

Oct. 17, 2018

WEEKLY

## THE GOLDEN GIRLS: BEA AFRAID!

PART OF OUR  
HALLOWEEN  
THEATER  
WRAP-UP

PAGE 7

From left: Adrian Hadlock, Ed Jones, David Cerda and  
Grant Drager in *The Golden Girls: Be Afraid!*  
Rick Aguilar Studios



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[howardbrown.org/BOB2018](http://howardbrown.org/BOB2018)

## THEATER REVIEW

## Eclipsed

Playwright: Danaï Gurira

At: Chicago Dramatists, 1105 W. Chicago Ave.

Tickets: \$18-30; PegasusTheatreChicago.org

Runs through: Nov. 4

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

"How you gonna survive?"

If you think about it broadly, every female must answer this question. But if you're a Liberian woman in 2003 when your country is in the throes of civil war, the answers are limited. You can have a commanding officer's baby and revel in the stolen outfits and boom boxes he brings you. You can become a peace activist, but only if you have the money and education. Or you can

pick up an AK-47 and make your own rules.

What if you're 15, abducted from your parents' home, tossed into a rebel camp and raped nightly? How exactly do you survive? Pegasus Theatre Chicago's *Eclipsed* sets out to answer that question and the results, while not for the faint of heart, are simply stunning.

In 2016, *Eclipsed* became the first play to open on Broadway with an all-Black, all-female creative team and cast. Playwright Danaï Gurira (yes, the same Danaï Gurira who starred in *Black Panther* and *The Walking Dead*) was inspired by a New York Times photo of African women, dressed fashionably and packing assault rifles. Indeed, one character (Adhana Reid)—formerly known as "Wife #2"—embodies that photograph. Once confined to a compound with a rebel officer's two other women, she now struts around in tight jeans and her very own gun, stopping in fre-

quently to rub her newfound power in the faces of the deeply insecure Wife #1 (Maya V. Prentiss) and the very pregnant Wife #3 (Aja Singletary). When a teenage girl (Sola Thompson) finds herself in the unfortunate role of Wife #4, she's torn between the two women who strive to protect her, and the one who seems to have it all despite the war-torn environment.

Director Ilesa Duncan infuses Gurira's frank dialogue with a series of arresting images. The Girl learns to use an assault rifle, her fingers festooned with bright pink nail polish. Peace activist Rita (Morayo Orija) teaches the illiterate Wife #1 to write her name in the dirt, and the latter's expression changes from disbelief to joy. When Wife #2 goes into labor, she cries out—not in pain, but for her beloved wig.

Gurira and Duncan never stop reminding us that these women are victims, but they're also human,

dancing to the radio and poring over their only book, a biography of Bill Clinton. (They refer to Monica Lewinsky as Clinton's "Wife #2.") The cast is incredibly skilled, navigating their characters' complexities and relationships with the kind of ease that only comes from very diligent preparation.

A thorough, illustrated lobby display informs the audience that the Liberian fight for freedom was very female-driven, with women negotiating for peace as well as shooting civilians. *Eclipsed* brings to glaring life a very recent piece of history with Black women at its center. "You have to work within the system," Wife #2 informs Rita, "and right now, the system is war." Perhaps one day, this line will feel irrelevant.

## THEATER REVIEW

## Crumbs From the Table of Joy

Playwright: Lynn Nottage

At: Raven Theatre, 6157 N Clark St.

Tickets: 773-338-2177 or

RavenTheatre.com; \$15-46

Runs through: Nov. 18

BY KAREN TOPHAM

Like Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage's 1995 family drama *Crumbs From the Table of Joy* is a memory play reflected through the mind of the oldest child of a very flawed, controlling single parent. In this case, the flawed parent is Godfrey Crump (Terence Sims), a man who has (as the play begins) recently lost the love of his life and uprooted his daughters Ernestine (Chanell Bell) and Ermina (Brandi Jiminez Lee) from the

south to Brooklyn.

The play's narrator is 17-year-old Ernestine. She's a high school senior who, unlike her social butterfly 15-year-old sister, pretty much keeps to herself. Her greatest escape is to go to movies, where she is awed by the great dramatic tales featuring actresses like Joan Crawford that manage to resolve themselves in two hours. Her own life offers no such neat resolutions. She lives in her imagination, even joyfully playing out alternative scenes from her life as she wishes they had occurred.

The Crump family's regimented life is uprooted twice: first by the arrival of Godfrey's sister-in-law, Lily Anne Greene (Brianna Buckley). Lily, arriving on the scene in ostentatiously bright and sharp clothing that the Crump girls cannot even dream of, is a hard-drinking, hard-socializing member of the Communist Party (because it is in favor of eliminating Jim Crow laws). The second disruption comes in the form of Godfrey's sudden marriage to a white German immigrant (Emily Tate), who at first seems a bit of a naïf but

reveals more depths as the play goes on.

Director Tyrone Phillips gets some outstanding performances from his entire cast. Sims plays Godfrey's desperation discover why he was left alone as the driving force of his life. It informs his newfound religion, his confusion over his feelings for Lily (with whom he shares a past), and even his honest and abiding love for his daughters. Lee is outstanding as the fiery, indomitable Ermina; she's a constant breath of fresh air in any scene she's a part of. Tate's throughout the play is fun to watch as she takes this white German woman (only a half-decade after WWII no less) and works to integrate her into the Crumps' lives only to meet massive resistance from both daughters.

Bell carries the weight of the play on her shoulders and is wonderful in the role of the wallflower daughter whose imagination is the greatest thing about her life. Her internalized and understated performance allows us to see all of the more flamboyant performances through her eyes, though it is by no means emotionless. Indeed, Ernestine

goes through just about every emotion possible during this play and Bell is a master of subtle expressions.

Among those flamboyant performances is Buckley's Lily. Buckley is a force of nature in this play: entering like a whirlwind in red, she immediately claims the stage, and whether boisterously drunk, audaciously sexy, or honestly tender, her Lily shines not only as the object of her nieces' affection but as one of the best performances of the year.

*Crumbs From the Table of Joy* asks us to find the delightful crumbs whenever and wherever we can because we don't always have full access to the table, but it suggests that the crumbs just may be enough. It's a quiet, simple play by Nottage, as understated as its main character, but it offers us a different glimpse into the playwright than her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Sweat and Ruined*; it's a sweet, lovely, loving play that never devolves into sappiness, and a small treasure in its own right.

## THEATER REVIEW

## Fun Harmless Warmachine

By: Fin Coe

At: Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Tickets: 773-697-3830 or

TheNewColony.org; \$10-20

Runs through: Nov. 4

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

The New Colony is dedicated to the works of new authors, inviting you to take a risk on a show you've never seen.

Author Fin Coe and director James Fleming's *Fun Harmless Warmachine* attempts to make good on that potential before hitting a wall. What results is a narrow miss, so close to being a profound statement on toxic masculinity and loneliness, that I can't wait to see version 2.0 of this script.

Tom (Daniel Chenard) is disillusioned with his

life, job, and adulthood in general. His passion is online gaming, but his family and persistent friend DC (Londen Shannon) clutter his text history and distract him from it. When a co-worker (Emily Marso) turns him down for a coffee date, Tom rages so hard at his fellow gamers that he attracts the attention of a gaming society, the Order of the Sword. Soon, Tom is enlisted by Niko (Victor Musoni) and Hunter (Robert Koon) to join the Order, whose members game, but also battle outspoken detractors and dox anyone who has wronged them on social media.

It's innocuous enough to Tom, who is so won over by the camaraderie and respect he is handed, that his real life starts to improve. It doesn't occur to him to examine how complicit he is in the violence that the Order wreaks, until he has someone important he could lose, Ekaterina (Ayanna Bria Bakari).

When *Fun Harmless Warmachine* gets a moment right, it gets it incredibly right. It suspends us in a white forest of glowing screens, and overwhelms us with bullet fire and shrill feedback. The dialogue plants us exactly where adolescence meets adulthood, with characters

specific enough to be living in your building or working in the next cube.

It only takes one scene to unravel the whole work: a pointed confrontation meant to amplify women targeted by online harassment. In it, the characters speak with unearned emotional intelligence, forcibly furthering the plot, and making leaps they hardly seemed capable of, the scene before. I swear, if one more secondary female character has to help a white male protagonist self-actualize, she'll earn a free sub.

The cast of *Warmachine* is an unrelenting force for good, however, and because they are double-cast, they breezily shift from internet trolls to jolly midwesterners. Victor Musoni is the perfect example, shining as both sinister Order operative Niko and Tom's beaming brother Jack. Emily Marso suffers bravely through unwanted male attention as Melissa, and as DC, Londen Shannon is the buoyant best friend none of us deserve. As Tom and Ekaterina, Daniel Chenard and Ayanna Bria Bakari are equal parts magnetic and breakable. This production hopes to make us face our dangerous proclivities, and the screen-cap is nearly complete.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**Curve of Departure**, Northlight Theatre, through Oct. 21. Wonderful four-person cast headed by living treasure Mike Nussbaum as the addled-but-wise patriarch of a family dealing with death, adoption and more in a well-crafted, warm-hearted play. JA

**Downstate**, Steppenwolf Theater, through Nov. 11. The always-irreverent Bruce Norris makes a case for penal colonies protecting those incarcerated therein from the wrath of outsiders seeking payback beyond the boundaries of justice. MSB

**The Walls of Harrow House**, Rough House Theatre at the Chopin, through Nov. 3. If the pictures are any clue, the puppets who guide us through Milton Harrow's secluded studio will prove scarier than clowns. MSB

**The Little Foxes**, Citadel Theatre, through Oct. 28. Lillian Hellman's exploration of greed and family in post-Civil War Alabama has a plot that hits like (spoiler alert, sort of) a heart attack while flaying bare (yes, I do mean flaying) the racism and misogyny of the Deep South both then and now. CES

—by Abarbanel, Barnidge and Sullivan



Henri Watkins courts Sydney Charles in *Flyin' West*.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

## THEATER REVIEW

### Flyin' West

Playwright: Pearl Cleage

At: American Blues Theater,

Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.

Tickets: 773-654-3103;

AmericanBluesTheater.com; \$19-\$39

Runs through: Nov. 3

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Pearl Cleage's 1992 *Flyin' West* is her first full-length play, which is apparent from its simple dramatic development and structure.

Indeed, the major event of Act II is so strongly telegraphed in advance that it plays out as comic, whether or not that was Cleage's intent. The play's popular appeal comes from its feisty, folksy, often funny and sometimes ferocious female characters, all very well portrayed in this production under veteran director Chuck Smith.

Most of Cleage's plays concern "the intersection of sexism and racism" as it relates the Black community, according to the Lisa M. Anderson book

Black Feminism in Contemporary Drama, among other works. *Flyin' West* is true to form, although it has an historic setting: the all-Black town of Nicodemus, Kansas, which developed in post-Civil War America, when the Homestead Acts fueled Western expansion. By 1898 (the play's setting), adoptive sisters Sophie Washington (Tiffany Oglesby) and Fannie Dove (Sydney Charles) successfully farm several hundred acres. "This is the land that makes us free women," Sophie declares.

Grandmotherly Miss Leah (Joslyn Jones), born a slave, owns the adjoining farm, but is staying with Sophie and Fannie when youngest sister Minnie Dove Charles (Tiffany Renee Johnson) visits with her husband, the educated New Orleans Creole poet Frank Charles (Wardell Julius Clark). They've been living in England where Frank praises the absence of "colored" society. In Nicodemus, money-strapped Frank is interested to find white land speculators offering \$500 an acre, because Minnie has a deed to one-third of the family farm. It's also quickly apparent that Frank physically abuses Minnie. What to do? "There are no laws to protect a woman from her husband," Sophie again declares. "It isn't a crime until he kills her."

*Flyin' West* isn't subtle; sometimes one wants to hiss the villain and cheer the hero. Fortunately, the women are appealing and sympathetic, allowing one to endorse the frontier justice of their final triumph. Lest anyone think Cleage's views of men are entirely one-sided, she offers a counterpoint to Frank Charles in Wil Parish (Henri Watkins), a rough-hewn but soft-spoken man who patiently courts Fannie with flowers and respect. One wishes Cleage had brought this sweet romance to some conclusion.

Grant Sabin's scenic design provides a neat, clapboard house interior typical of the play's setting, not fancy but furnished with taste and spotlessly clean. Lily Grace Walls supplies charming period-accurate costumes, some plain and some fancy. Sound designer Rick Sims' prairie winds frequently howl, yet no one closes close the door!

Although Nicodemus had a checkered history and only brief glory, the Homestead Acts did encourage women and Black Americans to access free Federal lands, allowing some to realize a free and better future, such as idealized in *Flyin' West*.

## SPOTLIGHT

The son of Charlemagne the Great tries to find his corner of the sky in Mercury Theatre's revival of Stephen Schwartz's enduring musical *Pippin*. Mercury's staging comes from the tried-and-true triumvirate of director Walter Stearns, music director Eugene Dizon and choreographer Brenda Didier. Kory Tarhan plays Prince Pippin, backed by a rock-solid supporting cast featuring Sawyer Smith as Pippin's extra-over-the-top step mother Fastrada and Donterrio Johnson as the leading player who urges one and all to leave their fields to flower. The Mercury Theatre production runs through Dec. 14 at the Mercury Theatre, 3745 N. Southport Ave. \$60-\$65; <https://www.mercurytheaterchicago.com>



Photo by Brett Beiner

## OPENS TONIGHT

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## THEATER REVIEW

# WaistWatchers The Musical

**Playwright:** Alan Jacobsen and Vince Dimura  
**At:** Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted St.  
**Tickets:** 312-988-9000 or  
**TheRoyalGeorgeTheatre.com;** \$45-65  
**Runs through:** Dec. 30

BY KAREN TOPHAM

From the Atkins and South Beach diets to WeightWatchers and NutriSystem, tens of millions of people follow diet and exercise plans each year in the hope of losing those excess pounds that make them feel less than beautiful.

Matt Silva's touring production of *WaistWatchers the Musical*, now at the Royal George Theatre, is 90 minutes of parody songs, personal dramas and hilarious visuals that might not exactly be Shakespeare but certainly is thoroughly entertaining, especially for the women in the audience.

Each character is carefully defined to represent a type. Kiley L. McDonald sparkles as instructor Carla, a woman with a deep love of chocolate who works out to keep in shape for various sexual encounters. Sarah Godwin is Cindy, a recently divorced woman trying to get back into the dating world. Krissy Johnson is Cheryl, a 40-ish woman undergoing a critical midlife crisis. She's been married long enough that her husband's suddenly-renewed sex drive is driving her crazy. And the brilliant Martha Wash (in town until Oct. 28) is Connie, a first-timer at the gym who just wants to get her husband to pay more attention to her. There is also an emcee (the effervescent Katherine S. Barnes) who plays multiple characters, such as a chef pushing a giant buffet and a Viagra pill. (You read that right: Costume designer Jill Rose Keys has a great time with this show.)

