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PRODUCTION PUTS SAUCY
SPIN ON THE NUTCRACKER

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The Buttcracker: A Nutcracker Burlesque.
Photos by Matthew Gregory Hollis

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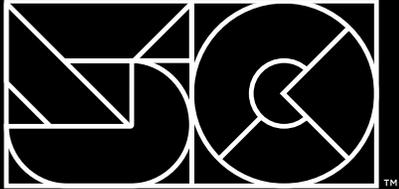




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THEATER REVIEW

The Revolutionists

Playwright: Lauren M. Gunderson
 At: Strawdog Theatre, 1802 W. Berenice Ave.
 Tickets: Strawdog.org 773-644-1380; \$35-\$40
 Runs through: Dec. 29

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

You probably haven't thought about revolution—not the kind extolled by advertisers, but the capital "R" off-with-their-heads variety—since history class, but try now to recall what you were told about the toppling of monarchies that didn't focus exclusively on males butting heads and making speeches. The documented contribution of women to the quest for independent rule, however, has always been largely restricted to wives, mothers, daughters and sweethearts serving as



Sarah Goeden and
 Kat McDonnell in *The
 Revolutionists*.
 Photo by Collin
 Quinn Rice

figureheads or martyrs in support of their sires.

Lauren M. Gunderson disapproves this injustice. In her account of the French revolution, Charlotte Corday, the assassin of Jean-Paul Marat, roundly denounces the assumption that she had to be "fucked into" taking action. Gunderson also argues the paradox of a privileged elite championing "freedom" while practicing colonialist slavery and domestic disenfranchisement, the insecurity of an artist's career, the downside of celebrity

and the ironies of faulty foresight. Her diatribe is framed in a scenario proposing a real-life playwright in 1783, one Mme. Olympe DeGouges, striving to be the voice of her turbulent age.

Late in the play, a tribunal accuses DeGouges of writing "a shameless drama, poorly penned" only to have the indignant author protest "It's a first draft!" While this factor might not apply to the play we are watching, there is no denying Gunderson's occasional surrender to an excess

of enthusiasm in her eagerness to explore every last contradiction inherent in her dramatic setting, making for occasional moments of vacant repartee or misplaced inside-jokes bridging gaps between pithier observations.

Gunderson's overstuffed text offers an abundance of deconstructive analysis packed into a mere two hours, with additional clutter provided by a Brecht-Tech ambience involving industrial-warehouse decor, exposed audio equipment and matte-white fashions encompassing a Dolly Parton-sized wig for the deposed Marie Antoinette and a baby-doll frock for Caribbean spy Marianne Angelle. The first heavy snowfall of the season couldn't help but take a toll on the opening night energy level (with Izis Mollinedo's slyly nuanced Corday emerging the sole performance to fully occupy every dimension of the role assigned her in Gunderson's brainy, witty and wordy sprint through three centuries) but what's a revolution without a challenge?

THEATER REVIEW

HeLa

Playwright: J. Nicole Brooks
 At: Sideshow Theatre Company at
 the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.
 Tickets: 773-404-7336;
 GreenhouseTheater.org; \$30
 Runs through: Dec. 23

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

HeLa juxtaposes three storylines linked only abstractly. Each one contains fine scenes that display the skill of J. Nicole Brooks, who benefits as a playwright from her experience as an actor. Collectively, however, HeLa is an odd duck.

Story One presents the cancer-related death of an unnamed Black woman in mid-20th-century Baltimore. Story Two presents a Black 1980s



Deanna Reed-
 Foster in *HeLa*.
 Photo by Jonathan
 L. Green

9-year-old Chicagoan, nurtured by her uncle and cousin, who dreams of becoming an astronaut or cosmologist. Story Three features two once-earthly beings, now adrift yet alive in space—one a Black woman and the other David Bowie's Major Tom. The stories intercut with each other as actors double or triple in various roles.

Only by reading an article in the program did I understand that the dying woman was Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951), whose biopsied tumor tissues

were cultivated into HeLa—the first human cell line to achieve scientific immortality. HeLa cells still are extensively used for medical research and were used by NASA for outer-space experiments, the article noted.

This helped me make abstract connections between the stories: how the dying Black woman unknowingly became part of the inspiration for the young Black girl; how the woman's literal physical essence—shot into space—gave rise to the surreal Black space entity, who offers sage but emotional commentary on our world; how the stars and heavens inspire and connect mere human mortals.

Many may be familiar with Lacks and HeLa—as I was not—via a 2010 book by Rebecca Skloots and a 2017 TV film with Oprah Winfrey. Such informed viewers may plug into this play immediately. But—and it's a big "but"—audience members should not have to read the program for sufficient context to make sense of the juggled stories. If I'd not read the article, I would have

been lost and, therefore, uninterested and dismissive of HeLa. This is a serious dramaturgical problem. A play needn't be literal or realistic, but its context must be self-apparent to viewers.

Still, there are precious and heartfelt moments throughout that are beautifully written, directed (by Jonathan L. Green) and played: a scene of charm yet pain between Henrietta and an affable fellow patient, a marriage proposal during a total eclipse, a man tenderly mourning his wife, a poetic meeting of space entities momentarily breaking their loneliness, a closing celebration of achievement. The fine cast includes Deanna Reed-Foster, Matt Fletcher, Aya Sol Masai Hall (Little Girl), David Hamilton, Nicole Michelle Haskins, Ann James and Carolyn Nelson—all in multiple roles, except Hall.

CRITICS' PICKS

The Safe House, City Lit Theatre at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, through Dec. 16. The occupants of the title dwelling may be a three-generation white, het Norman Rockwell family in suburban Michigan on the surface, but author Kristine Thatcher's savvy filial dynamics render their needs—and solutions—applicable to all demographics. MSB

The Nutcracker, House Theatre at the Chopin, through Dec. 30. The House Company's adaptation transforms E.T.A. Hoffman's romantic fancy into a mythic tale of a household battling the sorrow threatening their holiday cheer, their resistance aided by clever reanimated toys, tuneful musical interludes, thrilling sword fights and scrumptious cookies. MSB

Gypsy, Porchlight Music Theatre, through Dec. 29. E. Faye Butler is ferocious yet tender in this exceptional production of a legendary musical. Butler was born to play Mama Rose. JA

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

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Sullivan

THEATER REVIEW

The Butcracker:
A Nutcracker
Burlesque

Playwright: written and choreographed
 by Darling Shear
 At: (Sub)version Productions at
 Reggie's Music Joint, 2105 S. State St.
 Tickets: TheButcrackerBurlesque.com;
 \$20-\$40
 Runs through: Dec. 26 (Wednesdays only)

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

When the Uptown Underground abruptly ceased operations earlier this year, Jaq Seifert's annual Yuletide revue found itself searching for a place to pitch its tent—not just any church basement or banquet hall, either, but a campground capable of hosting pyrotechnics, floor acrobatics and exotic acts of nebulous infrastructure. Fur-

thermore, the location of this vaudeville also needed to promise a comfortable environment for audiences entering into the spirit of its gender-fluid body-positive manifesto.

Fortunately, the once-desolate district just south of Roosevelt Road is well on its way to becoming one of the city's trendiest neighborhoods, its former automobile showrooms now providing nightlife activities for a youth culture steeped in egalitarian diversity. To be sure, the play (as Shakespeare noted) may still be "the thing," but there's no discounting the advantages of a sophisticated light and sound system, a full-service bar and grill, nearby parking, public transportation and copious pedestrian traffic.

The show's improved morale was immediately apparent on its opening night. Based on the 18th-century fairy tale, the story recounts the adventures of meek office manager Clara, whose hired Holiday Party entertainment—a Father Christmas surrogate whose mischievous antics veer a little too far into Tim Curry territory—meets with her workplace supervisor's disapproval. The contrite Kriss Kringle comforts

his humiliated sponsor with a nutcracker in the shape of a soldier, whose candy ration transports them both to the Land of Sweets, where Clara's royal reward for bravely helping her GI Joe defeat an army of rats—no helpless damsel, she—is a sumptuous confection-related entertainment, set to jazz arrangements (chiefly those of Duke Ellington, Glen Miller and Billy Strayhorn) of Tchaikovsky's classic melodies.

The emcee trio of Squeaky Bubbles, Fay La-Verte, and Stevie Kinks keep the action progressing at sprightly pace in a spectacle clocking in at a brisk 60 minutes. Returning are belly-dancer Kamrah Raqs, vodka-swilling sequin-scattering Emma Glitterbomb, Gaea Lady (aka "Hot Chocolate") nibbling daintily on flaming torches, and Evelyn "Mother Ginger" Tension, clad in a layer-cake gown and inviting favored spectators to lick frosting from her hand. Newcomers include Clair Bell, a Calavera Catrina slight-of-hand artist fond of smashed crockery, and Pierre LaChance as a Drosselmeyer far younger and more seductive than his traditional geriatric white-ballet counterpart.

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THEATER REVIEW

Familiar

Playwright: Danai Gurira
 At: Steppenwolf Theatre Company,
 1650 N. Halsted St.
 Tickets: 312-335-1650;
 Steppenwolf.org; \$20-\$109
 Runs through: January 13

BY KERRY REID

The foundation for Danai Gurira's 2015 play is, indeed, familiar. It takes place in a well-appointed living room as a family prepares for a wedding. Inevitably, tensions build and old wounds bleed anew as secrets emerge. It's a sturdy scenario—and one we've seen many times before at Steppenwolf.

But what makes Gurira's house stand out from the neighborhood of similar dramas is the many ways the Chinyaramwira family of Minnesota—headed by Zimbabwean immigrants and academics Marvelous (Ora Jones) and Donald (Cedric Young)—struggle to define their mutual ties and their individual identities. The impending marriage of eldest daughter Tendikayi (Lanise Antoine Shelley) to Chris (Erik Hellman), a “little white boy from Minnetonka,” is only one part of the culture clash. There's also Aunt Anne (Cheryl Lynn Bruce), newly arrived from “Zim” and determined to perform the “roora,” or bride-price ritual of the old country, for her niece. Inevitably, this unearths old rifts among the sisters, including Jacqueline Williams' wine-guzzling Margaret.

The older generation's sibling rivalry finds its



Lanise Antoine Shelley and Erik Hellman in *Familiar*.
 Photo by Michael Brosilow

mirror image in the strained relationship between Tendikayi, a straitlaced Christian attorney, and sister Nyasha, a free-spirited singer/songwriter/feng shui consultant whose own recent trip to Zimbabwe inspires her to explore her roots. In turn, Chris, a button-downed Lutheran who works at a nonprofit for African economic development, has his own loose-cannon brother, Brad (Luigi Sottile), who drops by to help with the ritual and

finds himself attracted to Nyasha.

Gurira, a well-known actor (the film *Black Panther* and the TV series *The Walking Dead*) as well as a writer, is Zimbabwean-American and, pre-

sumably, drew upon that dual identity in crafting these characters who must navigate the choppy waters between assimilation and loyalty to one's first home. In tone, the story moves from high-spirited physical comedy and verbal ripostes, especially in the first act, to more somber notes in the second. Under Danya Taymor's assured direction, the tonal shifts unfold without being forced.

The cast simply couldn't be better. Jones, Williams and Bruce are a thespian dream team, but Young and the younger members of the ensemble hold their own. We clearly see each character struggling to find firm footing as they face riptides of memory and revelation.

All reveal moments of anguish and resentment as well as deep understanding and empathy. Bruce's Aunt Anne may demonstrate her avaricious side in her “roora” demands. But she also carries memories of the Zimbabwean struggle for independence that Marvelous, who calls her country of origin “a sinking ship,” has tried to forget. A recurring bit in which Donald keeps putting up a map of Zimbabwe, only to have Marvelous take it down and replace it with a wreath, moves from being comic to mournful as we learn more about the past circumstances of their lives.

Familiar doesn't take formal risks. It doesn't need to. The family story Gurira tells is evergreen but also fresh, immediate and heartfelt.

THEATER REVIEW

A Christmas Carol

By: Tom Creamer
 At: The Goodman Theatre,
 170 N. Dearborn St.
 Tickets: GoodmanTheatre.org; \$25-\$119
 Runs through: Dec. 30

BY AMELIA OROZCO

Charles Dickens' manner of telling the simple man's story lives on in the Goodman Theatre's *A Christmas Carol*, a Chicago tradition 1978. This most recent production (adapted by Tom Creamer and directed by Henry Wishcamper) is a treasure to see, with sentiments to carry all year long and not just during the giving season. Larry Yando plays Scrooge—the miser turned benevolent spender—for the 11th season.

Together with his younger double, (Asher Alcantara as the Boy Scrooge, Christopher Shepard as Scrooge as a young man) Yando's older-adult version of Ebenezer gives audiences reason to pity and concurrently root for the old lad as he comes to his senses. Ghostly apparitions scare the hell out of Scrooge's unsuspecting soul and show little mercy on Ebenezer as he falls into bed on Christmas Eve. It may as well have been All Hallows' Eve: Some of Scrooge's visitors were grim in both appearance and demeanor (especially Breon Arzell as the Ghost of Christmas Future). Through it all, Yando delivers a deliciously performance with imbued with hilarious antics and physical comedy.

