Gay mayor goes to the U.S. House

BY ROSS FORMAN

David Cicilline was in Washington, D.C., for a December meeting of the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, on which he serves. He then made his way over to the House of Representatives for its debate and vote on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

Cicilline, the first openly gay mayor of a U.S. state capital (Providence, R.I.), watched first-hand—from the House floor—when the repeal of DADT was passed.

“Being there was great, wonderful. It made me incredibly proud,” said Cicilline, a Democrat who has spent the past eight years as mayor of Providence and, on Jan. 3, 2011, moves into the U.S. House of Representatives for Rhode Island’s 1st congressional district.

He announced his candidacy for the House last February, for the seat vacated by fellow Democrat Patrick J. Kennedy—and Cicilline ultimately defeated Republican John Loughlin by about 10,000 votes.

“I thought [voting to repeal DADT] was a really important vote because there had been so much discussion about the valor and bravery of members of the LGBT community in the military, and the idea that 13,000 individuals

Local happenings in 2010

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Here are a few of the headlines that will make 2010 a year to remember, from rallies/protests to agency developments:

—There goes the judge: Tom Chiola, the first openly gay elected individual in Illinois, has announced his retirement from his 16-year Cook County Circuit Court judicial position. He made history when he won his rigorous campaign for Cook County Circuit Court judge in 1994 in the eighth Judicial Subcircuit. He later branched out into acting, taking part in the production F**king Men at Bailiwick Chicago.

—Red Line attack: Three men attacked Daniel Hauff, a gay individual, Jan. 10 on a Red Line train. Hauff avoided further injury by smearing blood on his attackers and saying he was HIV-positive, although he wasn’t. The alleged attackers’ cases are still pending.

—Election rejection: For the most part, gay and lesbian candidates did not fare well in the Feb. 2 elections, as individuals lost while vying for everything from the Illinois General Assembly to judicial seats. One bright spot is that Mary Trew, who lost a tight race for a post in the Cook County Circuit Court, was appointed by year’s end.

—Putting a Spin on it: The Boystown nightclub Spin became the subject of a lawsuit regarding a contractual dispute. The suit alleged that representatives of Spin failed to fulfill the terms of an arrangement made when plaintiffs Andrea Cruzatti and Maria Christina Wiesmore—acting as A&C Productions—booked and promoted a February show by Kid Sister.

—The Baim game: In an eventful year for Windy City Times Publisher Tracy Baim, she published the book Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage and was named the inaugural recipient of the Chicago History Museum’s OUT Fellowship.

State Rep. Greg Harris addresses the civil-union bill’s merits. Pic by Catherine Sikora
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**OUTLINES**
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**SHOW TIME**
Bent Nights looks at the year in concerts, including Crystal Bowersox at the Lights Festival (left).

*Photo by Vern Hester*

**GOING ‘OFF’**
WCT talked with Ben Folds of NBC’s The Sing-Off as well as the show’s most recent champions, Committed (above).

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**DO ‘TELL’**
Read Craig Teichen’s piece on activism in the face of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and its repeal.

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**GERY ON**
Read more of Joe Erbentraut’s interview with mayoral candidate Gery Chico.

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**THAT’S ENTERTAINMENT**
This week’s entertainment round-up includes bits on Annie Lennox, Rupert Everett and Tyler Perry.

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National news in 2010

BY ANDREW DAVIS

It certainly was an eventful year for the LGBT community on the national front. (Do George Rekers, Constance McMillen and Dan Savage ring a bell?) Here is the list of national highlights and lowlights for 2010 (in chronological order):

— Transgender advances: President Obama appointed transgender individuals Dylan Orr and Amanda Simpson. Simpson, 49, is a native of Chicago and began work Jan. 5 as senior technical advisor in the Bureau of Industry and Security. In a related development, the Obama administration, through the Office of Personnel Management, started to list gender identity among the classes protected by federal Equal Employment Opportunity policies.

— Sworn in: Annise Parker, 53, was formally sworn in as the 61st mayor of Houston, Texas. She officially became the first openly gay person to be elected as mayor of one of the country's five most populated cities.