These actresses—especially Wash, whose triumphant “Fat & Okay”



**Martha Wash of *WaistWatchers The Musical*.**  
Photo by Sean Black

is the play's most powerful moment—possess wonderful voices and have a delightful time with all of the subtle (and overt) sexual innuendo in the lyrics. (What they do with four giant exercise balls is one of Silva's more fun inventions.) Johnson, with her wonderful facial expressions and comically exaggerated anguish in songs like “Getting Older,” is a joy to watch. And don't let yourself focus solely on whoever is singing: The others in the background are often the greatest humor of the songs. Choreographer Dani Tucci-Juraga (a fitness trainer in her free time) puts them through the paces: It's easy to suspect that some of their reactions are completely real.

Silva's production is tight and simple, playing out in a small women's workout gym (designed by Joe Schermoly) that bleeds right into audience. Alan Jacobsen's fun script features song parodies with such names as “Botox Queen,” “Eat It,” “Sounds of Snoring” and “Oops” that composer Vince Dimura has rewritten to obscure the original music. (This reviewer found that technique, albeit clever, a bit distracting. Spending too much time trying to figure out what song, from *Supercalifragilisticexpialadocious* to “Don't Rain on My Parade,” was being parodied can pull one out of the moment.)

Diets and fitness are big business in this country right now, and they are indeed rife with parody possibilities. *WaistWatchers the Musical* (named perhaps so that no one would confuse it with a real diet movement?) is a fun, frothy look at an industry that has grown to mega-dimensions (more than a trillion dollars in 2017). It's not anti-fitness; though one song extols the virtue of the “Just eat what you want because it doesn't matter diet,” the fun it pokes is gentle and not polemic. However, with its final number, “Hot Mamas,” the musical makes the point that bodies come in all shapes and sizes.

Audience members who have been drinking and having fun will appreciate that. There's enough in this play for those who go to gyms and those who don't. Just don't expect miracles and deep insights: like diets themselves, this show isn't likely to stay with you for a long time.

## THEATER REVIEW

# Rock 'N' Roll

**Playwright:** Tom Stoppard  
**At:** The Artistic Home, 1376 W. Grand Ave.  
**Tickets:** 866-811-4111; **TheArtisticHome.org;** \$34  
**Runs through:** Nov. 18

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

This is a well-acted, intelligent production of a sprawling play with a tangle of themes and ideas intersecting symbolically if not factually: freedom vs. repression, love vs. Eros, theory vs. reality, rock music vs. politics, the collapse of European Communism and the rise of Thatcherism. Perhaps only Tom Stoppard could cram Sappho, Vaclav Havel, the Beach Boys, Karl Marx and the Plastic People of the Universe (PPU) in a single play. The PPU was an underground opposition rock band in Czechoslovakia following Soviet repression of the Prague Spring in 1968, and survived until Communism's fall in 1989.

*Rock 'N' Roll* is set in England and Iron Curtain-era Czechoslovakia, 1968-1990. I'm old enough to know all the history it recounts, all the artists and politicians it cites and the dialectics it references, and I've seen the play before. Still, it defies easy summation or comprehension even with this strong production.

It centers on Max (HB Ward) and Jan (Julian Hester), a spiritual father-and-son who divide



**Julian Hester and Raphael Diaz in *Rock 'N' Roll*.**  
Photo by Joe Mazza-Brave Lux

over politics. Max, a university professor and Communist Party member, supports Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Jan, his star grad student, is a non-observant Czech Jew (as is

Stoppard) whose family escaped the Nazis. Jan returns to Prague during the liberal reforms of Czech Communist leader Alexander Dubcek, only to become a dissenter when the Soviet Union

crushes the reforms.

Max's muse is Karl Marx, while Jan's is Western rock and the Stones and Dead to the Beach Boys and Velvet Underground. What unites Max and Jan spiritually is the purity of their visions and inability to compromise. Max twists logic to justify the Soviet history of repression, while Jan martyrs himself in Prague when he might be more effective elsewhere. Max is more pitiable as his personal life and politics spiral downward. His wife, Eleanor (Kristin Collins), succumbs to cancer as Communism stresses and collapses, crises which parallel each other in Max's inability to cope. Jan, meanwhile, is marginalized. He's attached to the Czech liberation movement but never seems important to it. Ultimately, long-interrupted love is revived and seems more important at the end than the political heart of the play. Is this Stoppard's dialectic, that one must be politically free before one can love?

Director Kathy Scambiaterra's vigorous, intimate production (45 seats) makes effective use of lighting (Cat Wilson), music, wigs and costumes (Zachary Wagner) to mark the passage of time. It's almost scary how pertinent *Rock 'N' Roll* still is, observing how all political systems manipulate truth, Capitalism as much as Communism. One also sees there isn't much difference between Communist repression back then, and the repressions of right-wing nationalist dictators today ... especially with a U.S. president who wants to be one of them.

Hand Mouth.

Photo by Chrystyne Kozol

# Too ghoul for school: Theater for the Halloween weekend



BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The weeks surrounding Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanzaa, solstice and New Year's are often collectively dubbed the "holiday season" in our multicultural society, but you're not likely to hear the three days set aside to recognize the transition from October to November—individually, Halloween (or "Hallow's Eve"), Day of the Dead and All Souls' Day—grouped under the name "Death Day season" in the near future.

Theater's pagan Greek origins predispose it to celebrations reminding us that the darkness is only temporary. Refuting the gloom in 2018 are an abundance of spooky and spectral entertainments listed below:

#### Wear your walking shoes:

—**Les Innocents/The Innocents.** A concert in the Paris catacombs staged in 1897—no, not by the phantom of the opera—provides the source of this promenade-staged spectacle by (re)discover theatre. It runs through Nov. 4 at Mason Hall at the Preston Bradley Center, 941 W. Lawrence Ave. [rediscovertheatre.com](http://rediscovertheatre.com)

—**Masque Macabre:** Strawdog takes advan-

tage of its wide open space to present a festive gathering with 14 storylines in real time, based on Poe's shivery tales, and let us choose which one(s) we want to follow. It runs through Oct. 31 at Strawdog (formerly Signal) Theater, 1802 W. Berenice Ave. [Strawdog.org](http://Strawdog.org)

—**The Walls of Harrow House:** Forget clowns! The humanoid puppet tour guides escorting us through this gloomy old house designed by a reclusive architect are far scarier. It runs through Nov. 3 at the Chopin, 1543 W. Division St. [RoughHouseTheater.com](http://RoughHouseTheater.com)

#### Pack your hankies:

—**The Madness of Edgar Allen Poe:** A Love Story: The Tudor mansion on the wooded Peabody Estate makes the perfect setting for our haunted hero's search through his tortured memories. It runs through Nov. 4 at First Folio Theatre, 1717 W. 31th St. in Oak Brook. [FirstFolio.org](http://FirstFolio.org)

—**Little Shop of Horrors:** A carnivorous plant in this 1982 musical rom-com adaptation of the venerable B-grade screamflick adds a new dimension to the concept of "botanical weapons." Runs to Oct. 23 at Drury Lane Theatre, 100 Drury Lane in Oak Brook. [DrurylaneOakbrook.com](http://DrurylaneOakbrook.com)

## THEATER

#### Look at your surroundings:

—**Near Death Experience:** Mentalist Neil Tobin displays his occult powers right in the Reaper's very own parlor at an actual working cemetery—can you get any more site-specific than that? It runs through Nov. 4 in the Rosehill Cemetery chapel, 5800 N. Ravenswood Ave. [NearDeathx.com](http://NearDeathx.com).

#### Travel the city from north to south:

—**Frankenstein:** Lifeline playwright Robert Kauzlaric re-imagines Mary Shelley's classic as a psychological journey fueled by filial devotion. Runs through Nov. 11 at Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood Ave. [Lifelinetheatre.org](http://Lifelinetheatre.org) 773-761-4477

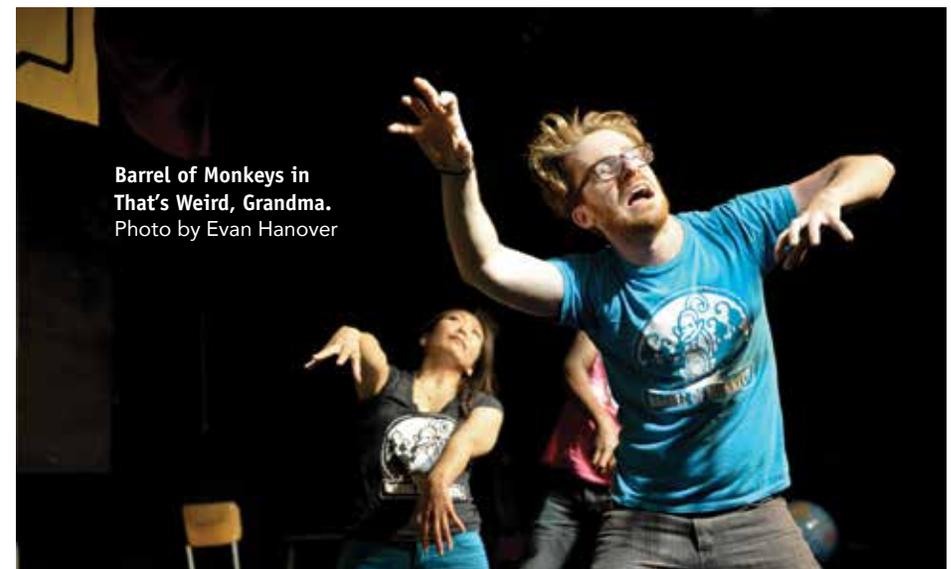
—**Frankenstein:** The man-made creature recounts his story in all its brutal candor when British author Nick Dear's adaptation inaugurates

A Handbag trick and treat in this holiday romp. It runs Oct. 13-Nov. 3 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. [HandbagProductions.org](http://HandbagProductions.org); 773-327-5252

—**Poe.** Christina Lepri's "creepy/campy" comedy for Theatre Above The Law proposes a cabaret where a 12-year-old Lost Lenore hosts re-enactments of cousin Edgar's greatest hits. It runs Oct. 20-Nov. 11 at the McKaw Theater, 1439 W. Jarvis Ave. [TheatreAtL.org](http://TheatreAtL.org); 773-655-7197

—**The Rocky Balboa Picture Show.** Corn Productions parodies, not one, but two cinema classics in this musical mash-up. It runs through Nov. 3 at the Cornservatory, 4210 N. Lincoln Ave. [Cornservatory.org](http://Cornservatory.org)

If restless spirits can roam the land of the living on Halloween, why not those of us still alive, too? Leave the candy by the door, throw on your cape and your calavera mask and go see a play! Boo!



Barrel of Monkeys in  
That's Weird, Grandma.  
Photo by Evan Hanover

Remy Bumpo's new home on Belmont Avenue. Runs Oct. 14-Nov. 17 at Theater Wit, 1227 W. Belmont Ave. [RemyBumpo.org](http://RemyBumpo.org) 773-975-8150

—**Frankenstein:** The light-and-shadow artists of Manual Cinema take up temporary residence in Hyde Park to explore Shelley's foresight as it applies to our technology today. Runs Nov. 1-Dec. 2 at Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave. [CourtTheatre.org](http://CourtTheatre.org) 773-753-4472

#### Bring the kids:

—**Ghost, Ghouls and Talking Potatoes: That's Weird Grandma.** The creative staff at Barrel of Monkeys believes (quite correctly) that children themselves, not adults, know best what's fun for children. It runs through Nov. 4 at the Neo-Futurist Theater, 5133 N. Ashland Ave. [BarrelOfMonkeys.org](http://BarrelOfMonkeys.org); 773-506-7140

—**Bunnica:** This heartwarming tale of a misunderstood orphan vegan-vampire rabbit is a perennial favorite in the Lifeline repertoire. It runs Oct. 20-Nov. 25 at Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood Ave. [Lifelinetheatre.org](http://Lifelinetheatre.org); 773-761-4477

#### Chortle and guzzle:

—**The Golden Girls: Be a Freak!**—The Halloween Edition. The irreverent dragsters of Hell in



Above: Les Innocents.

Photo courtesy of (re)discover theatre

Below: Man In Shadows.

Photo by Mike Oleon



Jill Soloway.  
Photo by  
Jesse Chamberlin Marble

## Jill Soloway looks ahead to celebrating new book in Chicago

BY DANIELLE SOLZMAN

Jill Soloway spoke with the Windy City Times ahead of the release of their new book, *She Wants It: Desire, Power, and Toppling the Patriarchy*. Soloway celebrates the book's launch during a sold-out event Oct. 18 at the Chicago Waldorf School in a conversation with Hannah Gadsby. Also joining Soloway for the event are Elaine Soloway, their mother; Faith Soloway, their sister; and Pidgeon Pagonis.

**WCT: Congrats on the release of *She Wants It* and on your return to Chicago on October 18th. When did you start to get the idea for this book?**

Jill Soloway: Thank you! I think this book has been on my mind in some iteration for a long time. I started with a lot of material about feminist storytelling—thinking about what a “female gaze” or “intersectional gaze” might look like,

and how necessary it is. Then I went through a series of really transformative personal revelations and experiences, starting with learning my parent was trans. That’s when the memoir element really started to take shape. I wanted to explore—do a little spelunking of my own soul—these changes I was experiencing.

**WCT: The event will feature a conversation between you and Hannah Gadsby, in addition to Pidgeon Pagonis, Elaine Soloway, and Faith Soloway. What can fans expect?**

JS: I’m so excited to share stages with all these heroes of mine. I wanted the tour to be a place to hold space and have community in the midst of everything going on in the world. I had this vision of a feminist tent revival, or a radical variety show. Audiences should expect laughter, debate, provocative notions, music, etc. We’re in such an extraordinary moment, and I wanted the tour to engage with that.

## BOOKS

**WCT: Like so many successful people in the industry, you got your start through the Chicago comedy scene. Is there an improv instructor who has had a meaningful impact on your career?**

JS: The Annoyance Theater was such an essential part of my coming into being as an artist. Everyone there—my teachers and collaborators—shaped me from the very beginning. Mick Napier and Susan Messing deserve special credit.

**WCT: Can you talk about 5050by2020 and its importance?**

JS: 5050by2020 is a strategic initiative I founded within Time’s Up, with a mission to activate and empower artists. We realized there really was no infrastructure for bringing working artists and entry- or mid-level artists into the Time’s Up fold. The Hollywood elite are well-represented, but we all knew the movement had to be more than that. So we provide that infrastructure, and do so with an emphasis on intersectionality. We’re convening cohorts among disabled artists, sex workers, Latinx writers, MENA [Middle East and North Africa] and Muslim artists, tech and more, to shake things up and change the face of Hollywood. This summer we also launched our TRANSform Hollywood guide, including an open letter signed by 50-plus industry partners promising concrete ways they would improve the representation of trans people in their content.

**WCT: Speaking for myself, I can say that the education and awareness from the success of *Transparent* helped in my coming out as transgender in late-2015. How often do you hear from fans about how much this show has helped with coming out?**

JS: I can’t tell you what it means to me to hear that. It is a very kind thing I will hear now and again from viewers. When I started with *Transparent*, my goal was just to make the world a safer place for my parent. I like to say that protagonism is propaganda for privilege. Film and television are empathy machines, and if we put authentic stories of authentic people in front of the camera, I believe it can slowly but surely change the world. If *Transparent* has helped viewers understand themselves or others better in terms of gender and sexuality, that’s the dream.

