date is slated to be Sunday, Nov. 10.

Gamble said that from the start his goal was to "put Andy back in the house," to make the photographs look so realistic that a viewer could imagine that the artist was just in the other room grabbing a snack. In 1997, he used silkscreen technology to physically screen pop art versions of Warhol into some of his photos—some of which are featured in this exhibit.

See [Hilton-Asmus.com](http://Hilton-Asmus.com).

## REVIEW from page 13

frustration fuels too much of Act Two, though it does impel an appearance by Rostand's wife Rosamond, creating a powerful if brief turn for Jennifer Latimore. The rest of Act Two focuses so much on that play that it might have been called Rostand/Cyrano and, though it remains engaging right through the last minute, the play doesn't say as much about Bernhardt's ultimate portrayal of Hamlet as it does about her early preparations for the role.

It's still easy to recommend this play because, no matter what its focus, it is an absorbing, cap-

tivating piece of theatre. Director Feore's love for the material shines through every decision she makes, and even her minor characters are thoughtfully rounded. Narelle Sissons' flexible backstage setting allows for quick and often lovely scene changes, and Dana Osborne's costumes evoke the era beautifully. There are also some absolutely lovely moments in Robert Wierzel's lighting, and Joanna Lynne Staub's sound design and original music are nothing short of perfection. Despite the issues I have with the second act, this is one impressive play both in front of and behind the scenes. I wish, though, that it had remained more true to its focus.



**Chicago Magic Lounge.**  
PR photo



# Don't lose the magic: Checking out the Chicago Magic Lounge

**BY KAREN TOPHAM**

When Joey Cranford's wife jokingly bought him a magic kit as a Christmas present, she had no idea what she had unleashed.

"There was an especially good trick in there," he said, one that spurred the research-oriented Cranford to begin exploring and eventually led him to discover what he calls the Golden Age of Chicago-style magic, when magicians moved from table to table doing card and coin illusions, which thrived at various bars and clubs throughout the city during the 20th century.

Sadly, by the 1980s, these clubs were closing down. Cranford theorizes that the rise of stand-up comedy displaced it, but he also wonders if “bad magic” killed it. With so many venues, he opines, there were bound to be second-rate performers who would turn people off to the scene. People who witnessed these poorly trained practitioners may have given up on magic for good. “When the contract is there for you to fool me and I see everything,” Cranford said, “you’re wasting my time.”

His vision of a new home base for magic began in 2015, when a friend was opening Uptown Underground and offered him one night to organize a magic show. Cranford made the decision to “tell the story” of Chicago magic in every show.

It didn't take long before the shows became so successful that they needed their own space,

and Cranford's concept became the Chicago Magic Lounge, whose unusual Andersonville theatre opened in February 2018, a club especially designed to give customers a true taste of Chicago-style magic as well as a cabaret where they can see headline magicians.

The lounge itself is hidden behind what appears to be a laundromat at 5050 N. Clark St, which is intended as both an homage to the building's past (history is everything) and a way that people will feel the pull of something unusual from the moment they walk through the door. But once they figure out how to get past the false front, many more surprises await that are not limited to sliding or hidden wall panels.

The entertainment begins at the fully stocked bar (a light food menu is also available), at which veteran Chicago magicians draw audiences in with their banter and their illusions. Once inside the art deco cabaret itself, patrons are treated to magic performed at their tables by a band of roving and personable magicians before the main show even starts.

"Our job is to expose people to how rich magic is as a creative form and then to give them variety," said Entertainment Director Benjamin Barnes. In selecting magicians for the club, he realizes that the profession of magic has long been a male-dominated one, but he strives to change that. "You'll see yourself" reflected on the stage," he assures. "Every night at Chicago Magic Lounge

there will be at least one woman, one Person of Color; all are bad-ass magicians."

One of these women is Jan Rose, a longtime veteran of the Chicago and national magic scenes who told *Windy City Times* that, when she got into magic, "I was so excited about the job that

can't I do this forever?" She acknowledged that most magicians are men, but felt it is because "girls just don't see other girls doing it."

Everyone agreed that what Cranford has created is essentially a family. Thompson loved the fact that she has been able to learn from so many oth-



I didn't even notice that it was a male-dominated industry." Still, she said that, even after she started to understand that, "I was embraced by the magic (community); I never felt any kind of discrimination at all."

Neither has Paige Thompson, who was given a magic kit by her grandmother when she was just 6 years old and became obsessed. She said, "I started doing birthday parties. I was making money in high school and started wondering, why

er magicians. Rose quoted her husband, magician Danny Ocean, as saying, "All of the magicians [at the lounge], stand on each other's shoulders."

Perhaps it is this atmosphere as much as anything else that draws the customers. Cranford noted that he does very little advertising, but the place is packed most nights. People are "moved by the story we tell," he said. "Word of mouth

**Turn to page 21**



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Sun BLVD.



**Blu Bone.**  
All photos by Julia Hale

## Chicago's queer hip-hop scene: Visibility, evolution and culture



KC Ortiz.



