

WINDY
CITY
TIMES

ARTS + THEATER

Oct. 24, 2018

WEEKLY



NOAH CYRUS GIVES FANS A 'GOOD CRY'

PAGE 15

Noah Cyrus.
Photo from David
Enriquez/Records
Marketing

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WINDY CITY TIMES

VOL. 34, No. 05, Oct. 24, 2018
The combined forces of Windy City Times, founded Sept. 1985, and Outlines newspaper, founded May 1987.

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DANCE REVIEW

Swan Lake

Composer: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
 At: Joffrey Ballet at The Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress Pkwy.;
 312-386-8905; Joffrey.org; \$35-\$195.
 Runs through: Oct. 28

BY AARON HUNT

A story of magic, mystery and an impossible love bourrées onto the stage of Roosevelt University's Auditorium Theatre with the Joffrey's production of Swan Lake. This production, which the company premiered here in 2014, was critically acclaimed, and kept the box office's cash registers

ringing.

Composer Pyotr (Peter) Ilyich Tchaikovsky—who also gave us the The Nutcracker ballet—composed Swan Lake in 1975-76. The story tells of Princess Odette, who was turned into a swan by an evil sorcerer, along with her ladies. Prince Siegfried meets a swan, who suddenly turns into a beautiful young maiden. When he learns why she and her flock spend daytimes as feathered creatures gliding on a lake, and their nights as outcast women, Siegfried prepares to shoot the sorcerer. Odette stops him, because the spell must be broken before his death. They promptly fall in love.

Later, at a ball, the sorcerer turns up with Odile, disguised by his magic to look just like Odette. Believing his eyes, Siegfried vows to marry this

“black swan.” When the subterfuge is revealed, Siegfried rushes to Odette and apologizes; however, now that Odette has been betrayed, she will remain a swan forever. (It's a fairy tale, folks.) They jump in the lake together and take a deep breath.

Over the years, directors have tweaked and twisted this plot to their own purposes. The plot is so fantastical that these changes don't destroy the essential love story. Director/Choreographer Christopher Wheeldon's production uses the conceit of a ballet within a ballet. The piece opens at the Paris Opera, where the ballet company is preparing for the opening night of Swan Lake.

The leading male dancer is in love with one of the ballerinas, who is pursued by a wealthy patron with unhealthy designs on her. Here we

have our prince, swan, and sorcerer. The rehearsal begins, and the line between fantasy and reality smear. There are times when it isn't clear whether a moment is concrete or imaginary—it would be helpful to know exactly what's actually happening. Costume designer Jean-Marc Puissant doesn't use feathers on any of the swan's tutus, which further muddies these waters.

Tchaikovsky's music and the dances of the original choreographer Marius Petipa (considered so untouchable that the most familiar segments are always left intact) carry the day. Music director/conductor Scott Speck keeps the orchestra in perfect harmony with the movement, and our amazing dancers bring the magic.

THEATER REVIEW

Frankenstein

Playwright: Nick Dear
 At: Remy Bumppo Theater Company at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave.
 Tickets: RemyBumppo.org;
 773-975-8150; \$37.75-\$62.75
 Runs through: Nov. 17

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Imagine a newborn baby—not a round, cuddly, greeting-card cherub, but a thin, pale, hairless anthropoid with the complexion of a peeled twig and a skull like a cracked eggshell. Now imagine this helpless infant's first experiences being rejection, privation, brutality and betrayal by those whose kindness cannot protect him.

Does it come as any surprise when this “monster” strikes out in mimicry of the cruelty shown him by his mentors?

That's the story of Frankenstein, according to British playwright Nick Dear, who considers Mary



Nick Sandys in Frankenstein.
 Photo by Joe Mazza-Brave Lux

Shelley's metaphor from the perspective of the progeny brought forth by irresponsible technology. If science can truly create an artificial human being, what are its responsibilities toward its “children?” Are they entitled to the same rights and privileges as their parents, or are they property, doomed to servitude and second-class citizenry? (This isn't an unprecedented question, by the way. Karel Capek, inventor of the word

“robot,” asked it in 1920.)

Perceived thusly, the nameless creature spawned by the amoral ambitions of Victor Frankenstein is not the barely-mobile titan we recall from the James Whale film, but vulnerable in both body and mind, emerging from his womblike sac (replicated by an Alvin Ailey dance-bag leotard) before gradually learning to crawl, then walk. Even after an old blind man teaches him language, his

speech, while educated, continues to reflect his flawed comprehension of the universe described in the books available to him (among them, significantly, Milton's Paradise Lost).

A narrative inverted a full 180 degrees isn't an easy proposition for audiences to accept—especially when they suspect that they are being cast as the villains—but the Remy Bumppo Company, departing from its trademark drawing-room repertoire to take full advantage of the intimate new quarters at Theater Wit, embarks on a harrowing visceral journey conducted within a stark-white minimalist environment augmented by a soundscape invoking the surface of a cold and lonely planet. Its protagonist's isolation is further anchored by the conceptual device of two actors—company members Nick Sandys and Greg Matthew Anderson—alternating in the roles of the Creature and his Creator, the better to illustrate the connection between those who venture recklessly into the unknown and those whose revenge is to follow their would-be masters back out of its murky realms.

THEATER REVIEW

It's Only a Play

By: Terrence McNally
 At: Pride Arts Center—
 The Broadway, 4139 N. Broadway
 Tickets: 866-811-4111 or 773-857-0222;
 PrideFilmsAndPlays.com, \$25-\$40
 Runs through: Nov. 11

BY PAIGE LISTERUD

Can a play be accused of being Minnesota-nice? That's the question that continually struck me while observing Pride Films and Plays' production of Terrence McNally's lesser known work, *It's Only a Play*, directed by Jon Martinez.

No one could accuse the production of being unenjoyable, but for a work from the creator of *Love! Valour! Compassion!* and *Master Class*, one can see why “*It's Only a Play*” doesn't get taken out of mothballs very often. Written in 1986 and revised by McNally in 2014, this small work still has the musty feel of goof-ball comedies written in the 1960s and '70s, with eas-

ily identifiable types and well-worn, inoffensive themes about theater people and theater life. Neuroticism, narcissism, and theatrical rivalries are pleasantly poked at without saying much about them and conflicts resolve themselves quickly and predictably.

It's Only a Play is one of a set of offerings by Pride Films and Plays exploring and celebrating McNally's life and prolific work this month, so perhaps its selection for production is best comprehended in that context. However, I fear this is one reboot that calls upon its cast to revive something that should have been put to bed some time ago.

Given all that, the actors are certainly game for it. Opening night in a hotel room awaiting the reviews to come in on a production of a new play called *The Golden Egg*, we are treated to a parade of characters, each with his or her respective manias—and the bigger the mania, the better. Sarah Hayes may win that prize, playing Virginia Noyes, an actress that makes her entrance screaming and proves to be a walking pharmacopeia of recreational drugs. Following close behind is Cody Jolly's portrayal of Frank

Finger, the play's self-absorbed, genius Brit director with a serious klepto compulsion. Marika Mashburn brings a lot of youthful and joyful execution to her rendering of the play's producer, Julia Budder.

The slightly more stable and earnest characters, James Wicker (William Marquez), an actor with a successful TV series, and Peter Austin (Kevin Webb), the playwright of *The Golden Egg*, are old theater buddies whose friendship is laced with ambition, rivalry, and a bit of recrimination. But it's here where the pleasantness of the writing undercuts a bit of badly needed tension between these two. On top of that, once the play truly sails into goof-ball territory, Jon Martinez's direction seems to hold the cast back just when it should be going a little further over the edge.

Again, it's not as if the show isn't humorous and enjoyable. But one enjoys a comedy like this as much as one enjoys smooth jazz or classical lite music. Here, McNally is being at his amiable and congenial best, with nothing to disturb the audience—and also nothing much to remember.

CRITICS' PICKS

Flyin' West, American Blues Theater @ Stage 773, through Nov. 3. In all-Black Nicodemus, KS in 1898, four feisty farming women deal with a rogue male. An endearing cast puts over this enjoyable melodrama-comedy blend. JA

Blue Man Group, Briar Street Theater, open run. If your nieces and nephews are too old for *Bunnica*, but too young for *Golden Girls*: *Bea Afraid*, the silent blue men with the splashy drums and oozing vests still conjure some spell-binding spectacle. MSB

The Rocky Balboa Picture Show, Corn Productions at the Conservatory, through Nov. 3. The “sweet-ass boxer from Philadelphia, Pennsylvan-i-a” is back in this mashup of monsters-and-muscle film classics. 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



E. Faye Butler in Gypsy.
Photo courtesy of Porchlight Music Theatre

THEATER REVIEW

Gypsy

Playwright: Arthur Laurents (book),
Jule Styne (music), Stephen Sondheim (lyrics)
At: Porchlight Music Theatre, Ruth Page
Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St.
Tickets: 773-777-9884 or
PorchlightMusicTheatre.org; \$34-\$61
Runs through: Nov. 25

BY KERRY REID

Let's be honest—E. Faye Butler as Rose in *Gypsy* is a dream come true for musical-theater lovers. But although she's undoubtedly the best reason to see Michael Weber's staging for Porchlight Music Theatre (few star turns get, well, starrier than this role), this Rose is surrounded by a bouquet

of flowering talents—each with her own thorny issues.

Although the production doesn't make a single change to the book or lyrics to reference it, seeing Rose and her family played by Black actors adds extra poignancy to their story as they scramble to find work on the dying vine of Depression-era vaudeville. When Louise (Daryn Whitney Harrell) takes off the blonde wig meant to conjure her more-talented sister June (Aalon Smith), who has eloped, and tells Rose "I'm not June," it registers at a deeper level. She's not her sister—and she's not a white blonde girl, either.

Butler's Rose isn't monstrous. She's desperate to be seen, even if only through the refracted glory of her children. By contrast, Harrell's Louise tells Tulsa (Marco Tzunux), the dancer she fancies who runs off with June, "I'm secretive. Just like you." The irony is that Louise, who has learned to survive the gale forces of Hurricane Rose by never revealing too much of what's inside her, ultimately becomes Gypsy Rose Lee, the world's most famous stripper. Yet at the very top of the show, we see Baby Louise conducting the members of the band onstage. She's already figuring out how to orchestrate the story of her life, just as Lee did with the memoir that inspired *Gypsy*.

In a way, Weber's show is a smart moving meditation on code switching. Jeffrey D. Kmiec's set features a rotating proscenium arch set center-stage that captures the dichotomy between onstage razzle-dazzle and backstage drama. (It does occasionally create some difficult sightlines, particularly in *Small World*, where Butler's Rose and Jose Antonio Garcia's Herbie find their mutual attraction across their personal divides.)

There's never any doubt that Rose loves her kids, and Butler finds many small gestures and reactions to show that amid the bluster. The daughters—including Jillian-Giselle as Baby Louise and Izzie Rose as Baby June—show early signs that they're wise to Mom's gimmicks, but powerless to disappoint her. Garcia's Herbie is a model of decency in a world of low-level showbiz snakes.

Chris Carter's choreography nails the awkwardness of Louise's back-up dancers (even through that cringey "toreador" number) and the we-suck-at-dancing-but-we-don't-care bravado of the You Gotta Get a Gimmick trio. (Terrific turns by Melissa Young, Honey West and Dawn Bless as Tessie Tura, Electra and Mazeppa, respectively, showing off Bill Morey's cunning costumes). Like Rose herself, David Fiorello's six-piece band knows how to pull off a driving tempo with a hint of underlying sadness.

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SPOTLIGHT

In Tearrance Arvelle Chisholm's **Hooded, or Being Black for Dummies**, two Black teens from spend one long night in a confined space. Marquis is a preppie bookworm from an affluent home. Tru is a street smart survivor of the inner city. Stuck in a police cell, they debate Nietzsche, Tupac, and the intersection of race and identity. The First Floor Theater production runs through Nov. 17 at the Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. \$25; FirstFloorTheater.com



Photo by Sam Doyle Photography

'The Last Session': A musical that tackles AIDS

BY KAREN TOPHAM

More than 675,000 people in the United States have died of HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in the '80s according to the Center for Disease Control. Another 1.2 million Americans currently live with the virus.

Yet the further away we withdraw from the original crisis, the less that average Americans know about both the disease and its history. Enter Refuge Theatre Company and Artistic Director Chris Pazdernik, who open the AIDS-related musical *The Last Session* on Thursday, Oct. 25. Pazdernik, who was diagnosed with HIV in 2009, said that the diagnosis threw him into a state of urgent info-gathering.

"In addition to learning what I could historically, I sought out pieces of art dealing with it, which is how I came across *The Last Session*," he said. "It's an incredibly beautiful show, but more than that, I think it's an incredibly important story: an origin story of the people who came and fought for us. It's important to honor those stories and not forget them."

Penned by Jim Brochu and set in 1996, *The Last Session* focuses on Gideon (played by Eric Pearson), a character modeled on songwriter Brochu's husband, Steve Schalchlin. Gideon is tired of fighting against AIDS-related diseases, so he decides to record his songs in one last recording session before killing himself and invites some friends to help him with the session. Pazdernik hopes the production will be "a gateway for the audience into learning more about this very pivotal time in queer history."

In order to prepare his cast for a show about a subject they didn't live through, Pazdernik

showed them the documentary *How to Survive a Plague*. He also brought in friends who had lost partners during the pandemic, and had them talk to the cast "so that the actors could get a better sense of the urgency and anger and death that was taking place at the time of the play."

The death toll hit the cast hard, Pazdernik said: "Exactly how many lives were lost is sort of unfathomable. Another thing that stood out was the generosity of the people who were fighting, knowing that they might not live long enough to see the fruits of their labor. They were trying to make a better world for the people who came after them. As a healthy survivor I feel an incredible debt of gratitude to them."

Pearson, who is also musical director, was on the brink of entering college in 1996, the show's setting. Alone among the cast, he has personal memories of the tail end of the AIDS crisis. Still, Pearson said the play opened his eyes to many things he'd overlooked earlier in his life. "The actual extent of the activism and the timeline of how long things took to get to get to any action, and the details of the pharmaceutical regimens: That information has been really eye-opening," he said.

The younger actors, too, have been struck by the extent of the activism. "The reaction of the general public was very inspiring," said Darilyn Burtley, who plays Tryshia, a friend of Gideon and the mother of his Godchild. "Everyday citizens put their own bodies on the line and made the change."

Ryan Armstrong plays Buddy, a Bible Belt Christian character he described as "somewhat of an antagonist."

"It's shocking because you didn't realize how

THEATER

hard these people were trying to get the care they needed and to get the research for all the medicine that was or was not being put out there at the time."

He said that another thing that surprised him was how little was known about the disease at the start. "The whole idea that you could get it from toilet seats; they didn't know if you could get it by touching, by breathing the same air. ... I can feel that Christian fear that people felt about that stuff."

Of course, the center of the play is Gideon and his struggle: "He talks about how exhausted he is with the ravages of this disease and the pharmaceutical hoops he's having to jump through. The whole impetus for the 'last session' is how exhausting this living in a state of not-quite-dead is for him."