**WCT: As far as the state of transgender representation in TV/film is concerned, do you feel that things are better or worse than when *Transparent* started?**

JS: Better. Certainly better. Just recently we saw the conversation around cis actors playing trans roles get attention in a big way. Like I said earlier about the TRANSform Hollywood guide and open letter, the entertainment industry is starting to get on board with what trans people need from representation. We can’t keep giving trans roles to cis people. We can’t keep telling trans stories without trans voices. This isn’t to say that we’re there yet—we’re not. Both the quality and quantity of trans representation have a long way to go.

## Proud to Run taking beneficiary applications

Proud to Run 2019 is now accepting applications from Chicago-area LGBTQ organizations seeking to be a beneficiary of the Proud to Run 10k run and 5k run/walk next June.

The deadline for submitting an application is Nov. 1.

Organizations submitting an application should be a non-profit that serves LGBT individuals in or around Chicago. PTR’s donations support a specific project or program that provide direct programming to the Chicago LGBTQ community donations do not support capital campaigns or annual funds, conferences and special events (i.e. fund raising receptions), lobbying efforts and/or political campaigns, or staff salaries. Beneficiaries will be selected by the Proud to Run board of directors in December of this year.

Last year’s beneficiaries included TPAN, Illinois Safe Schools ALLIANCE, PACPI and Care2Prevent. Find additional information, applications and instructions for submitting applications at ProudtoRun.org.

## Chelsea Clinton at W&CF Oct. 21

Former First Daughter Chelsea Clinton will be at Women and Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., on Sunday, Oct. 21, at 1 p.m. to sign copies of a book for kids entitled *START NOW! You Can Make a Difference*.

In the book, aimed at children 7 and older, Clinton breaks down the concepts of health, hunger, climate change, endangered species and bullying so that readers can understand the world around them, as well as how they can make a difference in their own lives, their communities, and the world at large.

Clinton is also the author of the best-selling picture book *She Persisted: 13 American Women Who Changed the World*.

Visit <https://chelseaclintonchicago.brownpapertickets.com/>.

## YEPP’s ‘Rise Up’ taking place Nov. 14

In recognition of the Transgender Day of Remembrance/Resilience and Youth Homelessness Awareness Month, Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) will host “Rise Up” Wed., Nov. 14, at Chicago Theater Works, 1113 W. Belmont Ave., 6-9 p.m.

Through performance and communion, attendees will honor those whose lives were taken, rejoice in the resilience of Trans youth, build community and raise funds.

See “Rise Up- A Celebration of Resilience” on Facebook.



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## BOOK REVIEW

## The Trans Generation

by Ann Travers  
\$25; New York University Press; 261 pages

REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Boy or girl?

That's a common enough question, if you're an expectant parent. You might've even wondered it yourself: will you need pink things or blue, and what name will you choose? For generations, it's been an exciting decision for prospective parents, but Ann Travers asks in *The Trans Generation* if it's a prudent one. Maybe letting the child decide would be a better choice.

Fifty-six years ago, when Travers was born, their mother's doctor unwittingly caused a lifetime of hurt: "It's a girl," he said, and Travers spent years trying to "untangle" what it meant. That, they said, is part of what drives this book. The other part is the desire to improve the lives of trans kids through understanding.

Getting to that point is harrowing: Ninety-five percent of transgender kids on one study felt unsafe in their schools. Many report that physicians misunderstand kids who are gender-nonconforming. Trans kids attempt suicide and/or self-harm at very high rates and, says Travers, "many grow up hating their bodies..." Most employ several kinds of coping mechanisms to live their lives.

In writing this book, Travers says, they interviewed a wide variety of trans kids from the United States and Canada—19 in all, ages 4 to 20, plus 23 parents. The children mostly came from middle-class families, which allowed them privileges such as better access to medical care and chances to change schools if they needed to do so. Other children Travers interviewed lived in poverty, their stories illustrating how being a trans kid can be socially and medically isolating, and how lack of access to needed resources can affect their well-being.

Parents, of course, can affect that well-being, too, but it takes a "phenomenal amount of care, advocacy, and activism ... to push back against cisgendered environments," schools, sports, binary-only bathrooms, social activities, medical facilities, and politics. It takes a willingness to learn, listen, and lean in.

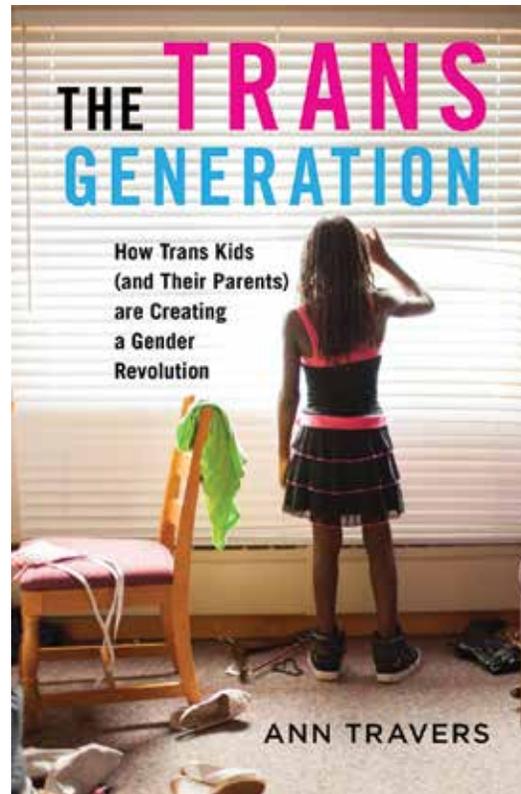
Not just for parents, but for teachers, advocates, and loved ones, *The Trans Generation* is one heavy-duty book.

Writing with a bit of a scholar's voice and occasional, relatively advanced, science and law studies, author Travers also offers readers plenty of eye-opening chats with trans kids, which turn out to be the most helpful, useful, and even entertaining parts of this book. From the mouths of babes, as they say, those interviews give insights that adults will find to be wise and thoughtful, even monumental. They're also heartbreaking but considering the kids readers are introduced to, and the singular interview with a 16-year-old who made her own hormone treatments in her high school's laboratory, they're a good indication of hope for the future.

While you could be forgiven for skipping to those case studies, you'd be missing out. The thicker parts of "The Trans Generation" are worth reading and reflection and are deeply instructive on pronouns, on gender fluidity, and on being trans in a cisgender-based society. They are also serious and weighty but that kind of rock-solid information could make this book the right choice.

Want more? Then look for *Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the Twenty-First Century*, by Tey Meadow; or *Parenting Beyond Pink or Blue: How to Raise Your Kids Free of Gender Stereotypes*, by Christia Spears Brown.

## BOOKS



## 'Tinderbox' author at Unabridged



Author/historian Robert Fieseler (left) discussed his new book, *Tinderbox: The Untold Story of the Upstairs Lounge Fire and The Rise of Gay Liberation*, with Owen Keehnen before a packed house at Unabridged Bookstore Wed., October 10.

Photo by Katharine Solheim

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Kyle Shire.  
Photo courtesy  
of Shire

## A Shire calling: Gay comedian moves from Chicagoland to LA

BY ANDREW DAVIS

People often have to make big changes in their lives in order to find success.

This is no different with Kyle Shire—a gay comedian who has moved from the suburbs of Chicago to Los Angeles after studying at such institutions as The Piven Theater Workshop, Second City and Columbia College Chicago.

**Windy City Times: Tell me about growing up in Chicagoland.**

Kyle Shire: I grew up in Des Plaines—in the shadow of O’Hare [International Airport] and the home of the first McDonald’s. I have a lot of comedians in my family, oddly enough, even though I don’t talk to them.

**WCT: The first time you did stand-up—was it terrifying, invigorating or something else?**

KS: Oh, God. I had one of the scariest open mikes of my entire life. It was at a comedy club that I don’t think is there any more. There was this stand-up there—P.K., short for “painkiller”—and the audience was ripping in on her, and she was ripping back at them. I wanted to join in on the fun [laughs] and I was on deck—and

I ended up making this lame joke that did not land. The whole room turned on me and P.K. started cussing me out. I still have five minutes before I had to go out, and I was having a panic attack. But I managed to go out (and I was a ranter at that point) and I managed to do well. I’m still shocked that I mustered the courage to do it.

**WCT: What is your comedic style?**

KS: I talk about my personal life a lot. I sometimes get a little sociopolitical—but I don’t talk about actual politics, which has become a parody of itself. But I do talk about strange things I encounter when I go back to the Midwest.

**WCT: I saw in a video where you talk about racists and Arizona.**

KS: I was at my boyfriend’s sister’s wedding. That actually did happen. [The video can be sent at Shire’s website, <http://kyleshire.squarespace.com/>.]

**WCT: I can believe that people can be that blatant.**

KS: Being a white guy, I believe there’s a different set of factors involved.

**WCT: By the way, I saw some of your Ins-**

## COMEDY

**tagram pics—and you’ve been detailing how you’ve physically transformed yourself.**

KS: Yes. I grew up a fat kid and I’ve always been a little chubby, and I’ve always had a little body dysmorphia. About a year and a half ago, I got into a gym routine and bodybuilding. I’m enjoying that—and I’m enjoying evolving into a gay man that straight men can fear. [Laughs] I followed X-Men and Magneto has been one of my favorite characters, so I always wanted to style myself as a gay Magneto.

**WCT: Going back to comedy, is society too PC for some jokes?**

KS: As much as I understand the PC argument, I feel that everything needs to be okay—or none of it needs to be okay, to a certain degree. It ultimately comes down to having fun. ... I think the conversation needs to be a little more nuanced—not taking an axe to it, but more like a surgical scalpel.

## OPERA REVIEW

### Patience and Sarah

By: Paula M. Kimper (composer) and Wendy Persons (libretto)

At: Third Eye Theatre Ensemble at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave.

Tickets: 773/975-8150 or TheaterWit.org; \$20-\$30

Runs through: Oct. 21

BY AARON HUNT

The world of opera is rife with hetero-love stories. Fewer and farther between in operalandia: Tales of lesbian love. Third Eye Theatre Ensemble rushes headlong into its fifth season with its production of *Patience and Sarah*, acknowledged by many as the first lesbian opera and one of the first mainstream, gay-themed opera.

Opera aficionados might argue the point. For centuries, opera has been rich with stories of gender ambiguity. Many operas feature cross-dressing and women in bed together, their lesbianism sitting lightly on the skin. Many would insist that the themes in Benjamin Britten’s *Peter Grimes* (1945) and *Billy Budd* (1951) are more than a little gay. Still, nobody is apt to win a debate on the topic because the terms, “lesbian” and “gay” are far too contemporary to be used as yardsticks in measuring operas penned before the language for LGBTQ+ people existed.

However you measure, 1998’s *Patience and Sarah* is a pivotal work that was groundbreaking in its exploration of women’s roles in early American, and gender expression.

The genesis of *Patience & Sarah* starts with librettist Wendy Persons, who was inspired by Isabel Miller’s 1969 historical fiction novel, *Patience & Sarah*, especially its happy ending. She took to writing a libretto for the story with the urgency of a wooer courting on borrowed time. The piece took form musically after Persons asked Kimper—then her partner—to collaborate.

Set in 1816, *Patience & Sarah* follows the titular couple as they fall in love, leave their families and buy a farm together. In Third Eye’s produc-

**WCT: Switching gears, you’re the second comedian I’ve spoken with recently, along with Whoopi Goldberg.**

KS: Wow! Tell her I like her. Jumpin’ Jack Flash was seriously a very big part of my childhood. It was always on in my house.

**WCT: Who are your influences? It seems like I detect a little George Carlin in your style.**

KS: The first comedy album I bought was Chris Rock’s *Bigger and Blacker*, and it was one of the best comedy albums ever; it’s sharp, aggressive and insightful all at the same time. Bernie Mac was also a huge influence on me. I dragged my mom with me to see *The Original Kings of Comedy*; we were, like, the only white people in the crowd.

I also loved Joan Rivers. I actually got to be an extra in [the reality show] *Joan Knows Best* the year before she died—that was pretty cool. I got to throw matzo balls at her. She did ask me, “Are you an actor? You’re very handsome.”

See <http://kyleshire.squarespace.com/>.



Jenna Schroer (Sarah) in *Patience and Sarah*.  
Image courtesy of Third Eye Theatre Ensemble

tion, director Jennifer Cox’s ensemble of singing actors cling to the music, the text, and each other to tell a story that speaks its name with brave clarity and clarion high notes.

The perfunctory set and scenery are quite rightly the barest necessities, keeping the character’s relationships in the novelistic, episodic tale as the focus. These fine performers open their hearts and throats to Kimper’s accessible score, which is most certainly the love-child of composers Gian-Carlo Menotti and Richard Strauss, modern but with reachable tonalities embellished with leaping vocal lines that match the pulse of the soul.

At the performance I saw, Diana Stoic’s *Patience* was a lesson in studied propriety, secretly scrambling to cloak latent desire. (At other performances, *Patience* is sung by Angela Born). Stoic’s sparkling voice drips molten silver, reminiscent of a young Beverly Sills.

Liana Gineitis’ *Sarah* was the standout performance. Her boyish choices ring as naturally as her attractive, wide-ranging mezzo-soprano. (Sarah is sung by Jenna Schroer at other performances.) Stephen Hobe was delightful as Parson Daniel Peel, portraying a seeker far ahead of his time who befriends Sarah, his presence as sunny as his voice. (Chicago favorite Noah Gartner sings the role at other performances.) As *Patience*’s brother Edward, tenor Dennis Kalup handles the vocal challenges with ease and shares the private life of a sad introvert with generosity.

Musically prepared by mensch Jason Carlson and wrapped in the charms of a seven-piece orchestra—all under the expert ministrations of conductor Alexandra Enyart—our girls certainly find their way.

# 10 questions with Vic

Gerami headshot by Stephen Blaha

BY VIC GERAMI

**Illeana Douglas** is a renaissance woman.

Her distinguished career includes theater, standup comedy, movies, including several Martin Scorsese films, TV, writing, music and producing. She exemplifies an artist who never stops creating and generating her own projects. She can currently be seen in the show *Funny Ladies*, on Turner Classic Movies, where she's joined by comedy legend Carol Burnett, to present a roundup of great comedic actresses.

1

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

Illeana Douglas: I've always said art is where you make it. I see the world as an artist. I try to live my life as an artist would. Finding beauty in nature. Compositions excite me. I love to people watch. It's important to engage in the world otherwise your outlook becomes static. I want to express the human condition with laughter and with pathos. Please don't call me quirky.

2

**WCT: You are a renaissance woman—you act, write, direct, produce, host a podcast and much more. How do you juggle all of it?**

ID: I'm happiest when I am working. I'm here to learn, so I work hard at getting better at my craft. Being a better interviewer, preserving film histories, telling women's stories as a writer/director. In my down time I love to cook, and as most people know I am pretty dedicated to my

dance classes.

**WCT: Entertainment Weekly named your memoir, *I Blame Dennis Hopper: Stories from A Life Lived In and Out of the Movies* "one of the best books of 2016." How does it feel to be praised for your writing after having won numerous acting awards?**

ID: My grandfather, Melvyn Douglas, always wanted me to be a writer. After reading some stories I had written, he gave me a few books for inspiration. One of my favorites was Dorothy Parker. That led me down the path of really wanting to be a writer. What I tried to do was not so much "write" but just tell good stories. That's what a writer/director does anyway. I love acting, and I want to continue acting! My grandfather won his first Oscar at age 63, his second Oscar at 80! I'm a character actress, so there will always be time for me to pursue great acting roles, but my role as a writer is obviously more personal.