CJ Run.

BY JULIA HALE

Chicago has long been known as a mecca for hip-hop culture. Within recent years, however, there's been a rise in queer and gender non-conforming hip-hop artists in the city. From Kidd Kenn, who recently signed to Island Records, to Futurehood, the queer Chicago-based hip-hop collective, queer rappers are creating their own sub-culture.

With rappers Lil Nas X and Tyler the Creator being openly gay, many rap fans equate visibility with acceptance. But visibility and acceptance are not the same; many queer hip-hop artists in Chicago have been forced to create their own spaces.

Queer Chicago-based rappers Mother Nature, Roy Kinsey, Blu Bone, KC Ortiz, CJ Run, Sun BLVD and Kidd Kenn spoke about visibility, the connections between Black culture and gay culture and Chicago's unique brand of art activism.

"You've got that stigma [that] Chicago's real hard," said Truth, one half of the queer hip-hop duo Mother Nature. If you find your own "tribe," Chicago can be an accepting place, according to Truth. "I love tribes," said Klevah, the other half of Mother Nature. "I love that we're able to navigate multiple spaces within the hip-hop community and the arts community in Chicago."

Queer rapper Roy Kinsey agreed, noting, "As much as Chicago gets this reputation of being violent or intolerant, there is a corner in Chicago for everybody," said Kinsey, who's a member of Futurehood, the Chicago-based record label and multi-media platform for queer and transgender artists of color. The creative collective is also associated with queer artists across the country including Chae Buttuh from North Carolina, Taylor Alxndr from Atlanta, and Rozay LaBeija and Linda LaBeija from New York City.

"When I came to Chicago, I found [Futurehood]," said Blu Bone, the Chicago-based bisexual

rapper who came to Chicago for school. Now a senior at UIC, Blu Bone has also gotten heavily involved with the ballroom scene in the city. "Ballroom in Chicago is very Black American. Very intimate, exclusive. It has that Midwest intimacy. I think that way about the Chicago scene [too]."

### Visibility

On the last day of June 2019, 20-year old country-hip-hop artist Lil Nas X announced over Twitter (or, suggested) that he was queer. "By all means, it was a marketing move," said Blu Bone. "As far as real change in hip-hop, I'm going to have to see. I'm hopeful that [this] will open doors for a lot more of us, or [for] the public to start questioning the Black male monolith."

Other queer and trans people of color in the city are also waiting to see how Lil Nas X's career plays out. "One thing about hip-hop is [that] you may slide in on the trend, but your talent will keep you there," said transgender rapper KC Ortiz. "Other rappers can't stop people from liking [his] music. He could be successful, but who's going to stand up and support him? That's what I look at. Who's going to back him up, who's going to be an ally?"

Kinsey sees Lil Nas X as the young gay rap icon that the culture needs. "I think the world needs to see him be a young heartthrob," he said. "That's exactly what I wanted when I was 15 and 16 years old. 'Mom, that song you like, that you can't stop singing? Yeah, he's gay.' [To me] it's more about whose lives can be possibly improved because they get to honor their truth because they've seen someone else tell it."

While it might be easy for some to celebrate the success and hope surrounding Lil Nas X, non-binary rapper CJ Run is concerned that visibility isn't enough.

"In the media, being queer is like the hot new topic. It's very in, and I don't know if that's so

much acceptance," they said, comparing the constant commotion around queerness to the feeling of being under a microscope. "Like, 'Hey, trans people exist!' That doesn't mean we're being accepted more, it just means people know about us more. We're more visible, so hopefully the acceptance piece can come with that."

Additionally, Lil Nas X is still a cisgender man, meaning he identifies with the gender assigned to him at birth. "Is the mainstream really ready for gender non-conforming rappers and people that look visibly gender non-conforming?" Asked Run. "I don't know, because when you look at the outrage and everybody's conspiracy theories around Lil Nas coming out, I'm [thinking], 'he's just a cis gay boy, and you guys did that because of him. You're not ready for me.'" Though he represents visibility, Lil Nas X only represents the visibility of cisgender gay men in hip-hop, not necessarily those who are genderqueer or trans.

Run is not alone in her concern. "Our trans brothers and sisters [are] being killed every day, gay youth are being kicked out of their homes and are homeless," said Truth of Mother Nature. "[Visibility] opens eyes to an extent, but on a global level or even nationally, it's [not] saying, 'okay, we're good!' You know? It's moving in the right direction as we push mainstream, but people still have to get in their heads: this is not [just] entertainment, these are peoples' lives."

### Hip-hop evolution

It's no surprise to many Chicago artists that queer Black people are becoming more visible, specifically within hip-hop. "It is an evolution in the culture of hip-hop that the ones most oppressed, the ones cast out, whose stories weren't told, would then feel it is time to take their power back," said Kinsey.

"[With] queer Black kids in particular [there] is a legacy of rapping, creating, tongue tying, orat-

ing, commentary," said Blu Bone.