He says that this is a play that will resonate with today's audiences who are concerned about "the fear that not as much as we'd hoped has changed, in particular about universal healthcare and what feels like a willful ignorance about how that affects the population at large and what privilege actually affords."

The other actors concurred. Burtley said that "it's hard to watch these documentaries and see the people putting their bodies in the way of revolution and not be inspired, especially today when lots of people are feeling hopeless and depressed and feeling like they have no say and are pretty helpless." Armstrong feels "the outrage" that "the gay community has been struggling for years and years but in a way it doesn't seem much different."

It's that last notion that has led Pazdernik to partner with Howard Brown Health, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and Season of Concern to help bring awareness to the work that those organizations are doing. He said that people need to "understand that there is still a lot we have to do: it has not been cured; it has not gone away; it's still very much a part of our community."

Armstrong said he hopes that the show will "give people ideas about American history that is often glossed over; it's good today to look back and see the struggle that these people went through. It's also a loving story with great characters and great music."

Pearson agreed, saying, "It's been really good for me to go back and remember and to learn more about this collective past. I'm glad to share that because we have a habit of forgetting history."

The Last Session will be presented in the non-traditional setting of Atlas Art Studio's recording studio, where Pazdernik hoped that "people will feel like they are really there during the recording session that is the action of the play." Due to the dramaturgic decisions that he has made, his actors already feel the immediacy of the show.

"It connects to today," said Burtley. "If people put their minds to it and join in for a common cause, no matter what the government says, no matter what any corporation says, everyday, normal civilians can make the change."

The Last Sessions runs Oct. 26-Dec. 2 at Altas Arts Media, 4809 N. Ravenswood Ave.

'SYTYCD' tour in Chicago Oct. 29

The So You Think You Can Dance Live! 2018 tour, based on the Fox dance-competition show, will stop at the Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State St., on Monday, Oct. 29.

Among other people, the concert features the Top 10 contestants from season 15: Jensen Arnold, Hannahlei Cabanilla, Genessy Castillo, Evan DeBenedetto, Jay Jay Dixon-bey, Magdalena Fialek, Darius Hickman, Chelsea Hough, Cole Mills and Slavik Pustovoytov.

See https://www.msg.com/the-chicago-theatre?cmp=van_chicagotheatre.

Hedwig' tour in Chicago in 2019

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

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

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

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

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

CSO performing with 'Frankenstein' screening Oct. 26

Chicago Symphony Orchestra will perform Academy Award-winning composer Franz Waxman's score to *Bride of Frankenstein* at an Oct. 26 screening of the film at 7:30 p.m. at Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave.

The 1935 film, directed by gay filmmaker James Whale, follows Dr. Frankenstein (Colin Clive) as he is goaded by the wicked scientist Dr. Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger) into creating a mate (Elsa Lanchester) for the monster (Boris Karloff) that he created in the original film.

Conductor Emil de Cou, music director of the Pacific Northwest Ballet, will lead CSO in the performance. The audience is invited to dress in Halloween attire.

Bride of Frankenstein runs 75 minutes, and will be followed by a screening of Mel Brooks' 1974 parody *Young Frankenstein*, starring Gene Wilder, Madeline Kahn, Peter Boyle and Cloris Leachman.

Tickets are available at Symphony Center, by phone at 800-223-7114 or 312-294-3000, or online at CSO.org.



Refuge Theatre' Artistic
Director Chris Pazdernik.
Photo courtesy of Pazdernik

CULTURE CLUB



Pippin.
Photo by Brett Beiner

THEATER REVIEW

Pippin

Playwright: Roger O. Hirson (book), Stephen Schwartz (music and lyrics)
At: Mercury Theater Chicago, Venus Cabaret, 3745 N. Southport Ave.
Tickets: 773-325-1700 or MercuryTheaterChicago.com; \$60-\$65
Runs through: Nov. 18

BY KERRY REID

If you're going to set Pippin in a cabaret—one named for the goddess of love, no less—why not give it the full-on Kit Kat Klub treatment?

L. Walter Stearns' staging at the Mercury's delightfully cozy Venus Cabaret couldn't be more different than the circus-spectacle version staged by Diana Paulus, seen here on the national tour in 2015. But it's breathtaking in its own right, and filled with an ensemble that brings in a potent blend of smarts, sexiness and a soupcon of sadness. Toss in Rachel Boylan's slinky-shiny lingerie costumes (complete with Bob Fosse-esque hands sewn over various body parts), and the parallels to Cabaret are irresistible.

First produced in 1972, as the Age of Aquarius was waking up to a Nixon hangover, Pippin also has thematic similarities to Cabaret. What do you do with your ideals and dreams in a world in thrall to war and repression? Join the militant masses? Try to reform from within? Lose yourself in sybaritic excesses? Or just run away to the countryside and hope for domestic bliss? We even have a master of ceremonies, er, Leading Player, as our tour guide.

Donterrio Johnson's take on the role brings jazz-hipster cool blended with Mephistophelean menace. Little wonder that Koray Tarhan's Pippin, though book-smart and filled with noble intentions, falls under the sway of Johnson's band of merry pranksters and seducers as he stumbles from battlefield to bedroom in the world of Frankish politics dominated by his father, Charles, a.k.a. Charlemagne (Don Forston).

Tarhan has a touch of Candide about him as well. He's a young man who wants very much to find meaning in life, but has no idea how to do that. When briefly given power, he screws it up royally. It's not until he meets the widow Catherine (played by Nicole Arnold with forthright charm) and her son, Theo (the adorable Gabriel Robert) that he gets a glimpse of how to put down roots.

The entire cast delights and enralls, using small but potent moments of audience interaction to draw us in. During Iris Lieberman's show-stopping turn as Pippin's Grandmother Berthe in No Time At All the space turns momentarily into a tiki bar, with the cast handing out fruity (nonalcoholic) drinks to the audience. (G "Max" Maxin IV's videography on four screens neatly suggests the changes in scenery.) Sawyer Smith as Pippin's scheming stepmother, Fastrada, dominates Brenda Didier's taut choreography with their legs-for-days physique and snappy sass. Adam Fane as Lewis, Fastrada's son, nails it as a narcissistic idiot who fails upward at life. (Sound familiar?)

The three-piece band under Andrew Milliken's direction brings out all the timbre and resonance in Schwartz's ingratiating score in the small space. Stearns' Pippin feels extra-relevant as we figure out how to make it through the darkness and turmoil of our times with our ideals intact.

Would you know what to ask for if the Devil came knocking on your door?

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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.



Some of the 2018 Proud to Run winners.
Photo by Carrie Maxwell

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A MUSICAL FABLE



Rupert Everett in *The Happy Prince*.
Photo by Wilhelm Moser, courtesy
of Sony Pictures Classics

Rupert Everett: Having a Wilde time with 'The Happy Prince'

BY TIM NASSON

At the height of Rupert Everett's stardom, he was co-starring alongside Julia Roberts in *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997) and opposite one of his best friends, Madonna, in *The Next Best Thing* (2000). He even voiced the character of Prince Charming in the *Shrek* movies.

But the most interesting thing on Everett's resume was not a movie role, but rather it was what he did in 1989: He was the first major actor to come out of the closet and not hide the fact that he was gay.

While talking about his latest effort, *The Happy Prince*—a movie based on the later years of Oscar Wilde's life that Everett wrote, directed and starred in—Everett said he had no regrets about coming out when he did.

He added, "There was never that question for me. ... I loved the whole gay culture. So, for me, to even consider anything other than being out wasn't an option. And, also, if you're going to lie about yourself, it's a tough thing. It's a negation of yourself."

Everett's fascination with Wilde began when he was six, he recalled, when his mother would read *The Happy Prince* to him at bedtime.

"I was enraptured by the story and inconsolable at the end. Coming from a military family with a distinctly pre-Freudian world view—it was probably the first time I heard about love and suffering and that there was a terrible price to be paid for it. *The Happy Prince* was a turning point.

"In 1975, I moved to London. It is difficult to imagine now but it had only been legal to be gay for seven years and the police—making the most of the ambiguity in the 1967 law—continued to raid and arrest people for homosexual acts in public and so there was a palpable feeling that we were stepping in Oscar's freshly trodden footprints on those unlucky occasions when we were

herded into paddy wagons and taken down to the police station for the night."

The actor later performed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, an event he described as "the beginning of a treasured relationship. Something between me and the text sparked."

The relationship with Wilde's material only intensified from there.

"A few years later I performed *The Importance of Being Earnest* in French at the Theatre National de Chaillot in Paris and then made two films from Wilde plays: *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*," Everett said. "At around this point my career dried up—literally evaporated overnight and I began to write. I decided to create a role for myself. If no one else would employ me, I would employ myself.

"Oscar Wilde seemed to be the ideal character. Not the Wilde of folk lore, the iconic family man, the life and soul of the café royal but a different Wilde, the fallen star, the last great vagabond of the nineteenth century—punished and crushed by society, yet somehow surviving. I would write *The Passion of Wilde*. After I had been turned down by almost every director of note I decided to make the film myself. If I had been in possession of a crystal ball, I would not have embarked on such a journey. It took 10 years to get to preproduction."

Based on all of that, Everett was asked why he immersed himself so fully in the world of Oscar Wilde, putting on three hats: director, writer and actor.

"I didn't think of immersing myself fully in the beginning, because I never wanted to be the director," he said. "I had written a couple of books [about Oscar Wilde] in 2000 and 2005, and I really wanted to write a script in which I could act and maybe resuscitate my career to a certain extent.

"So, Oscar Wilde seemed to be the perfect char-

acter in that he's a great inspiration to me, the patron saint figure in a way. After sending the screenplay to a number of directors, and seeing them all pass on the project, I realized if a screenplay is not directed it is nothing. You can't publish it in a magazine. It's nothing. And I thought, I'm going to do it myself. And that's what happened."

Everett focuses on the final years of Wilde's life, when he is recently released from jail, after having been sent there for engaging in homosexual acts, considered illegal in England until 1967. Much of the film features Wilde on his deathbed, recalling the horrible atrocities that befell him.

"I focused on the latter part of Wilde's life partly because the other three films about him focus on the successful part of his life, and I think that is a little bit of an easy get out for people to just look at the good part," Everett said. "What society did to him was this: They put him in prison and then they imprisoned him in liberty and it happened just for the fact of being a homosexual man. So, for me, as a homosexual man, this is the important part of the story."

When asked if he'd like to direct another film, Everett responded, "I would. It's kind of like childbirth when you're directing a movie. You think when you're in labor, 'Oh, god—I'm never doing this again.' But as soon as the baby is out of the bag, you think, 'I can't remember all that pain.' I'm now bristling with new ideas."

Everett turned down the role of Cecil in the 1986 smash *Merchant/Ivory* classic *A Room With a View*.

"At the time, I had made a couple of period pieces—*Another Country* and *Dance with a Stranger*," he recalled. "I didn't want to be typecast for the rest of my life. So, I turned down the film. I loved the *Merchant/Ivory* team. But turning down that role that Daniel Day-Lewis ended up with ruined my chances for ever working with

FILM

them again. I burned that bridge, if you will. However, for Daniel Day-Lewis, it was a career-making performance, because the same year he had done *My Beautiful Laundrette*, and his roles in those two films couldn't have been more different. He turned into a star overnight. The same would not have happened to me."

Everett this past summer moved back in with his mother in England to help take care of her. "That is like going back in the closet. It's going okay. It's having its own birthing process. You go immediately back to the relationship you had when you were 14 and my mum doesn't realize that I'm 59 and she kind of orders me around. I have to close windows, open bottles and do everything, and that is quite difficult. But it's nice."

Next up for Everett is a TV miniseries remake of the 1986 Sean Connery movie *The Name of the Rose*.

The Happy Prince will run in select Chicago venues starting Friday, Oct. 19.

CIFF names winners; LGBT movies named

The 54th Chicago International Film Festival (CIFF) hosted its Awards Ceremony at AMC River East 21, on Oct. 19, celebrating the films chosen as the award winners by the Festival juries.

Prizes were awarded to films in the following categories: International Feature Film Competition; New Directors Competition; International Documentary Competition; Out-Look Competition; and Short Film Competition. The Chicago Award and the Founder's Award were also presented.

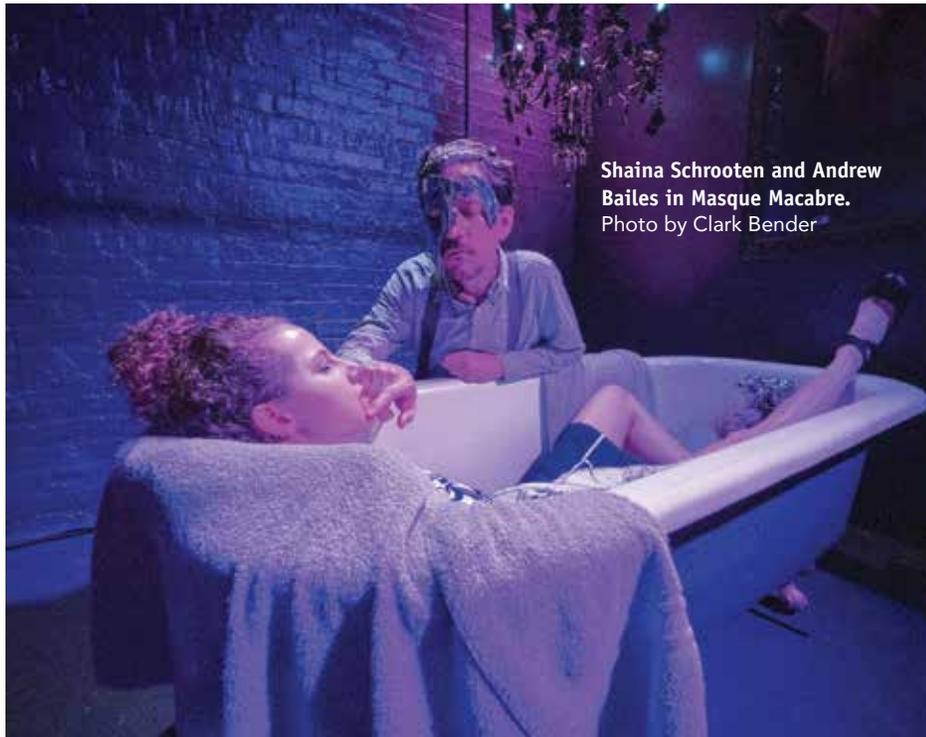
In the LGBT-themed Out-Look Competition, the Peruvian/German/Norwegian film *Retablo* took the Gold Q-Hugo. The Wanuri Kahiu-directed lesbian film *Rafiki* (Kenya/South Africa/Germany/Netherlands/France/Norway/Lebanon) won the silver, and the Brazilian movie *Hard Paint* received a special mention.

Hashtag Perfect Life won the Chicago Award, while *Beautiful Boy* (with Steve Carell and Timothee Chalamet) received the Founder's Award.

For more information, visit <https://www.chicagofilmfestival.com/>.