**WCT: Your follow-up memoir, *This Never Happened: Outrageous Stories from a Life Lived In and Out of the Movies*, will be**

**Illeana Douglas.**  
Photo courtesy of Douglas



4

**out in November 2019. Can you share some details, preview or teaser?**

ID: There were a couple stories that did not make the first book. They were slightly creepy, or verging on black humor, and I didn't feel they fitted in the narrative, so we pulled them out. This led me to thinking—because I always liked stories about the dark nature of suburbia like Cheever, or the dark humor of Evelyn Waugh or Dorothy Parker that maybe the second book could be all outrageous things that ever happened to me with a decidedly wicked comic edge. The phrase comes from something Peter Bogdanovich used to say to me before every take, "Remember Illeana ... this never happened." I started to think about all the things that I wished had never happened to me. I thought that might be a great premise for the next book. Do the darker things that have happened to us make us appreciate the good things?

5

**WCT: Tell me about your new show on TCM.**

ID: *Funny Ladies* is cohosted by comic legend Carol Burnett. We discuss some of the great film comedians going back to the silent era and their influence on American cinema. We show about 20 different films featuring talent from Mae West, Carole Lombard, Rosalind Russel, Goldie Hawn, etc. It's a great way to showcase Carol Burnett not only talking about her career, but about some of the woman who influenced and mentored her like Lucille Ball.

6

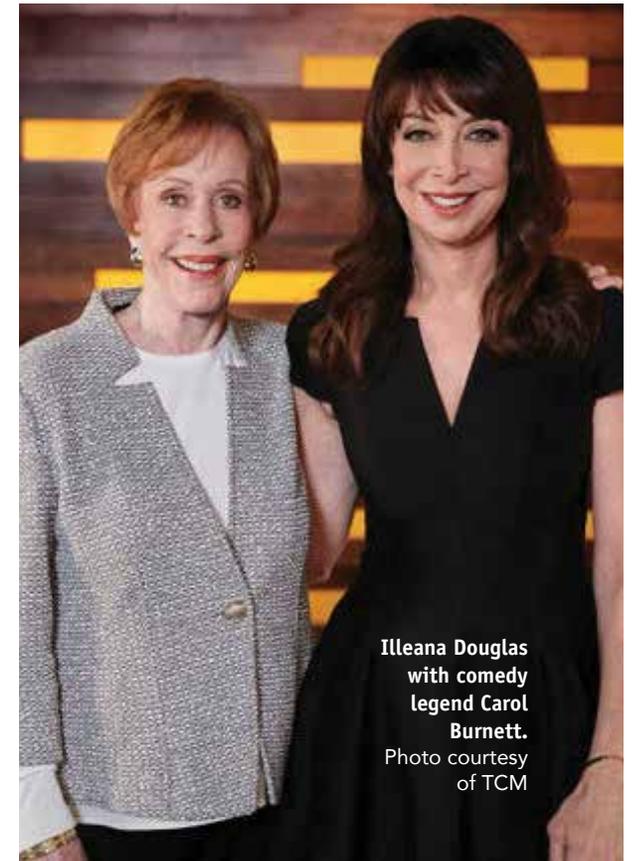
**WCT: What directors and/or actors would you like to work with that you haven't done so yet?**

ID: My favorite American director is Alexander Payne. Paolo Sorrentino is sublime. Actors and actresses—impossible! Off the top of my head [are] Bette Midler, Ellen Barkin, Anne Hathaway, Al Pacino, Bill Murray, Bruce Willis, Chris Pratt, Amy Adams, Hugh Jackman, Frances McDormand, Whoopi Goldberg [and] Albert Brooks.

7

**WCT: A lot has been written about your illustrious career, famous grandfather and personal life. What would you like your fans to know about you that isn't well-known?**

ID: My great grandparents on my father's side were songwriters. There is a long line of entertainers in our family. My great uncle—George Douglas—brother to Melvyn was also an actor, but mainly did B films.



Illeana Douglas with comedy legend Carol Burnett.

Photo courtesy of TCM

8

**WCT: What is your favorite charity or cause?**

ID: There are a few: Chimp Haven, Paws. Also, [there's] Paul Newman's Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.

**WCT: What other project(s) that I did not mention are you working on?**

ID: I am directing a film that I wrote called *Love is Funny*. It's a romantic comedy with some serious social issues.

**WCT: Tell me a secret—a good one!**

ID: I once interviewed an actor who was a suspect in an unsolved murder.

**For the latest news and information about Illeana Douglas, visit [IlleanaDouglas.com](http://IlleanaDouglas.com).**

10

9

Photo by Matt Simonette



# Center on Halsted hosts Orlando Traveling Memorial

BY VERNON HESTER

On Oct. 12, the Center on Halsted held an opening reception for The Orlando Traveling Memorial, a mural inspired by not only the Pulse nightclub attack which left 49 dead, but also the deaths of 2-year-old Lane Graves and singer Christina Grimmie in the same week.

Graves was fatally attacked by an alligator at Disney World and Grimmie was shot on the street after performing at a concert. The Pulse attack involved a lone shooter who attacked 300 patrons at a popular LGBTQ club with an automatic firearm; it is the deadliest incidence of violence against LGBTQ people in U.S. history. All three incidents happened in the Orlando area within the second week of June 2016.

Spearheaded by founder/visionary Colleen Ardaman, the mural is set to travel the country to “remember the 49 left behind.” Ardaman, who spoke at the opening, elaborated on the art work for the mural, which included painted portraits of the victims of the Pulse attack by surviving family members, and the “I Am A Handprint Campaign” that collected thousands of handprints of police, first responders, medical personnel, officials, local citizens, volunteers and groups who aided in the Pulse aftermath. Ardaman said, “The mural starts with our volunteers—the living part of the Memorial”—demonstrating support, compassion, kindness, humility and love to bring healing and restoration.”

The memorial will be on display on the second floor of Center on Halsted until Nov. 23, and will then move to Amundsen High School, 5110 N. Damen Ave.



Colleen Ardaman.

Photos by Vernon Hester (above and below)



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Glitterbomb hosts Alexander Rodriguez, Patrick Gomez and Enrique Sapene.

Photo from LATV



## 'Glitterbomb' engages queer Latinx community

BY BRONSON PETTIT

Television now has its first national queer Latinx talk show with a gay Latino cast.

LATV's *Glitterbomb* debuted last month and is broadcast to more than 22 million homes in the United States, according to Alexander Rodriguez, one of three hosts of the weekly half-hour show.

Rodriguez, Entertainment Weekly editor Patrick Gomez and actor Enrique Sapene launched the Los Angeles-based series on Sept. 20. They interview both Latinx and non-Latinx celebrities from music, TV, film and fashion.

While the show is inclusive in its interviewees, topics and audience, it is also meant to engage the queer Latinx community—one that's been historically ignored or overshadowed.

"The Latin community, stereotypically and with

good reason, is always considered very conservative," Rodriguez told *Windy City Times*. "The LGBT community hasn't had a major voice in the Latin community but the youth in the Latinx community is really changing that, because they're proud of who they are, they're not being quiet anymore, so families are having to have these discussions."

*Glitterbomb* aims to get families talking about LGBTQ issues by featuring both light-hearted and serious topics: "the Gayley Wed Game" segment asks a celebrity and their gay best friend, or a gay celebrity and their straight best friend, questions on how well they know each other.

In one episode, the crew interviewed Justina Machado, of the Netflix series *One Day at a Time*, a reboot of the eponymous series but this time featuring a Latino cast, in which Machado's character is a mother of a lesbian daughter.

"To take this 1970s style sitcom for it to be so popular now, taking place in a Latino home, taking place with gay characters, is just huge," Rodriguez said.

At the start of every episode, the hosts drop a "bomb" where they discuss provocative topics such as how to stay friends with your ex, if celebrities should get involved in politics, what to do if your best friend's boyfriend is on Grindr and who pays on the first date.

The show also touches on more serious aspects: "The current state of being Latino in this country, how do you subscribe to your culture while still being patriotic, while still being part of the melting pot that is the US," Rodriguez said.

"We have the same kind of stories of where we come from, family issues, love issues. So the only thing that really sets us apart is who we share our

bed with," Rodriguez said.

"That's why I really like the idea of *Glitterbomb*, because we don't look like your pretty-boy gay person out there, that's not who we are. We're the everyday person: I eat too many carbs, I might have a few too many drinks."

*Glitterbomb* comes at a time when the country is highly polarized, even within the LGBTQ community.

"We're all fighting the good fight right now, socially and politically, to have our voices be heard," Rodriguez said. "Sometimes we get so transfixed by those labels, and within those minority labels we have minority factions of ourselves in the LGBT community."

He pointed out the surge in suicides among queer youth in West Hollywood, due in part to bullying.

"We have to communicate with each other by putting our differences aside, putting stereotypes aside, and focusing on what the end goal is, because we all want our voices heard. If we're shouting at each other, you're not going to hear what the other person has to say," Rodriguez said.

So far, the show has gotten positive feedback, Rodriguez said.

"A gay youth can watch this show with their families, have some celebrities that they all like, and it happens to be three gay guys talking about their lives and it's done in such a natural way."

Going forward, Rodriguez said he wants to tell more stories and expand the show's viewership base.

"I'm looking forward to hearing more from the fans of how they open up the discussion and how they're able to talk about their daily LGBT lives in the big picture. They don't have to hide anymore," he said.

Rodriguez also hosts *On the Rocks* on iHeart Radio, where he also talks about entertainment. But moving from radio to TV has had its own challenges.

"Being in a studio is totally different. My first episode I didn't know what camera to look in, my makeup was running off," he said. "The producer is telling you, 'Ok, guys wrap it up,' but the celebrity keeps talking and talking, you're worried if you're slumped over too much. All of these things are running through your mind while you're trying to be funny and natural."

One of the biggest challenges, though, is being prepared.

"What I've learned from the radio show is you have to do your research," he said. "Sometimes that takes so long. There's so much content out there right now. So if someone says, 'Oh I love this new Netflix series.' Well, that's another show that I'm going to have to watch. But it's so important to ask questions that the celebrity doesn't get asked over and over again. Nobody wants to hear the same answers."

***Glitterbomb* airs at 9 p.m. Thursdays on LATV (broadcast over the air on channel 25-5 in Chicagoland) and will be available on demand soon.**

Kristina Isabelle at HCL Open House.  
Photo by Lanting Qu

## Two spaces celebrate access to artists with disabilities

BY KERRY REID

Accessibility has many shades of meaning in the arts, far beyond the question of “Is this work that people can understand?” For artists themselves, access—or the lack thereof—to time and space for creating work proves crucial to their ability to realize their visions. For artists with disabilities, those issues are compounded. They face the same difficulties as every other disabled person in navigating the physical world and challenging the prejudices of non-disabled people.

Yet, two Chicago institutions are currently showcasing work—new and old—by artists with disabilities this month. High Concept Labs holds its annual Fall Open House on Thursday, Oct. 25, at Constellation, where work by a variety of artists supported year-round by HCL will be showcased. Meanwhile, Gallery 400 at University of Illinois Chicago continues its exhibit “Chicago Disability Activism, Art, and Design: 1970s to Today” through Friday, Oct. 20.

There is crossover between these two institutions. Both currently feature work created by sound artist and musician Andy Slater, who is blind, and Matt Bodett, a poet and visual and performance artist with schizoaffective disorder. Both Slater and Bodett are activists and advocates as well as artists.

In Gallery 400’s current exhibit, Slater’s sound installation, *A Space for the Overactive Ear*, combines field recordings he’s made as he navigates city spaces. It’s accompanied by a book designed by Bodett containing Slater’s stories and musings about what it’s like to walk around Chicago with a cane. (There is a braille version available in the gallery.)

In a section entitled *Paralytic Transit*, the familiar sounds of CTA trains and announcements take on a more menacing quality when juxtaposed with Slater’s observations about how disorienting it can be for a blind person to walk underneath the elevated tracks. “The old wise blind mage inside me said ‘Face your fears, Andy, go and record

the sounds that don’t intimidate you and make something beautiful out of them.”

Creating space and opportunities for artists to create something beautiful is key to High Concept Labs’ mission. Founded in 2009, HCL functions as what executive director Steven Wang described as “an arts incubator, supporting artists through four-month residencies twice a year, which is the sponsored artist program. We’re an incubator because we provide the support with no financial requirements and no organizational requirements.”

He added “We look at all the different obstacles



Left: Margaret Morris at HCL Open House. Right: Matt Bodett.  
Left photo by Kirstie Shanley; right photo courtesy of Bodett.

that artists might face when they’re developing new projects and finding ways to remove those.” The support HCL provides includes, said Wang, “studio support for rehearsal space, documentation support, graphic design support, marketing support. We provide all of that for free.”

Sponsored artists can include both individuals and groups. Since 2017, HCL has also partnered with Chicago’s 3Arts, which focuses on providing support to women artists, artists of color and artists with disabilities. Artists who have come to HCL through the 3Arts partnership include Jan Bartoszek of Hedwig Dances and filmmaker/performer Rashayla Marie Brown. Wang said “With this partnership, more and more artists who are appropriate for HCL find out about the support we provide.”

## ART

The four-month Sponsored Artist Program (SAP) doesn’t place requirements on the artists to do a final presentation or performance. HCL board member Robyn Trem noted “There are multiple residency programs and other programs that will provide similar support, but they are associated with a final outcome, either a public performance or an exhibition. There is a quid pro quo. We do not ask for a final return from the artist.”

HCL also offers an Institutional Incubation



Ryan Packard when the latter needed people to join a choir for a piece he’s creating.

In terms of access, Trem noted that it increasingly includes “engaging different geographies in the city and expanding community engagement” by bringing work to different neighborhoods. She also noted that “Serving artists living with disabilities has been a tremendous learning opportunity. Space is always a consideration, and we’re thinking more about how to make an inclusive space that can enable all kinds of artists to thrive.”

Chicago has been on the forefront of that drive for inclusion, as the Gallery 400 show amply demonstrates. The exhibit also shows how tightly knit the disability arts community has been over the past several years and the collaborations they have developed. A milestone, as noted in one exhibit case, was the 2006 Bodies of Work Festival, spearheaded by Dr. Carrie Sandahl, director of UIC’s Program on Disability Art, Culture and Humanities, Disability and Human Development.

In addition to Slater’s sound installation, the work in the exhibit includes several paintings by Chicago artist and curator Riva Lehrer, who specializes in portraits of people with disabilities. The exhibit features Lehrer’s images of writer/performers Bill Shannon, Susan Nussbaum and Mike Ervin. A T-shirt with an image created by Ervin’s late partner, Anna Stonum, hangs on one wall. It bears the legend “Adapt or Perish” from Charles Darwin, along with a humorous look at “evolution” from primates to the familiar sign for wheelchair accessibility. A video of Shannon negotiating busy downtown Chicago sidewalks using a skateboard and modified crutches plays in one smaller room.