The history of hip-hop is comparable to that of ballroom culture in that both are rooted in struggle. Given that queer and transgender people of color exist, and at the most marginalized intersections at that, the two cultures are inextricably linked as well. "We have been pushing the culture forward this whole time and you didn't even know," said queer rapper Sun BLVD, who also came to Chicago for school before deciding to pursue music full-time. "[The ballroom scene] spills over into everyday life, into fashion, into music, into slang. Gay culture is popular culture now."

While Black queerness is overflowing into the mainstream, those who are genderqueer are in danger of being left behind. "It's so much easier to be queer in sexuality but still conventional in your gender presentation, if you still sort of look like the gender you were 'assigned,'" said Run. "It's so much easier to be a cis gay that does music in comparison to being a gender non-conforming person that does music and uses pronouns that people maybe aren't used to." Cisgender gay men being normalized in hip-hop is a significant step for the culture. The next step in hip-hop's evolution is transgender visibility.

### Creating the culture

Although the struggle for Black and queer liberation are connected, that doesn't mean that queerness has always been accepted in traditionally Black spaces. "Queerness always has to make space for itself," said Blu Bone. "We're very rarely asked to be in [hip-hop] spaces."

The animosity towards queerness in hip-hop is evident, from lyrics that outright decry homosexuality, such as Offset's line that he can't "vibe with queers," to the fetishization of lesbians.

Turn to page 18



# Jonathan Van Ness discusses memoir at Music Box

BY MATT SIMONETTE

According to Jonathan Van Ness of the Netflix series *Queer Eye*, "Writing a book is kind of like putting your soul into a food processor."

Van Ness discussed that new book, *Over the Top: A Raw Journey to Self-Love*, at a sold out discussion at Music Box Theatre the evening of Sept. 28. The presentation, entitled "Jonathan Van Ness: Beyond Permission," was presented by Chicago Ideas.

Van Ness first discussed how he conceived the title *Over the Top*—a reference to his family's references to his being "over the top."

"It's almost impossible to embarrass me," he joked.

Model/body positivity expert

Denise Bidot moderated the talk, with a performance by Chicago Gay Men's Chorus preceding it.

Among the topics Van Ness and Bidot covered were his small-town upbringing, which he loathed, and his beloved mother and stepfather.

"Every day since getting out of high school has been like being on vacation," he said.

Van Ness said writing the book was therapeutic, and was a way for him to get overwhelming thoughts about past

traumas and joys down on the printed page and out of his head.

"I feel like I absolutely have to tell this story," Van Ness explained. He is HIV-positive and spoke at length about the importance for anyone who is sexually active to know basic information about HIV, and the absolute necessity for society to eliminate anti-HIV stigma.

"Living with HIV is not an issue," he said. "The not-talking about it is an issue."



Denise Bidot (left) and Jonathan Van Ness. Photo by Chicago Ideas

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## Mark Farris at Drew's Oct. 4-5

Vocalist/musician Mark Farris—who has performed in piano bars and cabaret lounges throughout the world—will return to Chicago cabaret at Drew's On Halsted, 3201 N. Halsted St., on Oct. 4-5 at 8:30 p.m.

Farris debuted in 2000 at the Gentry of Chicago at its State Street and Halsted Street locations. Since then, he has entertained at numerous venues throughout the city, including the former 3160 Piano & Cabaret Bar and the Twisted Vine. He has also performed for icons such as Julie Andrews, Chita Rivera and Debbie Reynolds.

There is a \$15 cover charge with a \$15 food/drink minimum. Reservations are highly suggested; call 773-244-9191 or visit [DrewsOnHalsted.com](http://DrewsOnHalsted.com).

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# PRAA launches exhibit on Latinx LGBT activism

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Community members gathered Sept. 21 as Puerto Rican Arts Alliance (PRAA), 3000 N. Elbridge Ave., unveiled La Primera Parada: Chicago's Stonewall Moments, a photographic exhibition focusing on LGBT participation in events such as the Bud Billiken, Mexican and Puerto Rican parades.

According to a PRAA statement, "With this exhibit we celebrate the first Chicago queer people, trans women, drag queens, the boys, the dykes, and people of color who fought back and out of the closet to proudly say 'I'm Black, I'm Chicano, I'm Boricua, I'm queer and this is my parade.'"

Curator Jorge Felix said that the exhibition paid tribute to Latinx Chicagoans "who had the courage to think outside the box and participate in their community parades. But what we have here is a canvas, one with many spaces in between that we need to fill."

The exhibition will be at PRAA for nearly a year—much longer than the norm—and will be, subject to funding, supplemented by workshops and lectures shedding light on the people and events depicted in the exhibition. Among the proposed topics would be transgender participation and collaboration with other Chicago communities, Felix added.

Guest curator Milka Ramirez said the exhibit represented "a decade of dreams," adding that one inspiration for her was hearing an anecdote from activist Julio Rodriguez about marching in the Puerto Rican Day Parade as an LGBT activist for the first time.

"I thought, 'What a powerful story? Why are we not documenting these stories? Of course I partially know the answer to that. Historically, Black and Brown LGBTQ folks are not included in our history.'"