— Change in New Hampshire: New Hampshire became the fifth state to allow same-sex marriage, joining Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa and Vermont.

— What can Brown do for you?: Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley was expected to assume the late Sen. Ted Kennedy's seat—but she was upset by Republican Scott Brown, dashing hopes for immediate advancement on measures of interest to the LGBT community. However, Brown was one of the few Republicans who voted for the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in December.

— AIDS council named: Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the appointment of 24 new members to the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). Among those named were actress Rosie Perez, the Black AIDS Institute Executive Director Phill Wilson and Dartmouth College President Jim Kim.

— Mother’s Day: The United States Supreme Court denied review in a custody dispute Feb. 22 involving a non-biological lesbian mother whose former partner is the child’s biological mother, was seeking to strip her of any parental rights.

— Capital idea: Washington, D.C.’s marriage-equality legislation became law in spite of a Herculean effort by opponents to block its implementation through both legal action—including a last minute Hail Mary pass to the U.S. Supreme Court and Chief Justice John Roberts for a stay—as well as legislative maneuvering in the House and Senate.

— Prom date: In Mississippi, Itawamba Agricultural High School cancelled prom when Constance McMillen wished to bring her girlfriend as her date. Among those ensued was a fake stance McMillen wished to bring her girlfriend to the House and Senate.

— The Chicago mayoral race: Cicilline, 49, served in the Rhode Island House of Representatives for eight years before moving into City Hall in Providence. He was a lawyer before running for the legislature, and took office in January 1995. He came out during his time in the legislature.

Cicilline now joins a small group of high-profile openly gay politicians, such as U.S. Reps. Barney Frank, Jared Polis and Tammy Baldwin as well as Houston, Texas, Mayor Annise Parker.

“[The bullying] absolutely cannot continue to happen in schools in this country. It’s heartbreaking when you hear the stories, and infuriating.”

Cicilline said now is the time to implement a serious, national effort to eliminate bullying in schools. And that requires an investment of resources—training, education, and development of a protocol to monitor and evaluate these anti-bullying efforts.

“To the next generation, it’s almost a non-issue [already].”

“We’re continuing to make progress in our march toward full equality. We continue to make progress and, over time, we’re going to, without question, reach a place in this country where there’s full equality for members of our community, where we have all of the rights and responsibilities of every other person in this country.”

“[The bullying] is not going to end on its own; it requires engagement from the community, from parents, from young people themselves,” Cicilline said. “We cannot take [this subject] lightly. We have to make a real effort to respond to this issue; we owe it to the kids in this country to do it.”

To that, Cicilline directed the school superintendent in Providence to examine all of the training and education on anti-bullying, to determine if additional training was necessary.

— Illinois passing civil unions: “I think it’s a step on our march toward full equality. I’m a proponent of civil marriage; I think that’s what full equality means,” he said. “The more states that pass it, and the larger states that pass it, that brings more national attention to it—and it just be part of an ongoing effort to achieve full equality.”

— The Chicago mayoral race: Cicilline tagged Mayor Daley as “a good friend.” Daley hosted a fundraiser for Cicilline in Chicago when he ran for Congress. The two served together in the U.S. Congress. Mayor Cicilline has a cousin who lives in Chicago, and his finance director came from Illinois.

“I don’t know any of the [mayoral] candidates other than Rahm Emanuel, who I don’t know [personally],” Cicilline said.

MAYOR FROM COVER

were [kicked out] of the military because of their honesty about who they seemed to me incredibly tragic and unjust,” Cicilline said. “This was great for our country, great for our national security, great for our community.

“For me personally, it was a very proud moment. I was very proud of the members of Congress, and then [the] members of Senate. It made me very proud and gave real meaning to some of our core values as Americans—integrity, honesty, equality, and just all of the things that this country stands for.”

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“I have enormous respect for [each],” Cicilline said. “They have done so much and have been so positive and feel very honored to join them, and hopefully my presence here [in D.C.] will add to our success as a community and the work that still needs to be done to achieve full equality for all members of the LGBT community.

