

WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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E. PATRICK JOHNSON

A profile of the newest NU dean.

Photo from Johnson's website, run with permission



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DAVID ZAK

Leaves Pride Films and Plays amid controversy.

Photo by Bob Eddy

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POLITICAL PARTY

Durbin, Baldwin meet with supporters.

Official photo of U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin



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Photo by Tim Peacock



MARCH FORWARD

Grassroots event focuses on Black, Brown trans lives

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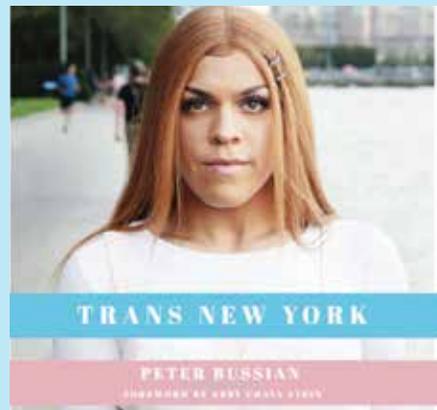
July 22, 2020	Sept. 16, 2020	Nov. 11, 2020
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Sept. 2, 2020	Oct. 28, 2020	Dec. 23, 2020

online exclusives at
www.WindyCityTimes.com

**JOINT FUSION**

Among the local restaurants reopening in this new world is French-Mexican spot Tzucu (left).

Photo of Tzucu's cochinita pibil courtesy of Tzucu

FOCUS GROUP

Photographer Peter Bussian talks about his new book, Trans New York.

Photo by Bussian

EVENT HORIZON

Find out about events that have been cancelled or postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about singer Brian Falduto, Jennifer Holliday and Mahershala Ali.

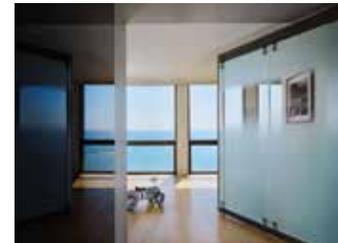
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DAILY BREAKING NEWS

Featured Properties

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COMPASS

Grassroots march focuses on Black, Brown trans lives

BY TIM PEACOCK

Organized by a host of grassroots organizations focused on assisting marginalized communities around the city, the Pride Without Prejudice/Reclaim Pride march kicked off at the Belmont Red Line station at noon on June 28. The march focused on Black and Brown lives—and transgender lives, in particular.

Although originally sponsored by a handful of grassroots organizations, the march received additional endorsements and co-hosts following the cancellation of the "Black Lives Matter: A BLM Pride Protest," as ACTIVATE-CHI organizers faced accusations they were not placing Black, Brown and trans voices front and center as well as claims they did not have an official endorsement from Black Lives Matter-Chicago (despite advertising such).

In the cancellation announcement, ACTIVATE-CHI said, in part, "We will be directing all of our resources from this march to Pride Without Prejudice, and make a sizable donation to Brave Space Alliance."

Organizations sponsoring and/or endorsing the Pride Without Prejudice/Reclaim Pride march included Affinity Community Services, Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, Organized Communities Against Deportations, Brave Space Alliance, Gay Liberation Network and National Trans March.

Ashabi Owagboriaye and Alexis Abarca kicked the event off by introducing speakers such as Samer Owaida, from Palestine Youth Movement; Wemi Esho, from National

Trans Visibility March; and Antonio Gutierrez, a co-founder and the strategic coordinator for Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD).

"Pride was a riot—it was not a party," Owagboriaye said. "We are not only here to fight for Black lives, but to fight for Black trans lives. The Black Lives movement needs to be inclusive of all of our lives. Black lives matter, Black women matter, Black queers matter, Black trans lives matter."

The march moved up Belmont and north through Boystown as the crowd chanted and grew.

At several points along the route, the march paused to highlight Black and trans speakers. In particular, the march stopped in front of the 19th District police station at 850 W. Addison St. to discuss police violence against Black and trans people. Organizers highlighted Strawberry Hampton, an incarcerated trans woman who was transferred to a women's facility in December 2018 after a year-long struggle that included sexual and physical violence.

Other speakers included Jae Rice and Zahara Bassett, from Brave Space Alliance; Jayda Van, from the Chicago Alliance Against Racialism and Political Repression; trans youth activist Carter Cavazos; drag performer Maori Beverly Hillz (Missy Banks); Envision Consulting CEO Tatyana Moaton; and transgender individual Russia Brown.

For more information on the march, including links to organizations accepting donations, see "Pride Without Prejudice/Reclaim Pride March" on Facebook.

All photos by Tim Peacock



Nondiscrimination guidelines affirmed after Trump rollback

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Illinois state officials issued guidance June 26 affirming the state's existing nondiscrimination protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The guidance came two weeks after U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that it would remove protections for transgender individuals and other marginalized populations that had been inscribed in the Affordable Care Act.

"Not only does this removal completely undermine a major pillar of the historic ACA legislation, it creates confusion about the right of everyone in the LGBTQ+ community, and specifically transgender individuals, to receive healthcare free from discrimination," said state officials in a press release, who further noted, however, that the state already had myriad protections on the books to protect those individuals in situations in which they now might be more vulnerable.

"From day one, my administration has sought to protect LGBTQ+ individuals, including by ex-

panding HIV preventative care and treatment, funding gender-affirming surgeries, fostering affirming and inclusive classrooms in which LGBTQ+ students are able to thrive, and ensuring LGBTQ+ students see themselves reflected in the curriculum," said Gov. JB Pritzker. "That work becomes even more urgent when the federal government hands down policy decisions that undermine people's basic humanity. As we live through exceedingly difficult times, we must unite against all forms of hate and show empathy and compassion for one another—especially as we fight for full equality and justice for all of our country's residents."

"No one should be discriminated against because of who they are or who they love," added Illinois Department of Human Rights Director Jim Bennett. "Illinois is a state where everyone's identities are affirmed. Our healthcare systems must be safe places for the LGBTQ+ community to seek care and the Illinois Department of Human Rights' team of investigators and lawyers will be there to enforce the protections our laws afford."

\$1 million or less. Money comes from filing fees nonprofits pay when incorporating in Illinois, not personal or property tax dollars.

For this grant cycle, \$375,000 is available to be split between 30 non-profits, and the maximum award amount is \$12,500 for each organization.

Previous grant recipients are eligible to apply if the term of their grant has been complete for at least one calendar year.

Visit ILCharitableTrust.com to complete an application online, or contact the treasurer's office at 217-836-4590.

cused much energy in the Badger State since losing it in the 2016 presidential contest.

"The road to the White House goes through Wisconsin," Baldwin said, adding that that she was "utterly shocked" when Trump won the state. She attributed that victory to emboldened Republican energy in Wisconsin thanks to the stewardship of then-Governor Scott Walker; voter interference; and a lack of connection with candidate Hillary Clinton, who did not ever campaign there.

But Baldwin maintained that Wisconsin voters have different issues on their mind this time around, among them healthcare, economic inequities and Trump's 2017 tax cut, which Baldwin said they noticed no benefit trickled down to them.

Durbin sang the praises of 2020 Democratic candidate Joe Biden, calling him the "most caring and compassionate person I've ever met in public life."

Durbin later added, "When Joe Biden does take the oath of office we will still be feeling the impact of the three crises [coronavirus, economic strife and racial inequities] that we're going through right now. ... We just have to think of some pretty bold action."

Nonprofits can apply for grants for food, housing

A grant program to help small nonprofit organizations provide food and housing assistance will begin taking applications July 1-Sept. 30, Illinois state Treasurer Michael Frerichs said in a statement.

The Charitable Trust Stabilization Fund assists small non-profits with annual budgets of

Durbin, Baldwin virtually meet with local supporters

BY MATT SIMONETTE

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin) joined U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) for an online conference call with Chicago-area supporters June 30. Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David also joined the call.

In the opening moments of the discussion, David outlined in stark terms what the consequences were for the next presidential election. "We are fighting for the soul of our country. We are fighting for our democracy."

"We have no alternative but to win," Durbin later added. He said during the talk that he was optimistic that Democrats could win the majority in the U.S. Senate, since several Republican senators' fortunes were irreversibly tethered to those of President Donald Trump.

Much of the discussion focused on Baldwin's home state of Wisconsin, a key battleground in the 2020 national election. Democrats have fo-

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This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

(bik-TAR-vee)

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BIKTARVY may cause serious side effects, including:

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BIKTARVY is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults and children who weigh at least 55 pounds. It can either be used in people who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before, or people who are replacing their current HIV-1 medicines and whose healthcare provider determines they meet certain requirements.

BIKTARVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS. HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

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- ▶ rifampin
- ▶ any other medicines to treat HIV-1

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Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- ▶ Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- ▶ Have any other health problems.
- ▶ Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if BIKTARVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking BIKTARVY.
- ▶ Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- ▶ Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, antacids, laxatives, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- ▶ BIKTARVY and other medicines may affect each other. Ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist about medicines that interact with BIKTARVY, and ask if it is safe to take BIKTARVY with all your other medicines.

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- ▶ **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. If you develop new or worse kidney problems, they may tell you to stop taking BIKTARVY.
- ▶ **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- ▶ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- ▶ **The most common side effects of BIKTARVY** in clinical studies were diarrhea (6%), nausea (6%), and headache (5%).

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You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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HOW TO TAKE BIKTARVY

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- ▶ This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- ▶ Go to BIKTARVY.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- ▶ If you need help paying for your medicine, visit BIKTARVY.com for program information.



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COVID-19

Survivor doctor denied as a blood donor because of his sexual orientation

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Dr. Dillon Barron, MD, is in the business of saving lives. At Saint Francis Hospital in Evanston, he as an emergency medicine doctor and most recently he and his partner, Eric Seelbach, tried to donate blood, but were denied because they are gay.

A few months ago, when COVID-19 hit hard, Barron said he and the doctors at the hospital were intubating lots of patients. Exposed to the virus, it was a matter of weeks before Barron started to get a runny nose, aches and chills, but no cough or shortness of breath. It did not seem like corona at first.

Then Seelbach started feeling sick, losing his senses of taste and smell a few days later.

The couple, who have been together for five years and reside in Lake View, tested positive for corona, but saw the positive in having antibodies and were excited at the prospect of donating blood, soon learning this was not a possibility because of their sexual orientation.

"To me, this felt like institutionalized subtle ways of how homophobia is still ingrained in our culture," said Barron. "The Red Cross and all



Dr. Dillon Barron and partner Eric Seelbach.

Photo courtesy of the couple

these organizations are in favor of repealing this because they know the science and because they know this law is not based on science, that it's just based in homophobia.

"No person in their right mind, no sane person, would say 'no' to something if the consequence is death versus living; no one would decline my blood."

Dr. Anu Hazra—assistant professor of medicine in the section of infectious diseases and global health at University of Chicago and staff physician at Howard Brown Health—explained the current blood bans on gay and bisexual men are based on policies dating back to the early '80s, when blood was not screened regularly.

The guidelines started as a lifetime ban that relaxed in 2015, to a 12-month ban, then in spring 2020, changed to a three-month ban. This, of course, was referring to the window of time that a man last had sex with another man.

"I think understanding someone's individual risk goes beyond just if they are a man who has sex with men," said Hazra. "What other countries have moved onto is individualized risk assessment. Finding these answers to create an individualized risk assessment to say 'this person would be considered higher risk for HIV and therefore they would not be a potential blood donor; that's a much more educated and insightful stance than just barring a whole group of people based on their sexual orientation, or the fact that they just have sex with even a single partner."

Individual assessments, Hazra said, are really the most evidence based approach in screening blood donors.

Working directly with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), members of Congress and other communities became involved. U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Illinois), for example, helped introduce a resolution in 2009 calling for non-discriminatory blood donation guidelines that were grounded in science and individual risk factors.

"I think what's driving things now, more than anything, is necessity," said Quigley. Something bad happens—Ald. [Tom] Tunney said this to me—and they step up like good humans and citizens, they offer to donate blood, they're told that they can't and they're angered confused surprised. They go through all those stages. Here we have COVID-19. We're experiencing extraordinary blood shortages and that's going to continue for some time. So now we have the opportunity to never waste a crisis."