Julio Rodriguez.

Photo by Matt Simonette

Rodriguez, who has long been active in Association of Latino/as/x Motivating Action (ALMA), was present Sept. 21 to describe that march further.

"It might not seem like a scary thing now, but my father was behind on another float the day ALMA marched in the Puerto Rican Day parade," he recalled. "I remember talking to my dad and saying, 'When I step off, there's no turning back.' Most of us who are Latino know that, when you are coming out, your family comes with you. I had been in that parade [before] and I had marched with my family. I remember, standing and holding that banner, shaking my fists. ... When you walk, you walk past every memory and every person who knew you and your family. There really is no stepping back."

The exhibit will run through May 29, 2020.

## HIP-HOP from page 16

"[To be] queer in hip-hop is to already dare to exist against," said Blu Bone. "That's why Futurehood has been really instrumental in terms of supplying me with spaces." Blu Bone credits Futurehood with making a queer hip-hop scene in Chicago feasible. "A [queer] scene is not possible without its spaces, without its cohorts, without its gatherings," he said.

Futurehood isn't the only space in the city for QTPOC in hip-hop. The standing party Slo 'Mo, which produces "slow jams for queer fam," and Party Noire, the "cultural hub" that focuses on and uplifts Black femmes, QTWOC and gender non-conforming Black womyn/people, are also helping normalize the presence of queer people in hip-hop spaces, in addition to creating spaces just for queer hip-hop artists and fans. "We're creating the culture," said Kinsey. "A lot of us have just been underground bubbling for such a long time, waiting to get the mic. These cultures are big and rich and ready."

Though Chicago is beginning to see more safe spaces for queerness in hip-hop, it's still not something universally accepted. "There are certain relationships that you won't have," said Kinsey. "To me, that's a blessing. That was God clearing them out of my sphere."

Ortiz and Run share a similar mindset. "Sometimes [people] say stuff like, 'if you weren't trans, you would be way bigger right now,'" said Ortiz. "In my mind, it's just not my time. No matter what I am or who I am, I'm good. At the end of the day, trans, Black, whatever, I'm going to let my work speak for me," she said.

Run agreed. "There might be certain opportunities that I know I should have but maybe didn't get because of certain things," said Run. "I still just remember I'm really fucking good at what I do."

### Art as activism

"There's something very special happening in Chicago," said Kinsey. "There's something beautiful happening [here] because there's this activism and art that we merge in a very specific and special way." Sun BLVD agreed. "We have something very unusual here. It's been happening, and it's still happening. We're pushing the culture forward. We want to make Chicago a city for everybody."

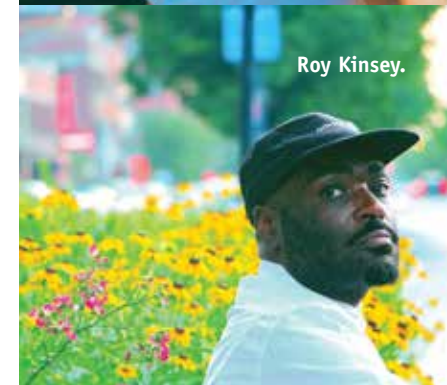
Kidd Kenn, the gay rapper from the south side who signed to Island Records at the end of July at just 16, is the return on the creative, underground movements like Futurehood, Slo 'Mo and Party Noire. "My city took me in," said Kenn, who's only been rapping for about a year. "I thought they weren't going to fuck with me just because of who I was and what I did. It shocked me when they did," he said. In Chicago, art and activism are combined in a unique way. This is shown in the music and activism of Chance the Rapper and Vic Mensa as well as Chicago Votes' 2018 "Give a Shit Weekend," which used visual art, fashion and music to mobilize young people in Chicago to vote in last year's midterm elections. This atmosphere of advocacy and advancement within art communities in Chicago has allowed for a gay Black kid from the south side to be his complete self, unapologetically, and actually see success.



Mother Nature.



Kidd Kenn.



Roy Kinsey.

Despite Kidd Kenn's popularity and accomplishments, Chicago isn't perfect; there's still work to be done. Klevah and Truth questioned the notion of acceptance, saying that they want more: "I don't want to be accepted, I want to be loved," said Truth.

The queer hip-hop artists that are thriving and popping up around the city are helping set the stage for that love and affirmation. "I want to be a part of that wave of artists that paves the way for other people like myself, so it's not as hard as it is for me," said Run.

"Everything I went through was to give me a resume," said Ortiz. "Hey, I went through this too. That happened to me. A lot of times if you can see someone where you're from, [and they're] where you want to be, it shows you it can be done."

For those who live at the most marginalized intersections in society, simply existing is a form of activism. Many people think of queerness as an antithesis to hip-hop, but the queer and transgender hip-hop artists here in Chicago, simply by being their authentic selves, are proving this to be false.

"It took me a while to understand that I had to be the person to create the music that I wanted to hear," said Kinsey. "I love that my intersections that I tried to keep separate were the key, once I put them together."