Rafiki.
Photo courtesy of CIFF



Shaina Schrooten and Andrew Bailes in *Masque Macabre*.
Photo by Clark Bender

THEATER REVIEW

Masque Macabre

By: Aly Greaves Amidei, John Henry Roberts, Cara Beth Heath

At: Strawdog Theatre, 1806 W. Berenice Ave.

Tickets: Strawdog.org, \$40-\$50

Info: 773-644-1380

Runs Through: Oct. 31

BY PAIGE LISTERUD

Strawdog Theatre's new immersive theater experience, *Masque Macabre*, sews together 14 different storylines from Edgar Allan Poe at a time of year when one's thirst for the macabre longs to be slaked and phantasmagoric thrills beckon the inner imagination. Directed by Anderson Lawler, Janet Howe, and Eli Newell, if there is one thing *Masque Macabre* is strong on, it's spectacle and mystery.

But do you know your Poe? Do you really know your Poe? Playwrights Aly Greaves, John Henry Roberts, and Cara Beth Heath do, and not only draw upon Edgar Allan Poe standards, like "The Masque of Red Death" and the "Cask of Amontillado," but also lesser-known Poe works, "Berenice" and "William Wilson," among others. That type of fanatical devotion to Poe's works may be the key to truly appreciating Strawdog's efforts and not knowing Poe threatens the viewer with more of a hodgepodge of experience than with anything really dark from within.

To be sure, every effort has been made to update and contemporize Poe's stories to make them more accessible and visceral. The show begins in "The Masque of Red Death"—only the Prince of the short story, who summoned all his followers to ride out the plague in his sealed-off castle, is now a spoiled, entitled billionaire Preston (Henry Greenberg) of an international conglomerate. His guests are to the masque are the audience themselves. Berenice (Shaina

Schrooten) is now the chicly dressed lover of Eli Lagaeus (Andrew Bailes), the featured artist whose mixed media and video work adorns the party space. William Wilson (Adam Hinkle, Brian Hinkle) is a gadfly celebrity vlogger, recording the event for his millions of viewers. An imperious master of ceremonies, who demands all refer to him as "The Viceroy" (Julian Stroop) directs the audience to be as obedient and tractable as the rest of Preston's entourage. Everything has been done to marry the Gothic world that Poe drew upon of debauched and decaying aristocracy to a 21st century where a new gilded oligarchy rears its ugly head and the person with the most clicks wins.

If there is mastery in that audacious opening, the show flattens once its dialogue, for all the intrigues, and recriminations among Preston's entourage as the evening advances, begins to sound like a jaded episode of "Gossip Girl." Far more fascinating becomes the opportunity to observe the crowd, as it huddles around the sight of a man being interred alive or around a fight, *mano a mano*, to the death. Mutilations and mayhem aside, it is the audience that becomes the most disturbing spectacle of the entire evening.

To house that spectacle and give it shape, the space for Strawdog's immersive theater experience is almost another character. Based on the different colored rooms in "The Masque of Red Death," it is a compellingly eerie maze of atmospheres (Claire Chzran, Shelby Arndt, and Daniel Friedman, co-lighting design) and set pieces (Tom Burch, scenic design, Lacie Hexom prop design, and Mike Sanow, Technical Director). The video displays, which are supposed to be Eli's handiwork, induce paranoia, wonder, and sometimes revulsion (Kyle Hamman, video/media design) and may, indeed, deserve their own curated art show. It's a sophisticated haunted house, wherein the strangest and most troubling monsters are ourselves.

THEATER REVIEW

Truman and the Birth of Israel

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

My father said Harry Truman supported Israel because of Eddie Jacobsen, his lifelong Jewish friend.

They met in 1905—when Truman was 21—served together in World War I and were partners in a failed business venture. As president (1945-1953), Truman informally sought Jacobsen's opinions concerning Jewish affairs, and Jacobsen (Peter Nerad) appears in this world premiere play, but as a character witness rather than an adviser. He defends Truman against charges of racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Catholic bigotry apparently leveled at Truman by a journalist in 1953, shortly after Truman's presidency ended.

Alas, there's evidence to support the charges: Truman's family were Confederate racists, his early letters are peppered with ethnic epithets and racial prejudice, he joined (and quickly resigned from) the KKK early in his political career in south-leaning Missouri, his mother-in-law didn't allow Jews in her home (which Truman and his wife respected when they moved into and, later, bought the house). It's all dredged up as Truman (Tim Kough) meets with two attorneys to prepare a libel suit against the journalist. Is it enough to debunk Truman's place in history as essential to the founding of modern Israel in 1948? One attorney, Don Muller (Andrew J. Pond), believes so, but he carries particular baggage as a non-Jewish survivor of a Nazi death camp.

It's fascinating history but rather detailed and picayune, especially when Truman and Muller dissect complex post-WWII Palestine policy and politics. The result is an impassioned play to be sure, but not a good play. For example, playwright William Spatz recounts considerable Truman biographical information, ostensibly to prepare his legal defense, but much of it has been covered theatrically well before this, and much of it is unconnected to Israeli history. The play may need



Tim Kough in *Truman and the Birth of Israel*.
Photo by Michael Brosilow

a narrower focus.

But the main structural issue is the strongly-telegraphed revelation of Muller's personal history, right down to the greatest cliché of Holocaust drama, the number tattooed on his arm. It's an unacceptable bait-and-switch which wrenches the play from Truman to Muller. Suddenly it's a play about Muller's Survivor's Guilt rather than about Truman and/or Israel. It cannot be both.

FYI: The other young attorney preparing Truman's case is ardent feminist Bella Abzug (Catherine Dvorak), prior to her political career. I couldn't confirm whether or not a Truman-Abzug meeting actually occurred, but portraying it has little value if it never happened. Also, I'm not sure the word "feminist" was in common use in 1953.

Under director Randy White, Pond is fiery as Muller, Dvorak is cool and brash as Bella and Kough's Truman is prickly but personable. The scenic design (David SS Davis), costumes (Kate Setzer Kaumphausen; great Bella dress) and projections (Clara Tomaz) add period detail and depth.

"AS OSCAR WILDE, RUPERT EVERETT LIFTS THE HAPPY PRINCE INTO THE STRATOSPHERE!"
-David Edelstein, NEW YORK MAGAZINE

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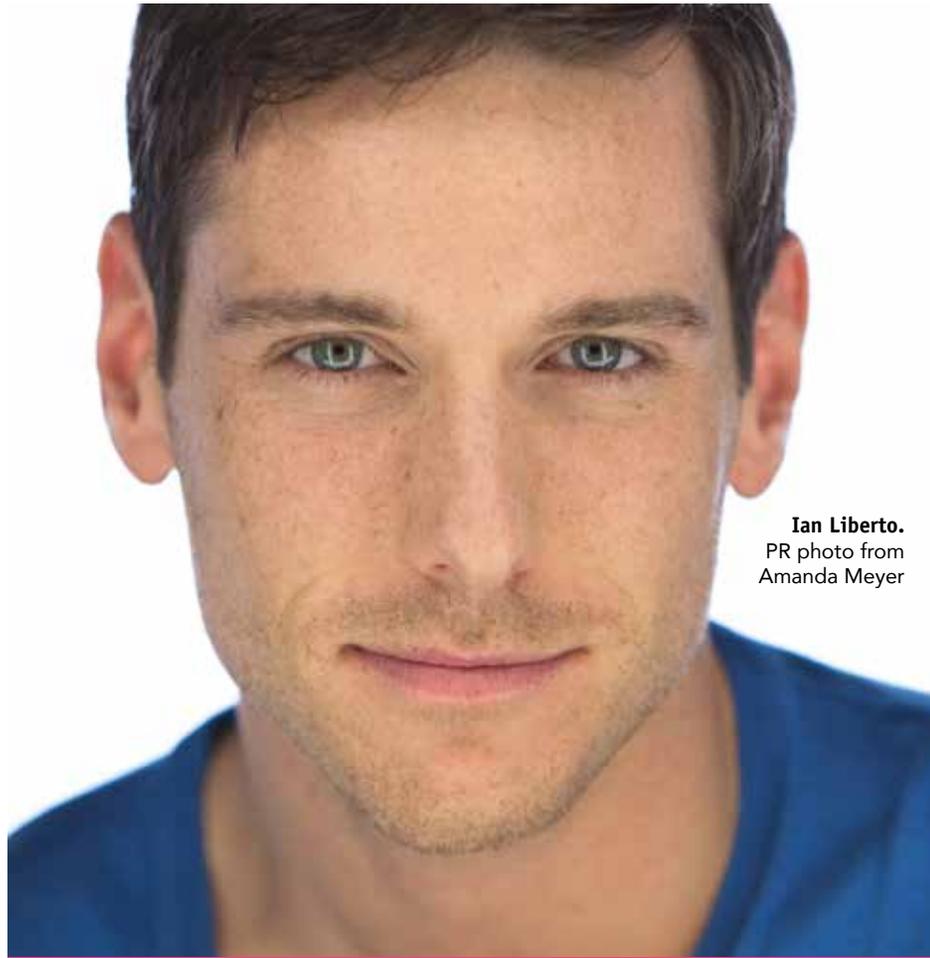
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Ian Liberto.
PR photo from
Amanda Meyer

Out Libertyville actor takes stage in 'Hello, Dolly'

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

As a student at Libertyville High School, Ian Liberto he was more of a band geek than a theater kid. The double-bass player even got a scholarship. But when Liberto graduated from Decatur's Millikin University in 2005, he had a degree in theater and an eye on Broadway.

It took him a minute to get there. Before Broadway, the 2001 Libertyville High grad cut his teeth on shows at the Marriott (2007's *The Producers*) and in 2009 nation-wide bus-and-truck tour of "A Chorus Line." Liberto was 27 when he made his Broadway debut in the ensemble of *Promises, Promises*.

Now 37, Liberto hasn't slowed down much since, forging a career in the ensembles of Broadway shows ranging from the short-lived *Chaplin*, *The Musical* to *Billy Elliott* to *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Through Nov. 27, he's in Chicago performing in the national tour of *Hello Dolly*, starring Betty Buckley in the iconic title role.

The beloved musical about an 19th-century matchmaker might be set more than a century ago but, for Liberto, its optimism, comedy and gorgeously detailed period sets and costumes can be a balm for today's troubled times.

"The core of *Hello Dolly* is about loss, and trying to stay in the world after being dealt a huge loss," he said. "It's about finding yourself alone. Three of the main characters have lost their spouse, and much of 'Dolly' is about how they're trying to deal with that."

Liberto has been with "Dolly" long enough to pick up on the show's most subtle nuances. He did a reading of the show a few years ago, and then was cast in "Dolly" on Broadway, with Bette Midler playing the title role.

As the dance captain for the national tour, he's in charge of ensuring that the cast masters choreographer Warren Carlyle's steps, while also understudying the role of Cornelius Hackl, a Yonkers hay and feed store clerk who makes his way to New York City in search of love and adventure.

Liberto credited his bus-and-truck days as

THEATER

laying the foundation for his career. "Everyone should do a tour after college," he said. "You learn how hard the work is. You close a performance at 10:30 p.m., go to your hotel, get on the bus at 5 a.m., go into rehearsal that afternoon, and start all over again performing that night. You learn to get along with people—you're spending so much time with your cast in a confined space. You learn to deal with not having much personal space. You're living in an eight by 30 foot bus with 20 other people."

Liberto has been out for years. He married director Kasey RT Graham in 2009. Long before the marriage, Liberto's plans for revealing his orientation to his parents didn't go quite as planned.

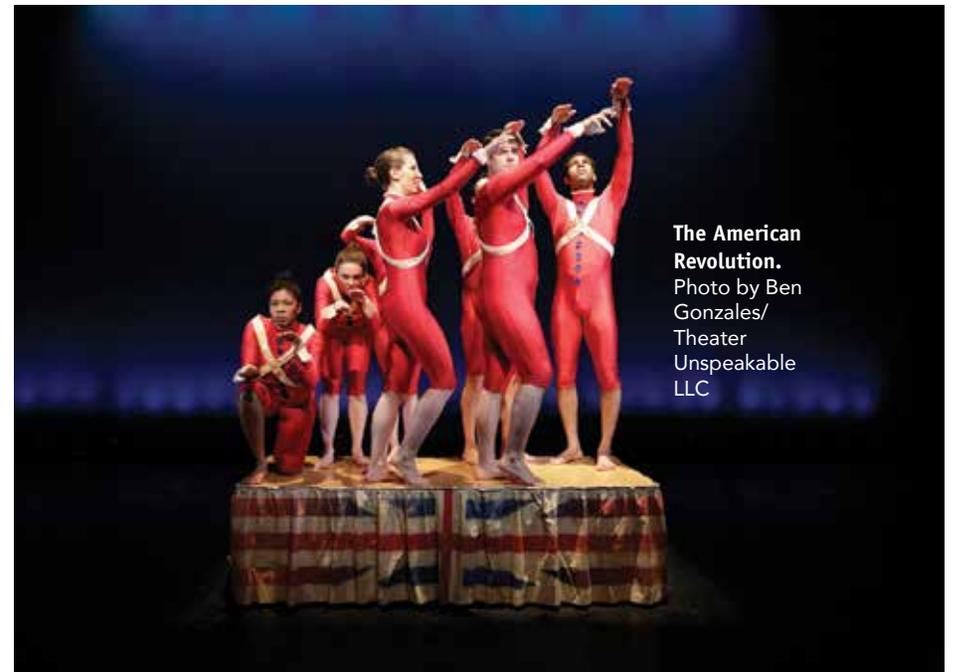
"I was going to write them this long letter once I went away to college," he recalled. "That changed when my father found something in my room that kind of outed me. It was rough, but it

ended up being fine. They needed time to process it—whatever their process was, I wasn't privy to it. But in a few months, everything went back to normal."

With "Dolly," Liberto is hoping to give audiences a sense of hope and a respite from the often grim barrage of current events. The 1964 score by Jerry Herman features songs infectiously cheery songs, including "Hello Dolly," "Before the Parade Passes By" and "Sunday Best."

"It has some of the most hummable melodies ever written for theater," Liberto said. "Without going into political specifics, I feel like we're at a time when people sometimes need a break from everything that's going on. They need a reminder that beauty and hope and kindness exist. 'Dolly' offers that."

Hello Dolly runs through Saturday, Nov. 17, at the Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. Tickets start at \$30. Twenty-six winners of a daily lottery will receive \$25 tickets. For more info, go to HelloDollyOnBroadway.com.



The American Revolution.
Photo by Ben Gonzales/
Theater Unspeakable LLC

THEATER REVIEW The American Revolution

Devised by: Theater Unspeakable
At: Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.
Tickets: \$20-30; Greenhousetheater.org
Runs through: Nov. 11

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

Seven actors. Twenty-one square feet. The entire *American Revolution*.

According to its founder and director Marc Frost, Theater Unspeakable thrives upon creating "big stories in small spaces." The Chicago-based touring company now brings their acclaimed physical-theater take on the Founding Fathers to the Greenhouse Theater Center. The result is a fast-paced and fun 50 minutes as an enthusias-

tic troupe takes its all-ages audience from the French and Indian War to John Hancock's oversized signature.