But I don’t think we’re far from that,” he said. “To the next generation, it’s almost a non-issue [already].”

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U.S. Vice President Joe Biden told ABC News on Dec. 24 that the nation will reach consensus on supporting legalization of same-sex marriage.

“I think there’s an inevitability for a national consensus on gay marriage,” Biden said. “That is my view. … It is evolving. I think the country’s evolving.”

President Barack Obama has made similar remarks, too. On Oct. 27, Obama told gay blogger Joe Sudberry: “(Y)ou’re right that attitudes evolve, including mine. And I think that it is an issue that I wrestle with and think about because I have a whole host of friends who are in gay partnerships. I have staff members who are in committed, monogamous relationships, who are raising children, who are wonderful parents, and I care about them deeply. And so while I’m not prepared to reverse myself here, sitting in the Roosevelt Room at 3:30 in the afternoon, I think it’s fair to say that it’s something that I think a lot about. That’s probably the best you’ll do out of me today … The one thing I will say today is I think it’s pretty clear where the trends are going … the arc of history.”

In a Dec. 22 interview with The Advocate’s Kerry Ewell, Obama continued: “Joe asked me the same question … The sentiment I expressed then is still where I am — which is, like a lot of people, I’m wrestling with this. My attitudes are evolving on this. I have always firmly believed in having a robust civil union that provides the rights and benefits under the law that marriage does. I’ve wrestled with the fact that marriage traditionally has had a different connotation, but I also have a lot of very close friends who are married gay or lesbian couples. And squaring that circle is something that I have not done yet, but I’m continually asking myself this question and I do think that — I will make this observation, that I notice there is a big generational difference. When you talk to people who are in their 20s, they don’t understand what the holdup is on this, regardless of their own sexual orientation. And obviously when you talk to older folks, then there’s greater resistance.”

The L.A. Times editorial board criticized Obama’s statements Dec. 30.

“The president could spare himself that struggle if he would analyze the issue logically,” the newspaper said. “If he did, he would recognize that it’s irrational, once same-sex couples are given the practical advantages of marriage, to deny them married status. Civil unions, while a vast improvement over the absence of any recognition of same-sex relationships, are almost by definition second-class arrangements. The temptation is to think that Obama knows this, and that his reluctance to endorse marriage equality is more political than personal.”

Indeed, in early 1996, then-state-Senate candidate Barack Obama wrote to the Chicago gay newspaper Outlines (now known as Windy City Times), “I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would do efforts to prohibit such marriages.” WCT reproduces the letter at tinyurl.com/wctlet1.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

### NATIONAL from page 4

al. Tauro said that DOMA interfered with the traditional state right to define marriage and forced the state to “violate the equal protection rights of its citizens.”

—Addressing an epidemic: Suicides among LGBT teens—a problem that was well-known within the community but rarely addressed—became one of the biggest stories of last year, if not the biggest. As dozens of teens committed suicide, a nation responded (thanks in part to Dan Savage’s “It Gets Better” project) and mourned.

—Winning strategies: The White House released the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) and accompanying NHAS Federal Implementation Plan. As for monies, $30 million of the Affordable Care Act’s Prevention Fund was to be dedicated to the strategy’s implementation—although activists expressed concern that new funding may not be available for the plan.

—Games controversy: The City of Cleveland sent a letter to the Cleveland Synergy Foundation stating that the Federation of Gay Games (FGG) was terminating Synergy’s license agreement for Gay Games 2014 and that the city was halting all payments to Synergy. Another organization, the Cleveland Special Events Corp., has formed to bid, but Synergy has filed a lawsuit against the FGG, claiming breach of contract and defamation.

—Target on your back: Target was in the middle of a political firestorm when it was discovered that the company (along with Best Buy) sent $150,000 to MN Forward, a Minnesota political action committee (PAC) that was backing anti-gay gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer. Target CEO Gregg Steinhafel sent a letter of apology to his employees, although the company declined the Human Rights Campaign’s suggestion to donate an equal amount of money to a pro-gay candidate or organization. Emmer conceded the race to DFL candidate Mark Dayton.