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## BILLY Masters

"I spent the first 23 years of my life playing a straight man."—**Gus Kenworthy's** response to criticism about him playing Emma Roberts' boyfriend on *American Horror Story*: 1984. He added, "A gay actor playing straight is a big deal. There aren't many openly gay actors getting cast in straight parts." He adds that some people wondered, "Gus has no credits, no experience. How did he get this role?" Too easy—not the question, the subject.

If you saw the film *Pacific Heights*, you know it's pretty hard to evict someone in California. Here in West Hollywood, a prominent political activist and donor wasn't evicted when a random person died in his apartment. He also wasn't evicted after a second suspicious death in that same apartment. Everything changed when a third person nearly died in the apartment. If you don't know the story of Ed Buck, it's a doozy. In 2017, someone died of an overdose in his apartment during a sexual tryst. But this is West Hollywood, so most people didn't bat an eye. When an eerily similar incident occurred 18 months later, many saw a pattern. Both victims were Black men who overdosed on meth. But the police said insufficient evidence. When a third African-American man survived a similar scenario a month ago, Buck was arrested and charged with three counts of battery and allegedly injecting the third victim with meth. He also was charged with operating a "drug den" in his apartment, which is probably against the rules of his lease. The eviction paperwork was filed last week.

Fresh off his historic Emmy win, **Billy Porter** went to the Pasadena Playhouse for the opening night of *Little Shop of Horrors* to support his Pose co-star, **Mj Rodriguez**. She made theatrical history as the first transgender actress to play Audrey. So, for those of you who wondered if trans people could only play trans characters: The answer is no—they can play whatever roles they are suited for (and, obviously, the converse is true). Aside from some key changes and awkward harmonies, it worked just fine. BTW, Billy Porter's voice was used for the opening narration. And here's a bit of trivia: Porter was the voice of the plant, Audrey II, in a 2003 touring production of "Little Shop" that closed just prior to opening on Broadway.

In this production, **Amber Riley** played the plant. The innocent little sprout in Act 1 remained throughout—except during feeding when puppeteers swung giant tentacles. (I initially wrote giant testicles .... Freudian slip.) **George Salazar** was a solid Seymour, while **Matt Wilkas'** portrayal of Orin's death scene took on operatic proportions—not that there's anything wrong with that. While it was a good, solid, stripped-down and basic production with admirable performances, I didn't think it was special—aside from the non-traditional casting. It runs through Oct. 20, and you can get tix at PasadenaPlayhouse.



**Tuc Watkins is half of a possible couple, Billy says.**

Image from the movie *Retake* from Breaking Glass Pictures

org.

Someone I saw at "Little Shop" was an ebullient **Alexandra Billings**. The trans actress has reason to celebrate. She'll be joining the Broadway cast of *Wicked* as Madame Morrible. A press release stated, "Alexandra is the first openly trans actress to play the role." Her first night will be Jan. 20.

On the flip side, **Erika Jayne** is going into Chicago. This, too, could be seen in a historic context, because I believe Jayne is the first openly discussed possible transgender performer to play the role of Roxie. And if you think I'm going to get into the "is s/he or isn't s/he," no dice. That's between her and her gynecologist and/or proctologist. What I got a kick out of is that her press release goes to great pains to state that this will be Erica Jayne's first appearance on Broadway. Really? You mean she never did *The Cherry Orchard*, or *Elektra*?

Making real history, playwright **Charles Busch** will lead an all-star Broadway benefit performance of his play *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* and he'll take over the titular role, originally played by Linda Lavin. But Lavin will still be performing—filling in for the late Shirl Bernheim, who was the original Frieda. The rest of the original cast will also appear—**Michele Lee**, **Tony Roberts** and **Anil Kumar**. This is an Actors Fund benefit and will take place Nov. 18 at the Friedman Theatre. Grab your tix at ActorsFund.org. See you there (God willing).

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Karl in Chicago: "I just heard that **Tuc Watkins** and **Andrew Rannells** are a couple. Is it true? Really?"

As people online are saying, they are an "Instagram couple"—whatever that means. **Cheyenne Jackson** chimed in, commenting, "You're Insta-ficial now"—and he knows a thing or two about online love affairs. Tuc and Andrew co-starred as combative lovers in the Broadway revival of *The Boys in the Band*, and they're currently shooting

# DOG DAY AFTERNOON

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a film version for Netflix with the same cast. So, needless to say, they're "close." Perhaps that's why they've both posted several steamy pix together on their social media accounts. While I'm happy to see two hot shirtless guys, I'm troubled that all of these photos feature Rannells embracing Watkins from behind. Oh, the humanity.

When I'm presenting real and/or fake couples, it's definitely time to end yet another column. And if they're hot, who really cares. Far more important is that we must acknowledge the passing of **Linda Porter**, who played Myrtle on *Superstore*. Happily, her hologram will live on. If you need a bit more life for your viewing pleasure, check out BillyMasters.com—the site that has its finger on ... well, on something you want. If you have a question, dash it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I find me an Instagram husband! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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# the DISH

Dining Guide in  
WINDY CITY TIMES

## SAVOR Sampling drag brunches

BY ANDREW DAVIS

If you like keeping up with culinary trends, one of the most prominent ones in Chicago also incorporates entertainment: drag brunches.