The *American Revolution* covers many of the same events as *Hamilton*, with a more nuanced perspective from George Washington (Jeffrey Own Freelon Jr.) and just as many wacky antics from smug King George (Devin Sanclemente). Both Martha Washington (Lexi DeSollar) and Abigail Adams (Carolyn Moore) have their say—at one point, Adams warns her husband that if no one listens to the women, they'll just start their own revolution. (Just wait a couple of centuries, Mrs. Adams.) Battles are fought, lost and won.

And except for an incident during the Boston Tea Party, not one of the seven actors leave the 21-square-foot platform.

Founded in 2010, Theater Unspeakable draws inspiration from movement and mime pioneer Jacques Lecoq, and many of its troupe have extensive backgrounds in physical theater. Aside

Turn to page 15

Chelsea Clinton signs hundreds of new kids' books at W&CF

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

More than 700 people of all ages lined up around the block to meet author, Clinton Foundation Vice-Chair and former First Daughter Chelsea Clinton Oct. 21 at Women and Children First bookstore.

Clinton signed copies of her children's book *Start Now!: You Can Make a Difference*. Her book focuses on how young activists can make a difference regarding health, hunger, climate change, endangered species and bullying.

"We are absolutely delighted that Chelsea decided to come into our neighborhood community to sign copies of her new book at our store," said Women and Children First Co-Owner Sarah Hollenbeck. "She chose to do an in-store event rather than going to a large venue off-site because her mother also did an in-store book signing here in 2003 for her memoir. This was a very family-oriented event so there is a wonderful community spirit in the air because of that connection."

Clinton also met with Bake Sale for Justice youth activists and their parents who were there to sell their wares outside of the store during the event. All monies raised from the bake sale will be going to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National

BOOKS

Network. The total amount was \$2,520, the most ever raised by Bake Sale for Justice at a single event.

"The store asked us to come to this event because we are here every month selling our products," said Bake Sale for Justice Creator Anne Fogarty. "So much of Chelsea's writing for kids is all about activism and empowering youth to take responsibility for the problems facing our world today and that is what Bake Sale for Justice is all about."

"I think it is important to do events like this because some people get annoyed when there are bad things going on in the world but they do not do anything about it," said Fogarty's daughter, activist Nora Fox, who is in seventh grade. "We have a voice and can use it to change things. It is a good day to be doing this bake sale because a lot of people are here to see Chelsea and they will learn about what we do and spread our message to their family and friends."

Clinton has also written a number of other children's books and has done numerous speaking engagements over the years.



Chelsea Clinton and young fan.
Photo by Carrie Maxwell

Jill Soloway reads from 'She Wants It' at local appearance

BY ANGELIQUE SMITH

With a line of people wrapped around the block in increasingly chilly weather, it was easy to catch snippets of why fans were there to see the Emmy- and Golden Globe Award-winning creator of *Transparent*, Jill Soloway.

"Saved my life" and "hero" could be heard more than once.

Held in the auditorium of the Chicago Waldorf School, 5200 N. Ashland Ave., on Oct. 18—with Women & Children First bookstore as the sponsor—Soloway's event for their book, *She Wants It: Desire, Power and Toppling the Patriarchy* featured the delightful Australian comedian Hannah Gadsby (*Netflix's Nanette*) as moderator.

While Soloway did read an engaging passage from their book, a fierce feminist manifesto focusing on their journey to self, what could have been a traditional book reading turned into more of an interactive variety show. The event featured Soloway's sister Faith on the keyboard for timely musical punctuations, their mother Elaine hav-

ing an all-in-good-fun feminist debate with local intersex activist Pidgeon Pagonis, and Claudia Martinez, Annoyance Theatre ensemble member, taking on additional emcee responsibilities.

In addition to discussing Soloway's transition from identifying as straight to non-binary and gender non-conforming, the rest of the night's conversation ran the gamut. Whether it was heteronormative conditioning during puberty, announcements about the next season of *Transparent*, having imposter syndrome, subverting the male gaze in TV and film, reminiscing to Cheap Trick lyrics, or achieving equity in Hollywood through an intersectional power movement that Soloway co-founded (*5050 by 2020*), the audience was ever-willing to participate, calling out any accidental misuse of pronouns throughout.

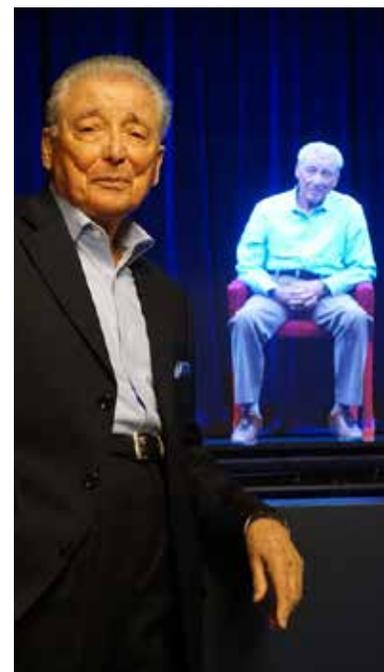
Copies of Soloway's book could be purchased outside of the auditorium, in addition to copies of their mother Elaine's novels, and attendees could also donate to the Intersex Justice Project and pick up branded merchandise.

With Soloway signing books and taking pictures

at the end of the night, more common themes emerged: a lot of "I'm so gratefuls" in heartfelt stories from those in line and "I remember yous" from Soloway, who had quite a few tear-filled reunions with old Chicago-area friends and loved ones. Everyone had a story, and Soloway seemed genuinely intent on listening to each and every

one.

Jill Soloway's *She Wants It*, published by Crown Archetype, is now available for purchase. Learn more about *5050 by 2020* at 5050by2020.com, and about The Intersex Justice Project at IntersexJusticeProject.org.



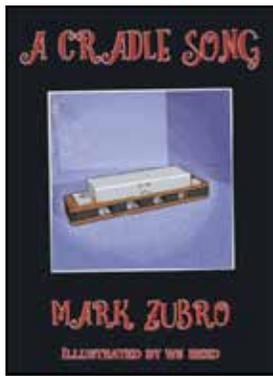
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A Cradle Song: Part Two

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 Two**.

Chapter One: Erik Part Two

He was the most down and scared and lonely that first Christmas Eve. He'd been sniffing. At first, Mildred had offered comfort.

Erik had told her about his desire to be part of a cradle song, to make a joyful noise with an orchestra, or even just one stringed instrument, or, if necessary, all by himself with some weebegone child.

On that day, Mildred had heard his little plaintive noises. He had whimpered as he'd told her his dreams. She had listened and when he'd finished, she had laughed. What's worse, she'd told the other musical toys who were just as unsympathetic.

The words she'd said when she'd stopped laughing were seared into Erik's memory. She'd said, "We've all got sad stories. Get over yourself. Besides, you're not a real harmonica, are you? You're never going to play for anybody. Even if you were in the best of shape, and you're not, the noise you'd make would be pathetic. I imagine it would be the smallest cacophony I've ever heard." And she'd laughed crueler and harder than any laugh the harmonica had ever heard.

Erik didn't understand how she could say this when she'd never even heard his music, but that didn't stop her.

This was very much like what mean Agnes had said. Although this time, the laughter and sneering was much harsher and more malicious.

Mildred didn't have to remind him about how small and beaten up he was.

He knew his limitations.

For many days after, she didn't stop picking at his dreams. Nothing seemed to ever shut her up.

The others had laughed at him. To this day, they still did. Erik never knew why they made fun of his dream. Sure, he was small. Sure, he wasn't likely to get any-

where near an orchestra. But he wanted to try, one night, especially on a Christmas Eve night, to make at least a soothing sound.

Others could be even nastier. A great mean tuba named Lawrence had bullied all the other instruments, but his worst venom was saved for Erik. Fortunately, Lawrence had been picked by a boy whose parents were making him take music lessons.

Mildred hadn't been chosen for many years either, even though she had been out front with the bigger and shinier instruments.

Mildred had finally been taken away a few years ago around Christmas, but not before she'd announced for the thousandth time to the world, always with a sneer and a snide remark, the little harmonica's hopes and wishes. Now there was always someone who remembered and passed the story on to the new arrivals so they could keep the derision fresh.

Erik often wondered, didn't they have goals and ambitions? If they did, they didn't tell anyone? The little harmonica thought it was so strange and so sad that there was bullying even among the toys.

Erik was glad that Mildred hadn't been around when Reginald arrived. He shuddered to think what the mean trumpet would have said about the little car.

As the days passed and Erik was not picked, his dreams seemed to die note by note as the uncounted years unspooled and the steps of each child who wandered by faded to silence.

Reginald was no help. Erik reassured the nearly inconsolable toy car as best he could. But Reginald seemed to make Erik's problem worse.

Often hours passed between them in companionable silence. After the first few days, they had nothing new to share in their tiny corner. What little comfort came from each other, and both dreamed

of being real toys again. They knew they'd never be like new. Each understood that, but to be cherished again, by a child and make him or her happy. That would be joy enough indeed.

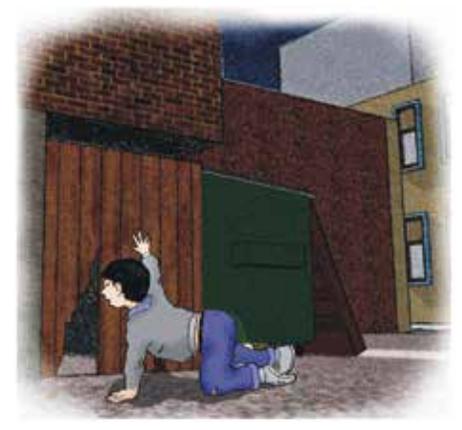
So now, most often, Erik embraced the shadows. Being lonely was awful. Being lonely and laughed at was even worse. Erik lived on his shelf hoping against hope that he'd be picked.

Chapter Two: Matthew

Matthew was nine-years-old. He was small for his age. As he struggled down the dark and damp street, he was dressed in a worn brown jacket, a tattered shirt, and ripped and torn jeans. Bits of cloth poked out of the holes in his shoes. In an attempt to keep his feet warm and dry, Matthew had wrapped them with rags before he put his feet into the shoes. Torn newspapers stuffed inside his shirt tried to help keep out the cold. Matthew used the discarded newspapers from the barrels in the park.

Matthew's daddy was away to war. Like most wars, it was in a distant land, and the boy didn't understand where his dad was or when he was coming home. His father had been gone far too often. He missed him every time more and more. This deployment had been the longest.

Matthew found shelter in a tiny alcove that could only be found down a narrow alley, through a passage under a rickety flight of stairs, then through a narrow cave-like space. Once in a while, the noise of the city leaked through, wailing sirens from emergency vehicles, from time to time a loud, booming radio, or now and then shouts and screams from unseen people who lived far above and around him, people who fought and cried often until the middle hours of the night and beyond. Every so often, he heard a baby cry.



The most important part of his tiny space was the heat. It wasn't much, but the back wall was warm to the touch for about three feet on each side of a pipe that came out of his floor and then travelled through his ceiling. Matthew figured there must be heating pipes in the wall of the building. He guessed that other homeless people hadn't discovered this spot because they were too big to fit in. He'd only gotten here the night he was chased because he'd squeezed through the final opening.

Inside his tiny space, which was maybe bigger than a refrigerator box, cached in a brick he'd hollowed out, were his few treasures. A plastic super hero holding a sleeping child. Two marbles: one a steely with a nasty dent, the other a cat-eye with a chip in it. A tiny toy train engine with its coal car. A small caboose maybe from the same toy set as the engine. A red fire truck nestled with the rest. He wished he could gather at least one more tiny toy.

Even worse, the week after his dad left, his mom had gotten sick. She took to her bed and rarely moved. Matthew had gotten very scared.

Matthew felt her forehead once as she had done to him. She was burning up. His mom could barely lift her head from the pillow to drink some water and take her pills. No one came to help. No one

told him what was wrong. At that time, his little sister often cried into the night. Matthew thought his sister needed medicine too.

Matthew rocked her cradle and sometimes she fell asleep when he did that. She was so tiny, years younger than him.

He'd tried to find someone to help his mom, but they were poor.

One day, Matthew had gone to the store for some medicine for his mom. There was no one to go for it but him. He knew the way back and forth. He only had to cross one busy street, and he was very careful as his mom and dad had taught him.

That day, there was a rain and sleet storm. It had taken a long time to get to his destination. He'd nearly slipped and fallen several times especially after passing big people who stumbled into him. Then when he was almost to the store, a passerby lurched and staggered into him.

Matthew had gone down on one knee and torn his pants. He'd braced himself as he fell with one hand on the pavement. When he looked at his palm, he saw nearly a third of it was scraped raw, and a few spots had flecks of blood. He'd wiped the residue of his fall on his jacket sleeve.

Then Matthew had to wait many extra minutes as the line in the store shuffled forward. As the time dragged, he'd worried that he'd been gone too long. On his way back, at the busy street, he'd rushed ahead of the crowd waiting for the light. He'd stepped off the curb, but a second

later, he'd almost been run over by a massive rumbling truck. Others around him had screamed and screeched.

At the last instant, a man behind him had pulled him back.

Matthew had turned to thank him, but the man had snapped, "Watch where you're going."

When he'd gotten home that awful day, his mom and his sister were gone. It had taken only seconds to search every room.

Nobody.

He'd shouted for them, but no voice answered.

Finally, the landlord heard him and came to see what the ruckus was about.

The landlord was always callous and demanding about their rent. He hadn't been as nasty when Matthew's dad was home. His dad had always met the landlord's bluster with serenity and a smile.

Matthew had watched his dad with the landlord and with everyone. His dad was always calm, and kind, and strong. Matthew wanted to grow up to be like that.

But after his dad had gone to war, the landlord had gotten meaner and meaner. As his mom got sicker and she couldn't work, the landlord got crueler, harsher, and more demanding.

That day when Matthew had told the landlord his mom was gone, the landlord had chased him away, and said if he ever came back he'd sic his big, snarling dog on him.

Matthew hadn't known what to do. His

mom and sister had been taken away. They were sick. He didn't know where they were. He didn't know who to ask.

On that day after he'd left their apartment, Matthew had huddled in a doorway down the street to be out of the icy storm. He'd seen people beg. Their part of town was poor and filled with desperate homeless.

When the rain let up, he set out, he knew not where. After a while, he'd gotten very hungry. He wondered if he could sneak back into their apartment and get something from the cupboard or refrigerator, but on that day, he didn't dare.



He'd found himself in the shadows of a park that was twelve feet wide and a building's length deep. It had begun to rain again. A big mean dog and a snarling man had come upon him.

Matthew had run and dodged and stumbled through alleys and backyards until he'd tripped across some boards and found a tiny opening in a doorway, slipped through it, and followed his circuitous path that he now knew well.