Although impossible to imagine, Quigley went on say there can be a silver lining in this pandemic: ending a discriminatory practice and then saving even more lives.



Dr. Dillon Barron.

Photo courtesy of Barron

Barron said he knew about the blood ban, but assumed that it would be lifted during a pandemic. He was shocked to be turned away.

Hazra said it is not a unique situation. He knows other gay and bisexual physicians and healthcare workers who contracted and recovered from COVID and then tried to pursue plasma donation. Each were denied because of restrictions.

"Even during non-COVID times, there are blood shortages super regularly; I can vouch for this as an ER doctor," Barron explained. "To me, I see gay men, as philanthropists for the most part, wanting to help and I know gay men who'd donate blood if they were allowed. There was a study that said if gay men were allowed to donate blood it would result in several hundred thousand extra units of blood being donated per year."

"I will remain committed to the fight to lift the waiting period entirely to make the blood donor system equal," said Quigley. "I feel good that we'll get there."

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I-CASH BY THE NUMBERS

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Reports	4,921
Properties	704,534
Cash	\$150,713,509
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Number of paid claims	87,701
Cash and share value returned	\$106,004,555.86

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PASSAGES

Brent L. Conn

Brent L. Conn—a caterer and business owner—passed away peacefully July 4 at home in Evanston. He was 67.

Born in Springfield, Illinois, Brent earned his degree in hotel and restaurant management from Michigan State University and founded Conn's Catering in Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood. He planned thousands of weddings and other events over 28 years.

He was the beloved husband of Michael Lo-cardio Limon, best friend/business partner of Sheila Mulcahy, and son of the late Leroy Powell Conn and Frances Lewis Conn. He was also the brother of Courtney "Court" (Karen) Conn; uncle of Adam, Casey, and Amanda Conn; and great-uncle of seven.

Brent was the faithful companion of Aliyah the German Shepherd and Zac the golden Lab. More than anything, Brent valued good friendships.

Friends and family will celebrate Brent's life when it is safe to gather in larger groups.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his name to



Brent Conn.

Photo courtesy of Cremation Society of Illinois, Inc.

the American Cancer Society, Cancer.org.

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

LGBTQ activists, leaders respond to virtual meeting with CPD

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

A Chicago Police Department off-the-record Zoom meeting with hand-picked leaders from LGBTQ organizations and new CPD Superintendent David Brown resulted in a public response calling for major changes in CPD—including “substantial defunding” of police.

Windy City Times was only made aware of the meeting when activists posted the information on social media. A number of these uninvited activists were also on the call.

According to the email that was posted on social media, the goal of the call was to introduce Brown, who has been on the job for eight weeks, to local LGBTQ leaders and find out how CPD can support LGBTQ community needs in Chicago. The Zoom link was only made available to the invited guests so this reporter was only able to call in via cell phone and was unable to introduce herself.

The 45-minute call came two days after the Pride Without Prejudice/Reclaim Pride march that took place on Chicago’s North Side amidst the worldwide #BlackLivesMatter protests against police brutality. The march focused on Black and Brown trans people and was held on what would have been the date of Chicago’s Pride Parade—the parade had been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CPD Assistant Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives Mike Milstein facilitated the discussion.

During Brown’s opening statement, he called the #BlackLivesMatter protests “civil unrest.” He said he was looking forward to working with the activists and mentioned the CPD officer who used a homophobic slur that was captured on video. Brown added that he took immediate action and relieved that officer of his police powers and launched an investigation that is still pending.

Brown said he knows there are issues between the CPD and the LGBTQ community and added that when it is safe to do so he will be having a meeting with trans activists to hear their concerns. Brown also said he wants to appoint five CPD LGBTQ liaisons.

While answering callers’ questions, Brown

spoke about “increasing violence against our police officers” with 16 officers being shot at as well as the challenges he has faced since taking this job. He added that he was in favor of having more social services in the city; however he does not want to reduce the \$1.76 billion CPD budget and re-direct those funds to Chicago Public Schools and other entities.

Many of the participants said they advocated for defunding and de-militarizing the police and investing in LGBTQ and Black and Brown community’s futures. They said that their stakeholders are telling them the same thing and added that many times the police do not make these communities safe and, at times, contribute to more vio-

lence in Chicago. Additionally, they said Brown needs to look at the detailed information activists have published regarding what they want to happen with the CPD and put them into action.

A number of invited leaders emailed statements to Windy City Times reacting to what transpired during the call.

“Anytime the superintendent of the Chicago Police Department reaches out to community for feedback, it is a positive step,” said Center on Halsted CEO Modesto “Tico” Valle. “Sometimes the feedback is going to be difficult to hear and will test their leadership. Walking into a high-profile position as the head of a highly scrutinized police department in one of the most segregated cities in the country, cannot have been easy.

“What the groups on the call were demanding at the very least is that Superintendent Brown needs to understand that this is not business as usual. We must have systemic change. We must listen to and act upon the needs of LGBTQ Black communities, particularly Black trans communities, here in Chicago. There is a real opportunity

in front of us to go beyond the Consent Decree and effect change where it is needed most.”

“At a time where there’s a national conversation about defunding the police, I was heartened to see that Superintendent Brown was willing to talk with and listen to LGBTQ community leaders,” said AIDS Foundation Chicago President and CEO John Peller. “LGBTQ people, and especially trans women of color and people living with HIV, can experience life-long consequences from interactions with the police. Chicago, the state and federal government must invest in services and supports like job training, better neighborhood schools, increased access to culturally competent substance use and mental health treatment to keep LGBTQ people out of harm’s way.”

When Windy City Times reached out to Milstein to ask him about the meeting, what the catalyst was for setting up the call, why it was not made public, how the CPD came up with the invite list and why activists were not invited on the call he sent this response via email to the paper:

Turn to page 11

REAL ESTATE AUCTIONS

AUGUST 11, 2020

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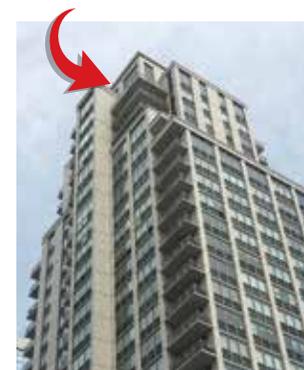
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E. Patrick Johnson: A man of firsts

BY JOSHUA IRVINE

E. Patrick Johnson is a man often associated with the word “first.”

He was the first in his family to go to college, and the first Black native of Hickory, North Carolina, to receive a Ph.D., for which the town proclaimed a day in his honor (although he said he has his doubts about whether he actually was the first to obtain a doctorate). He was the first Black man hired and tenured in Northwestern University’s performance studies department, and then the first given a named professorship.

And soon, he will be the first Black dean of the university’s School of Communication, where he has worked for 20 years.

Johnson experienced early success at Northwestern, beginning with his work in Black queer studies, an interdisciplinary field that essentially didn’t exist in 2000, when Johnson joined what was then known as the School of Speech.

Black queer studies was unprecedented in many ways: Gender studies was less than 20 years old and had just been renamed from women’s studies in the 2000-01 school year.

Additionally, according to Sandra Richards—a former professor of African American Studies and the first Black woman to gain tenure at Northwestern’s College of Arts and Sciences, in 1990—academia was only beginning to accept Black faculty.

“When we first came into white spaces, we were barely tolerated,” Richards said. “For a lot of us, we were coming into hostile ground.”

And, Richards said, scholarship around Blackness largely excluded queer narratives.

Johnson would be a major force in changing that, co-compiling the first anthology on Black

queer studies and writing one of its foundational texts, an essay which dubbed the burgeoning field “quare studies” after how Johnson’s grandmother pronounced “queer.”

He has gone on to become a successful scholar and performer, writing several oral histories of Black queer folk in the South and adapting one of them, *Sweet Tea*, into a staged reading, a play and recently a documentary. He’s also chaired both the performance studies and African American studies departments, while also contributing to what is now the gender and sexuality studies program.

“Patrick has always had a progressive, active, challenging vision of academia and the world at large,” Richards said, adding that Johnson’s personality and intellect helped encourage collaboration both inside and out of performance studies.

Johnson, in turn, credited Richards and a white performance studies professor, Dwight Conquergood, as key mentors who supported him at the outset of his Northwestern career and part of a “rich and broad” community that kept him at the university. (Conquergood died in 2004.)

Certainly, a lot is asked of Johnson. Students seem to flock to Johnson to ask him to be their adviser or mentor. He’s asked to be part of every committee on diversity as well as the diversity member on every search committee for new faculty. If there’s an event about diversity on campus, he’s requested to speak.

“You get asked to do all this labor around diversity that should be the work of the institution,” Johnson said.

And there’s still a lot to be done: Even in 2020, Johnson noted, there are still departments at Northwestern without Black faculty, in large



E. Patrick Johnson.
Photo run from Johnson’s website, with permission

part because the university doesn’t do its due diligence in seeking out professors of color. Additionally, Johnson said, the university—particularly its African American Studies department—has seen many talented professors “poached” by other universities.

In his new role as dean, Johnson said he plans to seek out more faculty who are persons of color and work with admissions to cultivate a similarly diverse student body.

Those are not disparate goals: Johnson said diversity has to be present at every level to create an inclusive environment that accommodates nonwhite students.

“Students of color are not going to be attracted to a university where they don’t have any mentor who share their background,” Johnson said. “People want to make sure they have mentors who share their experience.”

Johnson added he also hopes to raise funds to offer socioeconomically disadvantaged students the sort of opportunities enjoyed by their wealthier peers and improve interdepartmental collaboration.

“We have to create an environment at Northwestern that is inclusive, and doesn’t just pay lip service,” he said.

But Johnson said the university has improved, particularly in gender and sexuality studies, where race is now a core part of the program’s curriculum and trans and non-binary issues are the new frontier—a change he credits to a new generation of scholars.

Johnson sees a change in himself as well, particularly with regard to those scholars. Now 53, Johnson said his new role is one of seeding ground for—and ceding ground to—a new generation.

“I often say that the moment I stop learning from my students is the day I should stop teaching,” Johnson said. “I never feel like I’m the smartest person in the room. I’ve maybe read more or studied for, but I’m not the smartest. And that’s a good thing.”

Editor’s note: Joshua Irvine is currently a student at Northwestern University.

Center on Halsted selling BLM boards

Recently, Center on Halsted reopened—taking down the wooden panels that surrounded the building. The boards were erected as a precaution from the recent civil unrest that took place throughout Chicago.

However, a team called Chicago Cleanup Crew turned the boards into works of art that honor the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

Anyone interested in purchasing a board (which start at \$100 each) should contact the Center or the Crew (the latter through Facebook). Proceeds will go to the Center and Brave Space Alliance, a Black-led, trans-led LGBTQ center on the South Side of Chicago.



Panel at Center on Halsted.
Photo by Andrew Davis

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"Superintendent Brown hosted a call with LGBTQ+ organization founders and leaders with the purpose of introducing himself to them, meeting them and learning about their organizations. This is the first of many conversations we hope to have with members of the LGBTQ+ community as we work to strengthen our relationships with the community and find ways to collaborate more on how to better support the community. Being new to Chicago, this was the Superintendent's first opportunity to connect with many of these organizations and learn about the work they are doing. There will be many more meetings with members of the community.

"This was an introduction meeting to learn about different organizations in the LGBTQ+ community and was the first of many conversations with members of the community. We worked with a few of the LGBTQ+ organizations we have existing relationships with to create the list and ensure we were reaching all communities. This meeting was meant as an introduction meeting so the Superintendent could learn about the different organizations in the LGBTQ+ community. The Superintendent plans to meet with more members of the community, including activists."

Following the meeting, more than 110 LGBTQ+ community members and organization leaders, including more than a dozen who were present on the call, released a statement that they shared with this publication.

(The statement can be read at WindyCityMedia-Group.com.)