Comedy aside, Ebenezer comes through as the hopeless, tired and stingy old man that he is. Good thing the Ghost of Christmas Past (Molly Brennan) gives this production the pizzazz it sometimes lacks: The action moves at a slower

pace than the Metra at times, but that is to be expected in a story deeply steeped in tradition and values. The plot takes time to unfurl into the fully blossomed lesson intertwined within it. With her quick wit, vibrant costuming, sassy buzz-cut and Cirque de Soleil-worthy moves (Tommy Rapley, choreographer), a ghoul never looked so chic as Brennan.

Equally stunning is Jasmine Bracey's Ghost of Christmas Present. Bracey delivers the goods Scrooge so desperately needs to see—the gloomy day-to-day challenges of the Cratchit family, a large group living on a lean budget. The poor but unreasonably cheery Bob Cratchit (Thomas J. Cox) makes all those uninspired folks who dread trudging back to work after a holiday seem shallow and superficial. After all, the Cratchits are seen giving up creature comforts like heat and silver candelabras in exchange for a humble Christmas feast.

If by this point, audience members had managed to keep a dry eye, they soon gave up that hope with the arrival of Tiny Tim (Paris Strickland, back for the second consecutive year). Aside from being the first female to play Tiny Tim at Goodman, Strickland is also a cancer survivor. This, mixed with the high emotions the Cratchits embody, gives the production huge heart.

The design elements sprinkled throughout (including Keith Parham's lighting, Heidi Sue McMath's costumes, Andrew Hansen's original music and the live quartet of Malcolm Ruhl, Maddi Ruhl, Andrew Coil and Justin Amolsch) add to the splendor and the production's overall grandeur.

There is no time like the present to do the right thing, and Ebenezer realizes this at the nick (no pun intended) of time. *A Christmas Carol* has the magic of Christmas and the inspiration of a New Year's resolution, all wrapped up in one.

written by
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

directed by
JOE DOWLING

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Sam Kebede photo by Jeff Spector

BOOK REVIEW

The Best Party of Our Lives: Stories of Gay Weddings

by Sarah Galvin

\$18.95; Sasquatch Books; 226 pages

REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Your summer is filling up quickly.

It starts with graduations and confirmations. You've already got a pile of "Save the Date" cards for a bunch of weddings, and the summer wraps up with family reunions and more weddings. It might even end with yours, and in the new book *The Best Party of Our Lives*, by Sarah Galvin, you'll see how "I do" becomes "whoohooooo!"

Even though she "always figured" she'd end up spending her life with a woman, Galvin "certainly had no interest in weddings..." They just weren't relevant to her, except for an irksome knowledge that much of the wedding industry was biased against LGBTQ couples.

Later, as a writer for a newspaper in Seattle, she began getting requests to "crash" weddings and she was "blown away by the things" she saw. Weddings—especially for LGBTQ couples—weren't what she thought they'd be. Their parties were "the best ones imaginable..."

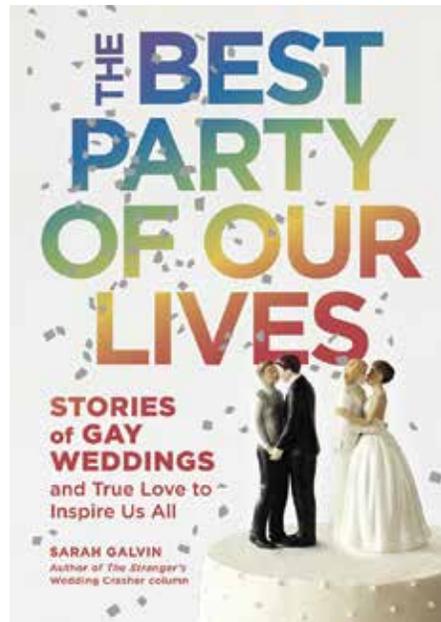
The stories of some she found are in this book.

When a couple looks back on their boy-meets-boy (or girl-meets-girl) story, there's often an element of surprise. There was an introduction, either traditionally or through modern methods like Craigslist, online, or dance rave. Falling in love might've begun with bumps and rough spots, followed by the realization of common interests and the happy idea that you can't get her out of your mind.

No two proposals are alike, although today's couples almost always have some sort of prior discussion on it. The actual "Will you..." might be romantic and accompanied by one or two rings, or it may be an out-loud wondering if moving in together meant more than merely sharing a home. And just like the proposals are varied, so are the budgets, which usually leads to a DIY ceremony that more reflects the pair.

Some of the couples in this book had domestic partnerships long before they married. One couple debated marriage altogether, figuring that

BOOKS



there was no reason to wed as an "affirmation of the love they'd known was true" for years. Some invited nearly everyone they knew, while one couple sent "Don't Save the Date" tchotchkes. There were cakes and cake-toppers, toasts and gifts, and one "[23]-year relationship [that] deserved a party..."

So you got engaged over the holidays, or maybe you've got love on the brain. How do other LGBTQ couples make their special days... special? "The Best Party of Our Lives" is packed with ideas on that.

It's also packed with another thing: stories that are very Seattle-centric. Author Galvin said she "started with" Seattle couples but she never really got any farther than that, although LGBTQ couples get married all over the place. I would've absolutely liked to see wider coverage from this book; the minimized area doesn't make it bad—it makes it a lot of the same.

Even so, if you've got stars in your eyes, a ring on your finger, and romance on your mind, you'll barely notice. For you, newlywed-to-be, *The Best Party of Our Lives* will fill you with happiness.

Want more? Look for *The Wedding Heard 'Round the World*, by Michael McConnell and Jack Baker; or *The Essential Guide to Gay and Lesbian Weddings*, by Tess Ayers and Paul Brown.

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The Joffrey Ballet. | Photo by Cheryl Mann.

SPOTLIGHT

The Book of Merman: Merman meets Mormons in the musical tale of Missionaries attempting to "save" the legendary Broadway belter. In Flying Elephant's production, composer Leo Schwartz packs the score with original music to tell a tale of self-discovery, showtimes and evangelizing youth. Runs through Jan. 6 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Tickets are \$40; visit Stage773.com.



Photo by Evan Hanover

MEASURE FOR MEASURE Yuletide tunes

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

We don't think any music director would program "Oh, Holy Night" and "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer" back-to-back, but both are part of the vast array of music which contributes to the holiday season. Sacred or profane, traditional or contemporary, profound or ridiculous, Hanukkah or Christmas or Kwanzaa, holiday music offers something for everyone.

Even Lyric Opera of Chicago is ringing the holiday bell, marketing its production of Jules Massenet's *Cendrillon* (Cinderella)—a Lyric Opera premiere—as a spectacular holiday treat (with early December and then January performance dates). The following events only scratch the surface of the season's musical riches.

Christmas Mubarak, Silk Road Rising at The Chicago Temple, through Dec. 11—Christmas Mubarak is a first-of-its-kind musical featuring texts from the Quran and New Testament that celebrate the birth of Jesus as told by Muslims and Christians. "Mubarak" is the Arabic word meaning blessed, and is commonly used as a greeting during Ramadan, the month-long Islamic sacred observance. The 90-minute show features actors from Silk Road Rising and choir members from the First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple. Corey Pond is the adapter/director and Erik Nussbaum is the choir director. Tickets/info: SilkRoadRising.org; \$25-\$35

The Lakeside Singers, various venues, Nov. 30, Dec. 7-8, 7:30 p.m. (all concerts)—Now 20 years old, the wonderful Lakeside Singers present the holiday mix *Oh, What Fun...* at venues in Evanston, Chicago and Naperville. The Chicago locale is the impressively pseudo-gothic Fourth Presbyterian Church on Michigan Avenue at Chestnut. The program will offer the type of *mélange* which is the signature of the group, combining cross-cultural classical music from around the world with choral arrangements of jazz, gospel, rock, folk, R&B and other contemporary genres. The Lakeside Singers are directed by founder Robert



A Doo Wop Christmas Show.
Photo courtesy of the McAninch Arts Center

Bowker, a renowned musical polymath we first met 40 years ago in the advertising biz, for which Bowker was one of the nation's top jingle singers.

A Doo Wop Christmas Show, McAninch Arts Center (Glen Ellyn), Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m.—The Doo

Wop Project, a six-man group dedicated to the deeply rhythmic '50s-'60s doo-wop genre, spins holiday songs in ways you've never heard before. This is just one of several holiday musical performances at "the MAC," as the McAninch Arts Center is called. On Dec. 14 (8 p.m.) Gavin Coyle offers **A Celtic Christmas** of Irish and American holiday songs, accompanied by guitar, piano, harp and flute. Then, Dec. 31 **the New Philharmonic**, the MAC's resident orchestra, will usher out the old year with 2 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. concerts of polkas, arias, light classics and movie music under music director Kirk Muspratt. Tickets/info: AtTheMAC.org; \$35-\$67 (depending on the event)

Hanukkah Concert, Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, Chicago Botanic Garden (Glencoe), Dec. 9—Call it Jewish jazz, call it Russian Dixieland, call it exotic and oriental ... whatever, everyone begins to sway when the clarinet and violin moan and swing and Klezmer music fills the air! Two one-hour concerts, 11AM and 1 p.m.. Ticket includes admission to the Garden;s Wonderland Express holiday attraction. Tickets/info: ChicagoBotanic.org; \$20 (in advance)-\$23 plus parking

Holiday Brass and Choral Concerts, various venues, Dec. 13-16—Nothing announces the holiday season better than the stratospherically-

THEATER

high clarion call of a baroque trumpet, or modern version thereof, certain to be heard during the annual seasonal concerts by **Music of the Baroque** chorus and brass ensemble. The bill includes Gabrieli, Praetorius, Anonymous and other carols, chants and joyful works for brass and voice. Venues are Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest (Dec. 13, 8 p.m.); St. Michael Church in Old Town (Dec. 14, 8 p.m.) and the Divine Word Chapel, Northbrook (Dec. 15-16, 3 p.m.). Tickets/info: Baroque.org; \$25-\$90

The Messiah and **Do-It-Yourself Messiah**, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Dec. 15-18, 7 p.m. (2 p.m. Dec. 16)—The Big One, the famous oratorio by George Frederick Handel performed—as it has been EVERY December since 1879!—by **the Apollo Chorus of Chicago** with orchestra and distinguished soloists. The full, uncut version will be offered Dec. 15-16. Then, on Dec. 17-18 **the International Music Foundation** takes the stage for its 43rd annual DIY Messiah in which a volunteer orchestra performs the score with professional conductor and soloists and YOU, the audience, as the chorus on such all-time hits as "Hallelujah!" and "For Unto Us." Tickets/info: HarrisTheaterChicago.org; \$35-\$70 (Apollo Chorus); \$15 (Do-It-Yourself). NOTE: Legit tickets for the Do-It-Yourself Messiah are available ONLY through the Harris Theater. NOTE: **The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus** also performs *The Messiah* in four concerts at Symphony Center, Dec. 20-23, with tickets starting at \$85.

Merry-Achi Christmas Concert, Copernicus Center (5216 W. Lawrence Ave.), Dec. 16, 3 p.m.: The Mariachi Institute of Chicago—you probably didn't know there was one—presents its third annual holiday concert offering authentic Christmas season Mexican music. The Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuellar is the featured guest ensemble, accompanied by the Ballet Folklórico de Los Angeles. Expect lavish and colorful costumes, violins, trumpets, guitars and more. Tickets/info: CopernicusCenter.org; \$40-\$75

Holidays on Stage & Screen, **Lakeview Orchestra**, Athenaeum Theatre, Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m.: Music from *The Polar Express* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* will be performed along with familiar works by Tchaikovsky, Anderson and Bizet. The five-year-old Lakeview Orchestra is an outstanding volunteer ensemble of advanced non-professional players led by musical director Gregory Hughes. Innovative vocal group Vox 3 also will perform. The beautifully -restored Athenaeum Theatre has been part of Lakeview/Lincoln Park cultural life for 107 years. Tickets/info: AthenaeumTheatre.org; \$20

Chicago Jazz Orchestra, Studebaker Theater, Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m.—Dubbed **ELLAbration** (sic), the concert will feature the complete 1960 Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn big band version of *The Nutcracker Suite*, plus vocalist Dee Alexander performing holiday songs favored by Ella Fitzgerald. The Chicago Jazz Orchestra, now 40 years old, is under the leadership of co-founder Jeff Lindberg. The venue, the beautifully—restored historic Studebaker Theater on Michigan Avenue—could not be lovelier. Tickets: ChicagoJazzOrchestra.org; \$35-\$45



Christmas Mubarak.
Photo by Andy Lynn

Red Bull festival features LGBT talent

BY JERRY NUNN

Red Bull Music Festival Chicago presented a late-night music event called Futurehood & Friends at the Wicker Park nightspot Subterranean.

The concert venue filled two floors with people from the LGBT community ready to be entertained with a variety of talent. Many were from the Chicago-based, LGBTQ-centric label Futurehood that is spearheaded by rapper Mister Wallace and producer Anthony "aCeb00mbaP," also known as aCe, Pabey.