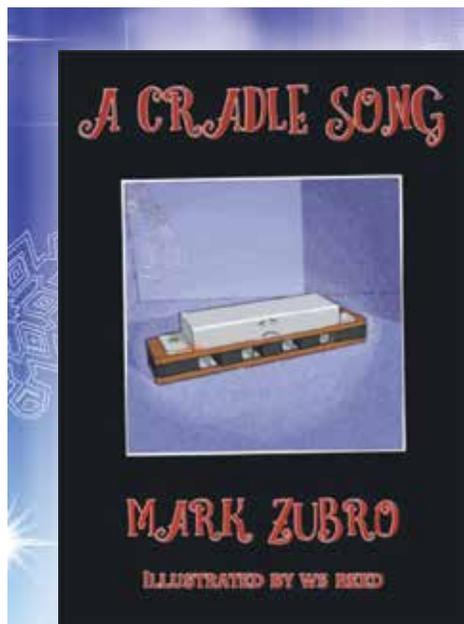
The night after he left, his hunger drove him. He snuck back into their apartment. He ate what he could find. He took as many of his clothes and a few oddments as he could carry. None of the objects he took were very large, but what he thought he might need. He also stuck deep in his pockets a few small treasured toys.

Every day he searched for his mom, but he couldn't find her. He had no grandmas or grandpas to go to. They'd moved from their hometown so his dad could learn to heal people. He knew no one in this city.

His parents had said he was too little to have a phone. Very few kids his age in this poor part of town ever thought of having one. That cost money.

Was his mom in a hospital? He didn't know which one it might be, where it was, or how to get there. Once in a while, the fear that she might be dead flitted at the back of his consciousness. He knew that war might bring death, but he didn't understand how or why. But his mom wasn't away to war, nor was his sister. He didn't know how to wrap his mind around that possibility. He feared asking an adult.

End of part two. Part three 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.

Chicago hosts Latino Fashion Week

BY VEE L. HARRISON

The opening night of Latino Fashion Week, held Oct. 11 at Block Thirty Seven in downtown Chicago, was as fierce as the models who were walking the runway. Models, photographers, spectators and friends gathered for the opening of a weeklong celebration of Latinx culture through fashion.

"Latin fashion has really evolved," said designer Richard Dayhoff. "Latino Fashion Week is about diversity and inclusion. Latino Fashion Week designs are by Latinos, but for everyone."

Dayhoff featured his 2019 spring/summer leisure collection at the show. He is a member of

FASHION

the Chicago Mayor's Fashion Council and his designs have been featured in Elle, Harper Bazaar, W, Glamour and Men's Style. His resume also includes styling Oprah Winfrey as well as co-hosting CBS's weekly show Fashion Police.

Rose Mandel, owner of Next Fashion Chicago and Mandel Productions, where she serves as producer and director throughout Chicago Fashion Week, added that Latino Fashion Week is a crucial part of Chicago's cultural scene: "Fashion period is important. Keeping fashion alive is important,"



Front: Arabel Alva Rosales (Latino Fashion Week co-founder), Richard Dayhoff and Lourdes Duarte.

Photo by Joem Bayawa

said Mandel. "The industry and retail has changed so dramatically over the last five to 10 years just making sure people are aware and the community

is involved, and nights like this are a support of design."

BOOK REVIEWS

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

REVIEWS BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

The Revolution is Female

Author: Kristen Blush
\$61; Blush; 128 pages

Modern HERstory

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

What does Trump's America mean for feminism?

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

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

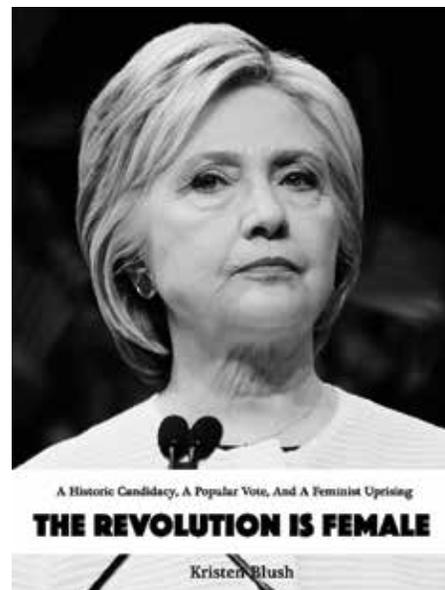
Revolution is divided into three sections: "I'm With Her" looks at the Clinton campaign, from the early days of the Democratic primary to general election voting in November 2016. As you'd expect, these photographs radiate hope, in the joyous face of former President Bill Clinton and in enthusiastic supporters getting a glimpse

BOOKS

of the woman they hope will be President. The second section, "Resist," has a different but no less vehement energy as new activists join women's marches and other protests throughout the country. Young girls in pink knitted hats proudly show off their Hillary buttons and marchers tote signs saying "Females Are Strong As Hell."

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

Modern HERstory takes a wider look at female and nonbinary contributions to society. The book features profiles (written by Imani) and illustrated portraits (by Monique Le) of a wide range



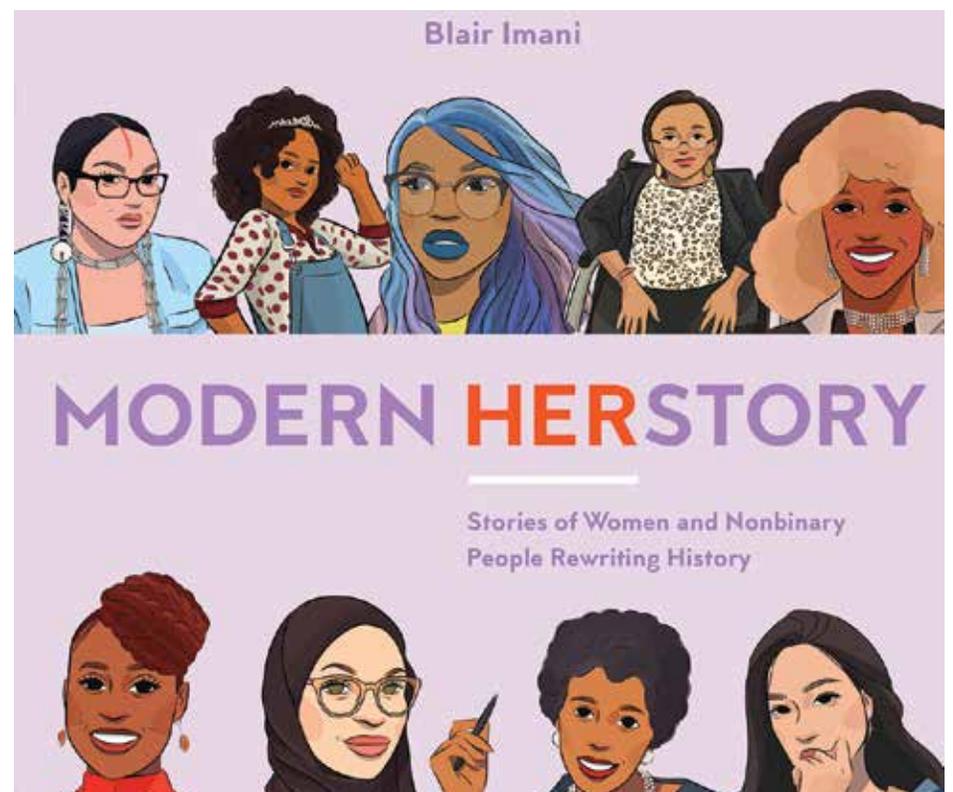
of historical and contemporary icons, from trans activists and Stonewall Riot instigators Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, to writer-comedian Issa Rae and rapper Missy Elliott. Each profile contains career highlights as well as obstacles the person had to overcome: for example, Elliott's abusive homelife, author Roxane Gay's childhood trauma and transgender activist Jazz Jennings' childhood spent living under an identity that didn't feel quite right. Most of these "herstorical" figures are of color, many are queer or transgender, and all have made great strides in science, literature, pop culture and activism. The stories are both informative and easy to read, and Le's colorful illustrations make each subject seem larger than life.

Imani herself is Black, Muslim and queer, and

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

The Revolution is Female is available at RevolutionIsFemale.com.

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



NUNN ON ONE

Noah Cyrus gives fans a 'Good Cry'

Noah Cyrus.
Photo from David
Enriquez/Records
Marketing

BY JERRY NUNN

Singer Noah Cyrus just gave Chicago a “Good Cry” at the House of Blues recently. Her new Good Cry EP covers a very public breakup with rapper Lil Xan, the passing of collaborator XXXTentacion and her famous family.

The daughter of Billy Ray Cyrus and sister of pop star Miley has a lot to talk about at the young age of 18. Named one of Time magazine’s 30 Most Influential Teens last year, she has acted with her father in Doc and sister on Hannah Montana.

Windy City Times: Do you still live in Nashville?

Noah Cyrus: No, I moved to LA when I was 5. When Hannah Montana started we all just packed up and moved to LA.

WCT: Did you always want to sing?

NC: No, I didn’t. I liked singing, but not until I was 15 did I think about a career.

WCT: Did your family give you advice?

NC: My family doesn’t give me advice like people are thinking of. My mom is my manager. She is not the typical momager—she keeps it separate.

It helped when I moved out. I never wanted that to get in the way of our mom and daughter relationship. She is my best friend in the whole world. I am such a momma’s girl!

WCT: What went into the Good Cry EP?

NC: A lot went into it. I wrote it when I was in a relationship for two years. That was an emotional rollercoaster.

I was also going through some personal struggles with anxiety and depression. I was figuring out who I was at age 17. The breakup helped me get a good grasp on that because I wasn’t so codependent on somebody. I didn’t look for

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myself in somebody else at that point.

Good Cry is my struggles in the past two years. Nobody saw it because I was putting out songs like “Stay Together” and “I’m Stuck” that I wasn’t passionate about. They are great records, but not what I was feeling at the time. I was going through something much more dark and personal.

People saw someone doing pop music and that is not what I am trying to do. Ben Howard, Kanye West and Alex Turner are my three biggest musical inspirations. They show their pain through their music. I wanted Good Cry to show the mental hell I was going through.

WCT: What movie makes you cry?

NC: The Fault in Our Stars, Paper Towns, P.S. I Love You and Titanic are my four go-to cry movies.

WCT: Describe your song “Again.”

NC: That song will always be very special to me. It took four days for me and [musician/singer/songwriter/rapper/record producer] Labrinth to write. There was a different second verse. I had the song for a couple of months and went to Australia. There was a beautiful cliff so we hired a videographer. I directed the video with my manager at the time.

Rob Perry, the chairman at Columbia, had just signed XXXTentacion. X hopped on the song but unfortunately didn’t get to be a part of the video. I think that’s what makes it so special that “you don’t know what you got ‘til it’s gone” line and I lost such a dear friend who was there for me in a hard part of my life. That song really connects with me. Every time I perform that record I can feel him in the room.

WCT: Are a lot of the songs on Good Cry emo-

tional for you?

NC: The record is so real and true to me. It is very personal to me. When I was writing “Punches,” I was on a couch sobbing. It was one of the hardest days with my ex-boyfriend.

“Good Cry” I wrote the day after Avicii died. There was so much and I was fighting with my boyfriend again at the time. There was always a mental struggle and a fight.

“Mad at You” I wrote a year into the relationship. We made it another year and I still felt the same way. That was when we realized we couldn’t be together. That was part of my mental growth.

WCT: How do you convey this to an audience?

NC: They get it by listening to my music. I wish I could sit with them like I am with you. I want them to know what goes into the CD. I made six

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from a white scrim and a few well-placed light cues, The American Revolution has no production values: the performers are storyteller, set and sound all at once. Clad in identical red spandex union suits, they play a myriad of characters, from George Washington’s humble slave to French royalty. Their mouths provide copious sound effects and music, and their bodies form buggies, ships and flags. To say the actors’ spatial awareness, ensemble work and positive energy are unparalleled, is the understatement of the decade.

Devised theater is a woefully underrated and incredibly challenging art form. The ensemble has no script to work with and must create from the bottom up: it’s the ultimate team-building exercise. Together and apart, the cast of The American Revolution frolic with an incredible grace. Their movements are intricate and beautiful, giv-

different records and they were all about the same thing. They all come from anger, sadness and confusion. It all made a story about my life.

WCT: Talk about this concert tour. Any cover songs you like to do?

NC: I love covering M.I.A. “Paper Planes” and Hozier’s “Take Me to Church.”

The tour is usually just a sit-down discussion between me and my musical director.

WCT: Can people buy your tears for \$12,000 at the merch booth?

NC: No; the tears are not real, unfortunately, but they can grab this hoodie or a T-shirt. It is a remake of my dad’s merch from the ‘90s. We did the exact same thing as him but put my face on it. I have always been my dad’s biggest fan.

Also, I have a voice candle with my face on it as well for sale. If you go in my house, you will see I have 140 religious candles. It took me three different dollar stores to get them all!

WCT: Miley is heavily involved in the LGBT community. Is that something you would like to do?

NC: Totally! I have always been supportive of all of my friends. There is no judgment with me. I would like to get involved.

I have worked with PETA, but not with LGBTQ yet. My best friend since I was 13 years old is a drag queen that is crushing it up in Toronto right now. I went to the drag shows there and it was the best time of my life!

WCT: Do you have a favorite scary movie, now that Halloween is here?

NC: I don’t have a favorite, but it’s always been a ritual to watch The Birds and The Shining with my dad every year.

WCT: Ponyo was a favorite movie of mine. Would you like to pursue more acting?

NC: I would like to. Voice over I would be down to do. A Hayao Miyazaki film was a huge honor to be a part of when I was eight years old. I didn’t know how legendary the cast was at the time with Betty White, Liam Neeson and Tina Fey, but now I will never forget it. I was super blessed to be the star.

I like deep TV shows like American Horror Story or Westworld—stuff that gets you thinking!

Visit NoahCyrus.com to follow the tour and purchase the new music.

ing off an air of childlike spontaneity that only comes from copious training, careful rehearsal and countless examples of trial and error. Even the nastiest character has a goofy charm, but the more problematic historical elements aren’t ignored—for example, culturally appropriating Native American dress during the Boston Tea Party, and the fact that the “father of our country” Washington didn’t free his most loyal slave until after Washington’s death.

The American Revolution has the effect of a Sesame Street segment from the 1970s: whimsical, educational and pleasing to everyone from toddlers to the elderly. Certainly, every age group in the theater was fully engaged from beginning to end. With its unique, enthusiastic rendition of historic events rendered by a supremely talented ensemble, The American Revolution is a pleasant way to spend a morning—and a shining example of how devised theater can be.

Doc explores Art, AIDS and activism in Chicago

BY ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

Documents: Art, AIDS & Activism in Chicago—a traveling documentary that Visual AIDS and QUEER, ILL + OKAY presented—premiered Oct. 20 at Pride Arts Center.

The documentary showed the history of fighting AIDS and HIV in Chicago and bringing awareness to non-LGBTQ communities with 30 years of media production by activists, journalists, artists and educators working against the disease. Ranging from video diaries to documentary footage and oral history lessons, the film focused on artistic influence from zines and comics and organized movements that propelled the fight against AIDS for mostly gay black men. It also included footage from ACT UP/Chicago campaigns and personal accounts from women living with AIDS and those involved in the world's longest-running clinical research study on women with HIV.