Morrison, Preckwinkle host online LGBTQ health forum

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Cook County Commissioner Kevin Morrison and Board President Toni Preckwinkle were joined by advocates from three local organizations for a conversation about LGBTQ health inequities on June 25.

LGBTQ Americans have long faced numerous challenges in dealing with healthcare professionals, many of whom are not adept at understanding and addressing the nuances needed in their treatment. Indeed, Morrison opened the session by discussing his own difficulties in finding culturally competent healthcare as a gay man.

But all panelists noted that those complications are exacerbated even further if a patient is transgender and/or belongs to one or more additional marginalized communities. Furthermore, the coronavirus has made already-existing problems even more difficult to tackle.

"The pandemic is following the disparities that we see for every other condition," said David Munar, CEO and president of Howard Brown Health. He noted that, in Chicago, people in wealthier Chicago zip codes have life-expectan-



Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

Photo courtesy of Preckwinkle's office

cies that are decades longer than residents of poorer ones.

"We're seeing this play out in a dramatic way in the pandemic," Munar added.

The pandemic "has stripped bare the inequities we see across the county," noted Preckwinkle.

Aisha Davis, director of policy for AIDS Foundation of Chicago, placed the health-inequities crisis within the context of racial inequities

gaining wider attention in the weeks following the killing of George Floyd.

She said that healthcare inequity is "not a new situation for Black and Latinx communities," and that, while society might say that solutions are unobtainable, the problems arise thanks to systemic disinvestment in communities of color.

"We have to acknowledge that, for a long time, Black folks, Latinx folks and indigenous folks were not thought of as human," Davis added ... [That] hasn't come out of medical profession completely."

Brave Space Alliance Executive Director La-Saia Wade noted that, beyond the complications the other panelists had already discussed, "Trans people face a different type of narrative and pushback" in healthcare settings Wade's organization primarily uplifts Black and Brown trans Chicagoans and connects them with resources.

Wade's partner, who is also transgender, is expecting a child, and she detailed difficulties they had in accessing competent care. "People are not wanting to touch him."

Davis said that it was important for advocates and public officials to let community members have a say in how community resources are allocated.

When proposing healthcare and community resource interventions, she added, "Don't just bring a finished product to the table—have an idea of what their needs are."

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letters

*Demanding justice**Dear familia:*

In June, another transgender woman of color was murdered—this time, in our own home, in the Southwest Side of Chicago. Today, we honor Selena Reyes-Hernandez.

Selena was murdered because of transphobia. This is yet another victim of the epidemic of violence toward trans* woman. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects has reported that half of all the hate crimes against LGBTQ people have been directed at transgender folks* , 40% towards trans* women of color. Yet, those numbers could be higher, since trans* folks hardly report to the authorities due to fear and further stigma.

We demand for full justice for Selena.

We also demand that schools and community organizations do better. Do better to educate about the trans* community, do better to eliminate stigma, do better at eradicating violence. There is absolutely no reason why the young man who murdered Selena should have had easy access to a gun, and even more importantly, he should have never even thought about murdering someone. We call on our allies, especially our straight and cisgender allies in the Latinx community, to speak out. We are asking for investments and funding for organizations led by trans* women of color.

We demand full justice for Selena. We will not rest until trans* women can live their authentic selves without any fear.

Rest in power, Selena.

Sincerely,
ALMA: The Association of
Latinos/as Motivating
Action

*Standing against racism**Dear community:*

June is Pride Month. Over 50 years ago, on June 28, 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. It was one of a long history of raids that the queer community had been regularly subjected to. But that time was different. Members across the LGBTQ+ community demanded to be treated humanely and fought for their rights.

During Pride, the LGBTQ+ community commemorates the Stonewall riots and celebrates the civil rights achievements of the community.

An axiom of the LGBTQ+ community is “Silence = Death.” The LGBTQ+ community continues to fight for justice and equal rights. We would not have gained civil-rights advances without the voices of our allies joining ours.

Last year, at our annual meeting, the Alliance of Illinois Judges (AIJ) asked allies to be a voice for equality and to educate themselves on issues facing the LGBTQ+ community; but more must be done to stand with people of color.

Equal protection and equal access will not be realities without confronting systemic barriers to both. Discussing these barriers, educating ourselves, and working towards a better justice system are integral parts of allyship. Judges and lawyers take an oath to uphold the Constitution. As Judges, we have the responsibility to ensure equal protection and equal access to justice.

The additional struggles and barriers LGBTQ+ people of color face are sharply in focus this year during Pride month. We cannot be silent.

What can be done? We can be better allies by pledging to come out, speak up and join in.

—Come out: Explicitly denounce racism to family and friends and stand for justice and equality.

—Speak up: Speak up against racist language and microaggressions. Call out injustices. Lift up the voices of our black and brown colleagues.

—Join in: Become involved and educated on the history, legal issues, and current struggles facing Black and brown communities.

We must work collectively for justice daily not just in our courtrooms, but every day in our communities.

The world needs us to do better and to be better. We are one nation and one people: *e pluribus unum.*

Together,
Alliance of Illinois Judges

*Solidarity**Dear community:*

The Kennedy Forum Illinois unequivocally stands with our community against racism and oppression.

The senseless murder of George Floyd, and the many who preceded him, emphasizes the injustice and inequity that have perpetuated both physical and psychological violence against the Black community for far too long. Racial inequity, developed over centuries, results in disparities across so many domains, including health, wealth and safety. If we wish to see lasting change that will eliminate

discrimination and oppression against Black people, words are not enough.

The Kennedy Forum Illinois has and always will stand for equality—not just for those with mental health and addiction challenges, but for all who are discriminated against. This includes ending the racist systems that perpetuate psychological violence. We want to contribute to the important conversation taking place in our nation by promoting resources and actions we can all take to heal and address the trauma caused by racism:

—Listen. It is a simple, but powerful (and often difficult) thing for people to do. Many of us can't begin to understand the challenges the Black community faces on a daily basis. Oppression, violence, threats, and micro-aggressions can have a lasting impact. To respect the experiences of others, we have to be able to discuss them and listen with open hearts and minds.

—Become an anti-racist. The Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of African American History and Culture created a website called “How to be Antiracist” that explores what all individuals, regardless of race, can do through self-awareness, self-reflection and action. It is no longer enough to be “non-racist.”

—Learn how racism undermines mental well-being and contributes to mental health disorders, including those caused by trauma. Become educated about how we can help those affected to heal.

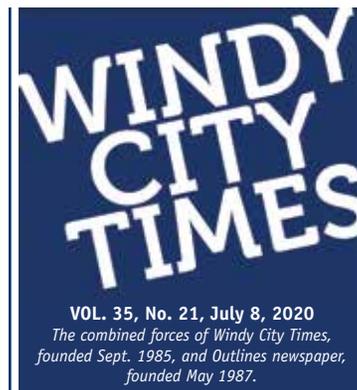
—Access and share Psych Hub's “Race, Racism, and Mental Health Resources” (available under “Alternatives to Calling the Police During Mental Health Crises” on Facebook).

—Practice and promote self-care by attending free trainings, such as our recent webinar “During the Pandemic: Strategies to Help Manage Stress, Improve Self-Care, and Reduce Isolation” (available on YouTube). Emotionally healthy people are more compassionate toward others.

John F. Kennedy, whose ideals and values shaped The Kennedy Forum Illinois' mission, fought for racial equality throughout his presidency. President Kennedy's words ring true today when he stated that our nation “...was founded on the principle that all men are created equal, and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.” The Kennedy Forum Illinois proudly honors his legacy each and every day. We will continue to fight to end structural racism in our country. Please join us and help to be the change.

Cheryl Potts
Executive Director
The Kennedy Forum Illinois

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



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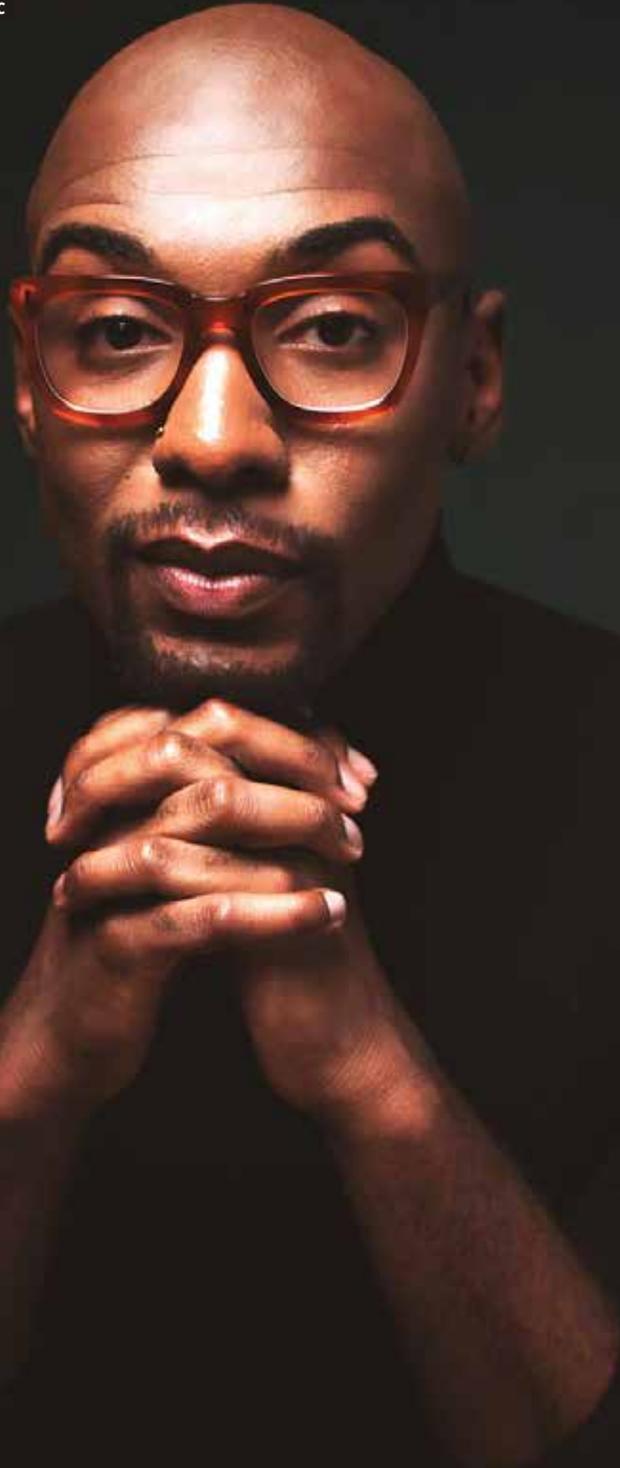
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ARTS + THEATER

New Pride Films & Plays Artistic
Director Donterrio Johnson.
Photo courtesy of John Olson



THEATER

Pride Films & Plays' Zak steps down after community outcry

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Pride Films & Plays (PFP) Executive Director David Zak stepped down from his longtime post July 3 after numerous members of Chicago's theater community voiced complaints about his working style in late June and began a petition urging his firing.

Participants in various social media threads alleged numerous incidents of mistreatment and negligence by Zak, who prior to his PFP position, was artistic director for the Bailiwick Repertory Company from 1982-2009. Zak was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame (now the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame) in 2013.

"It pains me that my actions and words have hurt many others in our Chicago theater community and for that I apologize greatly," said Zak in a June 3 statement. "I would not intentionally offend, hurt, or exclude anyone in our arts community, which plays such an important role to build understanding and bridges in our community. But it has happened, and I am sorry.

"I know the importance of creating a safe work environment in theater and film for all people who are so often marginalized. And while I am immensely proud of the creative projects done by our many teams, there is much more work that could and should have been done for us to be truly inclusive and sensitive. As the leader of this team, I let too many people down and cannot find words to express how sorry I am."

PFP's board also announced Artistic Associate Donterrio Johnson will be the organization's new artistic director, with artistic associates JD Caudill and Robert Ollis continuing in their current roles.