Nussbaum, the daughter of longtime Chicago actor Mike Nussbaum, has been working through the nonprofit Access Living for the past few years with a group of disabled young women who call themselves “Empowered FeFes.” Portraits of the “FeFes” by celebrated Chicago photographer Dawoud Bey, along with personal statements about how they see themselves, cover one wall. They are the future, and their images form a continuation with the past through documentary images of protests for disability rights and access in Chicago and Washington, D.C., from past decades.

Making visible the work of artists, particularly those with disabilities or who are otherwise traditionally marginalized, provides strong impetus for the work of both High Concept Labs and Gallery 400. The latter invites those with personal experience at “the intersection of disability activism, art, or design in Chicago” to contact them through their website. High Concept Labs is now accepting applications through November 11 for the spring 2019 Sponsored Artist program.

High Concept Labs Fall Open House will take place Thursday, Oct. 25 7-10 p.m. at Constellation, 3111 N. Western Ave. Tickets \$15 (includes light appetizers and a cash bar); visit HighConceptLabs.org.

**Chicago Disability Activism, Arts and Design runs through Saturday, Oct. 20, at Gallery 400, 400 S. Peoria St. It’s open Tuesday-Friday at 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday at 12-6 p.m. and by appointment. Admission is free; call 312-996-6114, email gallery400@uic.edu or visit gallery400.uic.edu.**

Program (IIP). This provides additional support for artists who have come through SAP and need more time to bring a project to fruition. Unlike the work developed through SAP, those in the IIP do share the final project with audiences.

The Open House is a mix of works-in-progress and finished pieces from present and past sponsored artists. On Thursday, Oct. 25, that will include work by choreographer Brittany Harlin, Opera Butoh Lab, conceptual painter and multimedia artist Shonna Pryor and the contemporary classical ensemble Zafa Collective.

Artistic director Billie Howard noted that sometimes sponsored artists through HCL find each other and begin collaborating. For example, Bodett, who creates performance poetry as well as visual art, worked with composer/sound artist

# 13th annual Chicago Latino Music Festival to feature free shows, plethora of genres

BY AMELIA OROZCO

The International Latino Culture Center (ILCC) of Chicago kicks off its 13th Chicago Latino Music Festival this week.

From Wed., Oct. 17 through Saturday, Nov. 18, ILCC will oversee eight concerts at venues throughout the city such as Instituto Cervantes, Columbia College, Old Town School of Folk Music and the Art Institute of Chicago. Founded by Gustavo Leone and Elbio Barilari, the festival features numerous free performances of music ranging from classical to rock.

**Windy City Times: What inspired you to create this festival?**

Gustavo Leone: Seeing that there was a lack of this music in already-established events, we started to work on creating a space so that Latin-American or Hispanic music could be presented or appreciated by the public.

**WCT: What makes this festival different from others?**

GL: The variety of music that is represented in the different styles and from different time periods in history that are not normally presented such as music from the 19th century. There are also music compositions of today and one project that is made up of children from Mexico with a composer.

**WCT: This is your 13th year putting on the fest. How has it changed from the first year?**

GL: At first, we were establishing ourselves in the eyes of the audience because this is music that exists and has existed more than 300 years, and to see it presented should be something normal to see, and is has to interest us.

**WCT: Why should it interest the public?**

GL: It's not only that it doesn't appear in books, it doesn't factor into Latin American music. There is no chapter on baroque Latin American music, colonial music. It is something totally ignored. This year we are not presenting historical music, but we have done it every year. Last year, it was the music from the 18th century and the year before that, it was an opera from the Jesuit missions, also from the 18th century. And this is all music that doesn't get in the books but all this is going to change.

**WCT: Will this change because of its exposure through this festival?**

GL: Because of everything, because today the resurgence of this music and the study of this music are what students are music are studying. And now this music is being heard more, including in the programs that we create and also in-

## MUSIC

cluded in different Latin American music festivals around the country. It's important to have these events in order to provide information to the public about it.

**WCT: What type of music do you think people think of when they hear the term "Latin American music?"**

GL: They think of folkloric music, and that's important of course and that is more commonly heard than classical music or concert music. Some may not realize that there is classical music, that there is a history in Latin America or, I should say, the Americas.

**WCT: Is there any sociopolitical context throughout the program?**

GL: In other programs we have done that before, but in this case, we don't have anything with a political or social connection.

**WCT: What should people expect when they come to one of the shows?**

GL: They will be surprised because each concert is a different style. In the first concert, they will hear jazz with Latin influences. In the second concert, they will find modern classical music by Latin American composers.

The next program will be guitar music, then a string quartet, an electronic music program, followed by Puerto Rican music and also guitar music in both Latin American and Spanish styles. Finally, the program will end with a concert of improvised music, with trumpets and special rock 'n roll sounds, free jazz and some elements of Bassanova and electronic music.

**WCT: How much Spanish does one need to know to enjoy these shows?**

GL: You don't need to know any Spanish. You simply need to feel the need to listen to music and then choose the program you'd like to attend.

**WCT: Are these events set up for the audience to dance to the music?**

GL: These are all concerts where the audience does not interact but watches the music performed on a stage.

**WCT: Why do you think these events are important?**

GL: We feel that this music-Latin American classical music is not as represented, and that is why we dedicate our time to this.

**For more information about the festival, go to <https://latinoculturalcenter.org/chicago-latinomusicfest/>.**

Rafael Vivanc.  
Photo courtesy of Gustavo Leone



## Lakeside Pride celebrates love and marriage

BY JOHN STADELMAN

Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles kicked off their season with the first of six themed performances honoring the legacy of the Stonewall Riots last Saturday, Oct. 13.

The "Love and Marriage" show by the Jazz Orchestra covered classic songs like "Fly Me to the Moon," "Besame Mucho" and Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" (although the last song was one Wonder wrote to celebrate the birth of his daughter).

Every song had a special meaning to the couples involved with the ensemble. Between each song, orchestra members brought their partners to the stage and told their wedding stories. Trombonist Eric West and wife Natalia talked about learning their dance (with an impromptu performance in the aisles), while Development Officer Chuck Malm and orchestra band leader Scott Malinowski reread their wedding vows. Audience members were invited onto the stage to share their own stories.

A playful encore of Justin Timberlake's "Suit and Tie" rounded out the performance.

Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles will be performing five more themed shows from now until June 1, 2019, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.

Find tickets and more information at <https://lakesidepride.org/season/>.



Above: Ethan Carter. Below: Samantha Elliot and Mark Stickler.  
Photos by John Stadelman



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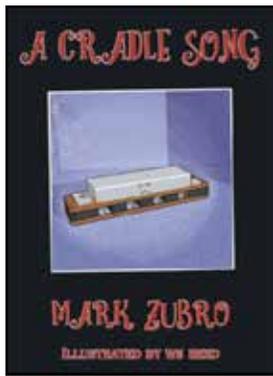


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# A Cradle Song: Part One

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

A Cradle Song, written by Mark Zubro and illustrated by W.S. Reed, debuts in the Windy City Times as the new holiday classic. Filled with travail and woe, warmth and great joy, it is a story for the ages. It will appear in ten installments from October 17 to

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

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

## Chapter One: Erik

The loneliest little harmonica sniffled. As best he could, he ignored all the distraction and noise from the store.

His name was Erik. Especially on a Christmas Eve like today, he tried to shut the world out. Then in his heart, he would listen to a cradle song for harmonica and orchestra, the most beautiful and soothing music he'd ever heard.

Deep inside of him, Erik had several secret wishes. The most important was that he wanted to be chosen by a good and caring child, and for that child he wanted to play a cradle song.

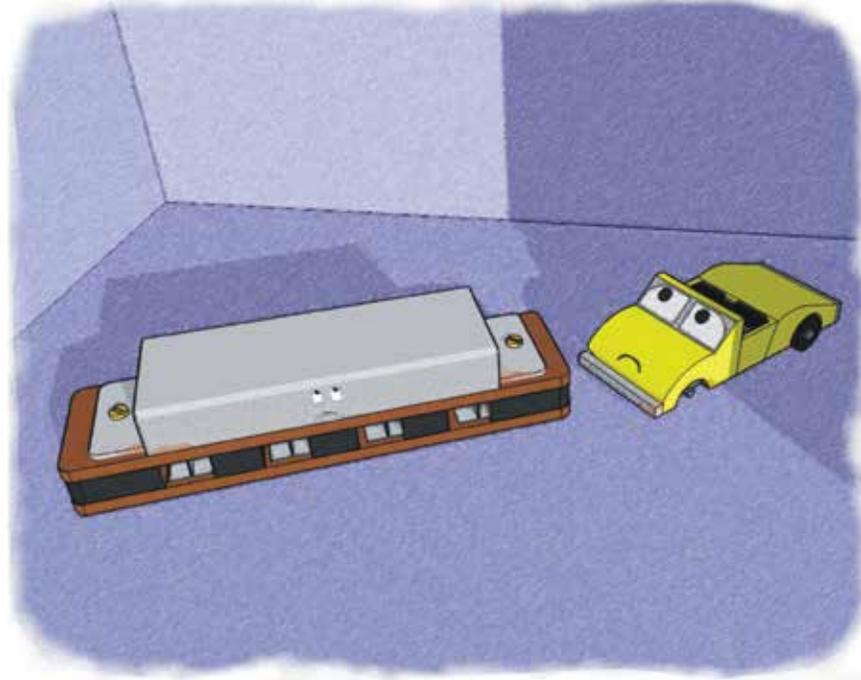
Long, long ago back to a time he could barely remember, Erik had heard cradle songs for harmonica and orchestra, a beautiful lullaby music. Only a few of those tunes existed. He wanted to make more. New ones. If not that, he wanted to make music with one little boy or girl, for one little boy or girl, music that would soar to the heavens in purity and grace. Music that would change the world, or at the least, heal a child's tired and broken heart.

He wanted to play a song like that, be part of a song like that. To play for a child with or without an orchestra, to play a lullaby as the child fell asleep on Christmas Eve, all this in Erik's forever home, nestled in the child's hands. That was his deepest dream.

But he'd been stuck back here for years, longer than Erik could remember. He'd never been chosen, not even close; picked up and put back only once.

Erik wore a coating of dust most of the year. Maybe in the big cleaning before Christmas, he was noticed in his quiet refuge and someone wiped away the year's dirt. Most times, they skipped him because they didn't see him.

Erik was far, far back on his shelf. The dim light rarely reached as far back as



## Erik & Reggie.

he was. He was a little rusty and dinged up. All the bright, shiny trumpets, French horns, tubas, flugelhorns, coronets, and so many more were out in front on the big shelves throughout the store; ready to blare and blast at the slightest sign of interest. The kids who wandered this far back rarely even saw, much less put a hand out toward him.

Erik wasn't as frightened as he had been in the beginning. He was used to feeling alone. He liked being so far back because he refused to ever show anyone that he was close to sniffing, or worse, crying.

Every Christmas Eve was the worst. Most days, the store thronged with children who all passed him by. He didn't blame them. They couldn't even see him all tucked away. Christmas Eve was the busiest day of the year, with the poor and dispossessed kids admitted to the Isle of Misfit Toys to pick and choose among them, and then take away a free toy. On

that day, the crowds were the biggest of the year. To be bypassed by so many, added an extra drop to his despair.

On Erik's own shelf, a cluster of knocked-around but shiny trumpets lounged way out front, followed by the battered but preening flutes and then, way far in the corner, him.

Erik was an oddity, a little baby harmonica. He hadn't grown. He always thought this was because he'd been snatched from the factory too soon. The truth was, he'd been made that way, but he didn't know that, and really, it didn't make any difference to him. He was happy being the smallest possible harmonica. He just wished with all his heart to make music.

Today, Erik tried to be brave for the tiny little race car who had been thrust onto his shelf a month or so ago. The little car had been shoved way back, by a boy who was being mean to his younger brother.

Reginald was the little car's name. It

was his first Christmas Eve not being in someone's home, without being cherished by a child. That woe-filled first day, he'd told Erik his story between stifled sobs and snorted sniffles.

Reginald was barely bigger than a Monopoly token and must originally have been bright yellow. He'd been loved and held and played with until he was worn to a dull sheen. Now, Reginald was all dinged, rusted, and seedy-mustard yellow. He had lost his left front tire. In his home, he hadn't cared because he'd known he was loved.

Erik thought one of the worst parts of Reginald's story was that, years before, the poor little car had lost his mom and dad to a crazed parent who was determined to throw away all her son's so-called childish junk. Then disaster had struck on that recent fateful day just after Thanksgiving. That had been Reginald's very worst moment.

The little car had talked between his tears about his home and the boy, Daniel, who loved him. How he always stayed in a special place in the boy's bottom drawer. He had always been safe in that one tiny snuglement.

Daniel cared for Reginald, treasured him, and was very kind, and always protected him. On that horrible day, Daniel's older brother, Harold, had waited in ambush to snatch the car out of Daniel's hand. The little boy couldn't get Reginald back.

Daniel got very angry and cried. His big brother dashed away and laughed at him. Daniel ran after his brother. He even chased him down the street, but the older boy danced and skipped away always an inch out of his brother's reach. All that time, Harold waved the weeping little car above his head.

The little boy told his parents. His

**Turn to page 17**

## CRADLE SONG from page 16

daddy was harsh, said he needed to get tough and not be a baby. His mother kept silent because she was afraid of her husband and also fed up with hearing the boys argue. Then later that day, in this store on the Isle of Misfit Toys, when no one was looking, Harold had thrust Reginald as far back on this shelf as he could. Daniel didn't see him do it. No one did.

Their parents had been tired and shushed the squabbling boys, then rushed them out of the store so their fighting and wailing wouldn't embarrass the adults.

Erik felt sorry for the little car who had no one and nothing in common with anyone on his shelf. After he'd been crying, Reginald tended to hiccup in the night. Erik comforted the little car as best he could.

As for himself, Erik had been passed around for years in many homes. In each one, he'd tried to be cheerful and make friends, but so many of the other musical instruments were indifferent or cared only about themselves. Plus, he was so tiny, it was easy to ignore or overlook him.

In one home, he'd met some snotty violins. One time when he'd thought they were feeling mellow, he'd explained to one of them about music for harmonica and orchestra, cradle songs, the kind he loved. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to him, he'd picked the most wrong one to confide in.

Agnes, the meanest violin, had snipped

at him, "Well, even if that kind of music does exist, and I doubt it, you're not a real harmonica, are you? You're a little baby harmonica, hardly worth the few notes you can play."

Agnes had liked to make the other toys feel bad. She tried to lord it over everyone, but Erik knew her secret. First, he'd noticed how she took to heart slights from the two closest other instruments, an oboe and a bassoon. He also saw that the bigger instruments and even other kinds of toys picked on Agnes. It was only when all of her tormentors weren't around that Agnes attacked and berated the ones smaller than herself.

The little harmonica felt sorry for Agnes, but his every kind word to her always fell flat. She was always meaner faster than any other toy he'd ever met.

Erik knew he didn't make as many notes as other instruments. Once, he'd met a huge grand piano. He'd lived in its bench for the longest time. The little boy of the house was made to take lessons on an instrument that seemed to be a bazillion times bigger and have a million more notes than the harmonica.