—Prop and go: U.S. District Court Chief Judge Vaughn Walker ruled Aug. 4, 2010, that California’s Proposition 8 violates the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection and due process. Currently, the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals is weighing the case—and it is expected to go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, regardless of the appeals court’s decision.

—Confirmation: The U.S. Senate confirmed the appointment of Solicitor General Elena Kagan to the U.S. Supreme Court Aug. 5—but not without complaints from nearly every Republican opposing her nomination. The vote was 63-37.

—“American” woman: After just one season on the TV megahit American Idol, Ellen DeGeneres departed as judge. The new line-up consists of Randy Jackson, Jennifer Lopez and Steven Tyler.

—Time for recess: President Obama was using the recess appointment to install openly gay nominee Richard Sorian as assistant secretary for public affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services. In March, he used the recess appointment to put lesbian law professor and activist Chad Feldblum on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

—Ken do: Ken Mehlman, George W. Bush’s 2004 campaign chief and the former chairman of the Republican National Committee, came out of the closet Aug. 25 in an interview with The Atlantic. He was the most powerful Republican in history to openly identify as gay.

—Crime time: Eighteen teenage and adult males were arraigned Oct. 10 regarding an Oct. 3 attack on a teenager in New York City on charges including sexual assault, robbery and hate crimes. Gang members heard that one of their recruits happened to be gay, and allegedly stripped him, beat him and sodomy him with a plunger handle—something they also reportedly did to two others.

—Pulpit talk: Jim Swilley—the pastor of Church in the Now, the Georgia institution he

### Navy commander’s anti-gay videos

Owen Honors, captain of the Norfolk, Va.-based USS Enterprise, produced several videos filed with raunchy and even anti-gay content made aboard the Navy carrier several years ago, according to a Huffington Post item.

The Virginian-Pilot released the video Jan. 1.

In the video, which was filed in 2006 and 2007 (when Honors was the executive officer), sailors are in drag; use gay slurs; and simulate a rectal exam and masturbation.

Aubrey Sarvis, Army veteran and executive director for Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said in a statement that Honors was acting more like the president of a frat house rather than the executive officer of the U.S.S. Enterprise.

Honors was slated to be relieved of duty temporarily, according to On Top Magazine. Some women sailors claimed to have complained about the videos, but were ignored.

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In a race where polling data and campaign cash have consistently favored one particular contender over all others, to call mayoral candidate and attorney Gery Chico an underdog is a patent understatement. But, as Chico himself has allowed, heads into the home stretch, it is clear this veteran of city government has not lost any steam in his hopes to eclipse his main rival Rahm Emanuel. If anything, recent polling suggests Chico is picking up some momentum.

With less than two months to go before the election, Chico sat down with Windy City Times to address his LGBT platform and why he feels his competitors cannot match his record.

Windy City Times: It’s been a big end of the year for the LGBT community here in Chicago, with “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” being repealed and the civil-unions legislation passing in Illinois. What are your thoughts on these advances?

Gery Chico: Obviously, I’m very pleased about the movement in Congress and the president signing the bill on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is long overdue. I mean, the day has come and gone when we should be worried about that policy. That shouldn’t even be in the books. With the passage of civil unions in Illinois, a lot of couples will now have peace of mind about their ability to plan their affairs and have some predictability in the future as to what they can do with their partners and that’s a large step in the right direction to become a much better society.

WCT: And how are you feeling at this point in your campaign?

GC: I feel very good about the race and how we’re doing. I think we have done the things that our strategy has us doing. We’ve executed well. Things are coming together the way we anticipated and clearly after the first of the year things are going to get turned up a little bit.

WCT: What led you first into politics? Did you ever anticipate or dream you would be here in this position?

GC: No, nope ... I started out as a city intern in 1977 and look at me, I’m running for the mayor of Chicago. You never know where your path will take you. I have the [good] fortune of being given a number of top level assignments and I’ve tried to do them to the best of my ability and just about every government I’ve had the privilege of leading has done better, considerably better than we were predicted to.