In a press release, Johnson said, "I am delighted to step into the role of Artistic Director of Pride Films and Plays. Of course I wish it were under better circumstances, but my team and I are ready to turn things around immediately. I believe in the endless future of PFP and I am excited to lead the charge, but we must rebrand, restructure and reignite the creative spark of this company."

Windy City Times asked PFP and Zak to comment on the online allegations specifically, but they had not responded as of this article's publication.

Online discussion about Zak and his organization began after director Jon Martinez on June 26 alleged numerous unsafe working conditions for his cast, among them having to navigate around sharp wooden edges; not adequately responding to a robbery that took place in the theater; not providing a clean rehearsal space, which Martinez said had rat feces and was infested with roaches; and not responding to a staffer who allegedly verbally assaulted an actor. Martinez said that he later received no feedback when he raised his concerns with PFP officials after the show's run.

"You could say that I was an angry director/choreographer who felt their show was ignored on account of the reviews being middling," he wrote on Facebook. "[The production] felt like it wasn't actually produced, just executed. In the end, I guess as long as they were able to say it was directed/choreographed by a POC, they got what they wanted."

After news of Zak's departure broke, Martinez told Windy City Times, "I'm very proud of the people who spoke out. That took enormous bravery, not only just telling it to another person but doing it online, which added fuel to the

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**STREAMING
THEATER REVIEW**

**The Golden Girls:
The Lost Episodes,
Vol. 4 – Lockdown!**

Playwright: David Cerda

At: Hell in a Handbag

Productions, streaming online

Tickets: HandbagProductions.org/Stage773.com

Runs through: Aug. 15

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

As the long intermission drags on into its fifth month, home movies and backstage chat are no longer enough for theatergoers craving brand-new written-from-scratch plays to remind them of better days when we really were all in this together—a theme epitomized in *The Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes, Vol. 4 – Lockdown!* the long-running television comedy from the 1980s celebrating AARP-eligible women living independently and speaking their minds with uncensored candor.

Given that material, it wasn't long before the Hell in a Handbag company launched its own string of live-action camp-drag parodies spoofing the popular Hollywood series.

Newcomers to the narrative need only know that flirty Blanche, dotty Rose, acerbic Sophia and gruff Dorothy share a house in Miami. In this



David Cerda and Grant Drager with (bottom, l to r) Ed Jones and Ryan Oates, in *The Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes, Vol. 4 – Lockdown!*

Photo by Joe Mazza/Brave Lux

fourth of the allegedly “lost episodes,” Blanche returns from the 1992 SantaCon festival after having been (perhaps) exposed to Legionnaires’ disease, plunging the household into quarantine. Soon news arrives that the entire city is now at risk—just how many people DID Blanche infect on her weekend spree?

Reactions to the crisis revolve around topics familiar to loyal fans of the source material:

Rose—sporting a chicken-beak mask—finds comfort in her homemade hand puppets and fond recollections of her bucolic upbringing in northern Minnesota, Blanche denies responsibility for the epidemic as she inventories her extensive supply of sex toys, and Dorothy resists the lecherous advances of her clingy former husband (who has invented a prophylactic face-covering that responds to exhaled breath by spelling out naughty

messages).

Other visitors include Rose’s shy suitor Miles, as well as two girlfriends: smug Misty and over-achieving Esther (who gleefully taunts online audiences with a shout-out to the “secondary characters that nobody who hasn’t seen a Chicago show even know about!”). Oh, and let’s not forget seen-it-all Nancy’s call-in reports of an orgiastic rave party erupting at the Shady Pines elder-care facility. The gags also encompass commercials extolling such copyright-dodging products as “Colonial Pencil” Life Insurance, along with an abundance of fourth-wall winks—not the least of which is the explanation of how everyone comes to be communicating by videoconferencing technology when it’s 1992.

Even more impressive than the verbal slapstick (ordered to stay in her room, Sophie protests, “Who am I? Anne Frank?”) is the noteworthy progress made since the advent of “pandemic” theater—not only by performers suddenly reduced to “headshot” acting techniques, but film editors faced with creating the illusion of ensemble dynamics from a welter of stitched-together solo speeches. The cinematography of Peter Neville/Image Control Unit ascertains that the adroit Handbag cast members never waver in their focus, however, but reacts to events and utterances as if clustered in a single space, while the divas being viewed in close-up are careful to gaze past the camera lens—except for the theatrical production’s Rose, whose slightly crossed eyes are part of her charm.

Chicago church that hosted historic same-sex event demolished

BY TIM PEACOCK

Following an extended effort to save the building, Misericordia Homes recently demolished the former Chicago Town and Tennis Club/Unity Church building at 1925 W. Thome Ave., in the West Ridge area of the city. Originally designed by notable architect George Maher and son Philip in 1924, the structure boasted “high gables, a slate roof and grand ballrooms,” according to Preservation Chicago.

The building functioned as a tennis club for much of its early history. During the 1980s, it briefly housed an Elks Club and, thereafter, sat empty until Unity Church purchased the space.

Describing the structure and its destruction, Preservation Chicago Executive Director Ward Miller said, “These buildings by these really seminal architects that are so well known and so published—to lose one of those is the equivalent of destroying a great master work of art.” He added, “I think we should be thinking of these buildings as works of art.”

Although it’s a historically notable building based on architecture alone, the building has the distinction of being the site where 40 same-sex

couples married June 1, 2014, after Illinois recognized same-sex couples’ right to marry. Unity Church led the services where those couples exchanged (and, in some cases renewed) vows.

When not marrying couples in a historic mass ceremony, Unity Church formerly held services at the building with a congregation totaling approximately 1,500 members.

That changed when Misericordia purchased the site—3.1 acres in total—in 2018. As a part of the purchase, it announced plans to construct 16 new group housing buildings that would provide both shelter and programming. That construction would necessitate the demolition of the Chicago Town & Tennis Club and its surrounding gardens.

Members of the West Ridge community as well as preservationists (like Preservation Chicago) worked ardently to save the structure from demolition, initially proposing repurposing the building.

“Some of the great buildings that would be among Chicago’s most notable structures have been destroyed, and with each of these you’re whittling away not only that architectural legacy, but you’re whittling away community,” Miller explained. “And you’re also whittling away at what



Unity Church
Chicago Town and
Tennis Club.

Photo by Serhii Chucky

could be some wonderful buildings that could house some fabulous community services that could serve so many people.”

He added, “And then of course there’s the green side and the environmental side of this whole argument. The greenest building is the one we have standing. Why should we fill our landfills with these marvelous works of art when we can repurpose them?”

Miller noted that Preservation Chicago highlighted the buildings “orange-rated” historical status as one of the stronger arguments his organization used in an attempt to convince Misericordia to preserve the building.

According to Miller, being “orange-rated” means the building was “determined to be significant by not only [Preservation Chicago], but by the city of Chicago in a survey called the Chicago Historic Resources Survey (CHRS). It was published in 1996 as part of a decade long plus survey and canvas of the city.”

CHRS categorizes approximately 9,600 structures in the city as “orange,” based on “some architectural feature or historical association that made them potentially significant in the context of the surrounding community.”

While it initially considered the idea, ultimately Misericordia rejected the proposal to renovate or repurpose the structure.

Misericordia gave Unity Church substantial time to move, during which preservationists continued their attempts to save the structure.

One of those proposals involved purchasing the building and moving it 250 feet to a nearby park that was originally a part of the Chicago Town and Tennis Club grounds before the land was subdivided. The new proposal would have repurposed the building to be a park field house.

At a meeting Ald. Andre Vasquez hosted June 17, Preservation Chicago proposed moving the

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building to Emerson Park. The meeting marked the end of the final 90-day review window (a landmark status review required before demolition of any orange-rated building). This review window was the last of several following extensions due to the holidays and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chicago Park District showed some interest in the proposal but did not have the money to move or staff the building. Although Preservation Chicago offered to raise funds and provide the money required for both, ultimately Misericordia rejected the final preservation proposal.

Commenting on the decision to move forward with the demolition Kevin Connelly, assistant executive director of Misericordia, said, "We bought [the building grounds] with one purpose in mind, and that was to serve as many adults and children with developmental disabilities as possible." He added, "We have waited two-and-a-half years. We feel we have been as neighborly as possible."

The following morning Misericordia began demolishing the building.

Offering final comments on landmarks around Chicago, Miller said, "A landmark building is not just ... a museum piece—it's a living landmark." He added, "We all share these treasures—these amazing treasures. And I think if we start looking at landmarks from that perspective and less from the museum idea, but as living landmarks—works of art—buildings that can be adaptively reused, creatively reused time and time again. That's what it's really about at the end of the day."

PFP from page 13

courage that everyone displayed. At times like these, it's important for everyone to know that our community is still there, even if we're not doing anything onstage."

Participants in Martinez's Facebook thread made numerous additional allegations about their times working at PFP, among them unsafe working conditions; actors pressured to perform in various states of undress; trans individuals being mocked or misgendered; actors being publicly body-shamed; and an overall lack of coordination between collaborators on PFP projects.

Performer Honey West was among those who wrote online about her time working with Zak. She said that demand was long overdue and felt that she had no choice but to come forward.

"I started to see friends and colleagues of mine express the hurt and the pain," West said. "In the past, over many years, things have come up and then got brushed under. There was an uproar—for a minute. But [this time] I thought, 'You know what? I was there. I experienced these things. I need to support my friends.'"

She added that she came forward out of a support for the idyll PFP represented: "This place that was supposed to be a Mecca, a place for us as artists to grow, expand, and tell our truths, is not doing that. It's doing harm."

Martinez said that he looks forward to seeing how PFP would evolve with its new artistic director and how it goes about making the changes it promises.

"Whenever we have a new person in charge,



David Zak.
Photo by Bob Eddy

particularly a person of color as an artistic director of a theater, it's exciting," he added. "I think that this is something that is profound and amazing, and I'm glad it's moving forward. As a person of color myself, it's so important to see those people in positions of power."

But Martinez also hopes to see structural change and conscientious accountability from

the organization. "I think the problems might go a little deeper than being solved by new personnel. Whatever the internal works are, I just await the active change and [PFP] addressing the things that actually happened to the people on this thread."

For the complete article on the PFP situation, see <https://bit.ly/2C4hpnY>.



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NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Rufus Wainwright: On new album, Pride and future plans



Rufus Wainwright.
Photo by Tony Hauser

BY JERRY NUNN

Out and proud performer Rufus Wainwright has always been and continues to be the thinking man's musician. His songs run deep with sometimes heavy lyrics covering topics such as family relationships, politics and religion.

For those not familiar with Wainwright, he was born in New York, the son of two folk singers, Kate McGarrigle and Loudon Wainwright III. He came out of the closet as a teenager and performed in the film *Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Traveller* at age 14.

His self-titled first studio album debuted in 1998. The work brought him a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Music Album and Juno Award (a Canadian honor) for Best Alternative Album. His follow-up record, *Poses*, earned him the same trophies in 2001; in 2009, *Rufus Does Judy* at Carnegie Hall was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album.

In 2012, his Mark Ronson-produced record *Out of the Game* came out; that same year, Wainwright married German art administrator Jorn Weisbrodt. His first child, Viva Katherine Wainwright Cohen, was born in 2011, conceived with his childhood friend Lorca Cohen, daughter of Leonard Cohen.

With his latest work, *Unfollow the Rules*, he continues on a path down a different road that leads him across the country on the new single "You Ain't Big."

Windy City Times: Happy early birthday!

Rufus Wainwright: Wait a few weeks since I am

in my late forties. Let me enjoy 46 while it's still here.

WCT: I just turned 50 this year. Do you have plans for that big year?

RW: Well, hopefully by then we will be in a safe and constructive society with more options. I celebrated my 40th in Spain at the opera house Teatro Real, in Madrid, so I am thinking another opera house, maybe in Italy. If we do need to social distance, we can always do it in gondolas!

WCT: You have a track on the new album called "Unfollow the Rules," but why did that become the overall title for the project?