Although no longer working with Futurehood, trans artist KC Ortiz is still a friend with the collective. Ortiz brought fierce raps and beats to the dimly lit stage upstairs.

DJs played in between brief set ups for performers Blu Bone and Kidd Kenn.

Born and raised in Chicago, openly gay rapper Roy Kinsey performed with his two moms for his segment. He took the crowd to church and described his choir background earlier in the evening sitting down with Windy City Times, "We used to sing 'Joyful, Joyful' from Sister Act 2. I had the rap part. I have been doing this for a very long time. In fifth grade, I wrote my first rap song. In college, I put my first album out."

Although he had always written songs about

band and that, in turn, inspired the jacket and hat Kinsey wore during the performance.

He brought a duo called Mother Nature to support him toward the end of his set. Kinsey became involved with Futurehood from his college friend aCe and the Banjo Report, a weekly dance party that aCe threw that later turned into Futurehood. "We bonded through music and culture," Kinsey said.

The operation of Futurehood was started by aCe and Mister Wallace in 2016 with the release of the Faggot EP. Wallace was the headliner for the Subterranean show, bringing an out-of-this-world artistic piece for spectators.

Before his set, he spoke of his live music being improv and playing in the moment. He stated, "I

like to vibe it out."

He described himself as "an alien inhabiting a form 3,001 years in the future." His goal is create an identity and evolve along the way as a person.

Futurehood continues to evolve as well, as a movement of artists and chosen family in the Chicago area that simply won't be defined. Wallace explained, "We may not be popular in mainstream society, but I am here to create a platform for them. I find the artists from the ether. People can reach out to me and we will find a way to navigate their dreams. I am the cool mom and their life coach!"

For future releases, such as Wallace's upcoming music COOL MOM, visit Futurehood.net.

MUSIC

men, he musically came out on his third album Beautiful Only where he addressed someone of the same sex. He feels he is growing into his voice on his new 11-track album, Blackie: A Story by Roy Kinsey.

His song "Ring Ring" was inspired by his hus-



The Vixen.

Photos by Jerry Nunn



Mister Wallace.

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By
playwright
Danai Gurira of
Black Panther
fame





John Grant.
Photo by
Shawn
Brackbill

NUNN ON ONE

John Grant weaves 'Magic' spell on fans

BY JERRY NUNN

Out singer John Grant was born in Michigan, started a band called The Czars in Denver and eventually moved to Europe. Along the way he created a legacy of solo work that included his

debut album, *Queen of Denmark*. During London's Meltdown Festival, he announced he is HIV-positive while he was onstage with Hercules & Love Affair.

His record *Pale Green Ghosts* had him singing three tracks with artist Sinead O'Connor and dur-

ing the album *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure* had guest vocalists Tracey Thorn and Amanda Palmer. He recorded with singer Robbie Williams on the album *The Heavy Entertainment Show*.

Grant's 2018 album, *Love Is Magic*, music brings him to Chicago while on a world tour.

MUSIC

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

John Grant: I am in the Netherlands. I have two days off before my show here. I am on tour so all over the place. We were in Milan, Germany for several shows, before that England. We are just getting started.

WCT: Where do you live?

JG: I am in Iceland.

WCT: Do you ever run into Bjork on the street?

JG: Yes, a few times. She's around, but I haven't seen her in quite a while.

WCT: How many languages do you speak?

JG: Around five—German, Russian, English, Icelandic and pretty solid Spanish.

WCT: Talk about the new album, *Love Is Magic*.

JG: I started this record down in Cornwall in a studio surrounded by modular synths in an incredible house. It was a beautiful setting in the Cornish countryside. I spent about 10 months doing the record going back and forth between Texas, Cornwall, Iceland and England.

I was doing a big Scott Walker concert. I had a festival that I curated in England. With everything, it took me about a year to get the whole thing done. I spent a lot of time getting the rich sounds right. On a big system it sounds fat, lush and gorgeous.

I wanted to get my love for the '70s AOR (album-oriented rock) ballads. I like to write those on the piano. It was nice to take my time with the sounds.

I took my time, but towards the end I like when I am given a deadline. I am a perfectionist and would probably never put it out. I would just

Turn to page 24

Jane Lynch, Kate Flannery make the yuletide swing

BY JERRY NUNN

Actresses Jane Lynch and Kate Flannery are teaming up this holiday season and hitting the road. The album—*A Swingin' Little Christmas!* Jane Lynch—features Lynch, Flannery and singer Tim Davis. It was recorded in 2016 and has led them to perform 34 shows all over the country this season.

The Tony Guerrero Quintet supported them for the two City Winery shows on Nov. 30 in Chicago. The single "Winter's Never Cold" brought them a number eight hit on the Billboard charts.

Lynch and Flannery spoke briefly before the set with Windy City Times. The two talented performers originally met at Second City in Chicago but really grew to be friends at the Annoyance Theatre.

When asked how gay the yuletide would be at this concert, Lynch laughed. "This show is for everybody, but it's very campy. It's just for the

community and nobody else," the out entertainer joked in a sinister Sue Sylvester voice. "I love the meaning of 'gay' now, because it means what it actually means instead of what it used to mean—and you can quote me on that!"

The group is on a tour bus and out on the road these days. Flannery said a must-have item on the bus is a popcorn popper and Lynch's only demand was to listen to MSNBC on her earbuds. Lynch explained, "We are not actually sleeping on the bus—although I slept for eight hours on the bus the other day on the way to Chicago from Kansas, and it was perfect. We are in hotels because we are divas!"

She then said Flannery was the biggest diva on the tour, "only because her throat is sore so we are all working around it." Much like *The Brady Bunch Christmas* episode in which Carol Brady had to battle throat problems during a performance, Flannery tries to rest. "This show has a big range. It is easy to sing the songs in the stu-



Jane Lynch (right) and Kate Flannery.
Photo by Jerry Nunn

dio but can be difficult live. We are doing it one show at a time," Flannery confessed.

Many years ago, the two were both in *The Real Live Branch Bunch Show* that grew out of Chicago improv in which Lynch played Carol and Flannery played Alice the maid, among other roles. "We

did that episode that you mentioned and I had to sing," Lynch said.

She was then asked if there will be more *Ralph Breaks the Internet* movies planned after the success of the current one. [Editor's note: Lynch voices Sergeant Calhoun in the animated movie.] Lynch said, "I think they left it where there will be more. It was so delightful and such a gem."

Flannery—who played a drunken Meredith on the U.S. version of the TV comedy *The Office*—was questioned about her favorite holiday drink. "It's called a white trash Russian. It's just vodka and Yoo-hoo." Lynch followed that by saying she no longer drinks but used to love coffee and Baily's while living in Chicago. Flannery then said, "That's like a time machine for me. It reminds me of the Gaslight across from the Steppenwolf Theatre in the old days." The *Glee* actress reminisced that the Gaslight is no longer there but it had "great hamburgers served in understated plastic baskets and wax paper."

The duo have a show called *Two Lost Souls* that they just performed for two nights at New York's Cafe Carlyle, and will take it to Largo at the Coronet in Los Angeles on Jan. 22. They are hoping to take *Two Lost Souls* around to more cities when they're not on the current holiday tour.

BOOK REVIEW

She Wants It

By Jill Soloway

\$27; Pegasus Random House; 241 pages

REVIEW BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

Jill Soloway can tell a story.

Celebrity memoirs are a dime a dozen, and often require one of two elements to be legitimately good reads: a specific angle or an interesting background on the memoirist's part. Soloway has both. Over the course of *She Wants It*, the nonbinary, Emmy-winning writer and director explores the idea of those who aren't straight, cis men wanting something. Anything. Whether it's representation, human rights or career success, Soloway argues, wanting is a radical act. And over the course of Soloway's life, they have learned to want.

Soloway was a married, straight-presenting, culturally Jewish mother of two when their parent came out as transgender. If this sounds familiar, it's the premise for *Transparent*, the very first Amazon series that became a smash success. As Soloway processed and eventually reconnected with their parent Carrie, they wrote and directed the indie film *Afternoon Delight*, featuring two complex female protagonists. A former writer for cable series like *Six Feet Under* and *The United States of Tara*, Soloway struck out on their own with *Transparent*—and struck gold with an unconventional, dysfunctional family story heavily inspired by the Soloways of Chicago's West Side.

No matter how you feel about *Transparent* (and despite its critical and commercial success, the show had plenty of naysayers), there's no denying Soloway's powerful voice. They are strong, funny and brutally honest about their shortcomings: conflating professional and personal fulfillment, acting on impulse rather than instinct and perhaps most egregiously, casting the cis male actor Jeffrey Tambor as transgender parent Maura Pfefferman. Soloway admits they never considered casting a trans actress in the role, and that *Transparent* may not have aired at all were it not for Tambor's name attached to the project. Though Soloway sought to rectify the mistake by hiring queer and trans individuals in every department of the series, they own their misstep, as well as the privilege they enjoyed for so

BOOKS



long as a heterosexual-presenting white woman.

Soloway also tackles their personal life: coming out as queer shortly after *Transparent*'s debut, and later as nonbinary. Acknowledging their queerness put an end to Soloway's marriage, but led to fulfilling relationships with women and an even deeper connection with family. Soloway's journey through sexual and gender identity and how it manifests in their love life and in *Transparent* makes for a wild page-turner.

As Soloway learns to balance their familial, romantic and LA relationships, the reader is along for a bumpy but ultimately fulfilling ride that culminates in MeToo and the ensuing Time's Up movement, of which Soloway is a founder. *She Wants It* is a book to consume in one sitting: the rare memoir that doesn't idealize or sugarcoat, but presents life as the messy, funny and fascinating journey it is.

'Stand Up for Red' marks World AIDS Day

BY JOHN STADELMAN

On Nov. 29, Center on Halsted partnered with DIFFA/Chicago to host the second annual Stand Up For Red indoor street festival, bringing together local restaurants, musicians and artists to raise HIV/AIDS awareness in preparation for World AIDS Day.

The Center's gymnasium was arranged to simulate a street fest, complete with lights strung up over the booths and the air savory with the smells of fresh bites while bands rotated onstage.

Participating restaurants offered samples of their dishes, including the Lunch Lady J (a sloppy joe) by lesbian-owned One North, Inspired Catering & Event's oregano spiced chicken skewers, turkey-fennel meatballs in goat cheese by Ashley Cheek catering and mushroom tostadas prepared by the Silver Fork culinary and hospitality vocational training program. Tito's provided cocktails crafted specially for the event.



Deja Blue Band.
Photo by John Stadelman

Artists included Mark Narens of The Black Couch Studio and Gallery, CNfactory selling handmade pop culture screen prints and Handcrafted Wellness offering soap and skincare products.

Drag queen Silky Ganache emceed, starting the event with a moment of silence honoring AIDS victims. This was followed by beats from DJ Madrid and performances from musicians including the Deja Blue Band. Silky Ganache rounded things off with a Christmas-themed routine.

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Fiction round-up: LGBTQ+ YA fantasy

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

As winter blows into Chicago—and freezing temperatures with it—the temptation to curl up in front of the fire with a good book is strong.

As the world burns with political dissent, the desire to escape to another world is equally strong. Since Harry Potter burst onto the literary scene in 1997, the world of young adult (YA) fiction has bewitched as many adults as teenagers. Here are five fantasy novels featuring LGBTQ+ characters and authors to spark your imagination and warm you from the inside out.

1. The Seafarer's Kiss—Julia Ember (\$15.99; Interlude Press; 224 pages)

Three words: queer Little Mermaid. Julia Ember is a bisexual, polyamorous Chicago native who now calls Edinburgh, Scotland home. The Seafarer's Kiss is her sophomore novel, the tale of Ersel, an independent 19-year-old mermaid who rescues, and subsequently falls in love with, a stranded shieldmaiden named Ragna. Trouble arises when Ersel's childhood paramour gives an ultimatum, and the mermaid makes a deal with mythic troublemaker Loki whose motives are never what they seem. Ember's poetic voice gives this fresh take on an old classic a distinctive lilt, and Ersel's epic quest for true love is one for the fantasy canon.

2. Mask of Shadows/Ruin of Stars—Linsey Miller (Mask: \$10.99; Sourcebooks Fire; 322 pages) (Ruin: \$17.99; Sourcebooks Fire; 370 pages)

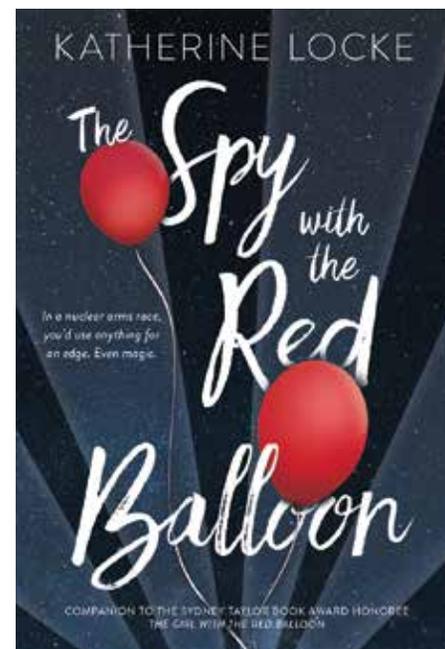
Mask of Shadows and its recently-released companion, Ruin of Stars, are a duology featuring a genderfluid protagonist (a recent and welcome trend in YA literature). Sal Leon is a skilled high-way robber but longs for something more than the next heist. When Sal learns of a competition to join the Queen's personal assassin team, they see it as a golden opportunity—but the stakes are high and the competition deadly. Will Sal live to attain their real goal: revenge against the no-

BOOKS

bles who destroyed their family? Both books are an exciting rabbit hole with a compelling main character who will stop at nothing to achieve greatness.