Of course, Kit Kat Lounge started this trend eons ago (and you can see my take on its brunch at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/SAVOR-Brunches-at-Kit-Kat-Lounge-and-Lark-/63934.html>). Since taking root there, drag brunches have sprouted throughout the city—including River North, which is sometimes early to the party; other times, it seems five years too late.

Recently, I went to the inaugural Dragalicious Gospel Brunch at the new spot **Lips Chicago** (2229 S. Michigan Ave.; [LipsChicago.com](http://LipsChicago.com)). The decor is as opulent as one might expect (with a huge main room), and some of the drag queens are also servers.

The price for this Sunday experience is cover plus \$30 for brunch—but, boy, do these queens know how to entertain. With Ruff N' Stuff emceeing (and putting on thunderous performances of her own), the queens strutted, preened, lip-synched (and sang live!) to gospel standards as well as secular tunes like Mary J. Blige's "Just Fine" (which almost had me jumping



**Lips Chicago emcee  
Ruff N Stuff.**  
Photo courtesy of Lips  
Chicago

out of my seat).

As for the food itself (since this is a culinary column), the menu items were quite impressive. My friend loved her chicken and waffles, and I was quite taken with the green eggs-and-ham omelet. (Other selections from Chef Tom J. Schmitt include shrimp and grits, deluxe cheeseburger, Belgian waffles, crab cake Benedicts and other items). Also, this a bottomless brunch, meaning there are unlimited mimosas and Bloody Marys.

Then there's **Joy District's** "District Divas" drag brunch (112 W. Hubbard St.; sign up at [ParlayChi.com](http://ParlayChi.com))—held monthly on a Saturday. The same friend who went with me to Lips' brunch accompanied me to this one as well, and said



**Brunch at "District Divas."**  
Photo by Nikki Hudson

the River North spot's event seemed like "an afterthought." Sadly, I had to agree (at least at first)—but I do harbor hope.

For \$50 (!) per person, guests can partake of a brunch buffet and mimosa bar on Joy's second floor club level. However, things did not start promisingly: There were problems with our reservation (which were eventually—and graciously—straightened out) and the buffet, despite the variety of items (ranging from pizza to Rice Krispie treats), was merely adequate. Also, while it was a bottomless brunch as well, the mimosa carafe was not placed on our table until the end of the performance set. I had hoped things would be a bit more polished for this third

installment of the brunch.

But the queens (which the dazzling Mimi Marks led) saved the day. Besides Marks, there were Khloe (celebrating a birthday) as well Lila Star (who truly embodies that surname) and RuPaul's Drag Race alumna Dida Ritz. They definitely worked hard for the money, and deserved every single that went their way. Speaking of which, there was one noticeable difference from Lips, in that there was a young man (wearing what my friend called "Market Days attire") who provided singles for attendees' comfort.

Taking everything into account, Lips' brunch wins this drag battle—by an eyelash.

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



PROFILE BY  
TONY PEREGRIN

**DRAG PROFILE OF THE WEEK**  
**DERRY QUEEN**

### BEHIND THE NAME

"My drag name is Derry Queen—my real name is Derry (very Irish) and the 'queen' just makes sense. I'm still waiting on the lawsuit from Dairy Queen."

### DRAG INSPIRATION

"I'm huge into storytelling and taking a character or pop-culture moment people recognize and making it come to life on stage. The dumber, the better! Some influences that have shaped my drag: Lady Gaga's high-concept camp; Alaska Thunderfuck's presence; and all pop culture from the mid-late 2000s."

### FAVORITE PIECE IN YOUR CLOSET

"Anything I make myself, like my giant flower pot or a replica of Lori Laughlin's title card from Full House."

### FUN FACT

"I am extremely lactose-intolerant, so Derry shouldn't eat Dairy."

### GUILTY PLEASURES

"Performing any kind of corny musical theater song—'So Much Better' from Legally Blonde, 'Someone Gets Hurt' from Mean Girls, 'My Strongest Suit' from Aida ... I love a good Broadway moment!"

### WHERE CAN WE CATCH YOU

"I host a monthly show at the Hideout, Derry Queen's Big Queer Variety Show, which is a blend of Chicago's amazing comedy world (standup, sketch, music) and our stellar drag scene."

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram/Twitter: @derryqueenhaha  
Facebook: Derry Queen's Big Queer Variety Show



## SIDETRACK

'First Husband' Chasten Buttigieg stumps for Mayor Pete at a fundraiser Sept. 24.

Photos by Jed Dulanias

Photo by Sarah Lawson



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## SPIRITUALITY

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## MAGIC from page 15

works best if you make your customer the hero of the journey, if you give them a story that is worthy of saying, 'listen to this.'