RW: It happened very organically. One day, our daughter Viva exclaimed that she wanted to unfollow the rules and I immediately jotted it down as a great idea for a lyric. That lyric became a song and the song the title of the album.

It has been an interesting journey the past few months. Initially the album was coming out in April and we had to push it to July 10 because of the pandemic. The idea of unfollowing the rules is not exactly kosher back then and I was apprehensive on how that would translate. Now that the Black Lives Matter protests have happened and we are in an election year, there is a sense of real evaluation and recalibration. It's a revolution in a lot of ways. Once again the title is appropriate and timely.

WCT: Have you been to all the places you sing about in the song "You Ain't Big?"

RW: You are the first person to ask me that question. I don't think I've been to Wichita.

WCT: Is there a place you would like to travel to, but haven't yet?

RW: I've never been to Africa. I have been to Morocco, which is technically part of the continent, so maybe East Africa.

WCT: Playing off another track on *Unfollow the Rules*, is your husband a "Romantic Man?" What's the last romantic thing he's done for you?

RW: Our plans to go to Europe were dashed with what is going on. We thankfully have an Air-stream trailer, so we went up the coast recently. Even just playing with the dog and walking to see the sunset together, after a lovely meal we have made for our daughter, is very romantic.

WCT: What's your dog's name?

RW: Puccini, and he's a miniature Australian shepherd.

WCT: Your voice soars on "Hatred." Can you talk about that song?

RW: Yes. All these songs were written over many years. About 10 years ago, I decided to embark holistically on my classical career. I did some productions of my first opera and produced my second opera *Hadrian*, so I was focused on another area of expertise. I wound up missing songwriting and the pop world. I really appreciated the audience that I had left behind. I wrote a lot of material and was very inspired.

Later, I became inspired in a bad way. I went through a difficult time and was filled with hatred. Me, being a positive person, wanted to transform that energy to something that was useful for me. That song is about me becoming a warrior when faced with adversity. I wanted to use any emotion, good or bad, as a tool.

With the election this year, I think we are embarking on an incredible battle. We need all the tools in the box to get through this, sadly, hatred is one of them.

WCT: Thanks to this pandemic I've had plenty of "Alone Time" as you sing about. What's one bad habit you have picked up during the lockdown?

RW: We have a candy kids area in the corner of the kitchen. It's like the Bermuda Triangle of sweets. I try to steer away from it, but I fail daily. Candy is not my friend!

WCT: You drew the art on *Unfollow the Rules* record booklet. Did you grow up drawing?

RW: I went to art school in college briefly. If you really examine my story, there are examples where my art peaked out of the corner and revealed itself. With this album, it has taken a more permanent position. When the pandemic hit, it was a chance to really exercise that muscle. It has turned into an arena that I want to continue to pursue.

WCT: "Matinee Idol" was a song you wrote about River Phoenix. Was your family a hippy family like the Phoenix's?

RW: There was a hippy element, especially on my mother's side, but actually my dad did dabble in hippiedom at one point. He did become more conservative. I don't mean like a republican, but a WASP-y American man, who returned to his roots of Bedford, New York.

My mother was more of a Canadian creature, who loved living in Montreal. She loved to be close to the earth and her family was working class. They were all very musical. My grandmother

was one of 17 children. They were salt of the earth people.

WCT: How did you commemorate Pride this year?

RW: I performed for Toronto Pride online. I have to say, I liked it when they changed the parade into a march for Black Lives Matter in LA. I wasn't able to attend, but I have been going out to the demonstrations when I can around here. New York has returned Pride to its roots, which has been needed for a long time.

WCT: I have been to your concerts in Chicago ever since you opened for Tori Amos. You usually have a very straight crowd attending. Did you ever think about how being an out musician has affected your career?

RW: I definitely think about how if I had jiggered my persona slightly and been more mysterious about my sexuality to my audience, I would have been more successful. Most of my concert crowd is straight.

On the other hand, the fact that I have been brutally honest about my sexuality from the onset has really started to pay off. People I work with appreciate the honesty. They like the fact that I've not tried to hoodwink them in any way. I went for the long game!

WCT: Well, it meant a lot to me when you spoke openly about your life at your live shows.

RW: Well, that's good to hear. I think with the small percentage of gay fans that I have, it meant the world to them. It really did.

WCT: Some people may not know how hilarious you are until they see your concerts with all the funny banter.

RW: [Laughs] I am more playful than my albums might present.

WCT: Are you planning a tour next year?

RW: Oh, yeah. We just moved everything a year down, so I am sure we will be talking again, sooner than later about the tour. We wanted to get the music out there, no matter what, on July 10.

WCT: Has there been one moment that has meant the most to you in your career?

RW: I go back to putting together these really fabulous shows of my mother's material. I was given the opportunity to really lose myself in her repertoire. I grieved her in a unique way by singing her music. Bringing that music to an audience and having them join me in that process was really amazing!





Walter Mercado.
Photo courtesy of Netflix

NUNN ON ONE: MOVIES

Queer filmmaker has 'Mucho Mucho Amor' for famed astrologer

BY JERRY NUNN

For generations, Puerto Rican astrologer Walter Mercado has brought hope and the future for many families.

He grew up a dancer, an actor in theater and starred in many telenovelas before his unique character debuted as a regular astrology segment for El Show de las 12. This eventually grew into a Univision network spot shown throughout the Americas. Mercado's legacy grew to international proportions before his death on Nov. 2, 2019, from kidney failure at age 87.

Bringing his story back to life, queer filmmaker Kareem Tabsch, along with Cristina Costantini, directed a new documentary called *Mucho Mucho Amor: The Legend of Walter Mercado* that was filmed right before Mercado passed away.

Tabsch is the co-founder and co-director of Miami's largest art-house cinema and has served as program director of the Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. Other docs he has created include *Cherry Pop: The Story of the World's Fanciest Cat*, *Dolphin Lover* and *The Last Resort*.

Tabsch was named 20 under 40 by the Miami Herald's Business Monday in 2014 and received the Knight Arts Champion Award from the Knight Foundation.

Windy City Times: Tell our readers a little about yourself.

Kareem Tabsch: I was born and raised in Miami, where I still live. I am a Cuban/Lebanese-American queer guy. My day job is working for O Cinema, which is a really popular local art-house cinema. I have been a programmer and curator for many years.

WCT: How did tackling a subject like Walter Mercado begin?

KT: He's such a complex figure, so it was a little difficult. As a Latino growing up in South Florida, Walter was a daily presence on family television. Every afternoon, my grandmother would bring everyone around the TV and shush us as Walter

came in and shared his daily horoscope. It was a sacred five minutes where we were forced to be quiet and pay attention or face the risk of being hit upside the head by grandma!

As a filmmaker, I wondered what happened to Walter Mercado. He was so ubiquitous in our culture, then the next day he basically disappeared. One of my friends, who produced the movie *Moonlight*, Andrew Hevia, told me I had to meet Alex Fumero, who is the vice president of programming at HBO. When we had lunch, the first thing we talked about was Walter Mercado and how we would both like to make a documentary about him. I told him I was going to an estate sale in Miami for Walter Mercado. I admitted I was not only going to buy a cape, but to try to

contact the family and get to Walter somehow. We planned a follow-up call and I met Cristina Costantini on the phone. We decided to co-direct the movie together, with Fumero serving as producer.

WCT: How long did the filming take?

KT: We had been working on the project for two and a half years. We didn't know that would be the last years of his life. We were shooting with him six weeks before he died. We submitted our cut on Nov. 1 to a film festival and he died on Nov. 2.

WCT: Your story about watching Walter on TV with your grandmother is very common, including with Hamilton's Lin-Manuel Miranda.

KT: Exactly. Lin is an avatar for all of us with



Kareem Tabsch.
Photo by Matt Sayles

the experience he had. Lin is a huge superstar and a fan. He was like a little kid when he met Walter. Alex Fumero had reached out to Lin while he was doing *Hamilton* in Puerto Rico, so they arranged for them to meet before a show. We were quite lucky to capture that in the film.

WCT: I worked as a rep in a store in Chicago where Walter Mercado did an in-store signing of his astrological CD. His fans were very devoted. Did he ever come out publicly?

KT: No. He never came out and didn't like labels identifying him one way or another. We talk about that quite explicitly in the film.

Walter was beyond coming out. Every day he came on television, he showed us who he was in a way that was groundbreaking, pioneering and authentic. He inspired millions of queer people that saw him. From the first time he came on as an astrologer, he was challenging what masculinity and femininity meant in how he looked and dressed. He talked freely about how the future would not be masculine or feminine, how gender would not be a thing in the future. We came across this in the archives over 30 years ago. He was radically ahead of his time. He did that in a way that was subversive. He could have possibly not had a career at the time if he came out, but he presented himself very authentically. He became an avenue for acceptability for many people in this way.

For me as a queer kid growing up, seeing Walter on TV was the first time I had seen any queer person. It was shocking. I recognized his sense of otherness. It was similar to the difference I had inside of me, even though I couldn't pinpoint it. He was beloved, famous and successful. My family adored him. If my family loved Walter Mercado as different as he was, then maybe they could love me. It was hugely important for me.

WCT: I've interviewed Eugenio Derbez before and he seemed very nice. Did he feel bad about making fun of Walter in a skit?

KT: I don't think he thought of it as making fun of Walter. He really adored Walter. Context is the key and you have to think about the time period that Eugenio was doing these impersonations and where we were as a society. He would never do that now. Eugenio was inspired by Walter because he dared to be different. He said that, but it didn't wind up in the documentary.

WCT: What are some other parts that didn't make the cut for *Mucho*?

KT: There's so much. We had hundreds of hours of footage after two years. There are many funny moments that we hope will come out as bonus materials.

One time we went to San Juan and stopped in to a store that Walter had been going to for 45 years. The owner and him were catching up. Walter asked him if he had any cannabis. He didn't, but had CBD. Walter said that doesn't work for him. He told us, "I don't smoke marijuana, but I love LSD. I did it a long time ago as an experiment. I had a beautiful trip!"

There were so many moments like that, which would drop out of his mouth and were hilarious to think of. He was the cutest thing ever and so smart!

WCT: I watched some of your other documentaries, such as *The Last Resort* and *Dolphin*

Turn to page 19

INTERNET

Juan Pablo Di Pace: Life's all about the small things in 'Minutiae'

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The coronavirus pandemic has put many things on hold—but has also led to creative output from individuals who may not otherwise have had time to produce such projects.

Such is the case with Juan Pablo Di Pace, an out actor/singer/dancer who is originally from Argentina but who took over U.S. screens on such shows as Fuller House and Dancing with the Stars (which had arguably one of its most controversial seasons ever when Di Pace, who many thought would win, ended up in fifth place).

Now, Di Pace is the creator, star and director of Minutiae—a YouTube series in which he plays Tomas, a neurotic but optimistic Hollywood actor who deals with the little things in his life. Among others who have appeared on the series are Ariana Savalas (the daughter of Telly and who co-stars in the the LGBTQ-themed episode "Promise") as well as Fuller House co-stars John Stamos and Andrea Barber.

Windy City Times: You were congratulated for coming out last year. It made a big splash with some people. What has the feedback been like from your family and the public?

Juan Pablo Di Pace: Well, the press loves to tell when people come out of the closet. It wasn't so much coming out of the closet; it was saying the words in a public arena. I've never really been in the closet since I was 19.

I just wanted to make things personal; I wanted to talk about my journey to help those who have to deal with acceptance and even bullying. But my family has known for 20 years, as well as my friends and everyone who's important in my life. It was more of a situation in which I didn't feel it was necessary for my career, because I'm a private person—but then I was, like, "Why not?" You could say it was a professional first, on my side, but there was no shame or angst anymore. So I thank everyone for the congratulations, but it wasn't this situation where I was [sings "Ahhh"] saved.

WCT: And what do you think of the school of thought that only LGBTQ actor should portray LGBTQ roles?