After the screening, a panel discussion was held with educators and activists who were part of the movements and who are still working to change the stigma surrounding AIDS. They reflected on strides the movement has made in the last three decades, specifically footage that influenced a change in the treatment of women with AIDS. *Who's Got the Power?*, a 1990 work by Suzanne Wright and Gerry Albarelli, showcased a demonstration in the street against the Cook County Hospital, which denied treatment to women with AIDS even though it had space. According to activist Mary Patten, who was one of the founding

FILM

members of ACT UP and was part of the 1990 demonstration, the hospital did not have the money to add separate bathrooms for women so it reportedly could not treat women with AIDS.

"It was a matter of days after that action where we dragged the women's caucuses and 15 mattresses to correlate the 15 empty beds [at Cook County Hospital] and conceptualized this action [that the] the AIDS ward was opened to women the next day," said Patten, who is also a professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the departments of Film, Video, New Media and Animation and Visual/Critical Studies.

Max Smith, a writer who was in the film and has been at the forefront of the movement, remembered hosting meetings at bars in the '80s to get people informed and build a community around the issue, especially since the government was not doing much about AIDS or HIV treatment.

"I didn't think there was a time for city council or the state legislature to get up to speed; rather it was time for something to be done," Smith said. "There has been a huge leap forward in the awareness of City, County and State legislatures."

Smith wrote an essay called "December 1, 2031: AIDS at Fifty," which gives details and particulars of how he believes the HIV epidemic among same gender loving men can end and gay men can enjoy sexual intimacy despite HIV. He said he



Panel of Jennifer Brier, Cordelia M., Mary Patten, Max Smith, John Neff and Alex Fialho.

Photo by Ariel Parrella-Aureli

hopes the film will continue to raise awareness about the issue and influence cultural changes for broader communities.

The most recent footage from the documentary was a living history of women in Chicago with AIDS. Produced in 2017, *I'm Still Surviving: 20 Years of the Women's Interagency HIV Study* in Chicago is meant to change the the narrative on Chicago history and how much women need to be understood as long-term survivors, according to producer Jennifer Brier, who directs the Program in Gender and Women's Studies at University of Illinois at Chicago and has created numerous other exhibitions on the subject.

One of the subjects from the study and video project was Cordelia M., who is from Englewood and has AIDS (She requested that her full name not be used in this article.) She was diagnosed in 1992 and connected with Brier through the study, which was funded by the National Insti-

tutes of Health. She said it was impactful to meet other women struggling with the disease like she was and getting the healthcare treatment because of the study showed her a new way to live.

"What I realized is that you can survive with it and, at this point, I am undetectable," Cordelia said, to which the audience laughed and clapped in support.

Audience member Ekeng Bassey said the movie was really emotional to watch.

"It had to do with real situations, real people—it was beyond fiction," said Bassey, who is queer and has lived in Chicago for three years as a fashion stylist and home care helper. "To be in the same room with those who have experienced the epidemic was a great energy. It's something I feel like the entire Chicago should watch—gay, straight, [or] allies. We need to know this because it's our story as well, our experience."

Chicago author publishes story about escape

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Coming from a place of experiences and a vast amount of travel, Joe English has written his first novel, *A Place Called Schugara*.

English was born in Paterson, New Jersey, and came of age in Mexico City, Mexico. He graduated cum laude with a B.A. from Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and received an M.A. from Rice University in Houston. In earlier years, he worked as a ranch hand at the Wild Horn Ranch in Florissant, Colorado. He is also a Woodrow Wilson Fellow.

For 16 years, English was a professor at Triton College in River Grove, Illinois. Additionally, he founded Oak Park Real Estate in 1984, which provided safe and affordable housing, primarily, in Chicago's Austin neighborhood. For more than 45 years, English has lived in the Austin neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. English, the avid traveler, also maintains a residence in the Dominican Republic, where he spends much of his time.

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He has two children that he and his partner of 28 years, Joe Towe, raised. He added Towe was a loving parent and instilled values of decency and integrity in his children, Carmen and Aaron, who are now grown, from an early age.

"The four of us were a family until Joe's passing in the year 2000," said English. "Joe and I did not flaunt our relationship, but we refused to hide it. We both were inspired by Harvey Milk, who with wisdom and foresight, taught us that it is every person's duty to themselves to love themselves first in order to love others. To deny one's self is life-extinguishing. Doing so kills soul and spirit."

The book's synopsis begins with the question "Who among us has not dreamed of going to the corner store and simply disappearing?" It is a story filled with fear, love, tragedy, life, discovery, family, relationships, among other things, over the course of years.



Joe English.

Photo courtesy of Joe English

A Place Called Schugara tells the story of Travers Landeman, a businessman from Ohio who fakes his death on the Caribbean island Mabouhey to flee from a loveless marriage, a failing business and blackmail. Landeman had a close relationship with his nephew, which slipped away. Matthew, a teenager, is sexually abused by his parish priest and reaches out to his uncle for help, but Travers turns away. Matthew then commits suicide.

When Landeman escapes to Mabouhey, he is in-

jured when he rescues a child, Schugara, from a shark. Travers and Schugara's mother, Marguerite, fall in love and go on to build their home on the side of a volcano at a place they name after her daughter: *A Place Called Schugara*. The story continues with more twists and turns as years pass.

While Schugara is English's first published book, he has published short stories in the literary journal *Co-Existence* and in the anthology, *After Effects*.

Not classified as a non-fiction novel, English described this work as an editorial novel. The author admitted stepping into the story at various stages.

"It is gratifying that many readers have found these editorial intrusions one of Schugara's strengths, especially readers who usually stick to nonfiction," said English of inserting himself into the story. "The reader, not the writer, is God. Much of Schugara is indebted to the naturalistic writers like Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris and Upton Sinclair. They, too, had a lot of Chicago running through their veins."

"Writers should write about what we know—either from practical experience, from living, or from imagination," said English. "Schugara is based on my West Side experiences as well as my travels throughout the Caribbean, especially my

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Mercedes Detox and Christina Aguilera.
Photo by Jerry Nunn

CONCERT REVIEWS

Aguilera, Sivan deliver sick shows

BY JERRY NUNN

The Chicago Theatre packed in the audiences this past week with two shows that stood out for queer attendees.

Starting with pop singer Christina Aguilera on Oct. 16, this landmark venue filled up for the two nights. Eager fans had waited for the singer in hopes that she wouldn't cancel as she did the week before in Detroit and Orilla. The blonde bombshell wasn't feigning sickness though, sounding congested when she said, "I was determined to not cancel this show. It would be so much easier if I lip-synched!"

The trooper didn't cut any of her setlist that night and plowed through her memorable hits "Genie in a Bottle" and "Dirrty."

Her backup dancers supported her well and the costume changes went smoothly throughout the evening. The set and production was arena ready but in a smaller venue so a rare opportunity for fans to get a chance to shake her hand up close and personal.

Her recent albums have not had much radio air-play so The Liberation Tour was strong reminder of how powerful her voice is and why she has the job. Even under the weather, "Beautiful" still captivated and "Say Something" was touchingly

MUSIC

heartfelt.

She stuck to "Lady Marmalade" and James Brown's "It's a Man's Man's Man's World" as cover songs. She had a lot of territory to cover with her own catalogue of "Fighter" and "Can't Hold Us Down" among many others in two hours.

There were video montages along the way and for the encore a Brazilian couple were brought onstage to become engaged.

The finale, "Let There Be Love," had Aguilera showing her support of the LGBT community by bringing some local divas of drag to dance with her. Mercedes and Detox were the first night, with Shea Coulee and Mimi Marks on the second night.

The queen was back to regain her throne that night and, hopefully, she returns again in full health soon.

The following Friday, Oct. 19, another bug plagued a concert at the same venue with Troye Sivan also fighting a sickness on his Bloom Tour. He said he had been bed trying to recuperate. Don't pop singers know about flu shots?

Recently interviewed in WCT, Carlie Hanson got her feet wet opening the show with Kim Petras, following her with bubblegum pop. Petras men-

tioned performing at the local nightspot Berlin the previous night.

Sivan entered solo for his set simply standing in front of the curtain to "Seventeen." He said, "The gays are out tonight" and it was true, with rainbow flags being waved around and flamboyant attendees in every corner. It was refreshing to see many parents accompanying their teens to the show and how genuinely friendly the crowd was with each other. The fun vibe continued with more pop gems like "Bloom" and "Fools."

Sivan talked about having a crush on Zac Efron before the song "Heaven" that contains lyrics of "counting to 15." This was a reference to the singer waiting until that age to see if he would still be gay.

The openness of the Australian singer as an artist spilled over to the crowd and made his statements just as important as his music. Hopefully, his message continues to grow on The Bloom Tour as it marches on the rest of this year.



Troye Sivan.
Photo by Jerry Nunn

MUSIC

CONCERTS

Glad Rags;
Garbage

BY VERN HESTER

Out troubadour Glad Matt and his band, Glad Rags, played a pre-siesta show at The Hideout Inn on Oct. 14 in support of their latest full-length release, *Wonder Under* (on bandcamp).

The band played selections from the CD ("You Think You Know Me," "The Alamo") and previewed new unrecorded music during the set. Glad Rags' immediate plans are to spend the winter months recording with a new full length planned for release early next year.

Meanwhile, 1990s rockers Garbage played to a nearly sold-out house at The Riviera on Oct. 17 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their second album, *Version 2.0* (on Almo Sounds Records). Led by frontwoman Shirley Manson, the band roared through the album ("Temptation Waits," "Special"), while offering favorites from its 25-year career ("The Trick is to Keep Breathing," "Afterglow," "Deadwood," "You Look so Fine").

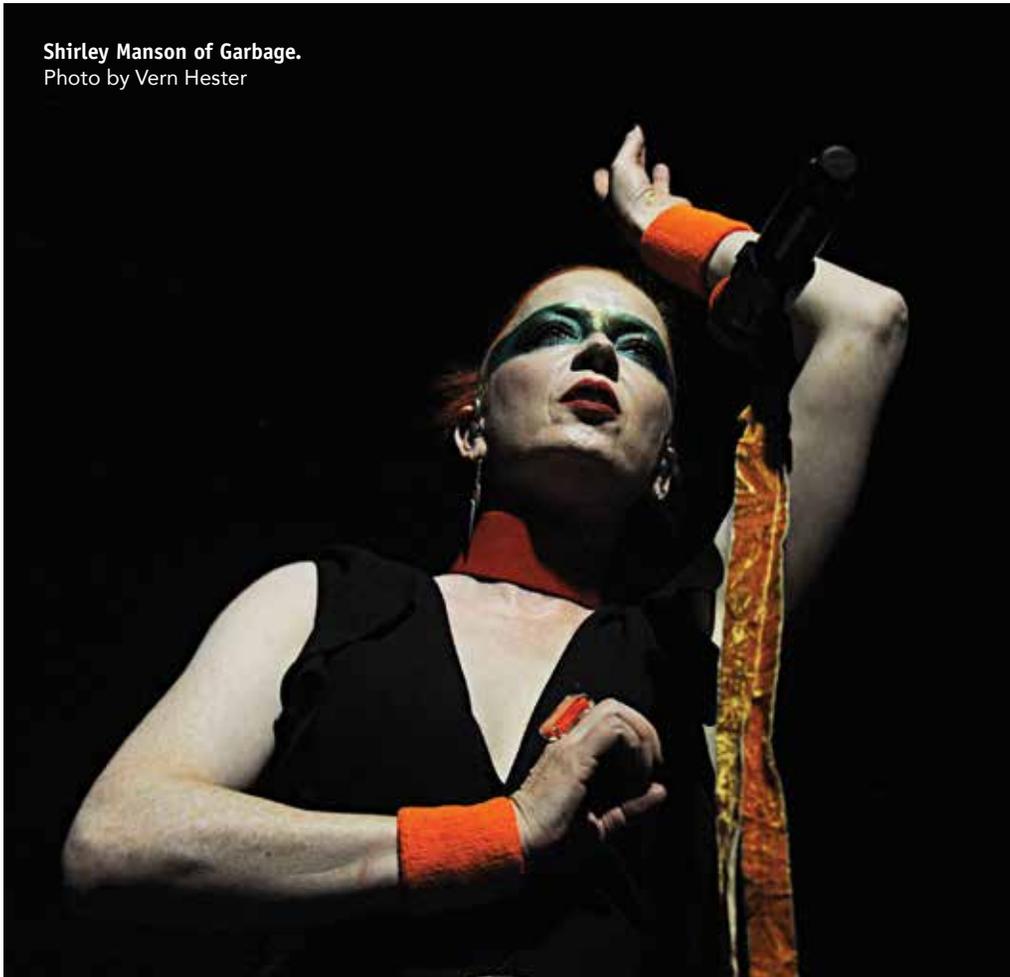


These three photos: Glad Rags. Left: Glad Matt. Above: Mary Ann Glad. Right: Manuel and Kelsee Glad.

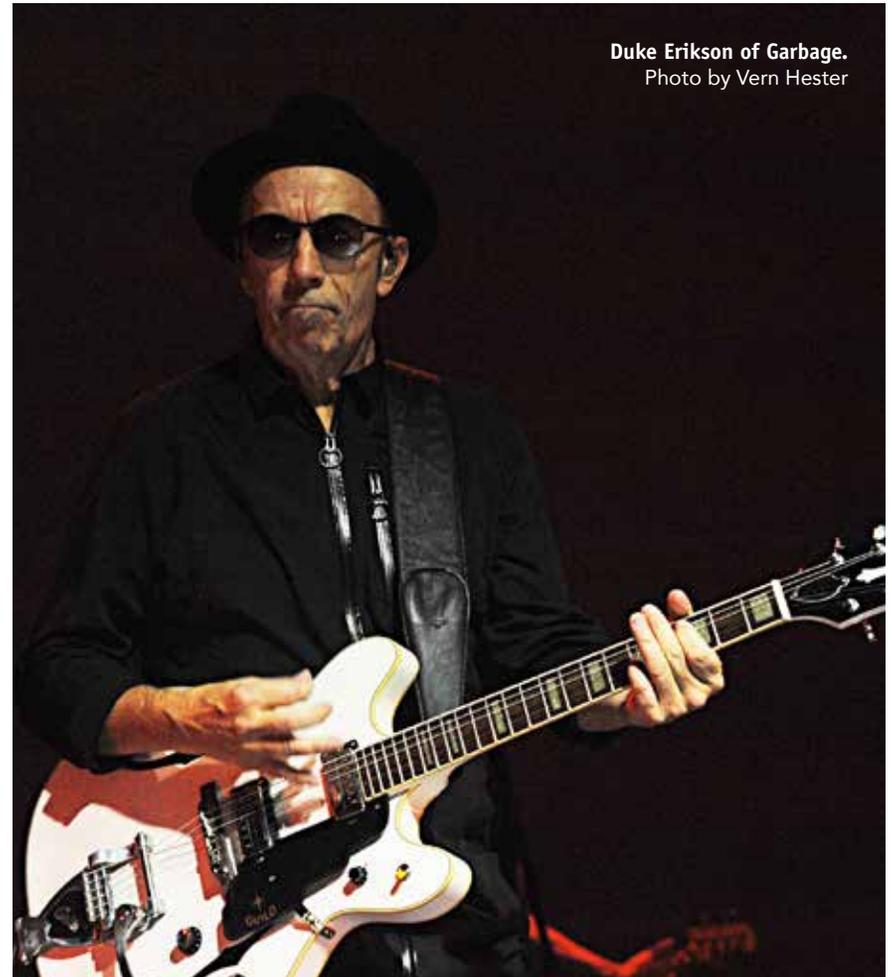
Photos by Vern Hester



Shirley Manson of Garbage.
Photo by Vern Hester



Duke Erikson of Garbage.
Photo by Vern Hester



David Hernandez: 'Idol' alum on new CD, recovery and self-love

David Hernandez.
PR photo by Bobby Quillard

BY JOHN STADELMAN

American Idol finalist David Hernandez's new self-released *Kingdom: The Mixtape* shows a great maturity from 2011's *I Am Who I Am*. While it explores depression, substance abuse and frustrations with the music industry, *Kingdom* also celebrates recovery, individuality and above all, authenticity.