After his interminable session every day, the little boy would sneak Erik out of the great bench. The boy would hide in a vast closet in one of the elegant rooms, and he'd play and play. Erik did his best to help the little boy feel better.

His second favorite times at that house were when the mom or dad would read out loud with the boy. Erik would be all nestled in the boy's shirt pocket, or if it

was at night, in the pocket on his pajama tops, and Erik would feel the words wash over both of them as if they were part of a long flowing stream of stories stretching on endlessly into magic.

Then one day, the boy had taken him outside to a park. He had swung and twirled on a round-a-bout tilt-a-whirl. The boy had gotten dizzy and sick and forgot the little harmonica on the edge of the sandbox.

While climbing over the edge of the sandbox, a three-year-old girl with angelic blond locks had accidentally knocked Erik off the edge and down into the sand. The next day, the little boy had come to search for him. Everyone looked and hunted, and the little boy had cried. But Erik had landed under a small drift of sand that only got bigger as hands reached and searched for him.

Erik stayed buried in the sandbox for the longest time. It had rained and gotten very cold. Many nights, the harmonica shivered and shook.

Then one sunny spring day, another little girl had found him. She'd cleaned him up almost as good as new. Try as she might, she couldn't get every bit of the rust off, but she got most of it. Her fingers weren't skilled enough to fix the dents.

Erik lived for a while on a shelf with her dolls. They were friendly in a stand-offish way. They didn't like to talk to him because he wasn't one of them.

Later, Erik had been thrown into a box of junk, which made its way through ga-

rage sales and rummage sales and finally giveaways in church basements.

Erik survived the drops, dings, and dents as best he could. He was seldom played with during all his jostlings and journeys. These days, the noise he made wasn't as true as it had once been.

In this store on the Isle of Misfit Toys, when he was brought in, they'd cleaned him up as new as he'd felt in years.

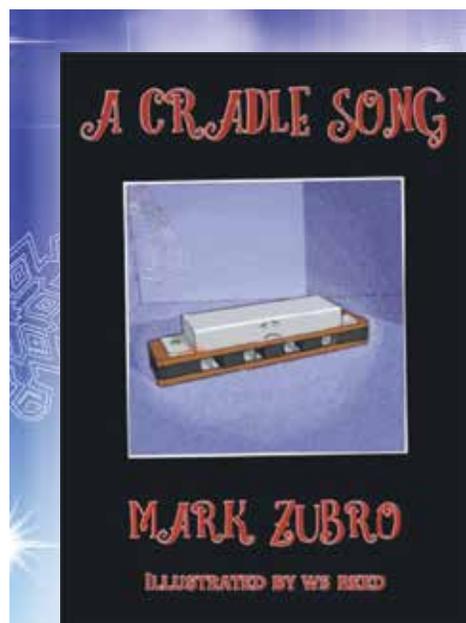
Even here with its kindly proprietor, the clarinets, flutes, and oboes farther along the shelves could be mean and snotty, most often in a snide way, whispering in their high or low-pitched whines.

The little harmonica knew he'd been here for years. No one had picked him. He'd barely ever been touched. He longed for one set of hands and one set of lips to bring him to life.

On his first Christmas Eve in this store, he was at one of his lowest points. At that moment, Erik had made the mistake of telling one of the other musical instruments his dream of playing a gentle cradle song for a child. He'd forgotten the lesson he'd learned from Agnes. He'd hoped her attitude wasn't shared by anyone else. Surely, no one could be as cruel as that violin? Alas, he was wrong.

Mildred was a brass trumpet who'd lost one of her shiny knobs and had a couple of big dents. At that time, Erik was closer to the front of the shelf, before he got shoved so far back out of the light and had begun to lose hope.

**Part two coming next week.**



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

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

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

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

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

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

# Entertainers come out for Michigan Avenue event

BY JERRY NUNN

National Coming Out Day, observed Oct. 11, had the crowds coming out to AT&T's downtown flagship store, 600 N. Michigan Ave., for an event celebrating people being their authentic selves. LOVELOUD and The Trevor Project joined with AT&T to bring in some diverse talent on that special evening.

Several of the performers stopped to talk with Windy City Times about their coming-out experiences.

RuPaul Drag Race's Shangela, who is currently in the middle of a 180-city tour, summoned her inner Beyonce for one number and also performed a parody of Bruno Mars' "Uptown Funk."

D.J. Pierce, also known as Shangela Laquifa Wadley, originally came out to his best friend in Paris, Texas, right before going to college. He said, "I think we should celebrate self acceptance and love. As people of the queer community, there are times we don't feel accepted, or feel alone. It is great on a national level that we can celebrate today. It's important to find out who you are and embrace that."

On his appearance in the movie *A Star Is Born*: "The audition was for a Marilyn Monroe impersonator. I knew, no matter how long I stayed out of the sun, that wasn't going to happen! They contacted me and said Lady Gaga wanted me for the part. I grabbed a white dress, put on a mole, and hopped on a plane!"

"Bradley Cooper gave us a lot of freedom, so we seasoned it with drag, making it more authentic. I am thankful, halleloo!"

Although not a household name yet, openly gay singer Wrabel has an impressive resume with writing songs for Ellie Goulding, Adam Lambert and Lea Michele. When asked about the coming out process, he described it as difficult: "I tried to come out to myself for years, and came out once I fell in love. I met a boy in a diner, and that was it."

His memorable song "The Village" was written for two transgender people he discovered outside his stage door on his first tour. He performed it for the audience that night along with several other songs, hitting some impressive high notes. His full-length album is planned to be released soon.



Left: Shangela. Right: Jussie Smollett.  
Photos by Jerry Nunn

Fox's *Empire* co-star Jussie Smollett closed the evening with several songs. He had worked with The Trevor Project to attend the recent LOVELOUD concert in Utah, which he described as "mind-blowing."

When asked about what coming out means to him he said, "It is about being who you are, and living your own truthful journey. Everyone's journey is different, and shouldn't be compared to

others. The most important person to be right with is yourself; the rest of the world is just icing on the cake!"

Smollett went on to say that people are made to feel invisible in the world right now, so these events are especially important. He couldn't give away too much information about the current season of *Empire*, but did say that it would be significant for his character Jamal Lyon.

## CIFF: LGBT movies, star-studded premieres

BY JERRY NUNN

The Chicago International Film Festival (CIFF), the longest-running international competitive film festival in North America, turned 54 this year. With screenings at AMC River East 21 in Chicago, the festival runs now through Oct. 21.

There are several noticeable movies with LGBTQ+ themes competing for the festival's Q Hugo Award.

*Boy Erased* will be screened Oct. 18, with director Joel Edgerton in attendance. It's the story of a young man named Jared who goes under gay conversion therapy and Lucas Hedges, Nicole Kidman and Russell Crowe, all of whom give strong performances. *Boy Erased's* general release in Chicago is planned for Nov. 9, so this is an opportunity to view it beforehand.

Kenya's *Rafiki* will screen Oct. 18, and has an interesting backstory. The tale of two lesbians navigating life where their love is outlawed should move audiences to tears, and was banned by the Kenya Film Classification Board. The film's director sued the government and it was allowed to be screened for Oscar consideration, but ultimately was not selected. After seven days it was banned again, so this is a rare chance to see the film on the big screen.

Look for Brazil's *Hard Paint* (Tinta Bruta) on Oct. 19-20, Peru's *Retablo* on Oct. 19 and 21 and France's *Sorry Angel* (Plaire, almer et courir vite) Oct. 20 and 21, all with queer themes.

On Oct. 13, Steve McQueen's heist film *Widows* was screened with a star-studded red carpet beforehand. Filmed in Chicago, *Widows* is the story of four women bonding together to settle a debt for their dead husbands.



Michelle Rodriguez, Steve McQueen and Iain Canning on the red carpet.  
Photo by Jerry Nunn

Viola Davis, who stars as Veronica Rawlins in *Widows*, described Chicago as its own character in the movie: "The film is yours and our gift to you." She added, "It's great we have more female-driven narratives. Working with Steve was a great combination of the feminine and the masculine. He's comfortable with both."

On playing pansexual Annalise Keating on *How to Get Away With Murder*, she said, "I feel everybody has a right to be who they are. It was my idea to make her open to love in whomever she wants to love. I am proud to play a character that is open and free. To me, that feels revelatory—even more than just being a Black woman on a TV show."

Michelle Rodriguez spoke of taking on the character Linda and

how that persona is universal. When asked about the reaction of her coming out of the closet as bisexual, she said, "I have had tons of fans tear up, because I gave them some courage to come out to their parents. I kiss and hug them, then explain I was just being me!"

Cynthia Erivo portrays a single mother named Belle in *Widows* and said, "Belle pulls no punches."

Erivo is known for playing Celie in *The Color Purple*, for which she won the 2016 Tony for Best Actress in a Musical. She said Celie gave her a chance to celebrate the LGBT community, and felt that was the point of the show. "I was very specific in that show that I

**Turn to page 19**

# DRAG IT UP!

Our list of all the regular drag shows in and around Chicago. To include your show in our listings, please submit info to [kirk@windycitymediagroup.com](mailto:kirk@windycitymediagroup.com).

## MONDAYS

**Chicago's Best Worst Drag Show**, hosted by Arby Barbie, weekly, 2 a.m., no cover. The Jackhammer Complex, 6406 N. Clark St.

**Vamp**, featuring Mimi Marks, hosted by Mercedes Tyler, weekly, 11 p.m., no cover. Progress Bar, 3359 N. Halsted St.

**Lipstick & Mascara**, hosted by Mz. Ruff 'n Stuff, weekly, 11:30 p.m., no cover. Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.

**Plot Twist**, hosted by T-Rex, every 3rd Monday, 10:30 p.m., Berlin, 954 W. Belmont Ave.

## TUESDAYS

**Killer Babes**, hosted by Lady Ivory, every 3rd Tues., 10 p.m. @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark St.

**Roscoe's Drag Race**, Chicago's longest-running amateur weekly drag competition hosted by Frida Lay, Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted St.

**Dixie Wins a Talent Show (while Alexis Bevels stage-manages)**, featuring Dixie Lynn Cartwright and Alexis Bevels, a showcase for local drag queens, performance artists and comedians, last Tues. of the month, 9:30 p.m., Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

## WEDNESDAYS

**Honeys on Halsted**, hosted by Mimi Marks and Mz. Ruff 'n Stuff, weekly, 11:30 p.m., no cover. Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.

**All Things Beyonce**, hosted by Dixie Lynn Cartwright, featuring Dida Ritz, Saya Naomi and guest queens, 2nd or 3rd Wed. of the month, 9 p.m., Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

**The Baton Show Lounge**, shows weekly at 8:30 p.m., 10:30 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. 436 N. Clark St.

## THURSDAYS

**Babes In Boyland**, featuring Monica Beverly Hillz, Lila Star, Teri Yaki and Otter Chaös, weekly, 1 a.m., no cover. The Jackhammer Complex, 6406 N. Clark St.

**Sirens of Splash**, featuring Lila Star, Mimi Marks, Aura Mayari and Silky, weekly, 9 p.m., no cover. Splash Chicago, 3339 N. Halsted St.

**POP ROCKS**, dance party with drag from Alexis Bevels and Saya Naomi, get on stage to Win with Dixie Lynn Cartwright, weekly, 9 p.m., Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

**Body Beautiful**, hosted by Danika Bone't and Alexandria Diamond, 4th Thu. of each month, shows at 11:30 p.m., 12:30 a.m. and 1:30 a.m., no cover. Charlie's, 3726 N. Broadway

**The Baton Show Lounge**, shows weekly at 8:30 p.m., 10:30 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. 436 N. Clark St.

## FRIDAYS

**Beauties and Beaus**, hosted by Naysha Lopez, Mimi Marks



PROFILE BY  
TONY PEREGRIN

DRAG PROFILE OF THE WEEK  
IMP QUEEN

### AGE

"27—but I'm eight months into medical transition, so I'm basically a 13 year-old-girl going through puberty."

### HOMETOWN

San Francisco

### NAME

"My sibling Deven named me Imp back when we were in college. I was a party girl and they would call me Imp whenever I was acting especially naughty. After college I was billing myself as Imp Kid, and when I started doing drag it became Imp Queen. Imp is the name—queen is just the job title."

### DRAG INSPIRATION

"Amanda Lepore, Candy Darling, Nina Arsenault, Sylvia Rivera, Sasha Colby, Juliana Huxtable and others ... I'm most inspired by the legends of trans-feminine experience who make my work and life possible."

### FAVORITE NUMBER

"I'm a live music act, not a lip-syncher. Right now, my favorite song to perform is "Amanda Lepore," which is the first track off my Magenta Agenda EP."

### WHEN DID YOU BEGIN DOING DRAG?

"I started doing messy, drag-adjacent performance art in 2013 as part of the band WITCH HAZEL, and that led to more nightlife gigs and more polished looks; by 2015 I was doing drag full-time."

### WHERE CAN WE CATCH YOU?

Berlin, Smartbar on Sundays for Queen!, Neverland circuit parties

### COMING UP NEXT?

"I'm working on new music right now...and other than that I'm focused on my transition. I'm in the early stages of what I think of as my next large-scale sculpture/performance project-- collaborating with surgeons, aestheticians, and personal trainers to feminize my face and body."

### SOCIAL MEDIA

@imp\_kid on Instagram and Twitter

Photo courtesy of Imp Queen

and Mz. Ruff 'n Stuff, weekly, 9:30 p.m., no cover. Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.

**Dining With the Divas**, featuring Angel LeBare and CeeCee LaRouge, shows weekly at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., Hamburger Mary's Oak Park, 155 S. Oak Park Ave., Oak Park, Ill.

**The Baton Show Lounge**, shows weekly at 8:30 p.m., 10:30 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. 436 N. Clark St.

## SATURDAYS

**Drag Matinee**, hosted by T-Rex, weekly, 10:30 p.m., Berlin, 954 W. Belmont Ave.

**#POPular**, featuring 2018 Fan Favorite Tiffany Diamond, hosted by Veronica Pop, weekly, shows at 10:30 p.m., Charlie's, 3726 N. Broadway

**Beauties and Beaus**, hosted by Naysha Lopez, Mimi Marks and Mz. Ruff 'n Stuff, weekly, 9:30 p.m., no cover. Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.

**Drag shows at Manuevers**: 1st Sat.: **Raven's Ravishing Revue**, hosted by Raven Samore; 2nd Sat.: **The Dymond Standard**, hosted by Diamond Calloway; 3rd Sat.: **Divas' Den**, hosted by Sasha Love; 4th Sat.: **Noche Latina**, hosted by Aleyna Couture. All shows at 11:30 p.m., no cover. Maneuvers, 118 E. Jefferson St., Joliet

**Stardust**, hosted by Natasha Douglas, 1st Sat. (starting Nov. 2018), 8:30-10:30 p.m. @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark St.

**Sofia's Dragtacular Review**, hosted by Sofia Saffire, every 2nd Sat., 10:30 p.m., Shakers on Clark, 3160 N. Clark St.

**Ashley Morgan Presents A Drag Revue**, featuring Coco Shonell, Dominique Diamond, Vivian Dejour and Juan M. Wette, hosted by Ashley Morgan, every 3rd Sat., 9:30 p.m. seating, \$5 suggested donation, The Call Bar, 1547 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.