JPDP: Oh, it's preposterous—it's rubbish. I'm against any kind of stereotyping. When you're an actor, you're supposed to work the muscles of getting into someone else's shoes. That's the whole point of being an actor; you can embody someone else besides yourself, and that includes nationalities, sexualities, cultures and even gender. Cate Blanchett once played Bob Dylan [in the film I'm Not There].

I understand it, especially with trans actors because they have really been pushed and pulled. But with gay actors, I feel that if you're good enough for the job, then you should get the

job. Now what I do think has been a very shitty double standard is when a gay actor doesn't get the same chance a straight actor would get for a straight role. That horrifies me, and should be stopped right this second.

WCT: Let's move on to Minutiae. How did you come up with the title?

JPDP: [Laughs] When I imagined this, I wanted a title that was confusing and not easy to understand. When I first heard the word "minutiae," I laughed out loud. The title and subject matter are all about the things that happen in this optimistic guy's head. It's actually about the things we make huge in our minds, but are actually small.

WCT: And you have some interesting co-stars, including a couple from Fuller House.

JPDP: That's been awesome, especially because I wanted to play with the abilities of my castmates. Most people know them as Kimmy Gibbler [Barber] or Uncle Jesse [Stamos], but they're also my friends and it was great to have them play completely different characters—including John cursing like a truck driver.

WCT: And the LGBTQ episode "Promise" was very moving. What made you go that particular angle [about two queer old Hollywood stars from the 1930s] with co-star Ariana Savalas?

JPDP: The episodes come from whatever's in my mind at the time, and Minutiae gives me a place to create different worlds, like a dream or a horror film.

I've been a huge fan of Ariana and we're really good friends. In 2017, we took these pictures with this amazing photographer named Jay P. Morgan. He asked me what kind of pictures I wanted, and I said, "I always wanted to be [the late actor Rudolph] Valentino." So the pictures you see in "Promise" are from 2017.

Then, I thought I really wanted to do an LGBT episode because it was June, it was Pride Month. It was really important to me, and I wanted to make my [contribution] to this and do something else besides, "Yay—let's celebrate." That type of relationship—with gay and lesbian Hollywood stars married off to other people—was big back then. They were under contracts that basically owned their lives. One, it's fascinating and, two, it's real.

It's definitely a more somber Pride this year, and it's a more reflective time. I wanted to tread a fine line of comedy and going somewhere else. I'm a fan of shows like Extras, with Ricky Gervais; Curb Your Enthusiasm; and The Comeback, with Lisa Kudrow. Those shows can make you laugh—but then, suddenly, you can find yourself crying.

WCT: You're the director of this series. Are you hoping to direct larger projects?

JPDP: Yeah! That's already in the works. There are two movies I've talking about directing. I think this pandemic made me realize that I'm ready to be a creative person behind the camera.

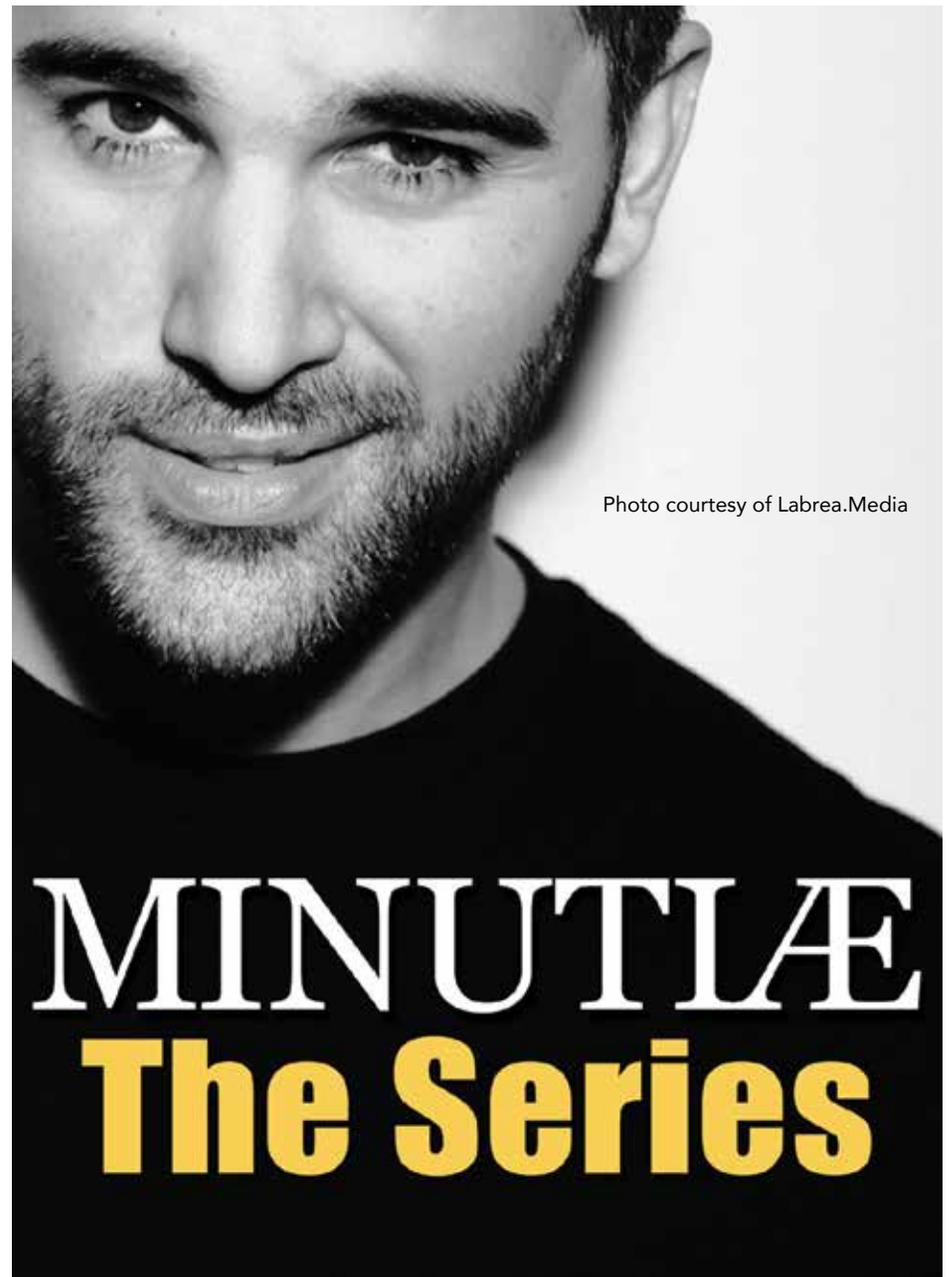


Photo courtesy of Labrea.Media

WCT: If you could work with any two or three actors, who would they be?

JPDP: Well, Marilyn [Monroe] would be fun. [Laughs] Also, I would love to have worked with Gene Kelly; he's my idol. I have a big background in dance, and he's always influenced me. You could see the joy in his face. And [working with] Cate Blanchett is a goal of mine; I think she's one of the finest actresses of our generation.

WCT: You've mentioned dance a few times. There are people, including myself, who criticized Dancing with the Stars because of where you finished.

JPDP: Well, I look at it this way: I made it to the finals. I was eliminated a day before the finals, but we [Di Pace and pro partner Cheryl Burke] were asked to come back for the finals and do our tango. At first I said, "No!" like a petulant child. Then I agreed to do it—but only if I could sing, so they let me do that.

It's a game, not a talent show. There were many factors we were not in control of.

Minutiae/The Series is on YouTube.

Magic Parlour at Home' during July

Magician Dennis Watkins is taking his experience The Magic Parlour online for a completely new virtual offering dubbed "The Magic Parlour at Home."

The new virtual magic show, designed for group and family viewings, will offer multiple performances every Friday and Saturday evening in July at 7:30 p.m. (The exception is Friday, July 10, during which there will be shows at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.)

Tickets are now on sale for \$75. A maximum of 30 tickets will be sold for each performance and each ticket will admit one "household" or up to 10 guests on one screen.

See TheMagicParlourChicago.com.

MUCHO from page 17

Lover. What did you bring from those into Mucho Mucho Amor?

KT: Thank you for watching them. I am fascinated by people who live on the fringe of society. I like people who are brazen and not worried about how they will be judged.

In Dolphin Lover, Malcom Brenner is a zoophile and a small part of the population. He wanted to talk about his experience and his truth. I don't agree with him, but admire the braveness of how he lived his life.

In The Last Resort, many were holocaust survivors and immigrated from Eastern Europe. They made a paradise in Miami despite being ridiculed. South Beach was all old people then, which is hard to believe if you have been there now. They dared to create their own space.

They both influenced Mucho Mucho Amor, so hopefully there's a thread you can see throughout the docs, even though they are vastly different.

WCT: Your next project is even more different...

KT: Yes, I am working on a documentary on a photographer named Bunny Yeager. She is also from Miami and a pinup model turned photographer. She was an early contributor to Playboy and helped popularize the bikini in American culture.

She helped discover Betty Page and was admired later in life.

WCT: What would you like LGBT audiences to take from Mucho Mucho Amor?

KT: As a queer Latino myself, we don't see enough of our stories told. Walter Mercado, as a figure, is a celebration of an icon for a whole community. Walter was so ahead of his time. No one looked like Walter Mercado on television. He launched his astrological personality in 1969 with capes, makeup and jewelry.

So much of the Latino representation in media is about immigration issues or drug cartels. We don't see enough positive stories. As queer Latinos, we have our heroes and they have influenced our culture. I think Walter has inspired many generations to live a life more openly and embrace themselves. I hope that audiences that don't know him, will have a joyful discovery in a moment when we need joy. There is so much divisiveness in our culture and world right now. Our leaders are preaching hate and here is somebody who had over fifty years of coming into our homes where he preached love and acceptance, regardless if you believe in astrology or religion. I can't think of a better way to live a life!

Mucho Mucho Amor: The Legend of Walter Mercado gives love to everyone at Netflix.com on Wed., July 8.

Last call for Little Jim's

Longtime Lake View tavern Little Jim's shut its doors July 2.

Billing itself as "the original hookup bar," Jim Gates opened Little Jim's in 1975, and it was one of the first gay bars in the Boystown area. Gates sold the business and moved to Florida in 2014.

"Don't blink or you'll miss it—it's a tiny late-night hook-up joint disguised as a neighborhood bar," the Chicago Bar Project said of the tavern. "Little Jim's is meant for getting together with friends, having a few drinks, chatting and, to be blunt, an easy place to meet easy older guys and

'bears.'"

The parcel on which Little Jim's stands was put on the market in 2019. The Howard Brown Health system has been in negotiations to buy the parcel to expand its Lake View operations. According to a statement that Howard Brown issued in early 2020, the acquisition would double the capacity of its Halsted clinic "for primary care appointments, provide additional space for walk-in sexual and reproductive healthcare, and house wrap-around and behavioral health services."



Little Jim's bartenders in 2005. Photo by Kirk Williamson



"I might as well ask you what your paychecks are. Paul, what's your penis size?"—Chris Evans interviews Paul Rudd and asks the two most sensitive questions you could ask an actor. Paul answered, "It's even bigger than my paycheck."

After months of being incredibly careful and staying away from virtually all humanity, I've thrown the whole wind into the caution and ventured back into the real world. Well, Provincetown. While this isn't the Ptown of yore (or mine), it's still lovely to get away. But is it even Provincetown? Certainly not a typical July 4. But the businesses are making the best of things. Bars that were unable to open because they don't serve food suddenly added sandwiches to their menu. Regardless, all eateries must close by 11 p.m., at which point the streets basically roll up. So, while it's still lovely, don't judge Ptown by this summer.

Meanwhile, reports indicate that Fire Island is as busy as ever. One particular person joined in the Fourth of July celebrations while knowing he had COVID-19. I won't name him or vilify him because, surely he wasn't the only positive person there. Many of these vacationers probably have the coronavirus—they just haven't been tested. But that doesn't make them any less contagious. I simply say what I said during the AIDS crisis—assume everyone is positive and act accordingly. You can still enjoy your life and be somewhat social while also being safe.