Windy City Times: It's been seven years since your first album. How have you seen yourself develop in that time, and how do you see that playing out in *Kingdom*?

David Hernandez: I've changed so much!

I've had a lot of experiences, I've matured, my writing [and] musical ear has gotten better. I love [*I Am Who I Am*], though. It's my baby but it was definitely more produced; I had less say in some of the writing.

I wasn't fully comfortable with myself ... I had a lot of people telling me to not come out as gay, to always sing about girls. Music is such a reflection of an artist's soul, so if I'm not singing my truth, it's not really comfortable for me. I didn't

know what I could say or couldn't say.

For *Kingdom*, all the f--king rules are out. I talk about sex in there, about heartbreak, about addiction. *Kingdom* is raw, it's honest, 100-percent me.

WCT: There's an authenticity to that.

DH: Oh, yeah. The first three tracks—right away that's like heartbreak.com! And I wrote that about an ex who I was with for almost three years, and there wasn't a solid three days that we didn't go without arguing about something. ... I was in a dark phase and taking a lot of Xanax and drinking a lot and my overall vision just became really blurred and I ended up staying in it for so long. It's crazy what you do to yourself.

WCT: "Yourself" seems to be a thematic crux, in terms of individuality and authenticity. A lot of that is directed toward your experience with the music industry, but how does being a gay musician play into this?

DH: What's funny about "Yourself" is I almost didn't put that on the album... [But] "Yourself" has been surprisingly one of people's favorite tracks. I've had people message me like, "Oh, my

MUSIC

god. This song spoke to me in so many ways!"

It just resonates with people so well and I think just as a human we all feel like we're not good enough. ... In the chorus where I say, "Say what you need/Set yourself free/Gotta be the one who makes you believe"—You're the one that's going to believe in you the most out of anyone, so speak it out loud and support yourself.

I wish that I would have learned to love myself quicker, to get to the point that I'm at now ... And at 23, 24, as a gay man you're suppressed. I was suppressed in my earlier years and I think there's still that little guy in there sometimes that's still like, "Oh, you just sounded really gay," and I'm still learning to fight that. Now I'm like, "Yeah queen!" I'm comfortable with saying these things now and it's been such a great evolution.

WCT: What advice would you give to people who are going through those issues right now?

DH: It sounds cliché, but find two or three people that love you for who you are—just surround

yourself with them all the time. It's getting so much better growing up and having all these different pronouns and identifying as certain things that never were available when I was growing up.

It's gotten a lot easier, and authenticity is way more acceptable now. And from what I've learned, yeah, you listen to your mom and your dad and the people that are positive influences on you, but for the most part where I think I went wrong was I listened to what everybody would say—so many different opinions and it would just stifle me and I didn't know which direction to go ... and I'd freak out and all my music would just sit there on my laptop.

But now that I'm in my thirties I'm like, "Screw this! Ain't nobody going to do this for me the way I'm going to do this, so let me just put it out there!" That's why I put out *Kingdom* and I think that's why it's gotten the response it's gotten—it's so real, it's so raw; [with] the political climate, people just want something that's true.

Kingdom: The Mixtape is available at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/kingdom-the-mixtape/1436902362>.

Local firm partners with nonprofit for pro bono project

BY ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

Local architect firm JGMA does not let money restrict its clients. Not unlike other architects working on the South and West sides, JGMA's philosophy that design can influence better education, social programs and more public space to those who cannot afford it is why the firm enjoys working with nonprofits who also have a strong social justice mission—often at no cost to the client.

JGMA completed pro bono consulting services and design to Cabrini Green Legal Aid's (CGLA's) new building at 6 S. Clark St. after the nonprofit was forced to leave its old building. CGLA aims to provide free legal help to those incarcerated to change Chicago's criminal justice system and client environments to better their situations.

Juan Gabriel Moreno, co-founder and president of JGMA, said the nonprofit stirs up emotions for the firm because of the neighborhood's history with public housing and the way people there were treated.

"We have strong feelings for anything Cabrini Green," Moreno said. "The plight of individualism in that neighborhood and the reality of what happened [is] something that has marked us."

This passion for the community from the firm's beginning in 2010 and a strong connection to CGLA Executive Director Esther Franco-Payne through a past program was also a driving force to help out the nonprofit, he said.

Six architects worked on the project, completed at the end of June with a grand opening Aug.

ARCHITECTURE

20. Not only did JGMA design the new space, but the team acted as Franco-Payne's free consultant, helping her navigate the tricky world of lease negotiations, finding the right space, building requirements and contract details. With this being a pro bono operation, the firm took special steps to make sure CGLA did not get the short end of the stick from contractors and builders.

It was equally important to give CGLA the space it deserved to best serve its clients, address staff needs and keep growing, said John Rausch, design principal and co-founder of the firm. Because of the nature of client conversations, Rausch said having special acoustics to speak freely while maintaining security was taken into consideration through design, as well as having each department share what they needed to do their best work. Flexible, opens spaces that could be used by clients or staff are new additions that have helped productivity. Project Designer Kai Liu was instrumental in designing these spaces and creating comfort, privacy yet openness simultaneously.

The nonprofit is three floors: one for client meetings that acts as the welcome space, one for staff and a third for community events. The welcome space has a children's play area, a waiting area and four small interview rooms that have acoustic privacy.

"[The first floor] is acoustically treated so privacy is maintained but there is still a visual con-



JGMA architects Juan Gabriel Moreno, Kai Liu and John Rausch. Photo courtesy of JGMA

nection to that central waiting area so people can maybe see their children playing while they are inside talking with their attorneys," Liu said.

The top floor's multipurpose functionality helps CGLA host fundraisers, community events, staff gatherings and meetings, Liu said, which supports the nonprofit's mission and gives them an activated, open area.

This intentional and careful design process is what Franco-Payne of CGLA appreciated from the architects. She said JGMA took the time to understand what the staff and clients needed from the space and were very supportive and understanding of important details like the intake rooms. Franco-Payne said the old building only had one interview room, so having four gives the company more time with clients and helps them fit growing needs. The new location downtown gives clients easy access to the building and transportation, also an important factor in the upgrade.

"We were able to create space design that is reflective of the people who use the space," Franco-Payne said. "Our clients are able to get their

needs met and get taken care of."

While projects like these are often time-consuming and not profitable for architects, the benefits to working for nonprofits and doing pro bono work are many. Giving underserved communities a space to call home can inspire ideas, investment, financial capital and even grant submissions—altruistic and strategic from a long-term perspective, Moreno said.

"Besides the altruistic part, there are relationships that can be built," Rausch said, giving an example of how Franco-Payne connected them to another upcoming project. Liu added that design can change the mindset and elevate aspects of people's lives, which is enriching for both sides and a design challenge that keeps the creativity muscles flexed.

"When you open yourself up to help people, you encounter some of the most amazing human beings—people that will mark your life in a positive way," Moreno said about the connections made through this project. "Nonprofit work will continue to be part of what we do."

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AUTHOR from page 16

109 trips to Jamaica."

English shared that after being perplexed and bewildered by an overnight re-segregation of Austin in 1970-71 and also hearing with horror Ronald Reagan denounce food stamps, among other experiences, it became increasingly clear to him that the United States' culture, was ever more desperate and entrapping.

It was during this time he began wondering what it would be like to simply disappear—escaping to leave it all behind and starting anew. So, he began writing an adventure story, of which he called "a tapestry of adventure stories, that blended together my puzzlements and musings with my newfound love of the Caribbean, incorporating bits and pieces of my 109 trips to Jamaica, mainly to out-of-the way places like Robin's Bay and Trelawny, against the backdrop of Austin, a soulful place in its own right."

In his novel, English said he weaves these worlds in which to examine various themes and

questions.

"Schugara has taken up 25 years of my life to date, might as well spend the time left to me watering the seedling," said English, adding that he is happy to come in person to any group, especially book clubs, to discuss his book.

English shared that he hopes Schugara causes readers to think and to see with partially new eyes.

"What is taken for granted should never be taken for granted," English explained. "Of Travers Landeman, one of Schugara's main characters, I write: 'He had not taken the road less traveled by. No—he had taken the American superhighway, interstate, four lanes, median strip, Howard Johnson's, and it had taken him straight to hell.' We must learn to love ourselves and then to love others and then to act in love. We must seek ways to step outside accepted constraints—to question, to explore."

To learn more about English and *A Place Called Schugara*, visit sites.google.com/view/Schugara/home.

Hundreds dress up for 'Big Orange Ball'

Hundreds of people crowded the Park West Oct. 20 for Howard Brown Health's fourth annual Big Orange Ball—the kickoff to the Halloween season.

Raising nearly \$150,000, the event showcased the A.J.A. Talent dancers on Park West's stage. This year's special guests were RuPaul's Drag Race finalist Shea Coulee, and TransTech CEO and actor Angelica Ross (from TV's Pose).

Also, Mr. International Rubber shared Exhibition Rubber, an interactive fetish experience open to all attendees.

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)



Coco Sho-Nell Presents
Whores of Horror.
Photo by Austin Oie



Coco Sho-Nell's horror show to present real scares

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

For more than a decade, Raymond Cleveland has broken out the fright wigs and fake blood to celebrate his favorite holiday, Halloween.

Cleveland's onstage persona, Coco Sho-Nell, has teamed with dozens of drag and variety performers over the years to develop Whores of Horror into a truly disturbing live show. In 2018, however, Cleveland is partnering with Red Tape Theatre to bring theatrical flare to a night of debauched Halloween variety acts.

"Whores of Horror' started as a campy production; then I had the idea to take things dark. I wasn't seeing anything dark and twisted in Chicago," Cleveland explained.

From there, "Whores of Horror: Slasher" and "Whores of Horror: The Monster Inside"—celebrating Jekyll & Hyde-style transformations, among others—were born. This year, Cleveland and the Red Tape team will be pulling out all the stops to create a Haunted House in their performance space.

"I consider myself a theater queen, both as Coco and as Raymond, which is why I thought working with Casey [Chapman] & Red Tape was such a good pairing," Cleveland said. Coco Sho-Nell is equal parts brash character development and storytelling. No matter what drag show she headlines, Coco Sho-Nell is always thought provoking and unexpected, and if her wig, dress, or shoes are getting in the way of her story, she'll

DRAG/NIGHTLIFE

fing them off, and continue, unhindered.

"I love when I can see performers connecting with their pieces. It's one thing to lip-sync, but are you connecting on another level?" Cleveland asked. "Have the gall to do something new and trying something different. You should always be competing with yourself, not with others."

In pairing with Red Tape, both Cleveland and Red Tape Theatre marketing director Casey Chapman are hoping to recapture a Chicago drag renaissance that died out in the early 2000s. Local luminaries such as Miss Ruff N' Stuff and Lucy Foozie would host boundary-pushing variety shows that didn't always fit the mold.

"We need people who can create their own identity," Cleveland explained. "When I started off, I got to develop my persona, I didn't have to aim for a type, or look polished. You don't have to stick to certain standards, you you don't have to be the fishiest one, just be who you are." With that, the performer roster for Whores of Horror is full of queer, trans and other gender non-conforming performers, such as C'est Kevvie, Vivian Dejour, Jean Wildest, Luc Ami, Alexis Hex, Anita Jon, Sultry Susan, Helena Handbasket and Duke LeSling.

Windy City Times asked Chapman just how Whores of Horror fit in with the Red Tape Theatre, alongside shows like The Shipment and the theater's upcoming production of In the Blood. One benefit Chapman mentioned was that this and Coco Sho-Nell's initial drag production, Coco's Carnivale, have provided is bringing a much

needed queer focus to Red Tape.

Chapman joined the staff as a marketing director two years ago, for the company's 14th season, artistic director Max Truax changed Red Tape's mission to join the free theater movement; no ticket price is charged for admission to any show.

"You can't put a price on a piece of art," Chapman said. "Everyone should have access. Many believe that theater is for rich, white, older audiences, so it became our company goal to invite everyone. The one thing our audiences have in common is they all pay zero dollars."

Another benefit to staging these productions in a free theater playhouse is that it opens up drag to enthusiasts who are under 21, Cleveland added. "The thing about working in bars all the time, is you lose some freedom to do what you want," Cleveland said. "I wanted to reach an audience that didn't necessarily have to be 21 to get in the door."

"We're bringing a dark tale, with a variety of different artistic perspectives to life," said Cleveland.

"For free!" added Chapman.

No matter who you are, so long as you can handle a little squeamishness, Raymond Cleveland and Red Tape invite you to have a good time, experience something you've never seen before, celebrate your differences, and maybe get a little bloody.

Red Tape Theatre's Coco Sho-Nell Presents: Whores of Horror runs Saturday, Oct. 27, for one night only at The Ready Performance Space, 4546 N. Western Ave. To reserve tickets and for more information, visit RedTapeTheatre.org.

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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.

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
DISCORD ADDAMS

AGE
"Discord has been around for centuries. Chaos is everywhere."

HOMETOWN
Akron, Ohio

NAME

"I began drag roughly 7 years ago! The first song I ever performed was Teeth by Lady Gaga and I remember just stomping around in a bra and underwear looking like a total goof!"

DRAG INSPIRATION

"I pull inspiration from every generation and genre of rock n roll—Mick Jagger, Steven Tyler, Alice Cooper and Courtney Love."

FAVORITE NUMBER

"Lady Gaga has an amazing cover of the 4 Non Blondes song 'What's Up' and it's hands down my FAVORITE song to perform. It has so much emotion and energy and really captivates the audience."

BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION ABOUT YOU

"A lot of people initially think I'm mean and intimidating because of my aesthetic and makeup but once I talk to people it allows that misconception to melt away because I'm actually really nice and eager to talk to new people at my shows."

WHERE CAN WE CATCH YOU?

G-man Tavern every first Friday co-hosting of Velvet Underground alongside Wanda Screw; every second Wednesday with Gidget Von Addams hosting Warped at Scarlet; and every other month cohosting Spit 'n Glitter at the Slippery Slope.

SOCIAL MEDIA

@discordaddams on Instagram and Twitter

Photo by Gidget Von Addams

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.