**6 Queens 1 Diva**, hosted by Muffy Fishbasket, every 4rd Sat., 10 p.m., \$5 cover, The Call Bar, 1547 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.

**Dining With the Divas**, featuring Angel LeBare and CeeCee LaRouge, shows weekly at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., Hamburger Mary's Oak Park, 155 S. Oak Park Ave., Oak Park, Ill.

**The Baton Show Lounge**, shows weekly at 8:30 p.m., 10:30 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. 436 N. Clark St.

## SUNDAYS

**Reinas de la Casa**, featuring Windy Breeze, Veronica Pop, Zafina Hasheesh and Danika Bone't, hosted by Alexandria Diamond, 2nd Sun. of each month, shows at 11:30 p.m., 12:30 and 1:30 a.m. Charlie's, 3726 N. Broadway

**Angel LeBare's Fish Hatchery**, contest for aspiring drag queens, every 4th Sun., 8 p.m. @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark St.

**The Baton Show Lounge**, shows weekly at 7, 9 and 11 p.m. 436 N. Clark St.

## CIFF from page 18

wanted it to be about those two people being in love. It was not a platonic thing. They loved each other. It was beautiful, and there were girls in that audience that felt it was okay to be a lesbian after watching it," she expressed.

Co-screenwriter Gillian Flynn said there is a

twist in the story in *Widows* for gay audiences. "So many heist films were very exclusionary when I watched them in the past, and were always such a guy's club. Women are connecting with this film because it is told from a woman's perspective. It feels more relatable, and something they would do," she explained.

Openly gay *Widows* producer and Academy

Award winner Iain Canning said he was on a plane with his husband during the recent National Coming Out Day, adding that, after winning his Oscar for *The King's Speech* that people came up to him on the street and told him how important his acceptance speech was for the gay community. The Englishman promised "an undercurrent in one particular character" that will be of interest to

our queer readers.

*Widows* opens Nov. 16 in Chicago and a wider release.

The festival is presented by its parent organization, Cinema/Chicago, which Michael Kutza founded in 1964. A full schedule and ticket information for CIFF can be found at [ChicagoFilmFestival.com](http://ChicagoFilmFestival.com).



## BILLY Masters

"Shit, I'm attracted to everything."—**Jake Choi** expresses his sexual orientation. If only I could place him. If only I could place him, although the nudes on BillyMasters.com sure look familiar.

**Melania Trump** recently declared, "I'm the most bullied person in the world"—a statement that has some credence. To put it into context, the day she made this statement happened to be the 20th anniversary of the murder of Matthew Shepard—a young gay boy who was beaten and left to die in Laramie, Wyoming. In a twist that further connects these two stories, it was announced on this sad anniversary that his ashes will be interred at Washington's National Cathedral. Yes, that Washington—within sight of the place Melania occasionally hangs her pith helmet.

Actress **Yvette Nicole Brown** was filling in for Joy Behar on *The View* last week. On Oct. 12, reporter **Tom Llamas** was promoting his sit-down with Melania. One of the topics was the accusations of infidelity against Mr. Trump. Yvette said, "Is it possible that she's not concerned with his mistresses because she was one of them?" The response from the White House was swift. A spokesperson for the First Lady said, "Check your facts before you accuse someone of being a mistress. She's your @FLOTUS—she deserves your respect & certainly not your lies. Disgusting." **Sarah Huckabee Sanders** tweeted, "Sad @TheView continues their disgusting attacks on @FLOTUS. The left's 'war on women' they disagree with is a disgrace. @FLOTUS is strong, accomplished, and has a lot more class than the women who bully her." Yvette said, "I stand by every word I said. My mom taught me that respect is earned. And, thankfully, we live in a nation—at least for now—where I don't have to bow down to dear leader or his third wife." She added, "My views are my own. And I own every one."

Last week was the Point Honors Los Angeles 2018 Gala. As you know, the Point Foundation is America's largest scholarship-granting organization for LGBTQ students of merit. Oodles of gays were on hand, including **Greg Louganis**, **Adam Shankman** and **Thomas Dekker** (who gets sexier as he gets older). The evening featured a mini-concert by **Leona Lewis** that was spectacular. But the highlight was the award presentations. First honoree was **Steven Canals**, creator of *Pose*, who acknowledged all those whose shoulders we stand on. The next honoree was **Eric McCormack**, who was introduced by **Cheyenne Jackson**. When Eric took to the stage, the two kissed on the lips—not the first time (obviously). Video of the speech and the kiss can be found on BillyMasters.com.

Congratulations go out to actor **BD Wong**, who married Richert Schnorr in Brooklyn. Fun fact: The two met in 2010 at a singles mixer that was sponsored by an online dating app.

One of the people at BD's wedding was **Rosie O'Donnell**. The night before, she returned to stand-up comedy and made a bit of news. She an-



**Cheyenne Jackson (above) and Eric McCormack had a little action at the Point Honors Los Angeles 2018 Gala, Billy says.**

Photo by Karl Simone

nounced that **Lady Gaga** would headline a Broadway revival of *Funny Girl* and that she, Rosie O'Donnell, would play her mother. Nobody else has said a word about this project, but I suppose anything is possible. It should be noted that while not a prerequisite, Fanny Brice is somewhere in her late teens when the show begins. Barbra was all of 21 years old when she made the part her own. Gaga is 32, and this production will surely take a few years to happen. By then, she may be more likely to be cast as Mrs. Strakosh!

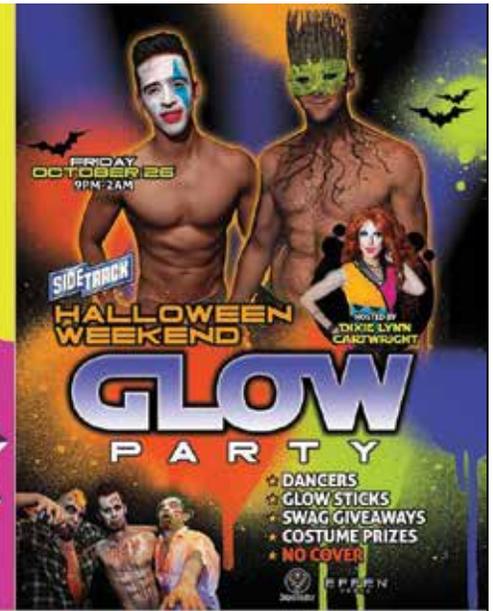
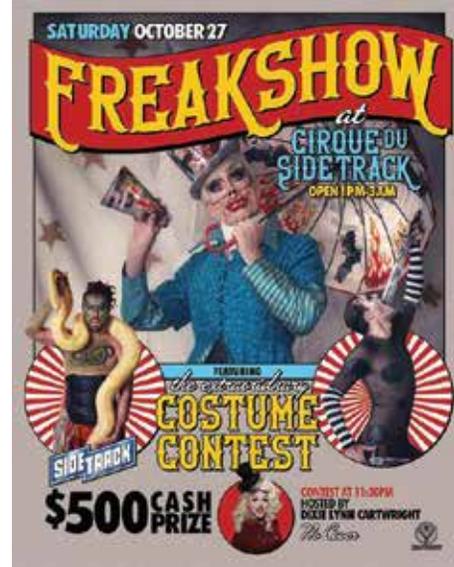
**Tilda Swinton's** got some tongues wagging due to her appearance in the remake of *Suspiria* (directed by **Luca Guadagnino**, who previously helmed *Call Me By Your Name*). In it, she plays Madame Blanc, the head of a dance studio in Berlin. She also plays Dr. Jozef Klemperer, an elderly Jewish psychiatrist. Being an actress' actress, Tilda decided that while inhabiting the person of Dr. Klemperer, she would wear what she calls "a weighty set of genitalia." She had the false phallus custom-made for her, "so that she could feel it dangling between her legs."

I do hate when friends of mine are embroiled in a scandal. But I will put on my impartial journalist cap and tell you about **Chris Marchant**, the hunky violinist in *Well-Strung* (who also strutted his stuff on *The Amazing Race*). The group is typically in summer residency at Provincetown's Art House. Marchant, who is no stranger to showing skin in snaps, posted a photo taken in a Provincetown cemetery that features his shirtless torso leaning against an obelisk with the caption, "Can't wait to get back to Ptown for Halloween and to help with the launch weekend of @ptownbrewingco."

Well, people were outraged—not about the post, but about the photo. One person said, "Someone wasn't buried there for you to take an abs pic"—although I suppose it depends on the person. Frankly, I wouldn't mind Marchant's sexy skin leaning against my erect obelisk—but that's another story. Initially, Chris was defensive—as



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one is wont to do. Then, after the story went viral, he deleted the post saying, "While it was never my intention to offend, I understand that it was disrespectful to take such a picture against a memorial to the life of someone I never knew. I deleted it, because the point of the post was to help a friend, and I would never want for my personal actions or words to harm the efforts of anyone else. I apologize for any offense I caused." That wasn't hard ... or was it? You can decide for yourself when you see the pic on BillyMasters.com.

When we're featuring a couple of stiffs in a cemetery, it's definitely time to end yet another column. It's apropos with all this cemetery nonsense that Halloween is just around the corner. And although I'll be headed to New Orleans (after working on my tan at the Filth2Go Beach House in Fort Lauderdale), I can quickly remind you to check out BillyMasters.com—the site that can even raise the dead! Should you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Melania goes anywhere near Donald's obelisk! Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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# the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in  
WINDY CITY TIMES

## SAVOR

### Twain; Halloween in Andersonville

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The new Logan Square restaurant **Twain** (2445 N. Milwaukee Ave.; <https://www.twainchicago.com/>)—which, yes, is named after the famed author and reflects where chef Tim Graham was raised—relies on a shrewd concept for its success: nostalgia.

Graham and sommelier wife Rebekah are the masterminds behind this spot that embodies the Midwest (but also a little of the South)—down to the flood-plain designs on the restroom mirrors and the farm animals on the huge felt mural on one side of the back of the restaurant. (By



**Surf and turf at Twain.**  
Galdones Photography

the way, the server commented that people are encouraged to touch said mural—and if a part gets soiled, the staffers just called the artist for a replacement piece.)

As for the nostalgia, Twain relies on family recipes passed down through generations—resulting in some sublime comfort food (although some sport twists on classics).

Appetizers include Ants on a Log, a delicious item that includes celery, duck liver peanut-butter mousse and bourbon cherries; Brock's fried green-pepper rings—an unusual offering that consists of battered rings topped with powdered sugar; Sloppy Marrow, which is roasted

bone marrow topped with sloppy Joe; and the Virginia spoon bread (which is worth the price of admission alone), which comes in a mini-cauldron and is supplemented by cider-glazed pork shoulder and pickled onions.

Soup and salad items include the standard wedge salad (with bacon steak), but there are also shaved carrot salad and a delightful beer-cheese soup that comes with a mini-Miller High Life back. (Also, the various breads—such as pretzel biscuits, with malt butter—are made in house.)

Somehow, the entrees were even better than the apps. My dining companion raved about the steak and eggs, which came with eggs done over easy—and topped with tiny deviled eggs. My chicken and dumplings (sufficiently creamy) came inside a small pot like the one your grandmother used—again evoking nostalgia. And if you have room for dessert, definitely indulge: Who wouldn't want to try gooey butter cake with jam; Mississippi mud pie; or hand-cranked ice cream (that comes with the sheet cake of the day)?

Rebekah also knows what she's doing, thanks to concoctions like The Sconnie (with Korbel and Sprite)—although she did tell Windy City Times that she was threatened with harm if she actually changed the recipe. I think (?) she was kidding.

In addition, items are reasonably priced (with

no entree costing more than \$23)—making this one of the best deals in the city. I truly hope Twain is around for quite some time.

### Halloween coming to Andersonville

Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood will celebrate Halloween the weekend of Saturday-Sunday, Oct. 27-28, throughout the business district.

More than 100 businesses participate each year in the Clark Street Trick-or-Treat on Oct. 27 at 12-3 p.m. and another 20 businesses will participate in the Andersonville Sweetish Stroll (formerly the Dessert Crawl) on Oct. 28 at 2-5 p.m.

Last year, the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce (ACC) planned to retire the former Dessert Crawl; however, due to popular demand, this "adult trick-or-treat" experience will relaunch the event as the Sweetish Stroll on Oct. 28. The event features two options—the August Gloop route and the Veruca Salt path, with 10 sweets-related stops on each. Tickets are available online now for \$20 per route; visit <http://www.andersonville.org/events/dessert-crawl/>.

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

# Lips unsealed: New drag venue coming to Chicago

BY TONY PEREGRIN

The new dinner, drinks and drag concept that will be on everybody's lips next spring is Lips—a dinner-theatre "show-palace" located in the historic Motor Row district in Chicago's Near South Side. The first Lips launched 22 years ago in New York, and today there are locations in Atlanta, Fort Lauderdale and San Diego.

"Many moons ago when I was working in my glitter basement with a young friend who was a graphic designer we came up with the name Lips," said Lips co-owner and Chief Executive Queen Mark Zschiesche, also known as Yvonne Lamé. "I wanted a name that had something to do with the face because a fabulous face is what makes a drag queen. And "lips" also means love and happiness—and that's a big part of the concept behind Lips."

The Chicago location—which is set to lock lips with the Windy City in March/April 2019—will cater to celebrations of all kinds, including birthdays, bachelorette parties, marriages, divorces, retirement, graduation and more, according to co-owner Ed LaFaye.

"Lips is drag queen dinner theater," explained LaFaye. "It's a totally interactive experience.

## DRAG/NIGHTLIFE

Instead of just coming in and sitting down and having dinner and drinks and then seeing a show for an hour, you're interacting with the waiters who are all in full drag on the floor." The interactive experience typically includes on-stage celebrations where guests are brought up to the stage, placed on a throne and presented with a crown or tiara.

Some members of the Chicago LGBTQ community have expressed reservations about partying alongside bachelorette parties in Boystown, which can feel invasive and disrupt the overall vibe of a night out at a gay enclave—and LaFaye readily acknowledges that perception. "If you go to Lips on a Saturday night, I would say the crowd is 90 percent straight. Twenty years ago, I think mainstream audiences didn't know what to expect when they went to a drag show. Now, people know what drag is. There are some people who don't want to be in that atmosphere and we encourage them to visit during the middle of the week. There's a little something for everybody at Lips, which is all about love and diversity, and all types of people coming together and enjoying a night out.

RuPaul's Drag Race has played a pivotal role in the mainstreaming of drag and has been a factor in Lips enduring appeal to audiences of all backgrounds, according to LaFaye. "To be honest, I think RuPaul's Drag Race has upped the game for everybody, because now people are expecting to see Drag Race-type queens when they go out. I think it's helped [the industry] dramatically."

LaFaye and Zschiesche are looking for Chicago-based talent to entertain their guests, with at least 10 shows per week.

"Lips will definitely use local queens because that's what makes Lips become a part of the Chi-

cago community," said Zschiesche. "One of my main jobs for the Lips company is finding the best talent out there, and I think I have a pretty good eye. In fact, at least six Lips queens have appeared on RuPaul's Drag Race, including Peppermint from our New York location and Violet Chachki from Atlanta."