3. Black Wings Beating—Alex London (\$17.99; Macmillan/Farrar, Strauss and Giroux; 432 pages)

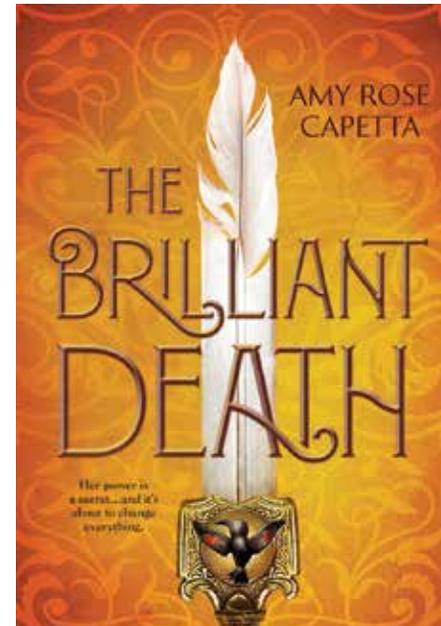
Brysen will stop at nothing to protect the boy he loves, even trap the most dangerous game. In the world of Black Wings Beating, both birds of prey and the falconers who control them are treated with the utmost reverence. As Brysen and his asexual sister Kylee set out to catch the deadliest bird of all, the Ghost Eagle, they find themselves on a fantastic and often surprising journey. Gay author Alex London is a former journalist who reported from refugee camps and conflict zones overseas before setting up permanent camp in the States. Black Wings Beating is the first in the Skybound series and will leave readers hungry for the next installment.



4. The Spy With the Red Balloon—Katherine Locke (\$17.99; Albert Whitman; 368 pages)

Based just outside Chicago, Albert Whitman & Company's YA offerings have a universal appeal. Author Katherine Locke's The Girl With the Red Balloon, was a hit for Whitman, garnering pres-

tigious acclaim. Its recent companion, The Spy With the Red Balloon, follows queer Jewish siblings Ilse and Wolf as they navigate the violent and complex landscape of World War II. Both are blackmailed into using their magical powers into building the atom bomb for America and going undercover to sabotage Germany's nuclear war efforts. Locke's plotting is magnificent and their prose thoughtful and empathetic, making for a wild ride through one of history's darkest times.



5. The Brilliant Death—Amy Rose Capetta (\$18.99; Penguin Young Readers; 352 pages)

Amy Rose Capetta's debut YA novel Echo After Echo was a captivating tale of intrigue, murder and same-sex romance set against the backdrop of Broadway. Her latest, The Brilliant Death, combines magical realism and fantasy with the same page-turning suspense.

Teodora and Cielo are both shape-shifting streugas (witches), mastering their powers in a nation harshly controlled by powerful Mafia families. But when an attack leaves Teo's father in a coma, she must make her way to the national palace to fight for what is rightfully hers. Both Teo and Cielo are genderfluid, their love story as integral to the action as their adventures in shape-shifting. The Brilliant Death has received glowing reviews from Kirkus, Booklist and Barnes and Noble Teen, and is a welcome new addition to any queer fantasy collection.

winning plays and her impact as a leader in her industry.

She is best known for her roles of Michonne on AMC's The Walking Dead, and Okoye in the films Marvel's Black Panther and Avengers: Infinity War. Upcoming projects include Gurira adapting Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's book Americanah into a miniseries; also, her play The Convert will be staged at the Young Vic theatre in London in December.

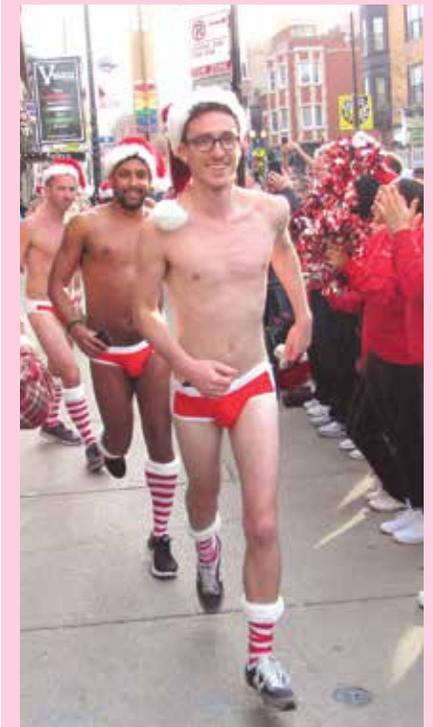
To obtain tickets, which start at \$100 each, call 312-654-5632 or email specialevents@steppenwolf.org.

'Santa Speedo Fun Run' on Dec. 8

The annual Santa Speedo Fun Run will take place Saturday, Dec. 8, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Sign-in and registration will start at noon, with the one-mile run through Boystown starting at 2 p.m. There will be awards, entertainment and door prizes with Debbie Fox at 2:30 p.m.; and an after-party with Dixie Lynn Cartwright at 5-8 p.m.

Among other highlights, six men wearing luxury underwear by Richard Dayhoff will dash for donations for the Center on Halsted. See <https://www.sidetrackchicago.com/santa-speedo/>.



From 2017's Santa Speedo Run. Photo by Jerry Nunn

Double Door to reopen in Uptown

The nightclub Double Door—which originally closed in 2016 and which hosted acts as varied as Common and the Rolling Stones—will reopen in Uptown at 1050 W. Wilson Ave., Fox32Chicago.com noted.

The old Double Door had to close after 24 years in the same spot in Wicker Park because of a rent dispute. In the area where the new Double Door will be, there are already venues such as the Riviera, the Aragon and the Green Mill; in 2019, renovation of the Uptown Theater will commence.

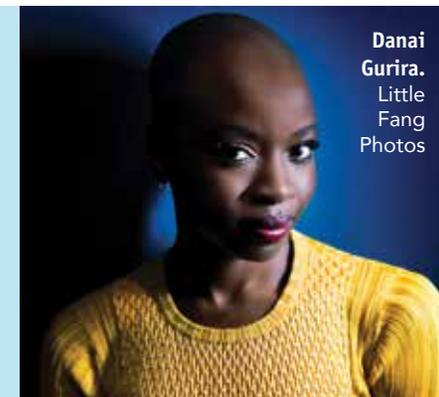
The new Double Door is slated to open next fall.

The Fox32Chicago item is at <http://www.fox32chicago.com/news/local/chicago-music-club-double-door-to-reopen-in-uptown>.

Steppenwolf to honor Gurira Dec. 10

Steppenwolf Theatre Company has announced that Obie-, Helen Hayes- and NAACP Award-winning actress/playwright Danai Gurira as the honoree at the 10th annual Steppenwolf Women in the Arts fundraising luncheon on Monday, Dec. 10, at the Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel, 221 N. Columbus Dr., at 12 p.m.

Gurira will join Steppenwolf Artistic Director Anna D. Shapiro for a conversation about her on-stage and on-screen acting career, award-



Danai Gurira. Little Fang Photos

WINDY CITY TIMES' 2018 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

WEEK TWO



Staying in the Loop

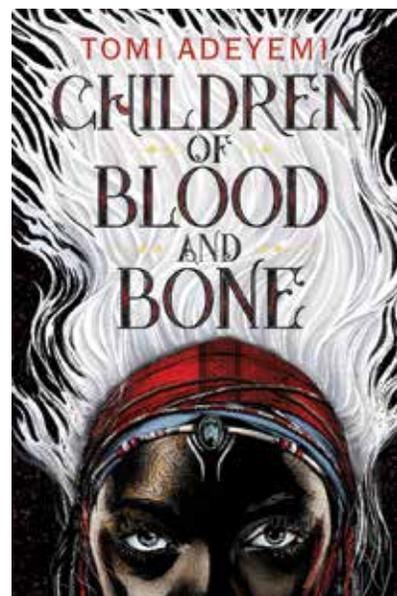
Located in Chicago's theater district, **The Dearborn** (co-owned by lesbian Amy Lawless and her sister, Clodagh) serves some pretty cool dishes, ranging from Not Billy's Scotch Egg to honey lavender-glazed duck breast to caramel apple churros. Make someone's day by purchasing a gift card to this spot. (Various prices; <https://www.thedearborn Tavern.com/>)

Heavy Petal

A cute stocking stuffer, **Petal** is the newest sparkling beverage to lead what's been called the "rose revolution." Flavors include Original Rose, Mint Rose and Lychee Rose—and the drink has zero calories, zero sugar and no caffeine. Also, since it's just blooming (pun intended) in the industry, you'll be ahead of the game. (\$27.48 for a variety pack; DrinkPetal.com)



Photo by Erik Marthaler



'Bone' ranger

Haven't heard of the book **Children of Blood and Bone**? Where have you been? This first book in a new West African inspired fantasy series (think Black Panther with Magic) has sold more copies in its first six months than any first book in a major young adult franchise since Harry Potter. Be sure to check out this book (which, of course, is being made into a film). (\$14.24; <http://www.tomiadeyemi.com/books/>)

Ross examination

Diana Ross puts her indelible spin on holiday classics such as "The Christmas Song," "Winter Wonderland" and the title song on the CD **Wonderful Christmastime**—a collection of holiday recordings from Diana Ross that were first issued in 1994 and have been widely unavailable since. (There are also covers of non-holiday tunes such as Stevie Wonder's "Overjoyed" and the gospel classic "Amazing Grace," among other songs.) (\$12.59; amazon.com)



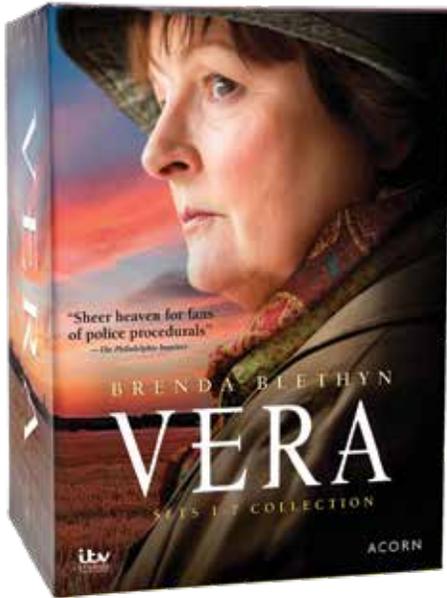
I'll drink to that

From the popular Italian liqueur, **DISARONNO** (an amaretto-like liqueur) has partnered with Italian fashion house **TRUSSARDI** to launch a limited-edition bottle dressed in the brand's notable texture and greyhound logo. (In addition, the limited-edition collaboration will also be available in six mini-bottles.) Look fashionable and drink fashionably with the brand DISARONNO wears TRUSSARDI. (Various prices; <http://www.disaronno.com/en>)



An Epic snack

Gay-owned, Indiana-based **Epic Popcorn** is the first NGLCC (National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce)-certified popcorn company—and it offers more than 65 rotating flavors, including Dill Pickle, Fruity Loops (my fave), Pizza, Cinnamon Toast and much more. However, you can also feel healthy about eating this, as Epic features non-GMO corn, pure coconut oil, 100% non-tans-fat cheese and gluten free flavors. (Various prices; <https://epicpopcorn.com/>)



It's a mystery to me

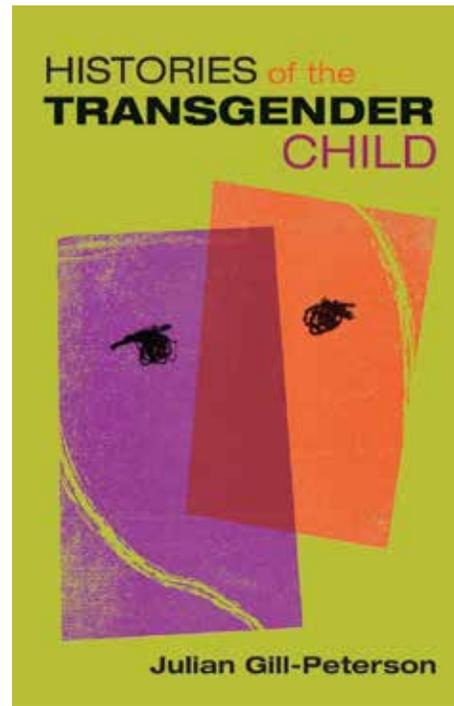
If you like your British murder mysteries, they rarely come better than **Vera**—and the very popular series (with Oscar nominee Brenda Blethyn) is now in a box set through Acorn with sets one through seven. And if you're really into this subgenre, Acorn TV is available in a gift subscription for just \$49.99/year. (\$219.99; <https://acorn.tv>)

Pacman fever

Addicted offers swimwear, underwear, fetish attire and casual clothes for the man who likes to let it hang out—so to speak. Exhibit A: PacMan-style underwear that shows a video character gobbling something other than those dots... (Various prices; <https://addicted.es/en/>)



Photo by Leonardo Corredor



'Histories' lesson

Julian Gill-Peterson's **Histories of the Transgender Child** uncovers a previously unknown 20th-century history when transgender children not only existed but pre-existed the term "transgender" and its predecessors—playing a critical role in the medicalization of trans people, and all sex and gender. (\$24.95-\$100; <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/histories-of-the-transgender-child>)



Here's the dish

Give the gift of sushi-making this season. Chicago Japanese restaurant **Arami** offers hands-on, authentic sushi demonstrations on the third Wednesday of every month. The hour class, by Arami's Executive Chef Joseph Fontelera, includes a hands-on (edible) maki and temaki instructional followed by a three-course prix fixe dinner. (\$60 each; <http://www.aramichicago.com/upcoming-events/>).