"What makes people come," said Barnes, "is curiosity. People love magic, but they don't know until they see it. The thrill for me is that I love watching audiences watch magic."

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For Cranford, who said he believes that "the Silver Age of bar magic is this next generation," the joy is found every time he watches a new trick. "I love being fooled," he said. "I don't want to know how it's done," adding, "truly, the secrets of magic are stupid, but the effect is amazing."

**The Chicago Magic Lounge is at 5050 N. Clark St. Performances are nightly with a family-friendly matinee on Sunday. Visit [ChicagoMagicLounge.com](http://ChicagoMagicLounge.com) or call 312-366-4500.**

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## Wed., Oct. 2

**Budget Town Hall** Last of a series of meetings held across the City where residents openly communicate key considerations for next year's budget. 6:00pm - 8:00pm South Shore Cultural Center 7059 S. South Shore Dr Chicago <http://www.chicago.gov>

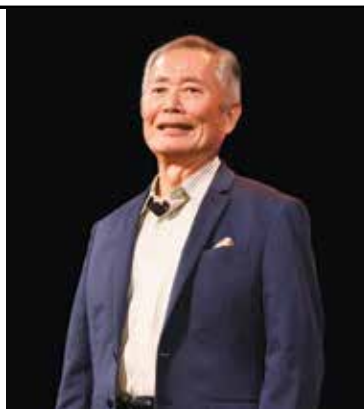
## Thursday, Oct. 3

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

**6th Annual Purple Tie Affair Concert & Silent Auction** Showcasing musical artists, drag performers and one of kind silent auction items. This year's proceeds will go to The Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus. When you arrive at the Purple Tie be ready to purchase some amazing pieces of art, buy some raffle tickets, and enjoy great entertainment. 7:00pm - 11:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/508031553282680/>

## Friday, Oct. 4

**McCraney's Brothers Size** Steppenwolf for Young Adults (SYA) presents The Brothers Size, by ensemble member Tarell Alvin McCraney (Academy Award



OH, MY!  
Monday, Oct. 14

Actor George Takei is one of several guests expected at "The Galaxy's Greatest Hits."

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

for Moonlight, co-creator of MS. BLAKK FOR PRESIDENT) and directed by Chicago director Monty Cole. The cast features Patrick Agada (Oshoosi Size), Manny Buckley (Ogun Size) and Rashaad Hall (Elegba). Through Oct. 19 7:30pm Downstairs Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St. 312-335-1650 <http://> Tickets: <http://> Steppenwolf.org

**Mark Farris** Lush baritone, exquisite piano stylings, and good-natured humor to dazzle audiences in piano bars and cabaret lounges. \$15. Reservations. Also performing Oct. 5. 8:30pm Drew's on Halsted, 3201 N Halsted 773-244-9191 <http://DrewsonHalsted.com>

## Saturday, Oct. 5

**AIDS Run & Walk Chicago** Advocates from across Chicago and beyond will gather to support those living with and vulnerable to HIV, 5K walk and 5K and 10K runs. Theme "Live true. Be you." 9:00am Soldier Field 1410 Museum Campus Dr Chicago 312-334-0946 [http://events.aidschicago.org/site/TR?fr\\_id=1530&pg=entry](http://events.aidschicago.org/site/TR?fr_id=1530&pg=entry)

**U.S. Women's National Team Public Trainings** Soccer fans are invited to attend the U.S. Women's National Team public training sessions. (Match between the U.S. and South Korea on Oct. 6) Free 11:00pm - 12:00pm Soldier Field 1410 Museum Campus Dr Chicago Tickets: <http://ussoccer.com>

## Sunday, Oct. 6

**Opera Tunes benefit** Encore of Opera Tunes at Sidetrack fundraiser benefiting the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. Drag, nudity and song. 21+. \$25 includes two drink tickets. Silent auction 1:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <http://sidetrackchicago.com> Tickets: <http://operatunes.eventbrite.com>

**Old Gold: Grown Music for Grown People** First Sunday of each month with host Kristen Kaza and DJ Tess + a rotation of special guests spinning all-vinyl, all-day, from Chaka to Sade. A sister party of "Slo 'Mo: Slow Jams for Queer Fam," "Old Gold" invites queer family & allies of all generations, races, identities, and ex-

pressions to join in the groove. 21+ only. 3:00pm - 9:00pm Waydown at Ace Hotel, 311 N. Morgan St., <http://www.facebook.com/events/2292348530880707/>

## Tuesday, Oct. 8

**Gender and Sexuality Studies Workshop** Navigating Graduate School: Advice from Recent PhDs, panel discussion with Eman Abdelhadi (Provost Postdoctoral Fellow in Comparative Human Development), Carlos Cardenas-Iniguez (Social Science Teaching Fellow), and Caterina Fugazzola (Earl S. Johnson Instructor in MAPSS). Workshops are held on alternate (even week) Tuesdays. Questions to [gssworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:gssworkshop@gmail.com) 5:00pm - 6:15pm Seminar room, 5733 S. University Ave. <http://lists.uchicago.edu/web/subscribe/sexuality-gender-wkshp>.