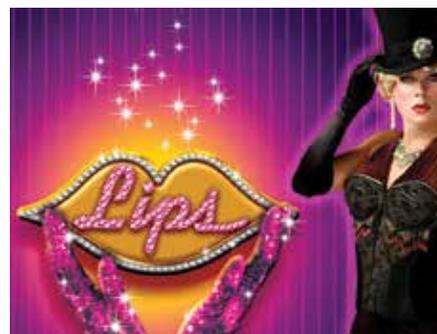


Image courtesy of Lips

"When we opened Lips Atlanta five years ago we had more than 100 auditions," added Zschiesche. I think Chicago's auditions will be even more because I have already been contacted by at least 40 Queens and we have not even run one ad about the auditions." Zschiesche said he is not only looking to cast "current stars in Chicago," but the queens who will be "the fabulous stars of tomorrow."

The show's hosts are always the most challenging to cast and hire, revealed Zschiesche, because they require comedic skills that can "carry the room."

Not only do all four existing Lips locations share a commitment to hiring top-quality entertainers, they all boast a similar look and vibe. "We have jewel tones; we have pink, purple and blue and colors that most people might not think

go together," said LaFaye. "The whole idea behind the Lips decor was that it should look like a drag queen's jewelry box had exploded all over the room."

Unique to the Chicago location are the bones of the building, which in a previous life, housed a Ford dealership with 25-foot tin ceilings. "Because the dealership kept automobiles on all of the upper floors of this building, it was reinforced with humongous steel beams across the ceiling. These beams allow us to have a big show room theater setting with no columns or anything else that will interfere with guests viewing the stage and the show," said LaFaye.

Existing Chicago venues, including Kit Kat Club and The Baton, feature a similar style of entertainment. Is the Chicago market large enough to support another show-bar?

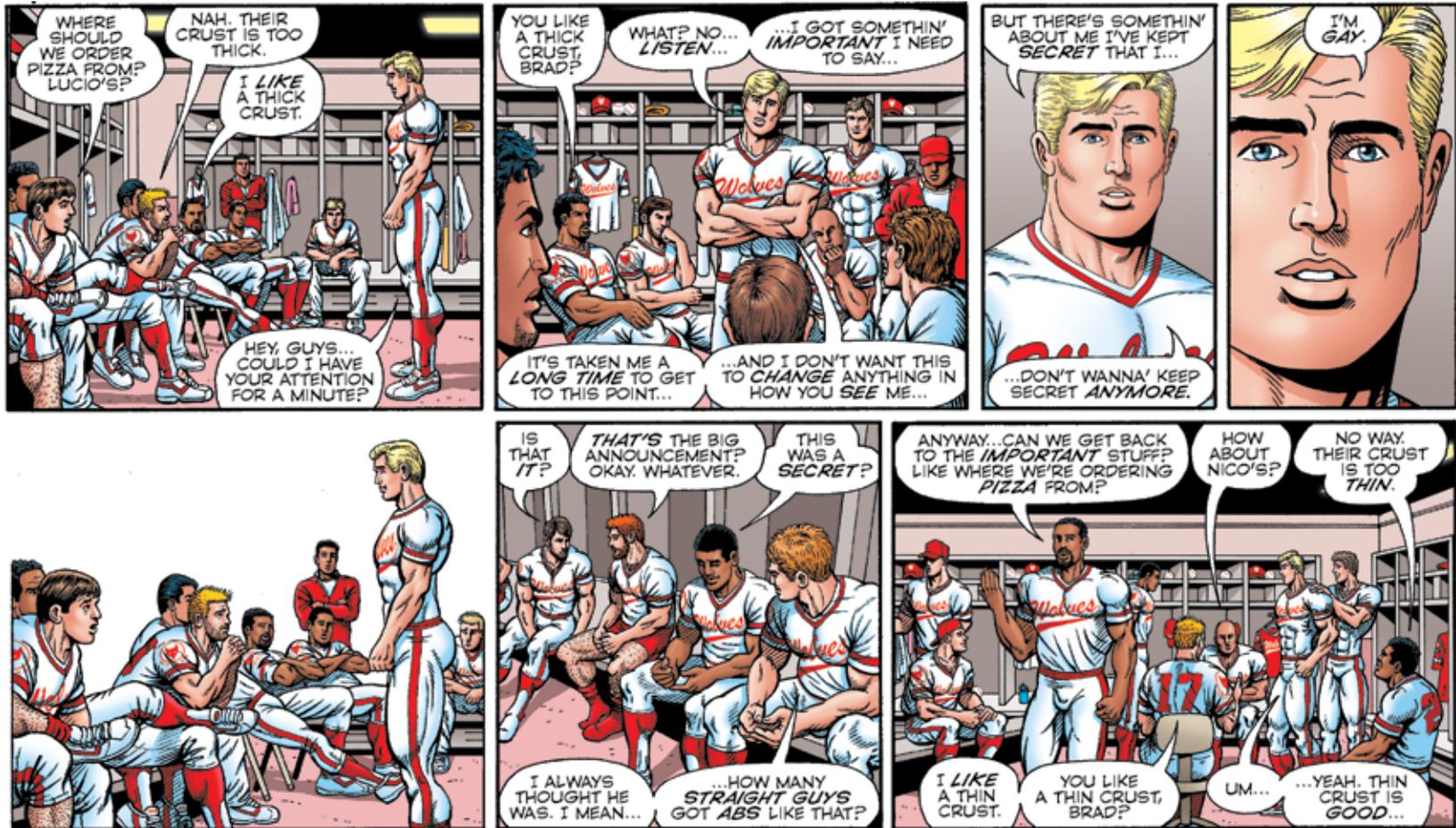
"I think there is room for everyone," said LaFaye. "There are several clubs in New York and everybody's got more than enough business. 22 years later and there's several other big outlets there, but we're still doing record business pretty much in all of our locations."

As for getting LGBTQ audiences to venture out of Boystown or Andersonville and to the Near South Side, LaFaye doesn't think it will be a problem as none of the other Lips outposts are located in traditional gayborhoods.

"There are a lot of places that are starting to open in the Near South Side," added LaFaye. "By the time we open in March or April, there will be several other restaurants, bars and hotels in the area or opening shortly thereafter. Some people have said there is a great possibility that this area will become the next River North. The thing about Lips is that it's really a destination. You're not really getting people walking down the street saying, "Oh, this looks good. Let's go in." When you have a destination—a big party like this—people will travel to you."

# KYLE'S BED & BREAKFAST

by Greg Fox



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# WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## Wed., Oct. 17

**Swan Lake** Danced to Tchaikovsky's classic score and performed live by the Chicago Philharmonic in four acts. Through Oct. 28 3:00pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University 50 E Congress Pkwy Chicago <http://joffrey.org>

**Christina Aguilera, The Liberation Tour** With new song "Accelerate," featuring Ty Dolla \$ign and 2 Chainz, released in May, the first song from forthcoming album, Liberation 8:00pm The Chicago Theater, 175 N. State St. <http://LiveNationEntertainment.com> Tickets: <http://www.christinaaguilera.com>

## Thursday, Oct. 18

**Eve Ewing, author Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side** Poet/author releases her nonfiction book with a launch party. The book covers the 2013 closing of 53 Bronzeville schools and its aftermath. 5:00pm - 7:00pm Chicago Teachers Union, 1901 West Carroll Ave., Chicago <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/ghosts-in-the-schoolyard-by-eve-l-ewing-official-launch-party-tickets-47783435542>

**Art for Life Chicago Benefit Auction** Save the date. Juried live and silent auction of 80 pieces of contemporary art, including painting, photography, sculpture and other 3D media by biggest names in contemporary art. Benefits those living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Tickets \$100.00 6:00pm - 10:00pm Venue West, 221 N. Paulina St. 312-644-6412 <http://www.diffachicago.org>

**The LGBTQ Movement: Then and Now** Out@COMCAST and Out@NBCUNIVERSAL, with Out & Equal Chicagoland, present panel LGBTQ movement history in Chicago moderated by NBC5's Chris Hush and including Tracy Baim, publisher Chicago Reader newspaper and founder Windy City Times, Bernadette Smith CEO of Equality Institute and co-chair of Out



## ALL ABOUT EVE

### Thursday, Oct. 18

Eve Ewing will host a book-release party at the Chicago Teachers Union.

Photo by Nolis Anderson

& Equal Chicagoland, and Daniel Hernandez attorney at Walczak Hernandez, P.C. Light refreshments. Register online. 6:45pm - 8:00pm 455 Cityfront Plaza Dr., NBC Studio Chicago <http://www.eventbrite.com>

**Jill Soloway** Discussing forthcoming memoir She Wants It: Desire, Power, and Toppling the Patriarchy. Guests Hannah Gadsby, Pidgeon Pagonus, Precious Brady Davis, Faith Soloway, Elaine Soloway 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://jillsolowaychicago.brownpapertickets.com/>

**The WOMB Open Mic Nite** Open mic poetry event. Affinity Community Services is a social justice organization serving the needs of the Black LGBTQ community of Chicago with a particular focus on Black women. 7:00pm Affinity Community Services 2850 S. Wabash Ave. #108 Chicago <http://affinity95.org>

**Marin Alsop** Out conductor with concerts part of public programs, A Time for Reflection-A Message of Peace, organized to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the World War I Armistice on Nov. 11,

1918. Oct. 18, 19 and 20 8:00pm Chicago Symphony Center (Orchestra Hall) 220 S Michigan Ave Chicago <http://cso.org>

## Friday, Oct. 19

**Orlando Traveling Memorial Art** installation created by Pulse Nightclub shooting survivors, first responders and family members, The Orlando Traveling Memorial (OTM), will make its first stop here. Through Nov. 23 12:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Orlando-Traveling-Memorial-to-debut-at-Center-on-Halsted/64350.html>

**Isaac Mizrahi: Moderate to Severe** Actor/fashion designer/singer Isaac Mizrahi will perform classics from Charles Aznavour, Blondie and Cole Porter, joined by his band of jazz musicians, led by Ben Waltzer. 7:30pm City Winery Chicago 1200 W Randolph St Chicago <http://citywinery.com/chicago>

**Gypsy, A Musical Fable** Stars E. Faye Butler as Rose, Broadway's legendary "stage mother" who raises her daughters to assume the heights in the world of show business. Through Nov. 25. \$20 - \$66 8:00pm The Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St. 773.777.9884 <http://PorchlightMusicTheatre.org>

**Pride Action Tank's 3rd Anniversary Fundraiser** Dream It. Speak It. Do It. Pride Action Tank launched three years ago as a project of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago sing a collaborative model for improving outcomes and opportunities for LGBTQ+ communities and other marginalized groups. Thair, the lead singer of Chicago alternative band Astro Samurai performing. RSVP at link. 8:00pm - 9:30pm Clark-Hill PLC, 130 East Randolph, Suite 3900 [http://events.aidschicago.org/site/Survey?ACTION\\_REQUIRED=URI\\_ACTION\\_USER\\_REQUESTS&SURVEY\\_ID=7234](http://events.aidschicago.org/site/Survey?ACTION_REQUIRED=URI_ACTION_USER_REQUESTS&SURVEY_ID=7234)

## Saturday, Oct. 20

**2nd annual TransTech Summit** Second annual TransTech Summit will include workshops in web/app technology, media technology, design technology, and business technology. Lunch provided. Keynote speaker Angelica Ross, founder of TransTech and actress on the FX hit TV

Series Pose. Early registration \$25-\$50. Lunch provided. [info@transtechsocial.org](mailto:info@transtechsocial.org). 8:30am - 8:30pm 600 W Chicago Ave Tickets: <http://www.universe.com/events/transtech-summit-2018-chicago-tickets-R7DVPK>

**Memorial gathering for Arthur Gursch** Gursch, who died June 22, was a member of Gay Liberation Network, formerly Chicago Anti-Bashing Network, participated in the senior program at the Center on Halsted, and other groups including the Stonewall riots, both in Chicago and New York. 1:00pm - 5:00pm Grace Place, 637 S. Dearborn St. <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/PASSAGES-Activist-Arthur-Gursch-dies-at-72/63423.html>

**HalloWig party** Show up in a new do and get Wiggy with the guys from Stonewall Sports - Chicago. Prizes awarded for Best Styling, Best Group Wig, Highest Hair. Bring multiple hair to wear and play games with Dixie Lynn Cartwright. 3:00pm - 8:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/events/1698655620260885/>

**Big Orange Ball** Howard Brown Health's fourth annual kick-off to the Halloween season with dancing, beats by local DJs, full bar, light bites, tons of spooky surprises. Early bird price \$125. 8:00pm - 12:00pm Park West Chicago 322 W Armitage Ave Chicago, <https://howardbrown.org/event/big-orange-ball-2018/>

**Uncovered: Aretha Franklin Respect to the Queen** Music and dance tribute to Aretha Franklin. Franklin recorded an array of music styles including blues, folk, jazz, soul, pop, and spirituals. Dance party directly following the concert. 8:00pm Old Town School of Folk Music 4544 N Lincoln Ave Chicago <http://www.oldtownschool.org/concerts/2018/10-20-2018-uncovered-aretha-franklin/>

## Sunday, Oct. 21

**Chelsea Clinton book signing** Book signing in celebration of her new kids' book, START NOW! You Can Make a Difference. One signing line ticket with book purchase admits up to four family members. 1:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago Tickets: <http://chelseaclintonchicago.brownpapertickets.com/>

**Petition to Be a Queer Disney Princess** Queer solo show with stand up and comedy music with Lisa Ridarelli accompanied by Robbie Ellis 7:00pm Davenport's Piano Bar and Cabaret 1383 N Milwaukee Ave Chicago <http://davenportspianobar.com/events/lisa-ridarelli/>

## Monday, Oct. 22

**Lynn Sage Cancer Research Foundation Annual Fall Benefit Luncheon** Guest speaker Jill Kargman, creator, writer, producer and star of the scripted comedy "Odd Mom Out" 11:00am - 2:00pm Chicago Hilton and Towers 720 S Michigan Ave Chicago 312-926-7133. <http://www.lynnsage.org>

**Jeff Awards ceremony** Honoring outstanding theatre artists since 1968. Time:TBA Drury Lane Oakbrook 100 Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181 <http://www.jeffawards.org>

## Tuesday, Oct. 23

**Gender and Sexuality Studies Workshop** The Willful Sexual Invert in Alfonso Hernandez-Cata's El angel de Sodoma. Ebenezer Concepcion, CSGS Dissertation Fellow/PhD Candidate in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Studies Discussant: Prof. Alison James, Romance Languages and Literatures 5:00pm - 6:30pm First floor seminar room of 5733 S. University Ave <http://voices.uchicago.edu/genderandsexuality/>

## Wed., Oct. 24

**Chicago 00: The 1968 DNC Protests exhibit** Exploring a watershed moment in U.S. politics-the 50th anniversary of the convention protests-with the new virtual-reality experience. From photographs and documents from the Chicago History Museum's archives to the site of the demonstrations. David Farber, Ph.D., narrates the 14-minute VR tour that can be viewed through YouTube; the Chrome browser; or with Google Cardboard VR glasses. Ongoing. 12:00pm Chicago History Museum 1601 N Clark Chicago <http://chicago00.org/experiences.html#dnc>.



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