Twisted sister

The Museum of Contemporary Art's store has a lot of innovative items, such as the **twisted spectrum bag**. Perfect for running errands or a casual night out, the faux leather bag can be effortlessly transformed from clutch to wristlet to handbag—and in a colorful way. (\$44.95; <https://www.mcachicago.org/>)



Leather or not

Ezra Arthur specializes in high-quality leather accessory products, whether they're wallets, belts, bags or even stationery (with the items having been in publications ranging from USA Today to Men's Health). Trust me: The feel is fantastic. (Various prices; <http://ezraarthur.com/>)





The bite stuff

Baked by Melissa's bite-sized cupcakes make the perfect gift for those who want something sweet but don't want to overindulge (although some have argued the merits of eating a gallon of ice cream in one sitting). (Various prices; <https://www.bakedbymelissa.com/>)

Air apparent

AirSelfie2 is a revolutionary pocket-size flying camera that connects to a smartphone to take hi-def photos (12-megapixel resolution) from the sky. Its turbofan propellers can thrust up to 50 feet in the air, letting the user capture wide, truly original photos and videos. Your friends will wonder how you got some of those photos. (\$199.95; <https://www.airselfiecamera.com/>)



Photo by Alan Davis

Body and 'Soul'

Chicago's **Black Ensemble Theater** is known for having the coolest musicals, like the current *Women of Soul* and *A Holiday Cabaret*. Purchase tickets for you and your better half, and get set for a toe-tapping good time. (\$35-\$65 each; <https://blackensembletheater.org/>)



Game on

Hammacher Schlemmer has released **The Atari Home Arcade**. (Those older than 35 may remember the name "Atari.") A 17" flat-screen LCD displays the pre-installed games' two-dimensional graphics and colors, and people can choose from the *Asteroids* cabinet (with a knob wheel control and *Asteroids*, *Tempest*, *Major Havoc*, and *Lunar Lander* games) or *Centipede* cabinet (with a trackball control and *Centipede*, *Crystal Castles*, *Millipede*, and *Missile Command* games). (\$399.95; <https://www.hammacher.com>)

Bodi language

After eating some of the items in this guide, you might want to work off some of those calories at a spot like the local fitness facility **Bodi Shak**. Classes have such catchy names as *FIRM*, *DRENCH*, *SURGE* and *BLAZE*, and will definitely challenge your body on every level. Get a friend a gift certificate—and you might want to purchase a class or two yourself. (Various prices; <https://www.bodishak.com/>)

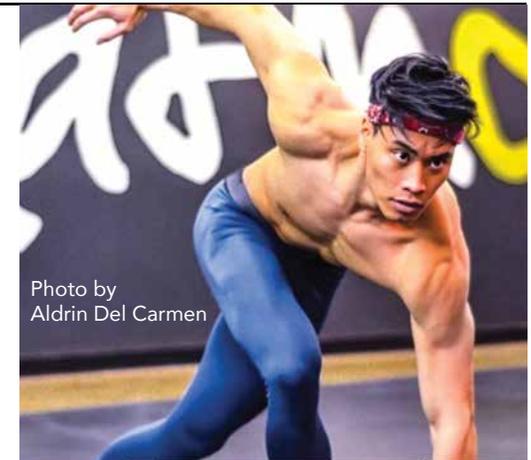


Photo by Aldrin Del Carmen

Pop and lock

The **Tapplock One** has much more to offer than your standard lock—and, therefore, offers much more security. The smart padlock's state-of-the-art capacitive fingerprint sensor allows you to access your items in under a second and the corresponding app can be used to give temporary, remote access to others. Your valuables (whether it's jewelry or your great-grandmother's recipes) have never been safer. (\$99; <https://tapplock.com/>)



BLAQ is beautiful

Charcoal is being used for a lot more than grilling these days. Witness **BLAQ**—charcoal-laden skincare products that target toxins and extract impurities. Whether it's the *BLAQMask* or even the teeth-whitening wand, the results can be impressive—and you won't have to use those briquets. (Various prices; <https://blaq.co>)



Now and Zen

With everything happening in our lives today, it's more important than ever to take some time to relax. **Buddha Board** might just be the answer; as a mess-free temporary "painting" board that utilizes the natural element of water, it can be used by anyone anywhere to simply 'be' in the moment and enjoy their creativity. The Buddha Board comes in its original size, the 5" Mini Buddha Board, or the Enso, the enhanced version of the Mini Board. Release your inner artist and de-stress simultaneously. (\$14.95-\$34.95; <http://www.buddhaboard.com/>)

Art-felt

The website **Art.com** has what it calls "the largest online catalog of wall art and decor"—and, with a selection like that, there's something for everyone. Moreover, dozens of items are currently discounted at 50-60 percent. Score! (Various prices; art.com)



50 scent

Helmm is a men's deodorant and antiperspirant that smells great, looks good and actually works. With Helmm's delivery box service, you never have to think of deodorant again—and fragrance offerings (which can be used in Helmm's reusable nickel-plated, laser-engraved zinc container) include Trailblazer, Coastline, Hudson and Night Market. (\$25; helmm.com)

Watch this

Retro is fashionable everywhere (although the jury is still out on fanny packs). The **Casio Vintage Timepiece Collection** features those designs from yesteryear, with stainless-steel bands and even more colors. Moreover, there are other functions, such as an auto calendar, stopwatch and more. (\$49.95-\$69.95; <https://www.casio.com/products/watches/classic>)



Shake and bake

Evanston bakery **Hewn**—known for its hand-forged, artisan bread and pastries—recently launched its first cookbook, *Heritage Baking*, through Chronicle Books. And unlike some books on foods, this one features a lot more than recipes (although it has 45 of those): Through first-hand stories from Ellen King, this cookbook aims to change the way consumers look at bread. (\$29.95; <https://www.hewnbread.com/>)



Tee time

There are your standard workout T-shirts—and then there are **SCOTTeVEST** tees. The moisture-wicking shirts are machine-washable, and are even have single-zippered pockets made specifically to hold your cash, credit cards or keys. You'll wonder why you hadn't purchased it before. (\$45; <https://www.scottevest.com>)

GIFT GUIDE EXTRA

SWZLE: Part of the reusable straw revolution

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Reusable straws have become a central focus in helping to preserve the environment—so much so that banning plastic straws was an issue on the Chicago ballots during the recent midterm elections.

To that end, former Chicago Bear Ryan Mundy and business partner Philip Causgrove have founded SWZLE, a company specializing in mostly stainless steel straws that are BPA (bisphenol A)-free and dishwasher-safe. Moreover, the straws come in three different shapes (bent, cocktail and straight) and seven unique colors (silver, gold, rose gold, black, blue, purple, rainbow metallic).

Windy City Times: How did you two become business partners?

Ryan Mundy: A mutual friend connected us well over a year ago now. We're both members of Soho House and that friend is also a member. Phil and I then started emailing each other and having coffee—and that's the genesis of how we met.

WCT: Five years ago, people didn't really think about reusable straws. Do you have any stats to show how much of an impact plastic straws have had on us and the environment?

Philip Causgrove: One that gets thrown around quite a bit is that 500 million plastic straws are used in the U.S. daily. And you may think, "There aren't even 500 million people in the U.S.," but there are those straws that come with refills. And every time a bartender makes a cocktail, they may use a straw to taste and then throw it away.

That's an incredible number; it averages out to about 550 straws per person per year.

Since plastic has been ingrained in our daily lives, in the '50s, only 9 percent of it has disappeared in some way, shape or form. So basically all of the plastic that has ever been created is still in existence—and there's no great way to break it down.

WCT: Wow. Tell me about how people can customize their SWZLE orders.

PC: Yeah; there are three shapes and several different colors, and we definitely have some more shapes and diameters coming down the pipeline. They're BPA-safe, dishwasher-safe and even come with their own carrying cases.

WCT: There are all sorts of reusable straws out there—including a rose-quartz crystal straw on the website goop that retails for \$68. [SWZLE's items are \$9.99-\$19.99, incidentally.] What distinguishes your straws from the others out there?

PC: I think the customization sets us apart. But also, you can grab a nice coffee on your way to work, for example, and clean it out. [The straws come with cleaners.] We also wanted to make our straws a little eye-catching.

WCT: There's still a Kickstarter campaign?

RM: We completed our Kickstarter in mid-September. It ran for three weeks and we more than exceeded our goal. I think we reached 180 percent of our goal. It was about the eco-friendliness of the straws, and making a difference on an individual level. Kickstarter was a great springboard for our product.



SWZLE.

Photos courtesy of Philip Causgrove

WCT: So SWZLE straws are ready to ship?

PC: Items will be ready to ship in mid-December, but we are taking pre-orders right now. The Kickstarter campaign was great for awareness and brand recognition. Looking forward to spring, I

think we're considering a wholesale strategy for select retailers.

WCT: By the way, who came up with the name?

PC: Oh, I did. I was playing around with swizzle stick and stirring. By the way, something a lot of people don't know is that we also have biodegradable paper straws. We look forward to working with the hospitality industry, restaurants and bartenders. We even talked with the Bears about the possibility of Soldier Field switching to them.

RM: Yeah—we're really excited to work with the restaurant and hospitality industries because, as Phil said, a lot of plastic straws are in those places. Places like Starbucks, United and Hyatt, for example, have said they're looking to ban plastic straws.

WCT: My final question: What are your predictions for the Bears' final regular-season record?

RM: [Laughs] I know they have some divisional games coming up, but those teams aren't doing too well. I'm going to say they'll finish 10-6.

PC: In the interest of full transparency, I'm not a Bears fan. But I don't want to offend anyone, so I'm going to say 11-5.

See <https://www.SWZLE.com>. Also, follow the company @SWZLE (Instagram) and @SWZLEstraws (Twitter) as well as on Facebook.



From far left: Philip Causgrove; Ryan Mundy.

10 questions with Vic

Gerami headshot by Stephen Blaha



Greg Louganis

Courtesy of Greg Louganis Archives

BY VIC GERAMI

Greg Louganis is the greatest diver in history. In the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, Louganis achieved gold medals in both the men's three-meter springboard and 10-meter platform events. At the 1988 Olympic Summer Games held in Seoul, South Korea, he won the gold for the three-meter springboard competition, as well as the gold for the men's ten-meter platform. He is the only male and the second diver in Olympic history to sweep the diving events in consecutive Olympic Games. Greg continues to inspire us with his work as a noted author, an activist and a humanitarian.

Windy City Times: You are the only male and the second diver in Olympic history to sweep the diving events in consecutive

Olympic Games and been called "the greatest American diver." It's been 30 years since you won two gold medals in Seoul Olympics. How do you reflect on that period now?

Greg Louganis: I think it is "in the history of the sport," not just "America"—China, Italy, Russia had many wonderful divers. It is in the history books; I don't reflect often about it, unless I get questions like this.

WCT: How has the sport of diving change since your competition days? Who are a few divers that you follow?

GL: The focus is on Degree of Difficulty; the sport has changes tremendously, and also they now have four more medal events with Synchronized Diving. Tom Daley, and curious who the new Chinese are, Sasha Klein from Germany was a favorite of mine as well as Matthew Mitcham.

WCT: How has it been living with HIV and your journey in the last three decades?

GL: I am still here.

WCT: What do you think of PrEP and other advancements in HIV and AIDS?

GL: Much progress has been made.

WCT: Aside from being a decorated athlete, your resume includes acting in films and theater, writing, coaching and activism. Is there anything that you would like to do that you haven't done so yet?

GL: Go to Africa and help the wildlife there.

WCT: What is a single misconception about you?

GL: I am serious

WCT: What is your favorite charity or cause?

GL: The animal charities that are actually helping animals.

WCT: Which living person do you most admire?

GL: They died, so sad...

WCT: What project(s) do you have coming up?

GL: Bio Pic, writing a musical, a book, a clothing line...more acting at some point.

WCT: Tell me a secret—a good one!

GL: I kissed a girl—she had four legs and [was] hairy, yes tongue was involved; more on her part than mine, sneaky bitch.