BILLY Masters

"I actually feel bad for him. What I saw was a minstrel show today. Him in front of all these white people—mostly white people—embarrassing himself and embarrassing Americans, but mostly African-Americans, because every one of them is sitting either at home or with their phones, watching this, cringing."—Don Lemon on Kanye West's recent Oval Office visit.

When Sarah Jones' solo show "Sell/Buy/Date" opened at the Geffen Playhouse last spring, it sold out in a matter of minutes. It's fortunate that the Los Angeles LGBT Center is mounting this encore presentation so that others can experience this mesmerizing work. Jones is a phenomenon, with many touting her as a successor to Lily Tomlin. Comparisons between the two miss a vital point—while Lily is the face of her work, the words are those of partner Jane Wagner. Sarah Jones writes and performs her own material.

But like Tomlin's solo pieces, "Buy/Sell/Date" could be seen repeatedly and leave you gleaning something new each time. The show takes place in the future during a seminar on sex workers. We meet men, women, children and elders, and Miss Jones inhabits them all beautifully. The audience is not only entertained, but also moved to think. The show runs through Nov. 3, and you can get tickets at LALGBTCenter.org.

Opening night was hosted by Lily Tomlin and Laverne Cox. Rashida Jones (no relation) was also listed as a host but, to the best of my knowledge, she showed up, took some photos and presumably had better places to be. Afterwards, my play mama, Jenifer Lewis, went backstage to congratulate Sarah. I was walking into the lobby with Debra Messing when, right in front of me, I saw her: Brigitte Nielsen. Believe it or not, I would (and did) knock people over to get to Nielsen. Most remember Gitte from her marriage to Sylvester Stallone, her various other romantic entanglements and her tabloid headlines. But if you were in the UK when she did Celebrity Big Brother, you saw another side of Gitte—a human side and a real person capable of great love and compassion. She's smarter than you think, wickedly funny, brutally honest and a nurturer.

When I came upon her (you can't miss her—she's, like, nine feet tall), she was chatting with a group of women, led by comedian Whitney Cummings! The topics? Fertility, IVF and older women giving birth. Cummings was asking Brigitte everything about her landmark pregnancy at 54. Whit may be only 36, but she's obviously thinking about having children—and, more importantly, when. She even said, "You know, they should tell girls when they're young that they should freeze their eggs so that they have them ... just in case." What a brilliant idea—and it came from Whitney Cummings! Nielsen spoke with them endlessly and even offered to stay in touch and be of service. It was surely anticlimactic when I engaged her in conversation about Jackie Stallone and her time on "Big Brother," spoke Italian with her husband and perhaps



Don Lemon (above) made his thoughts known about Kanye's visit to the White House. Photo courtesy of Farrah Gray Publishing

drooled a bit over her model son, Douglas Aaron Meyer. (Picture a male version of Gittle.) Photos will follow on BillyMasters.com.

We hear that things are heating up between Rosie O'Donnell and girlfriend Elizabeth Rooney. As you may recall, Rosie and Rooney have been dating for just more than a year. Tongues have been wagging ever since Elizabeth added an "R" and an emoji of a diamond ring to her Instagram bio. (It has since disappeared.) But something else struck me. When Rosie spoke about this relationship with Howard Stern, she said, "It's the first time I've dated someone younger than me. It's a very trippy thing." What's trippy is I can't find record of Rosie ever dating anyone OLDER than her. Rosie was born in 1962. Her most recent wife, the late Michelle Rounds, was born in 1971. Kelli Carpenter was born in 1967. There are other paramours I won't name who are even younger. Before someone says, "There you go, focusing on the age gap again"—Rosie brought it up first. By the by, she also told Howard she'd never get married again. We'll see about that.

Someone making news is Aaron Hernandez, who died more than a year ago. The quarterback of his high school football team, Dennis SanSoucie, confirms that the two began a sexual relationship in middle school which continued through high school. "Me and him were very much into trying to hide what we were doing. We didn't want people to know," he said of his relationship with the former tight end. Aaron's brother Jonathan said that Hernandez "had a feminine way about him," which enraged their father: "I remember [Aaron] wanted to be a cheerleader. My cousins were cheerleaders and amazing. And I remember coming home and like my dad put an end to that really quick." We'll give SanSoucie the last word: "I really truly feel in my heart I got the thumbs-up from him." TMI.

Lots of you sent in the same "Ask Billy" question, but it was Randy in Maine who wrote in first. "What is the story about the gay-porn star and flight attendant having sex in the bathroom? And there's a video? Where?"

Gay-porn star Austin Wolf was on a Delta flight when he met a newly hired flight attendant. The FA in question was not working, but he was in uniform. At a certain point, the two disappeared

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into a lavatory for eight minutes. I'd say you can only imagine what went on, but no need to imagine—Austin took a video with his phone! Not only is the attendant's face clearly visible (since his mouth is doing much of the initial work), but so is his employee ID. Oops! And, before you ask, yes, the attendant enjoyed Austin from both ends. Moments after Wolf posted the video, people went crazy and immediately identified the Delta employee. He claims to have not known he was being filmed, which is: a) unbelievable and 2) hardly the point. He's been suspended. Austin quickly deleted the video from the web ... but not before we snagged it. Prepare for liftoff, on BillyMasters.com.

When people are joining the mile-high club just as I'm flying out of LAX, it's time for me to pack extra condoms and end yet another column. Be sure to check out BillyMasters.com—the site that ensures you'll unbuckle and get into the upright position. And if you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before you can say "Ocupado". So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Alpana Singh returns to 'Check, Please!'

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Check, Please!—the local show focuses on a rotating panel of everyday people commenting on various restaurants—will have a combination of the new and the familiar when Alpana Singh returns to helm the show after a five-year absence, succeeding Catherine De Orio.

Windy City Times: Did returning to Check, Please! feel like putting on a pair of old, comfortable shoes?

Alpana Singh: You know what it was? I describe it to people as having a job that you really love but, now, you know what you know and you have this life experience.

When I first took the show over [in 2003], I was 26 years old; I was still working as a sommelier. Now, I'm 41 and I have a lot more life behind me. I've three restaurants behind me now. So while I feel the essence of my personality hasn't changed—I'm still bubbly and outgoing—I



Alpana Singh (second from left) with guests on season 18.
Photos by WTTW-Ken Carl

feel I'm more solid with my insight. I feel more informed and authoritative. There come a time and age, you know?

WCT: You said you have three restaurants behind you. Are you no longer associated with any of them?

AS: So I only have Terra & Vine [in Evanston]. With Boarding House and Seven Lions, I sold my interests last August; Seven Lions is still going, and Boarding House closed a [little while] ago.

WCT: So did your return to Check, Please! happen?

AS: I just got a phone call and they asked me to meet, and one thing led to another—that's just how it happened. With me shedding a couple

restaurants, I was in a much better place in my life when it came time to do it.

I felt like the universe was telling me something. It just worked out really well because, last year, I was thinking about running for office as a Cook County commissioner and I decided not to. There was something telling me to wait and that it wasn't the right time. It just wasn't for me, at that time. Then six months later this opportunity came along, and I'm glad I listened to my intuition.

WCT: So I saw the first episode. Based on it, I think your tag line should be "Is there such a thing as a bad taco?"

AS: [Laughs] That's pretty funny.

WCT: So what's different this time around?
AS: Well, we didn't change the formula—the things people want and adore about the show. The show has not changed at all.

However, some of the [extra] things are different. David Manilow, the creator of the show, and I are offering a behind-the-scenes look at the show; it us talking, "Between the Ferns" style. We talk about restaurants, of course, and about what guests say. We also have a column about some facet of the show; for example, I'll offer BYOB tips, like bringing albarino to a Mexican restaurant, or what to bring to a brunch—and I never thought about doing that.

So the [addenda] will be different, but the form and structure of the show will remain the same.

Also, [the additions are needed because] the dining landscape has changed: Chicago now hosts the James Beard Awards, and Chicago has been named a top dining city, and how social media has impacted dining with people preplanning their visits with research.

WCT: I wanted to offer a twist on the standard "What is your favorite restaurant" question: What now-closed restaurant do you wish were still open?

AS: I would say Charlie Trotter's; it was such a beacon of dining. Either that one, or one like Le Francais in its heyday in the '70s. It was about glam, old-school dining in which people got dressed up, and it was really about service and hospitality. It was really about fine dining.

The new season of Check, Please! will debut Friday, Oct. 26, on WTTW at 8 p.m. See <https://checkplease.wttw.com/>.



BERLIN

R.I.P. Stadust Thursdays.
Photos by Kirk Williamson





'Wig' out!: HalloWig raises funds for Lurie

Things got pretty hairy at Sidetrack for their HalloWig party, Saturday, October 20. Bewigged participants pitched in to help raise over \$5,000 for Lurie Children's Hospital. The party was hosted by Sidetrack resident Dixie Lynn Cartwright.

Photos by Joseph Stevens Photography



WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Oct. 24

Swan Lake Dance 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>

All Things Jackson Scream in Halloween, a night of Michael and Janet music videos. 9:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/events/186018912291689/>

Thursday, Oct. 25

Webinar, Elder LGBTQ veteran awareness OutServe Knowledge Online, hosted by Aaron Tax, Director of Advocacy, and Ashton Stewart, SAGEVets Coordinator, from SAGE!, discussing LGBTQ aging issues and how to support the elder LGBTQ veteran community. Starts 1 p.m. EST, on Facebook Live and online through the OutServe conference system. 12:00pm online <http://www.facebook.com/events/301437903971051/>

ChiTown Squares Halloween Dance With Arlene Kaspik. Our annual Halloween dance will take place at the Thursday workshop! Dress up in your creative costume for prizes. Warm up with Kate Reed 7-7:30. 7:30pm - 9:30pm Ebenezer Lutheran Church 1650 W Foster Chicago <http://www.chitownsquares.org>.

Barb Jungr and John McDaniel McDaniel was the music director on The Rosie



MYSTERY'S AFOOT

Wed., Oct. 31

The annual Halsted Halloween Parade & Costume Contest will take place at Halsted and Belmont. 2017 photo by Jerry Nunn

O'Donnell Show during its entire run. British singer Jungr has been making music of all kinds since the '70s in London. \$25 8:00pm Davenport's Piano Bar and Cabaret 1383 N Milwaukee Ave Chicago 773-278-1830 <http://tinyurl.com/ycfhhqum>

Hallow-Queen Edition of Pop Rocks Thursday Scary Good Drag with Chicago Queens Alexis Bevels, Saya Naomi, Alex Kay & Jasmine Phoenix join hostess Dixie Lynn Cartwright on the Sidetrack Stage. Get on stage with Dixie to Lip Sync for your Life and win fun prizes. No cover. 9:00pm - 2:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N

Halsted St Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/events/324804788348033/>

Friday, Oct. 26

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>

Trans/Gender Affirming Name Change Mobilization Hosted by Transformative Justice Law Project. olunteers will assist Cook County residents with filling out the documents required for a name change. Last Friday of every month in room 1202. 9:00am - 3:00am Daley Center Plaza 50 W Washington St Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/transformativjusticeproject/>

SexuWellness For women and TGNC individuals, a wide variety of sexual and reproductive health-related services like chest/breast exams, mammogram referrals, pap tests including HPV screening and pelvic exams, STI testing, birth control prescription, IUD placements. Fourth Friday of every month. whs@howardbrown.org 5:00pm - 8:00pm Howard Brown, 6500 N. Clark, Chicago 773-572-8359 <http://howardbrown.org/womens-health/>

Asians & Friends Costumed Pub Crawl Starting at North End moving on at 7:30 for a bite and then hit Boystown. Find Asians & Friends on Facebook 6:00pm Starting at North End, 3733 N. Halsted

Slo 'Mo Party's "The Coven Classic" A night of women, nonbinary & trans pow-

ered magic hosted by Kristen Kaza & Jen Delos Reyes. Benefits Chicago Volunteer. Treats on the patio sold by queer women and tarot services. Prizes for most supreme witch. Wheelchair accessible, gender neutral restrooms. \$20 9:00pm Sleeping Village, 3734 W Belmont Ave. <http://sleeping-village.com/calendar/slo-mo-party-the-coven-classic/>

Saturday, Oct. 27

UnMasked, a Masquerade Affair, HRC Chicago Gala and Auction Indivisible Aurora will receive the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Chicago Community Leadership Award. VIP reception, a large silent and live auction followed by a Black Tie optional dinner. 6:00pm Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile Tickets: <http://HRCChicago.org/gala>

Lakeside Pride's Brass Quintet Fall Recital Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles is family of performance groups of the LGBTQ community with three ensembles, Jazz Orchestra, Marching Band, and Symphonic Band plus a dozen plus ensembles. Free 2:30am - 3:30am Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://lakesidepride.org/event/brass-quintet-fall-recital/>

Sunday, Oct. 28

Halloween Weekend in Andersonville 100+ locations for trick-or-treat plus the Andersonville Sweetish Stroll 10:00am - 10:00pm. Continuing from Oct. 27. Start Andersonville Chamber of Commerce, 5217 N Clark <http://www.andersonville.org/halloween-in-andersonville/>

Monday, Oct. 29

The So You Think You Can Dance Live! 2018 tour Based on the Fox dance-competition show with the Top 10 contestants from season 15 7:30pm The Chicago Theatre (Chicago) 175 N State St Chicago http://www.msg.com/the-chicago-theatre?cmp=van_chicagothetheatre.

Tuesday, Oct. 30

Margaret Atwood, author Handmaid's Tale, two times and places Discussing implications her 1985 dystopian novel in contemporary world with Northwestern faculty members. Two events: The Chicago campus event noon in Northwestern Pritzker School of Law's Thorne Auditorium, 357 E. Chicago Ave. and the Evanston campus 4:30 p.m., in Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, 50 Arts Circle Dr. 4:30pm Pick-Staiger Concert Hall 50 Arts Cir Dr Northwestern University Evanston, IL 60208 Tickets: http://nbo.universitytickets.com/user_pages/event.asp?id=2364&cid=111

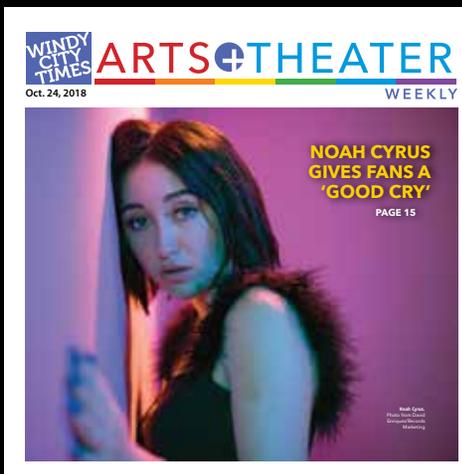
Wed., Oct. 31

22nd Annual Haunted Halsted Halloween Parade & Costume Contest Costume Contest has \$4,000 in cash & prizes in four categories: Theme, Group, Drag & Scary. Featuring a panel of drag queen judges and spectator Instagram hashtag voting! Winners Ceremony presented by Circuit Mom. Halsted St from Belmont Ave to Brompton Ave. Kick Off: X:XX pm at Halsted & Belmont 7:30pm Kick Off at Halsted & Belmont and go to Brompton Ave. <http://HauntedHalsted.com>

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