## Thursday, Oct. 10

**Mobilize LGBTQ Presidential Town Hall Viewing Party** Free, 21+, ID required, cash bar. 5:00pm - 10:30pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/2516135895168746/>

**Landmark: The Legacy Project [un]Gala** Honor recent groundbreaking achievements and the contributions of Lori Cannon, Paul Highfield, Owen Keehnen and Carrie Maxwell. Open bar, heavy hors d'oeuvres, music. 5:30pm - 8:30pm Chez Chicago, 247 E Ontario St. Fl 2 Tickets: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/landmark-the-legacy-project-ungala-tickets-68805227287>

## Friday, Oct. 11

**Randy Rainbow** Internet sensation, satirist, actor, singer, writer. Musical parodies and political satire. 8:00pm Genesee Theatre <http://genesee.theatre>

[atrewaukegan.org/?msckid=16868f66ce1e1cd392c3d22aac11c0f8](http://atrewaukegan.org/?msckid=16868f66ce1e1cd392c3d22aac11c0f8)

## Saturday, Oct. 12

**Waukegan Friends of Rainbow Railroad** Funds raised will support the work of Rainbow Railroad, an international non-profit organization, providing emergency travel support to individuals fleeing anti-LGBTQI violence and persecution. Find Rainbow Railroad Waukegan IL Fundraiser on Facebook 3:00pm - 6:30pm Baton Show Lounge 4713 N. Broadway Chicago

**Affinity Black Gold Casino Night Fundraiser** Raffle, a live DJ, dancing, and the casino game winner, will take home the coveted Affinity Community Services Black Gold Trophy. VIP (separate ticket) reception from 7 - 8 p.m. 8:00pm Gallery Guichard, 436 E 47th St. Tickets: <http://affinity95.org/acscontent/black-gold-2019/>

## Monday, Oct. 14

**George Takei, Kurt Elling at "The Galaxy's Greatest Hits" concert** Commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing with favorite space classics from Star Wars, E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, Gustav Holst's The Planets, Star Trek, Apollo 13 7:30pm Chicago Symphony Center (Orchestra Hall) 220 S Michigan Ave Chicago Tickets: <http://order.cso.org/10439>

## Tuesday, Oct. 15

**Madonna** Several intimate concert experiences 12:00pm The Chicago Theatre (Chicago) 175 N State St Chicago Tickets: <http://madonna.livenation.com>

## The Second City marking 60 years with special events

The Second City turns 60 on Tuesday, Dec. 16. However, the celebration kicks off this month with special events and launches that give audiences a peek behind the curtain of the comedy theater.

The company will commemorate its diamond anniversary with the release of a new coffee table book. The Second City: The Essentially Accurate History (Agate Midway), by The Second City with Sheldon Patinkin and Liz Kozak, will be released Wed., Dec. 17. The book is now available for pre-order wherever books are sold, but customers who purchase at SecondCity.com/book now through Dec. 8 will receive a free Second City logo sticker, free gift wrapping for the holidays and entry into a drawing to win their choice of one of three grand prizes.

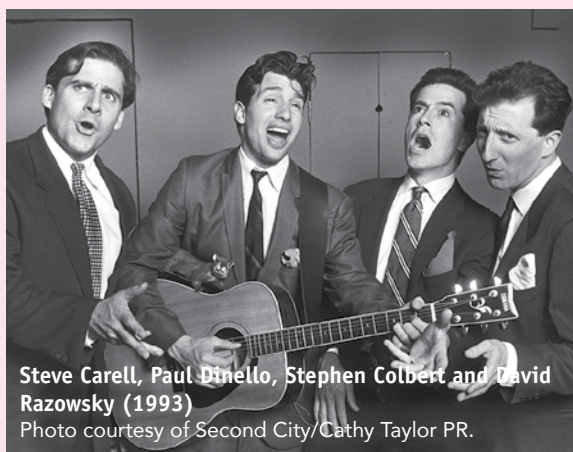
Also:

—The Second City is participating in the Design Museum of Chicago's free public exhibit "Setting the Stage: Objects of Chicago Theatre," which overlaps with the city's Year of Chicago Theatre initiative. Visitors can see the famed bentwood chair through Sunday, Jan. 5.

—To honor Second City's Wednesday night opening in 1959, the theater will offer a special ticket pricing of \$19.59 for select Wednesday performances, starting in January.

—Second City's Diversity & Inclusion program will hold sixty mentorship meetings with new and current talent to support diverse comedic talent, starting in February.

—The Second City Training Center will award sixty scholarships to students, starting in March. See SecondCity.com.



Steve Carell, Paul Dinello, Stephen Colbert and David Razowsky (1993)  
Photo courtesy of Second City/Cathy Taylor PR.

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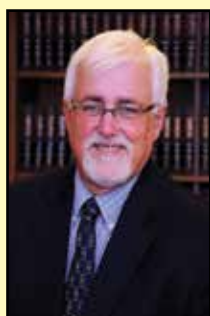


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