For more information about Greg Louganis, please visit greglouganis.com

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World of Chocolate provides dessert for a good cause

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Hundreds of community members visited AIDS Foundation of Chicago's (AFC) annual World of Chocolate celebration and fundraiser at Revel Fulton Market, 1215 W. Fulton Market, on Nov. 30.

Nearly two dozen vendors from across the region participated, among them CH Distillery, Chocolat Uzma, Sofitel Chicago magnificent Mile, Langman & Eagle, Terry's Toffee, Vanilla, Starbucks, Hilton Chicago & Towers, Prasino, Wow Bao, Cocoa Exchange, Just bLike U Like It, Cindy's, London House, Uptown Brownie, Noir D'Ebene Chocolat et

Patisserie, St. Jane Chicago, Margeaux Brasserie, Zed 451, My Chocolate Soul and Vivere Chocolates.

Guests were given "passports" to encourage them to collect stamps—and treats—at from each of the chocolatiers. AFC this year garnered with Walgreens Boots Alliance to make the event "zero-waste"; chocolatiers were asked to use only recyclable, reusable and compostable products. Decorations were provided by Kehoe Designs.

Since its inception in 2001, World of Chocolate has raised more than \$2.1 million of vital HIV/AIDS services



Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com). See more online at www.WindyCityTimes.com.



a cradle song



WRITTEN BY MARK ZUBRO
ILLUSTRATED BY W.S. REED

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

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

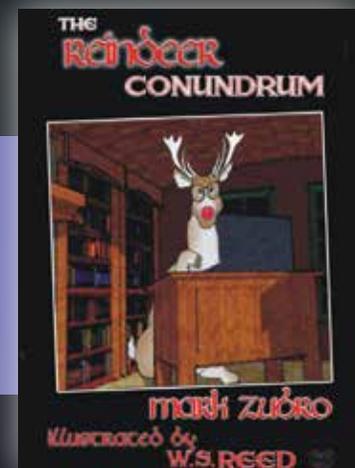
"**A Cradle Song** is a wonderful, heartwarming story, and just right for Christmas. Open this present and enjoy!"

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

A **Cradle Song** is available now in paperback from **Unabridged Bookstore** in Chicago, **Outwords Books** in Milwaukee and also as an ebook or a paperback online at **Amazon.com**.

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

Also still available: Last year's holiday book, **The Reindeer Conundrum**





A Cradle Song: Part Eight

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

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

ber 17 to December 19 and will also be available for gift giving as an e-book and as a paperback. For the true joy and meaning of the season, this is the book you want to read.

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

Chapter Nine: Part Two

If it was his own son Matthew, he knew what he would do. Move mountains to get what he needed.

Luke explained to the leader what his examination showed and what medicine he thought the boy needed.

The leader got very angry. He raged around the tent.

Luke knew what was wrong, fear for the life of his son drove the man to even greater extremes. Luke didn't know if he'd live to see the next minute.

As always, the vision of his wife and children flashed through his mind.

The leader wanted a miracle that Luke thought was only a bit of medicine away.

Luke said, "I will go get the medicine. I will come back."

The leader conferred with his minions. They all left the tent. The woman who'd come with stood next to Luke. She told Luke she was the boy's mother. She thanked him and wished him well. Then she sat on the cot next to her son.

Luke remained nearby.

An interminable amount of time passed. Then with a rush, the leader returned. He barked commands. Minutes later, Luke was in the cab of a truck. Through the windshield, Luke saw snow swirling in the dark. The storm continued to rage.

Luke, the driver, and the leader crammed themselves into the front seat. Before the driver started the engine, the leader held the muzzle of the gun to Luke's head. He shoved the gun so that Luke's head bent at a forty-five degree angle. The leader said, "If you try anything, you die."

Luke nodded.

The driver turned the key, and moments later they started off. They didn't turn on the headlights. Another harrowing journey ensued. None of them spoke. It seemed like they drove for hours before Luke began to see lights in the distance.

At a signal from the leader, the driver stopped and let the engine idle. The leader pointed his gun at Luke. "We are at a ren-



dezvous place. You will walk from here. The medicine is ready, but they will only give it to you. You will walk back here. If you do not return, I will destroy the entire village you see in front of you. All the men, women and children will die in the flash of a few moments."

"Why don't you just go in and take the medicine?"

"I can't risk them destroying what I need. It was a delicate negotiation. These are not your people, but they are also not my people. They would not trust one of mine. You, they will accept and believe."

Luke walked through the cold and dark. He'd been allowed to bring his blanket to wrap around himself as a supplement to his jacket. The wind found every opening in his clothes. He blew on his hands to try to keep them warm. He hadn't had gloves since the day the camp had been overrun. His feet crunched over the snow. The storm had not let up.

Following the directions from the leader,

Luke arrived at the rendezvous point.

No one was there.

Luke sagged in hopelessness. His knees met the ground. He bent over and his hands touched the cold snow. As he knelt in the small drift, he saw two boots. He looked up.

A soldier in a warm coat stood over him. He smiled, held out his hand, and helped Luke rise. The soldier said, "Would you like to come in and get warm?"

Luke said, "I need the medicine. I need to get back."

"We can protect you."

Luke shook his head. "I gave my word. A child might die. They'll kill you all if I don't go back."

Luke's whole body slumped, ready for despair. The soldier tapped Luke's elbow. The man took off his gloves, reached into a pocket, pulled out several vials, and gave them to Luke. The soldier nodded and said, "That should do it." Then he handed Luke his pair of gloves. "I think you need these.

I can get another pair."

Luke said, "Thank you." As he walked back to the truck, he put them on. They were very warm.

Back at the camp, Luke injected the boy with the medicine. Through the night as they waited, the whole time the leader stood next to Luke between him and the cot where his boy lay. The mother sat on the floor at the foot of the bed alternating looks between her son, her gruff husband, and her boy's possible savior.

Through a long night, the boy breathed heavily.

Luke was desperately tired and wanted to sleep. He was closer than he'd ever been to giving up completely. If it wasn't for the pictures of his wife and children that ran through his mind, he thought he might welcome death, but he wanted to live for them, to see them and be with them again.

With the dawn, the fever broke.

Joy filled Luke's heart.

The leader gushed over the boy, then over Luke. After embracing her son, the mother touched Luke's hand.

"You proved faithful at great peril," the leader said. "What do you wish in return?"

Luke almost collapsed with hope. He whispered, "I want to see my wife and children. I want to go home."

The leader said, "I will make it so."

Another perilous journey through the next night ensued. Luke was delivered to an empty clearing. He was told his side was a mile farther down the road. He wandered through the night back to his own lines. Walking through the cold and desolate countryside was almost a comfort, even with possible dangers.

It took a frightening long while to get through the guards and the checkpoints and to prove to them he was who he said he was.

Very quickly, he was told he would be transported home. It seemed the fearful leader had influence even here. Luke's superiors asked few questions.

His most evil enemy was making sure he would be going home.

Chapter Ten: Erik

Reginald, the little car, woke early on that Christmas Eve. The first thing he said to Erik was, "I hope I get picked today. Wouldn't it be a perfect day for it? Do you think I'll get picked today? Is there anything I can do to help me get picked?"

Erik had a kindly heart. He didn't want to dash Reginald's hopes, to tell him how unlikely it was that anyone would even realize they were here, not this far back. All that felt like it was too enormous and an awful thing to reveal. Instead, Erik said soothing things all day, no matter how many times Reginald went on and on. No matter how many children they saw walk by who didn't even notice them in the slightest.

Erik knew the ache of loneliness, the desire to be part of something. The little car was annoying, but it was more companionship than Erik had had in years. Perhaps Reginald was tiresome, but Erik felt he could afford the time for kindness.

When the sun began to set that day, even Reginald began to get quiet.

Then when full dark had fallen, and the lights in the store were turned to their brightest, Reginald said, "It's hopeless, isn't it? Please don't lie to me."

Erik could think of little to say. What was there to say? He felt so bad himself.

He had his own depth of disappointment to deal with. He almost said something harsh, but then stopped. It would do no good, and probably just contribute to the day's despair. Erik managed to say, "There's still a little time."

On his shelf, in this store, hope was in short supply. Erik may not have much, but he wasn't going to take it away from others, certainly not Reginald, the lonely little race car.

Chapter Eleven: Matthew

Matthew had no presents to give for Christmas and no one to give them to. He remembered he'd always had a bright happy home for Christmas, and now it was suddenly all gone. In his home at Christmas time, lights always twinkled. A star shone at the top of their little tree.

Matthew followed the passage and came to the bridge. The Isle of Misfit Toys was most lit up on Christmas Eve. It was as if a million stars had come down from the sky then burst to wild glows greater than a billion fireworks. Matthew was dazzled. In great wonderment, he crossed the sparkling bridge.

It was neither warm nor cold on the Isle of Misfit Toys, but altogether pleasant and calm.

A sweet old grandmother-looking woman met him on the other side. She wore a great flowing dress covered with multi-hued droplets of crystal that both captured and reflected light.

She smiled broadly. When Matthew met her gaze, he understood without her saying anything the rules for the Isle of Misfit Toys. Matthew knew there were always rules for everything. Somehow, he understood, he could pick one gift for himself and one gift for each person in his family.

Matthew saw crowds of children at the windows and doors of the little shops. He didn't see any parents. What was better, the children looked like him. No fancy clothes, no bratty bragging, no privileged sneers, just happy, smiling faces as they gawked.

At every corner, there were little food carts with brightly colored canopies. In each of them, Matthew saw steam rising from warm food. He smelled baked bread and chocolate chip cookies fresh from ovens.

What seemed to Matthew like Munchkins from the Wizard of Oz stood on boxes at each kiosk at all the intersections. The first little man smiled at Matthew. He said, "Matthew, would you like a grilled cheese sandwich and some tomato soup?"

How did he know my name, thought Matthew? But the little man didn't look dangerous. And he saw other children taking

food as the vendors said their names. On this day, with the toys free, so were the snacks, sandwiches, cakes, and hot chocolate the vendors gave away.

Somehow, the people at the kiosks knew which children had eaten and those who were now just trying to be greedy. Those were gently turned away. And really the marvels of the toys were too dazzling to be distracted by anything else for too very long.

Matthew ate his soup and sandwich. They tasted wonderful. As he savored each bite, he watched children leaving on the path back. All their faces beamed with contentment. Some were burdened by gargantuan boxes that housed the largest toys. Most had normal sized boxes, a few of which were brightly decorated or had great colored bows.

Finished eating, Matthew began the walk up the magic road. Only a few steps up the cobbled street, through a store window, Matthew saw a million flowers, more blooms than in any garden he'd ever seen or imagined. In one corner of the display window were vases of metal roses in every color that Matthew thought could exist in the whole world. Three spotlights shone directly down on them from the ceiling. The roses glimmered and sparkled. He knew his mom would love one of them.

End of part eight. Part nine coming next week.



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Pro-LGBTQ sports group looks to increase membership

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Just more than four years ago, Chicago's Jake Lenz was searching for other LGBTQ individuals who worked in sports and entertainment as connections. When he did not find who, or what, he was looking for, he knew something had to change.

Lenz, a sponsorship marketing specialist and Good Sports and You Can Play Project regional board member, met Jim Andrews at a conference in Chicago in 2015. That was a game-changer for him. Andrews, who worked at the sponsorship firm IEG for 31 years and was the About Face Theater board chair for five years, quickly became a mentor to Lenz because he was the only other gay industry professional he knew.

Due to Andrews' mentorship, Lenz was able to meet other out professionals and grow his network and that is when the idea of HomeField Alliance came to fruition. Lenz said this is the first organization of its kind focused on the business side of the sports and entertainment industry. So far, HomeField Alliance has a growing membership from around the U.S. and Canada.

Lenz and Andrews decided to join forces with David Slade, WFYI-Indianapolis Public Media's chief development and marketing officer who previously led the United States Tennis Association's LGBTQ employee resource group, as co-founders and board members in 2017 with Noel Guevara coming onboard as a board member earlier this year. Guevara is the Arizona Diamondbacks' spe-

SPORTS

cial events and community outreach coordinator who launched LGBTQ initiatives for the team, including its first Pride Night.

Andrews said the name came from the "core of what we were creating, which was a passionate community of people rooting for each other, and creating a positive environment of support. This is clearly exemplified by the support a team feels from its fans while playing in their home town. Win or lose, those fans are there to help push their team to success, amplifying each others' cheers week after week, season after season, giving their team that home field advantage."

The mission, according to its website is, "to be the leading voice and resource for LGBTQ professionals in the business of sports and entertainment. Offering professional development, networking and at-work ally programs, in addition to creating industry awareness and conversation, HomeField Alliance will provide our members with the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop in their professional careers regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

Andrews explained that they decided to make Chicago the organization's headquarters because it is centrally located and easily accessible to host events.

"From a sports and entertainment perspective, Chicago is one of the premiere cities in the world," said Andrews. "Chicago's teams and ven-



Jake Lenz.

Photo courtesy of Premier Partnerships

ues have storied histories, wildly passionate fans and an incredible ability to create community, even when we would be called crazy elsewhere, for leaving our homes in the middle of winter for an outdoor event. Our city also boasts some of the best corporate citizens of sports in the world, whether it's an equipment manufacturer or a sponsor focused on making sports and entertainment a core of their marketing efforts."