Marc Shaiman is a big supporter of the Black



Chris Evans (above) and Paul Rudd had quite the exchange, Billy says.

Photo courtesy of Walt Disney Studios

Lives Matter movement. His musical version of Hairspray tackled racial tensions in Baltimore, circa 1962. During the climactic "You Can't Stop the Beat," Motormouth Mabel sings, "And tomorrow is a brand new day, and it don't know white from Black." Shaiman made the following declaration: "But PLEASE note, in all future productions, the colorblindness that was a goal for many years will be improved, and the lyric will now be 'And tomorrow is a brand new day, and it

sees both white and Black!"

Speaking of Hairspray, the star of the film version just came out officially! No, not John Travolta. And, no, not Queen Latifah. The Tracy—Nikki Blonsky. While this was not news to those of us who know and love her, it was a bold public proclamation from a bold kinda gal. She made the announcement as only she could. She posted a video of herself dancing in the yard along to the music of Diana Ross' "I'm Coming Out." The caption was simple. "Hi, it's Nikki Blonsky from the movie I'm Gay!"

Back in May, Nikki and I excitedly talked about her being on "Billy Masters LIVE!" Unfortunately, I planned to only feature out LGBT guests during June. So I made a note to circle back to Nikki at the end of June. And then, poof, she came out! We'll have her on soon.

This past week, "Billy Masters LIVE" started off on a sexy note. Tuesday's show featured Tom Judson (aka Gus Mattox), Florian Klein (aka Hans Berlin) and David Pevsner discussing working in gay erotica and in the legitimate theatre. A very fun episode with lots of dish. And then on Thursday, we featured singers Sam Harris and Billy Gilman. It was my first time: a) having a guest named Billy and 2) "meeting" Gilman. And the whole show was a complete delight. Not only did they have so much in common in terms of career trajectory and attitudes about singing, they're also big fans of each other. Check us out on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 3 p.m. ET on Billy Masters TV on YouTube, or on the TV tab at BillyMasters.com.

Our provocative "Ask Billy" question comes from Dennis in Baltimore: "I just watched 'Hamilton' and LOVED IT! But it got me thinking: With people wanting only gay people to play gay roles, and trans people to play trans roles, and only

people of color can play those roles, how is it that Hamilton can have every color of the rainbow playing mostly Caucasian historical characters? I loved it and believe that's what colorblind casting is all about, but it seems like we're heading backward. Where does that leave Hamilton?"

If you've got a question you want me to tackle, dash it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before anyone else from the "Hairspray" film cast comes out! 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

BOOKS

Joey Skladany entertains, instructs in 'Basic Bitchen'

BY ANDREW DAVIS

With *Basic Bitchen*, Joey Skladany has probably put together one of the most entertaining cookbooks one might come across.

With recipes for items such as Antidepressant Red Velvet Cake Pops and entertaining stories, Skladany aims to connect readers and cooks with the basic pleasures of life. Skladany talked about his book, *Pride*—and lightning.

Windy City Times: Let's talk about your book. First of all, how did you come up with the title and, for our readers, what's a "basic bitch?"

Joey Skladany: [Laughs] Well, it's been in the vernacular for a while. Well, "basic" initially has a negative connotation—like if someone's devoid of culture and is into doing only what's comfortable. But I flipped the script a little on that, and "basic" is now a term of endearment. I am a very complex individual, but I like to challenge myself by traveling and doing different things, so being basic is kind of a respite for me. It embodies what is comfortable to me, to the point where I don't have to worry about anything. So these are go-to dishes that are simple and that really hit the spot. So "basic" is almost very contradictory to who I am as a person.

As for the name, I have a background in entertainment and TV; I started as a publicist. Then I worked for Food & Wine, and then Chowhound. I look at cookbooks almost every single day, as people want me to look at theirs. And I would look at some and say, "Hmmm ... this isn't really grabbing my attention." So many were aspirational instead of inspirational. And in my mind, I thought, "I just need to get back to basics." And I came up with "Basic Bitchen," but I thought it had to be trademarked; I looked it up, and it wasn't. Then, I logged onto GoDaddy and said, "Done!" [Laughs]

I felt there was a void in the cookbook world. I wanted to put out something that was told through a lens of humor and self-deprecation; I really my writing reflects who I am as a person. People don't want to be preached to; they have so little time, and they want the items to taste

good.

WCT: The book has something for everyone, from vegans to full-blown carnivores to low- and high-carb items. How did you decide what recipes went into the cookbook?

JS: Again, I wanted to cater to every single type of eater. And because being basic is so universal, I wanted to make sure the food was as well. But if you think about a typical "basic bitch," that person is usually health-conscious but they're also willing to go out and drink a lot at brunch, so I have drink recipes. And they also have a sweet tooth that needs to be satisfied.

I think the thing with being basic is that there's inclusivity—especially with me, as a gay man—and I would never want to put out a cookbook that ostracized a group of people because of a dietary restriction. I wanted this book to speak to everyone.

WCT: And part of the fun, for me, involves the names of some of these recipes. What, for example, is the story behind "I've Got My Shit Together" Strawberry Macarons?

JS: [Laughs] Yeah—that. Well, I've very type A and OCD. I'd like to think my shit together but, in actuality, we all don't. Macarons is probably the longest and most detailed recipe in the book, but here the measurements have to be precise. So if they come out right, the first thing I think is, "I've got my shit together." [Both laugh.]

WCT: Also, what about the "I'm So Artisanal!" Cobb Mason Jar Salad with Homemade Ranch Dressing?

JS: Being a New Yorker, there are stereotypes about the artsy hipsters—and they pride in what they do, whether it's home-brewed beer or homemade kombucha. The term "artisanal," from a media perspective, has been synonymous with "Brooklyn-derived." It's, like, some people say, "I'm making my own ranch dressing. I'm so

artisanal." It's about using an overused term—it's like "synergy," in the workplace.

WCT: Like the word "organic"...

JS: Yes. There are federal guidelines, but it stops at a certain point. I don't need organic Cheerios, you know? [The term] is definitely a marketing tool.

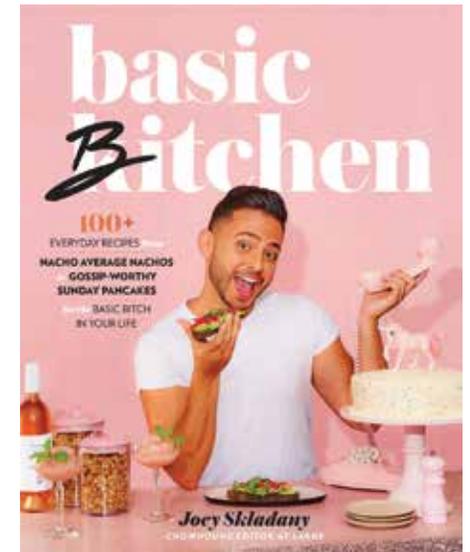
WCT: What was the toughest part of putting this book together?

JS: Oh, my gosh. I never second-guessed anything I put into the book, but because I'm so insanely type A, everything has to have a flow and a place—and I think that inhibited me in a lot of ways regarding the creative process. Also, the regimented schedule I use in my everyday life didn't always work in my favor when it came to the book, although it helped with deadlines and [the organization of] my thoughts. Then, I started a routine in which—every morning, for the first half-hour—I would bring my laptop into bed with me and just write, with a fresh mind; I just let it all flow and go back to see if anything made sense.

But when I'm in a zone and doing something creative like this... I was just craving an opportunity like this. It just felt so right.

WCT: With June being Pride Month, what does "pride" mean to you?

JS: It means complete and utter confidence in your own skin. As LGBTQ people, we grew up being so ostracized for our differences. Pride is about celebrating these amazing things that make us different, and using them for our advantage—not rejecting them. I always thought being labelled as gay



would be detrimental to my career and life; it wasn't until my mid-20s when I was able to flip that script.

Being gay is a part of me and something I can use to my advantage—like surrounding myself with this amazing community of inspiring people. RuPaul said it best: "If you don't love yourself, how in the hell are you going to love somebody else?" It's important to achieve self-love and self-acceptance, and not giving a rat's ass what anybody else thinks because their opinions don't matter.

WCT: By the way, is it true you were once struck by lightning?

JS: Yes—well, indirectly. The summer before my freshman year in college, I was going out to get the mail and my dog was on a leash. Lightning struck the tree right next to me and the current traveled, and I felt the full zap in my feet. I was so disoriented, and I had sores on my feet as well as lacerations. Also, I had no saliva in my mouth, and my hair was on edge. I did go to the hospital.

WCT: And what about the dog?

JS: My poor little Yorkie was actually fine because he was on a patch of grass. But I jumped so high and quickly that his collar came up over his head, and he bolted, too—no pun intended. [Laughs] But it was so weird: There were no clouds and no thunder before it happened.

Basic Bitchen will be available Tuesday, Aug. 4. Pre-order the book at bit.ly/BasicBitchen.

Left: Joey Skladany.

Photo by Guillermo Riveros



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Printers Row Lit Fest officially cancelled

For the first time in its 36-year history, Chicago's Printers Row Lit Fest has been officially canceled.

Organizers said the current city and state restrictions around large public gatherings due to COVID-19 made it impossible for the event to proceed as planned over Labor Day weekend 2020. The festival—the largest outdoor literary showcase in the Midwest—will return in the summer of 2021.

New York Times best-selling author and National Book Award winner Ta-Nehisi Coates is the recipient of the 2020 Harold Washington Literary Award, as previously announced.

"We encourage everyone to keep supporting independent booksellers during this difficult time," said Bonnie Sanchez-Carlson, president and executive director of the Near South Planning Board, which presents the festival. "Printers Row Lit Fest will return, but until then, take advantage of the programming at your local bookstores and follow them on social media. They are an essential part of our communities."

For more information and updates throughout the year, visit PrintersRowLitFest.org.

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Chicago Sky player Stefanie Dolson. Photo by Jennifer Pottheiser

Chicago Sky hosts 'Unapologetically You' Pride virtual panel

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

In honor of Pride month, the Chicago Sky held a virtual panel "Being Unapologetically You" June 23 focused on success stories from three local LGBTQ leaders.

E3 Radio Founder and CEO Anna DeShawn moderated the event. Panelists included Chicago Reader Publisher and Windy City Times co-founder Tracy Baim, Chicago Sky center Stefanie Dolson and LGBT Chamber of Commerce (LGBTCC) Director Jerome Holston.

When DeShawn asked why everyone said yes to this panel the consensus was that it was a no-brainer to talk about being their authentic selves within the LGBTQ community, especially during Pride month.

Baim added that anytime she can help elevate sports as a catalyst for positive change she will participate. She said because of Title IX becoming law she was able to play various sports since she was a child, adding that was transformative for her.

DeShawn asked Dolson if things have changed for the better regarding out LGBTQ players in the WNBA. Dolson responded that, for her, the league and players have always been accepting in the seven years she has been playing professional basketball.

In terms of the cost of living authentically as a Black gay man, Holston said that prior to working at the LGBTCC, he did fundraising work on behalf of churches—a time when he was only out to a few

people there. He added that the work culture did not lend itself to connectivity between people, which is why he did not come out to everyone there. Holston added that the disconnected work environment that impeded his ability to show up fully and express himself directly impacted his chances at a promotion despite the fact that he had raised a lot of money.

DeShawn asked Baim about being out since the beginning of her career in the mid-1980s and if that has impacted her in a negative way. Baim said yes, but not in terms of finding a job right out of college.

"I prevented it on the front end," said Baim.

Baim said her mother, who was a journalist at the Chicago Defender, told her about the publication Gay Life when she returned to Chicago after graduating from Drake University, and she started working there almost immediately. She added that her stepfather, who worked at the Chicago Tribune, told her at the time she could not be an out lesbian and work for that paper.

This reality was the catalyst for Baim to create her own career as an independent journalist and business owner for the past 36 years. She credited her parents for being so supportive at a time when most LGBTQ people were being ostracized from their families.