In terms of what the organization wants to accomplish, Slade said "in a big way, we hope to legitimately impact the culture within the sports and entertainment industry by giving employees and organizations the tools to create inclusive environments, removing stigmas around the LGBTQ community and by fostering community across cities and between organizations. In a small way, we hope that by connecting LGBTQ professionals to other individuals, they have the chance to learn from and connect with people who they otherwise might not have been able to do so with."



David Slade.

Photo courtesy of USTA

As for how they are going to address gender and racial diversity within their leadership ranks, Lenz said it is one of their top priorities.

"We cannot advocate for diversity unless we start from a place of diverse thought, background and experience," said Lenz. "It is that simple, so it is a sticking point for our entire board to make sure that while we now have male, female, gay, lesbian and African-American representation, we continue to add differing views and perspectives in order to provide the best possible impact for all our members."

The organization launched its mentorship program in September, and will be hosting some regional events next year and a member summit next summer.

Membership fees are \$40 annually, and any membership purchased in 2018 will be good through the end of 2019. Any inquiries should be sent to info@homefieldalliance.org.

See <https://homefieldalliance.org/> for more information.

GRANT from page 10

work on it until the end of time otherwise.

WCT: How does your music reflect your day to day life?

JG: I have been thinking a lot about my trajectory in music and life recently. I am learning to love, which usually means having a good relationship with loving yourself first before you can love others. That has been a particularly difficult journey for me personally.

I know I am not the only one, but there are people out there in the world that have a good relationship with themselves. They attract healthy relationships as a result of that.

I have been in a lot of destructive relationships, but the last one was very nurturing. It helped me realize that all the work I have been putting into myself in the last 14 years has been yielding good results. I have great people around me. That is what I have always wanted.

WCT: You have been open about having anxiety. What helps you?

JG: I initially took Paroxetine, brand name Pax-

il, back in 1994. It is to deal with severe anxiety and that was helpful to me.

These days people should look at caffeine intake. It is also good to have someone to talk to about every day living, like a therapist.

WCT: We come from the same generation where we were bullied for being gay so I am thinking that was where some of the anxiety came from.

JG: Oh yeah. I was basically told I wasn't on the same level as other human beings. There is a spiritual side as well where we are separated from the creator of the entire universe for being what you are. You must change to have a place in society or any other world after this one. That sets you up for problems right there. That led to substance abuse for me.

WCT: Well, it must be great to put out music as a way of dealing with it.

JG: It is. I think if I wasn't working on my issues then the music would further my downfall. If I were wallowing in self pity or rage I wouldn't get anywhere. The music would just be a toy to escape and would eventually destroy me.

When you are young it doesn't matter what was done to you, as an older person you need to figure out a way to survive and thrive in this world.

WCT: In the "Love Is Magic" video, what was behind all of the dogs?

JG: That idea was pitched to me by someone who sent in the treatment. I liked the idea that humans can experience the unconditional love of an animal that is almost impossible to get from humans. I thought it was nice to see a snapshot of this type of love.

WCT: Do you own a dog?

JG: No, I don't. I would like to, but can't with this type of career.

WCT: Was the video for "He's Got His Mother's Hips" inspired by past Peter Gabriel videos?

JG: It was. It wasn't my idea, but the guys that pitched it to me wanted a love letter to the "Sledgehammer" video and Eurythmics "Missionary Man."

WCT: How was working with Kylie Minogue?

JG: She's a badass and super-lovely to work with. She's kind and gracious. She's been through

a lot and it is nice to consider her a friend. We are not close, but we keep in touch.

Everyone just shit their diaper when she walked onstage and sang "Glacier" with me at the Royal Albert Hall in London. That was epic.

She invited me to sing at her Christmas show after that. I really like her. She's impressive.

WCT: What [will] your stage show at Lincoln Hall be [like]?

JG: We have a big crew around us. We have a band. We present the music in the best possible way we can. I am excited about connecting with the crowd.

I won't have Kylie with me or won't have Sinead O'Connor fly down from the rafters on a platform!

WCT: That would be so great, though? Dressed as an angel just in time for the holidays.

JG: Totally!

See Grant live at Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln Ave., on Sunday, Dec. 9, at 8 p.m. Ticket information for the show is at LH-ST.com.

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 Alexandra 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.



PROFILE BY TONY PEREGRIN

NAME
"I actually created the alter ego of 'Tiffany' when I was about five six years old so that I could imagine myself in a world where I was able to like my crushes and play with all of the toys and dress like a princess—the way I'd always wanted. As I got older, the name evolved [in part] because of my love of old Hollywood films and glamour."

FIRST DRAG PERFORMANCE
"To me, drag is a culmination of almost every art form I've worked in throughout my life, but I actually didn't make my stage debut as 'Tiffany Diamond' until last July. The first song I ever performed—which I look back on now and cringe [laughs]—was a Disney channel cover of 'These Boots are Made for Walkin.'"

DRAG INSPIRATION
"I look a lot to designer dolls and '80s cartoons when it comes to inspiration for my aesthetic. I don't particularly care for street fashion in drag for myself, because Tiffany is more about a fantasy. I view her as a doll that's come to life."

GO-TO NUMBER TO SLAY THE CROWD
"You know, it really depends on the venue. My personal favorite to perform is 'Aphrodite' by Kylie Minogue. Everything about that song just screams Tiffany to me. It's drama, it's pop, it's sexy and I always feel the full fantasy during that number."

FUN FACT
"I'm actually a professional children's book illustrator and character designer by day. Extra fun fact: I played Peter Pan and Ron Stoppable for Disney World."

WHERE CAN WE CATCH YOU
Scarlet on Saturday nights co-hosting Pregame with Aurora Gozmic

SOCIAL MEDIA
Instagram and Facebook: @liketotallytiffany
Twitter: @liketotallytiff

Photo from the Anastasia Beverly Hills photo booth at DragCon NYC

FRIDAYS

- 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.
- 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.: **Diva's 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.
- Pregame!**, featuring Abhijeet, Tenderoni and Harlet Wench, hosted by Aurora Gozmic and Tiffany Diamond, 9-10 p.m. Scarlet, 3320 N. Halsted St.
- 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 Alexandra 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

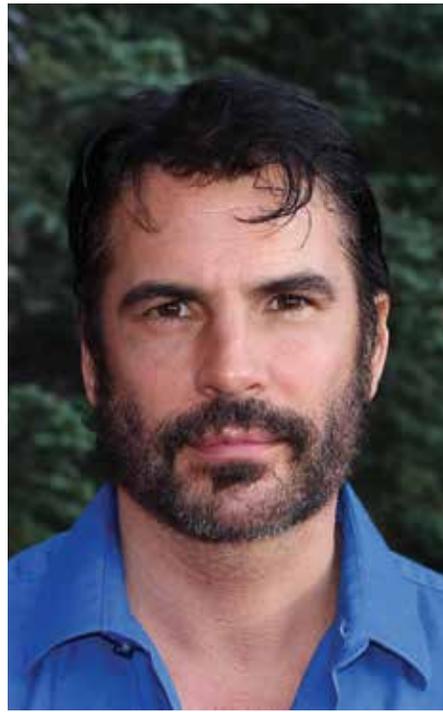
"I thought the stain was going to be bigger. Y'know, it was so low. To me, it was probably he hadn't pulled up his pants and just hit her with a wet tip!"—Wendy Williams' takeaway from The Clinton Affair documentary.

Last week, we commemorated World AIDS Day. In our current political climate, it almost makes sense that the White House would single out **Mike Pence** to participate in a ceremony. Why, it's like OJ speaking on domestic abuse. And, what better way to combat AIDS than conversion therapy? (I say this dripping with sarcasm, in case that didn't come through.) If you don't believe me, you obviously didn't listen to what Pence had to say—or, rather, what he didn't say. He somehow managed to talk for several minutes about HIV without ever uttering the word "gay" or mentioning the LGBT community! But he did manage to squeeze in this little factoid—the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (known as PEPFAR) has \$100 million earmarked for religious organizations. Is it just me, or does that sound a tad excessive? I mean, how much does it cost to hand out condoms to priests?

In a related story, **Pope Francis** made it clear where he stands on gay priests. In the book *The Strength of Vocation*, the Pope says that homosexuality in the church "is something that worries me"—of course, he said it in Italian but, happily, your Billy is bilingual: "For this reason, the Church urges that persons with this rooted tendency not be accepted into ministry or consecrated life." This includes priests, monks and nuns—all of whom take vows of celibacy. What if you have those tendencies and are already in the church? Franny has some advice for them, too: "It is better that they leave the priesthood or the consecrated life rather than live a double life."

A Delta Airlines pilot is hoping to keep his job after sending a Grindr message to a passenger: "I see you're on my flight. Enjoy the ride to Chicago." Now, I ask you, in these days of questionable customer service, isn't that a nice message? Sure "enjoy the ride" on a sex app could be taken a variety of ways, but I'm accepting it as innocuously as I do when a hot flight attendant asks me if I'd like "warm nuts." Apparently, the recipient of this message was not as blase as moi. He told the *New York Post*, "My reaction was I knew I needed to get off this plane as fast as I can." Again, the phrase "get off" is open to interpretation.

Remember a few weeks ago how we told you that porn star **Austin Wolf** filmed himself having sex with a flight attendant in a Delta lavatory? Well, in-flight sex is running rampant. Diego Barros isn't actually a porn star—he sells underwear and likes to pose in them (and out of them, too). He was recently on a flight where he was sitting in one of those first-class cubby holes. So, what does one do when alone and bored? Yes, exactly. He filmed himself masturbating. I dunno—I guess it's scandalous. It's certainly illegal. And you can see it on BillyMasters.com.



Thom Bierdz's newest book is one of Billy's gift-giving suggestions.

PR photo courtesy of Harlan Boll

Without further ado, we bring you more of "Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions." **Thom Bierdz** has the distinction of not only being the first openly gay actor to appear as a regular on a daytime drama, he also played a character who was openly gay. Of course, neither the actor nor the character started out that way. When Phillip Chancellor III was killed off of *The Young and the Restless* in 1989, Bierdz went into something of a freefall.

When his character returned from the dead 20 years later—as soap characters do—it was revealed that he faked his death because he wanted to live openly as a gay man. If you think that sounds bizarre, wait till you read *Young, Gay & Restless*. It's a gripping story of a handsome young man trying to make it in Hollywood, hitting the heights of daytime drama one day, and then bartending at the Soap Opera Digest Awards the next. Dichotomy is a regular part of Bierdz's life. While he was being pursued by some of the best-looking men in Hollywood, he was still feeling inadequate about his looks and took some drastic measures to change them. Throw in one brother who committed suicide and another who killed their mother, and you have a story that's stranger than fiction. By the way, Bierdz is marking his second appearance on our "Gift Giving" list. His previous book about the murder of his mother, *Forgiving Troy*, made our list in 2009. You can get his books—and his artwork—at ThomBierdz.com.

The good thing about having lasted so long in this business we call show is that I've grown up with many of the people I write about. The acclaimed **Thirsty Burlington** and I go back a LONG way. Long before I started writing this column, I spent years hosting shows in my native Boston. One of the regulars in attendance was the young



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NO COVER

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DECEMBER 7 7PM
VH1 **RuPaul's DRAG RACE**
HOLI-SLAY SPECTACULAR

Scott Townsend. To have watched Scott transform himself into Thirsty Burlington, one of the world's premier **Cher** impersonators, has been a joy for me. But that was nothing next to the joy I felt watching the film "Thirsty" and seeing how this extraordinary person developed. It was also a pleasant surprise to see my friend Jonny Beauchamp play Scott in his early years! If you are a fan or new to the Burlington brand, this is a film I cannot recommend enough. You can grab it on Amazon or watch it on Amazon Prime.

When I'm still Thirsty for more Burlington, it's time to end another column. I forgot the worst part of the holidays—peppermint bark. Don't get me wrong, I love it ... a bit too much. So while I am out doing a few extra thousand steps, you can check out BillyMasters.com—the site that's always a step ahead of everyone else. But even while exercising (or eating), I can respond to your every need. Drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Pope Francis starts giving out Bibles with a strip of condoms as a bookmark! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

Schott

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the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Conrad's Grill; Swissotel's Santa Suite

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Apparently, students at Michigan State University know how to party—and how to eat after one.

The fast-casual restaurant **Conrad's Grill** (1422 N. Milwaukee Ave.; <https://www.conradsgrill.com/>)—a staple in the university's city of East Lansing, Michigan—has made its first foray outside that state, selling its delicious (and very filling) items in Chicago's Wicker Park area.

And this place specializes in what are called "tot wraps"—wraps loaded with meats, cheeses, sauces and, yes, tater tots. It's a twist on the fries that some have stuffed in their wraps.

The selection of tot wraps is staggering, and intriguing. For example, the O.G.C.T. contains chicken tenders, mozzarella cheese, lettuce, tomato, hot sauce and a choice of sauce; and the Jemalty, a giant wrap laden with grilled chicken, ham, bacon, tater tots, cheddar cheese, sour



The Hangover Helper at Conrad's Grill.
Photo by Kailley Lindman

cream, BBQ sauce and ranch. (Any wrap can be customized—just let Cameron and Joe know. As for another question some might have, no, there isn't a cardiologist in the restaurant.)

I tried the Hangover Helper, which contains a sinful mix of scrambled eggs, double sausage, American cheese, mayo and tots; and (later) the ever-popular Dweeb, an olio of chicken tenders, bacon, tots, cheddar cheese, mac 'n' cheese bites and extra ranch. These items are so filling that I could only try half a wrap in one sitting—meaning you'll definitely get your money's worth.

But wait—there's more. Sides include pickle fries (exactly like they sound), broccoli-cheddar bites, mozzarella sticks, waffle fries and other items. The brownie may seem like an afterthought, but it's actually one of the best I've tried recently—especially if it's warm.

If you're hungry, Conrad's Grill is a can't-miss

option. And it has the cutest mascot, a dog fittingly called Tot. (I'm sure Tot is the reason for the fire hydrant-accented bench in the restaurant.)

Swissotel's Santa Suite

'Tis the season: Chicago is now enveloped in seasonal and holiday wonder, with there being some truly memorable offerings to experience.

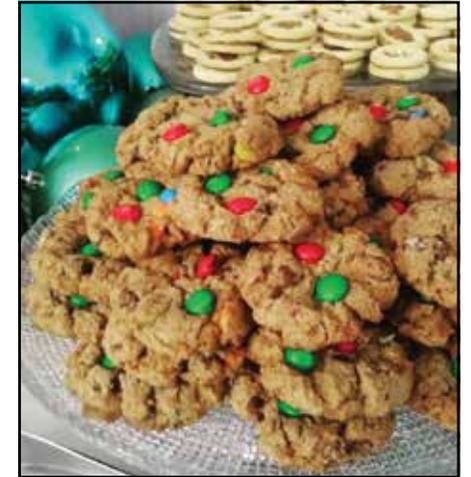
Take the **Swissotel's Santa Suite** (323 E. Upper Wacker Dr., 41st floor; <https://santasuite.eventbrite.com>), in which a five-room presidential suite has been converted to a seasonal wonderland. The theme "Christmas Around the World" is reflected in the 16 inspirational Christmas trees from countries including Greece, Peru, Germany and Mexico.

And this family-friendly environment has something for everyone, from a bar for adults to activities such as face-painting and letter-writing for kids (and, ahem, a few "older kids," as this one wished for world peace—and vacation tickets). Adults and kids also have the opportunity to sit on Santa's lap.

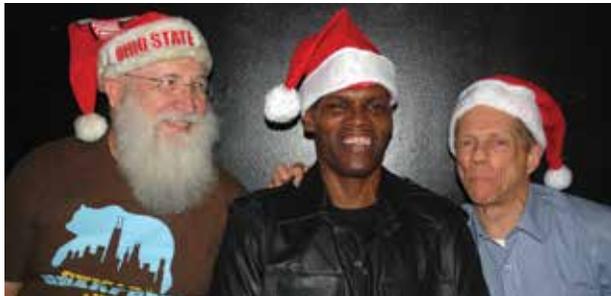
And since this is a food column, it would only make sense to discuss the goodies there as well. The night I went featured waitstaff with pumpkin-bisque shooters and other hors d'oeuvres—but there's also a large table of sweets ranging from M&M-filled cookies to miniature cotton-candy items. In addition, there are (or were) 22,000 pieces of candy in canisters and on dishes throughout the suite—and they are for the taking.

The suite offers elf-guided tours and visits with Santa throughout the month on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

By the way, do you want to stay here overnight? It is possible—for just \$2,500 a night Monday through Wednesday starting this week. Other packages include a Holiday Treats Package starting at \$209 a night and the Elf Decorated Room Package starting at \$349 a night through Dec. 31. These packages include overnight accommodations, access to the Santa Suite, and milk and cookies before bed.



Cookies at Swissotel's Santa Suite.
Photo by Andrew Davis



TOUCHE

Bellies like bowls full of jelly at the annual Night of 1000 Santa, a benefit for Toys For Tots.
Joseph Stevens Photography



BERLIN

GeekHaus presents Before Time: A Prehistoric Cosplay Variety Show.
Joseph Stevens Photography

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WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

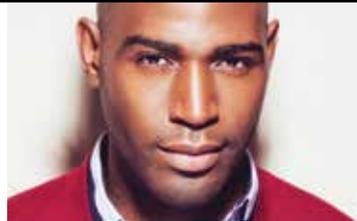
Wed., Dec. 5

Chicago 00: The 1968 DNC Protests exhibit ongoing Exploring a watershed moment in U.S. politics—the 50th anniversary of the convention protests—with the new virtual-reality experience. 12:00pm Chicago History Museum 1601 N Clark St., Chicago <http://chicago00.org/experiences.html#dnc>.

2018 LGBT Chamber Winter Soiree Participants and honorees build relationships, network with up to 100 prominent guests, enjoy a top-shelf open bar and refreshments and enjoy stunning views and the twinkle of the city's lights. 6:30pm - 10:00pm City View Lofts, 324 N Leavitt St. Suite 200, Chicago <http://business.lgbtcc.com>

Queer Eye's Karamo Brown First openly gay African-American in the history of reality television, co-founder of 6in10.org on mental health and self-esteem of those affected by HIV and author of Know Thyself: Using Your Uniqueness to Create Success. Free 7:00pm Evanston Township High School Auditorium, 1600 Dodge Ave., Evanston, <http://familyactionnetwork.net>

GenderQueer Chicago Discussion based group for genderqueer and nonbinary transgender related topics in a safer space for nonbinary trans people. Free. Questions to genderqueerchicago@gmail.com 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/requestspeaker/>



'EYE' WITNESS

Wed., Dec. 5

Queer Eye's Karamo Brown will give a talk in Evanston.

Photo courtesy of Royce Carlton

Nia & Ness Black, lesbian, dancer-poet performance art duo based in Brooklyn, NY, touring with spellbinding and passionate poetry and dance, opening hearts, stealing breath, inspiring minds. 8:30pm Affinity Community Services 2850 S. Wabash Ave. #108 Chicago <http://affinity95.org>

Thursday, Dec. 6

American Veterans for Equal Rights monthly meeting AVER is a non-profit, chapter-based association of active, reserve and veteran servicemembers dedicated to full and equal rights and equitable treatment. This monthly meeting supports the chapters work in outreach

and visibility for LGBTQ veterans year round. On Facebook, see AVER Chicago Chapter. 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago

One of a Kind Holiday Show Shopping, live runway shows, gourmet foods, an emerging artist market, fine art gallery, activities. Through Nov. 9. \$12 for all days. 8:00pm The Mart, 222 W. Merchandise Mart Plaza <http://www.oneofakindshowchicago.com>

Friday, Dec. 7

Book signing. New Media Futures: The Rise of Women in the Digital Arts Dramatic story of Midwestern explorations in digital arts, a web of fascinating relationships which helped usher in the digital age that propelled social media. 4:00pm - 6:00pm Gallery 400, College of Architecture and the Arts, UofI at Chicago, 400 S. Peoria St. http://cada.webhost.uic.edu/Gallery_400/G400_homepage_a.html

World AIDS Day with AIDS Healthcare Foundation One Million Lives in Care. Musical guests and entertainment including Frankie J and Jermaine Dupri. 6:00pm - 10:00pm Lacuna Lofts, 2150 S. Canalport Ave. <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/world-aids-day-chicago-tickets-52629233454>

Late Night Andersonville More than 70 businesses participating with deals, seasonal refreshments, free trolley rides, more. Women & Children First offering 20% off 2019 calendars and boxed holiday cards 7:00pm - 9:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

New Erotica for Feminists: Satirical Fantasies of Love, Lust, and Equal Pay Author Reading Caitlin Kunkel, Brooke Preston, Fiona Taylor & Carrie Wittmer.

Imagine a world where all erotica is written by feminists. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Saturday, Dec. 8

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

Santa Speedo Run Dress up your Speedo, run and party to raise money for the Center on Halsted. 12 p.m. sign in, registration. 2 p.m. 1-mile run through Boystown. 2:30 p.m. awards, entertainment, prizes 12:00pm Begins at Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St., Chicago http://events.centeronhalsted.org/site/TR?fr_id=1110&pg=entry

Elton John Tribute Concert Holiday Fund-raiser Concert for Gallery 1070 and Edgewater Artists in Motion Acres To Miles will open with soulful rocking original music. Chicago staple Great Moments in Vinyl doing the best of Elton John's Goodbye Yellow Brick Road and other hits. Two drinks included. \$25 7:00pm Gallery 1070 Auxillary Building, 1101 W. Granville <http://www.bitly.com/gallery1070>

Monday, Dec. 10

10th Anniversary Women in the Arts Luncheon Honoring Danai Gurira. 11:30 a.m. Registration 12:00pm Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel 221 N. Columbus Dr Chicago <http://www.steppenwolf.org/>

Gay Fathers of Greater Chicago Network of gay men who have children living with us or apart from us. Free. Questions to stakacs14@gmail.com 7:30pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N

Halsted Chicago <http://gayfatherschicago.org>

Howard Brown Insurance Enrollment Assistance Need help navigating health insurance for 2019? Howard Brown Health is here to help. An open event to answer all your questions about insurance open enrollment. Assistants will even help you choose a plan that best fits your needs. Open Enrollment ends on December 15. To get started early or browse plans that might work for you, visit <https://www.healthcare.gov/>. 4-8 p.m., Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St., Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/events/2079516115694675/>

Tuesday, Dec. 11

George Takei's Allegiance to Broadway George Takei's ground-breaking Broadway musical on the big screen. Straight from its Broadway run and inspired by the true-life experience of its star George Takei (Star Trek, Heroes), Allegiance follows one family's extraordinary journey in this untold American story. 7:30pm Various theaters Tickets: <http://www.fathomevents.com/events/george-takeis-allegiance>

Thursday, Dec. 13

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

'When Adonis Calls' through Dec. 9 at Pride Arts

Thompson Street Opera Company is collaborating with Pride Films & Plays on the production When Adonis Calls, which will run Fridays through Sundays Nov. 30-Dec. 9.

Fresh from its premiere at Ashville Lyric Opera, When Adonis Calls follows a correspondence between an accomplished author and a younger fan. The opera utilizes an ensemble of a string quartet and a percussionist; the Poet and Muse are sung and acted by two baritones, and physicalized by two dancers to illuminate the complexities of a gay relationship in the 21st century.

The opera stars Chicago favorite Jonathan Wilson as the Poet, and presents the Chicago debut of baritone Nathan James Kistler as the Muse. Pride Films & Plays Artistic Associate Derek Van Barham will direct.

Admission is \$15-\$30 each; visit <https://whenadoniscalls.brownpapertickets.com/>.

3Arts announces award winners

Chicago-based nonprofit grantmaking organization 3Arts awarded 20 Chicago artists with unrestricted grants at the 11th annual 3Arts Awards Celebration at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.

The celebration, which drew more than 300 attendees, honored the 10 annual 3Arts Awards recipients with \$25,000 grants, along with 10 recipients of Make a Wave, an artist-to-artist giving initiative in which recipients receive \$1,000 each.

The 2018 recipients of \$25,000 3Arts Awards are dancers/dance educators T. Ayo Alston and Anna Martine Whitehead; musicians Brittany "BrittanE" Edwards and Ben LaMar Gay; teaching artists Leida "Lady Sol" Garcia and Elgin Bokari T. Smith; playwright/actor Sandra Delgado and costume designer Christine Pascual; and visual artists Dianna Frid and Hýong Ngo.

The 2018 Make a Wave recipients include Nura Aly (violinist, educator and dancer); Silvia Inés

Gonzalez (interdisciplinary artist and educator); Krystal Grover-Webb (visual artist and educator); Jo de Presser, aka Marlon Billups (DJ); Joelle Lamarre (soprano, teacher and playwright); Jenna M. Lyle (experimental musician and performer); Krystal V. McNeil (actor); Gonzalo Escobar Mora (visual artist and experimental filmmaker); Carolyn O'Brien (composer); and Ana Santos (actor).

'Haunted Christmas' Dec. 7-8 in suburbs

The creators of the 13th Floor Haunted House Chicago, 1940 George St., Melrose Park, will host "Krampus: A Haunted Christmas" Dec. 7-8, 7-11 p.m.

Chicago's world-famous 13th Floor Haunted House has been transformed to tell the tale of Krampus, a nightmarish demon, who has kidnapped not only the bad but also the good children at Christmas.

Tickets start at \$27.99 each; visit KrampusHauntedChristmas.com/chicago or 13thfloorchicago.com.



Krampus.

Photo courtesy of Julia Shell PR

'Unicorn Ball' Dec. 15 at The Shapiro

The 2018 Unicorn Ball—Brave Space Alliance's largest annual fundraiser—will take place Saturday, Dec. 15, at 9 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Shapiro Ballroom, 1612 W. Chicago Ave.

This has been called the official queer "coming out" party of the year, as Brave Space celebrates trans liberation and power in the city.

Tickets are \$20-\$250 each; visit "2018 Unicorn Ball" on Facebook or Eventbrite.

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