Dolson spoke about how easy it was for her to come out to her family and friends. She said her mother was supportive right away and her father gave her a high-five and immediately wanted to see a picture of her girlfriend. Dolson said that the fans have also embraced her and the other out LGBTQ players across the WNBA because of the inclusive environment the league has created. She added that other sports leagues can learn from what the WNBA has done for its out LGBTQ players.

DeShawn asked about this year's Pride Month in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the #BlackLivesMatter protests, adding that it has been hard for her to feel celebratory.

Holston said that other than some of the marketing he has seen, it does not feel like Pride Month because of the lack of in-person events and the loss of jobs and, especially, loved ones due to the coronavirus.

Baim added that this is a reckoning for everyone, including the LGBTQ community, of the racism she said pervades every corner of U.S. society. She pointed to the recent Spyners' Pub protest—spurred because of the lesbian owner's racist Facebook posts—as an example of the racism within Chicago's LGBTQ community. Baim said she is grateful for the activists out on the street and that Pride has taken a backseat because "we need a new normal."

Dolson echoed what Holston and Baim said regarding her feelings about Pride Month.

As for what gives them hope right now, Dolson said it is the little wins, including the young girls who reach out to her on social media to say she has inspired them. She added that her whole family, including herself, recovering from COVID-19 has also bolstered her spirits.

Baim said that despite the fact that The Reader and this publication lost 90 percent of its advertising due to the COVID-19 shutdowns, no one was laid off or furloughed and every employee got June-teenth off as a paid holiday.

Bringing more good news, Holston said that none of the LGBTCC member businesses have had to shut down permanently despite the current challenges, adding that this development bodes well for the future.

A Q&A session followed.

WINDY CITY TIMES

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

[NOTE: Events may not occur because of compliance with guidelines connected with the COVID-19 outbreak. Please contact the venue if interested in a particular event to see if said event is still scheduled.]

Wed., July 8

Women and Children Books reopening
Limited number of patrons and limited duration of visits. Fridays from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. will be designated time for our most at-risk community members. 11:00am - 6:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Thursday, July 9

IGNITION Festival of New Plays Thursday evening readings of four new plays from Chicago playwrights. Each reading will be followed by a "Coffee with the Creators" chat during lunch hour the Friday after. Free. Through Jul 17. Create an account to RSVP 7:00pm - 8:30pm Online Tickets: <http://victorygardens.org/event/2020-ignition-festival-of->

IGNITION POINT
July 9 and 16

The IGNITION Festival of New Plays will continue with Exal Iraheta (July 9) and Alex Lubischer (above, July 16).
PR photo

new-plays/

Friday, July 10

American Writers Museum reopens With a mission to inspire the young writers of tomorrow. Portions of ticket sales during July support two groups: Young, Black & Lit and Bernie's Book Bank. See virtual program schedule at the link. 10:00am - 5:00pm American Writers Museum, 180 N Michigan Avenue, #505 <http://americanwritersmuseum.org/calendar/>

Saturday, July 11

Illuminati 2020, Citadel Theatre Summer Gala Supporting Citadel Theatre Company and excellence in performing arts in Lake County. Menu by Froggy's French Cafe 4:00pm David Adler Estate, 830 Green Bay Rd., Lake Forest Tickets: <http://www.citadeltheatre.org/gala/>

The Magic Parlour at Home Magician Dennis Watkins virtual magic show, designed for group and family viewings, will offer multiple performances every Friday and Saturday evening in July. \$75 per household. First show 7:30 p.m. 9:30pm Online Tickets: <http://TheMagicParlour-Chicago.com>

Monday, July 13

Chicago Gay Men's Caucus Chat and Chew Every Monday, the Caucus staff and some special guests will be streaming LIVE from our Facebook page to check in

with our community in this time of social distancing. 12:00pm Facebook Live Tickets: <http://Facebook.com/CBGM>

Tuesday, July 14

LGBT Chamber of Commerce Virtual Mix & Mingle DIY wine glass paint activity and building new relationships. Julie Langrehr with the City of Chicago Department of Procurement Services will update on the city's survey to study its spending with LGBTQ+ owned businesses. RSVP at link. 5:30pm - 6:30pm Online <http://business.lgbtcc.com/events/details/mix-mingle-happy-hour-4245>

Thursday, July 16

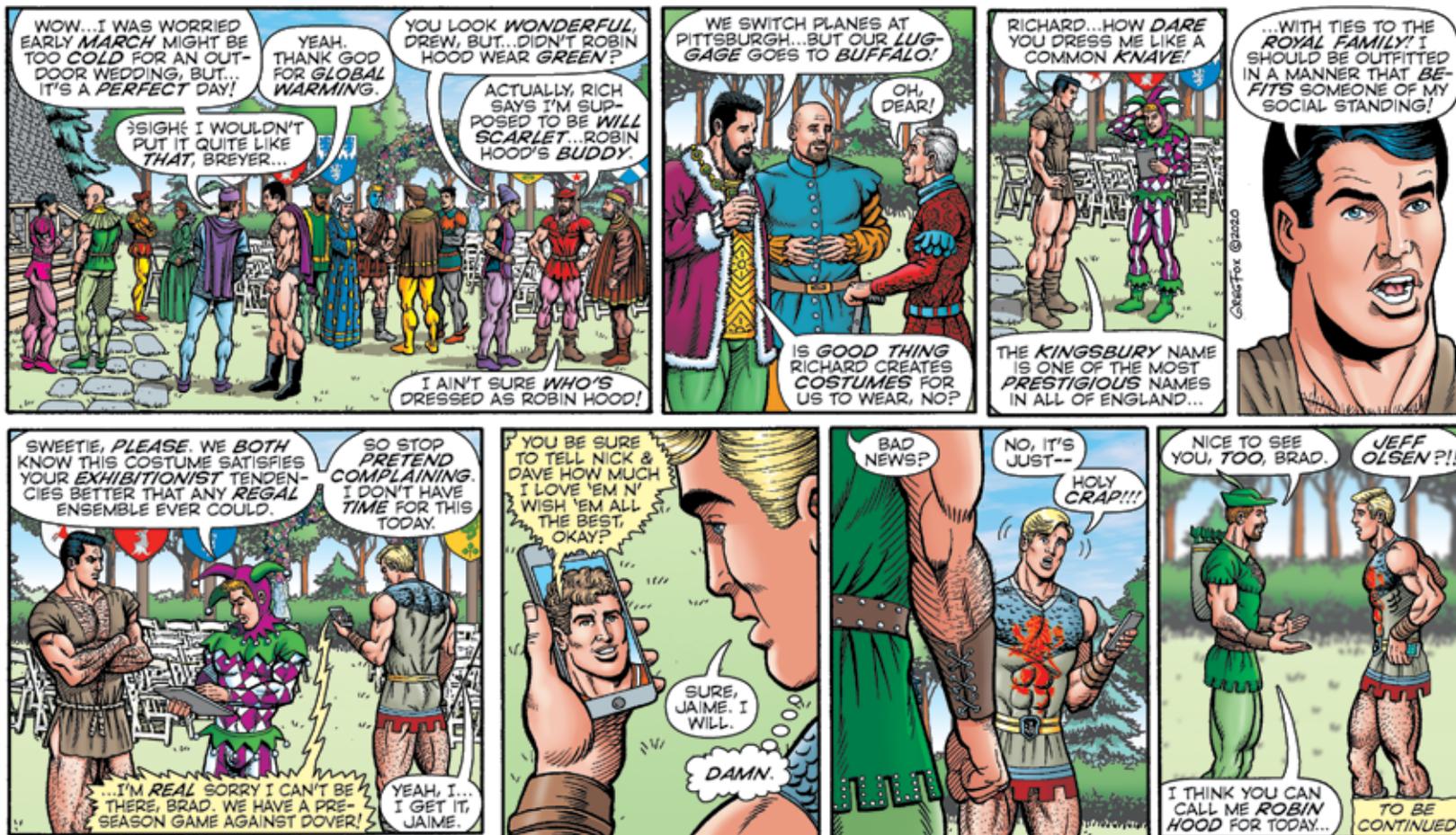
Welcome to Chechnya: Beyond the Film panel Discussing Welcome to Chechnya, David France's documentary on rescuing Chechen survivors of the LGBTQ purge there. Amnesty International and GLAAD, featuring David France, Rainbow Railroad Executive Director Kimahli Powell, and Maxim Lapunov, a survivor of the purge whose compelling story is significantly featured in the film. 7:00pm - 8:00pm Online Tickets: <http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/welcome-to-chechnya-beyond-the-film-tickets-111695387912>

Saturday, July 18

Men Having Babies Midwest Conference (virtual) 5th annual MHB Midwest returns with surrogacy parenting options and the debut of the Complementary Services Expo. For gay men who want to become parents through surrogacy, a wealth of information, advice, wide range of relevant service providers. 3:00pm. Continues July 19. DoubleTree Chicago Magnificent Mile, 300 E. Ohio St., Tickets: <http://www.menhavingbabies.org/surrogacy-seminars/chicago/>

Friday, July 31

Being Earnest online Based on Oscar Wilde's satirical comedy of manners, The Importance of Being Earnest. Skylight Music Theatre's online/virtual, full-length musical has the score that's a tribute to 1960s rock groups like Herman's Hermits, The Dave Clark Five, The Rolling Stones, The Seekers, The Hollies, The Lovin' Spoonful Time: TBA. Call 414-291-7800 Tickets: <http://www.skylight-musictheatre.org>

KYLE'S BED & BREAKFAST
by Greg Fox

First season of 'Batwoman' on DVD, Blu-ray Aug. 18

The television series *Batwoman: The Complete First Season*—featuring lesbian actress Ruby Rose portraying the out lesbian superheroine—will be out on Blu-ray and DVD on Aug. 18, from Warner Bros. Home Entertainment.

There will be all 20 episodes from the first season, plus *The Best of DC TV's Comic-Con panels San Diego 2019*, deleted scenes and a gag reel.

Also, a limited-edition bonus disc featuring all five DC Crossover Event *Crisis on Infinite Earths* episodes will be available exclusively for fans who purchase the Blu-ray. *Batwoman: The Com-*

plete First Season is priced to own at \$39.99 SRP for the DVD and \$44.98 SRP for the Blu-ray, which includes a Digital Copy (U.S. only). *Batwoman: The Complete First Season* is also available to own on Digital via purchase from digital retailers.

In its first season, *Batwoman* starred Rose (*Orange Is the New Black*; *John Wick: Chapter 2*), Rachel Skarsten (*Birds of Prey*; *Reign*) and Dougray Scott (*Departure*; *Snatch*), among other actors. Rose recently left the cast.

Buffalo Theatre pauses 2020-21 season

Buffalo Theatre Ensemble (BTE), the professional Equity company in residence at the McAninch Arts Center, has decided to take a pause on its 2020-21 three-play season.

The season was scheduled to open this September with Mat Smart's *Naperville*, and include Stephen Karam's *The Humans* and Richard Bean's *One Man Two Guvnors*, an English adaptation of *The Servant of Two Masters* (Italian: *Il servitore di due padroni*).

Artistic Director Connie Canaday Howard said in a statement, "The Restore Illinois plan was issued just as we were announcing our 2020-2021 season. A close examination of the plan made it evident there would be significant impact on the way we audition, design, rehearse, perform and stage as well as serious financial implications.

"BTE's dedicated board of trustees met to review and discuss all of this and, with heavy hearts, decided that BTE will go on a temporary hiatus for this coming season, so we can return strongly in fall 2021."



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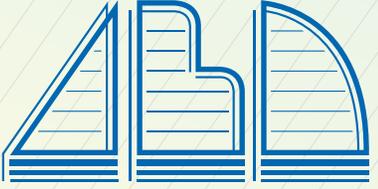
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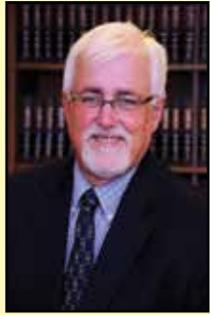
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