I think now, with Mayor Daley leaving, if you’re a good citizen and you have some experience and you have some skill, you offer it up in the public service. You don’t step back and say, “What can I do to make my own personal life cushier?” I don’t think that’s what this is about. I think that we’re a city, we’re a people. It all goes back to what I said earlier. You’re part of a community and if you think you can lead and think you can do a good job which will make a whole lot of peoples’ lives better, it’s incumbent upon you to do it.

WCT: If elected, will be your first priorities specifically pertaining to the city’s LGBT communities?

GC: Obviously equal employment. We want to make sure that we have a government that is representative of the communities that we serve so we can probably do a better job of including the LGBT community in our government positions. We can look to do more with economic development in the way we relate to the businesses that are from the community. As a city, we have our own various tastes and powers. Bullying is something that I want to really concentrate on and make sure is part of our curricula in the schools and that our police department is properly trained on all matters involving the LGBT community. We want them to be sensitive to what all the people are experiencing. I’ve already said I want to maintain or increase the HIV/AIDS funding. Those are at least four [things] that I think we would launch pretty quickly. Some of them are just as we’re putting together a government, you’ll have to include people from all quarters so we want to make sure we’re doing that there.

Along the way, you’ll obviously have the opportunity as the mayor to talk about matters that are beyond the purview of the mayor’s office per se—matters such as [DAT], civil unions and any other issue that comes up and you’ll have to speak to it. I see those things as outside the purview [of the office] but important to society to weigh in and be a voice on those matters.

WCT: When you were a Senate candidate in 2004, you were the only candidate in that race to endorse marriage equality, and you also made headlines when you spoke out against government funding of faith-based initiatives. Do you think the city’s contracting with faith-based agencies that have discriminatory policies toward LGBT people—such as the Salvation Army or Lutheran Child and Family Services, which refuses to license same-sex adoptive parents, as one example—should be reconsidered?

GC: I don’t know. Honest to God, I don’t know that I want to do that. What I don’t think we should do is get into religious tenets. I would much rather keep a separation of church and state and I would rather speak on the moral high ground of the prosperity of those matters rather than use the machinery of government to get in and try to change religious views. I think that goes beyond the scope of what government should be doing.

And we have to remember, too, we don’t want to harm the many people that these agencies serve, whether it’s Lutheran Services or any other [agency], the people they’re serving need that help, whether it’s meals or shelter. For the principle that maybe you and I agree on, I don’t think we should hurt the homeless or the hungry by trying to leverage this municipal help. It would hurt those people, I can’t hurt another guy to help another guy. I don’t believe in that.

WCT: You identify as a Catholic and that’s important to you. Are you concerned that your progressive views on LGBT and other issues may alienate some socially conservative voters?

GC: I hope that’s not the case ... I think the attitudes are changing much more so even over the last six years. Since I ran for the Senate, I know that polling—I’ve never done this [looks at finger, points toward the ceiling], anyway, so I don’t pay much attention to that. I try to do the right thing and the chips fall where they may. But I imagine, where you’re really at with this right so I couldn’t adopt a socially conservative position anyway.

The Rev. John C. ‘Mr. Tupperware’ Gould

The Rev. John C. ‘Mr. Tupperware’ Gould passed away unexpectedly in his Chicago home Dec. 29, 2010; he was 54 years old. Famous for his infectious, child-like enthu-

assiasm for life and a twisted sense of humor, Gould brought joy into the lives of everyone he met—and some whom he didn’t even know.

Gould was born Oct. 18, 1956, in Laramo, Mo., to Donaldson (O’Neal) and Edward Gould, who immediately knew they had a big bundle of ex-

cessive energy on their hands. At 7 years old, shortly after moving to Gainesburg, Ill., John launched the G and J Restaurant, an at-home backyard restaurant featuring an eight-hole mini golf course, tetherball, rock band venue and seasonal ice rink. The five-year venture not only launched John’s love of amusement parks, but was also his first in a long line of successful entrepreneurial endeavors. After graduating from Gainesburg High School in 1975, where he was heavily involved with the Prairie Players, John earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and economics at Knox College in 1979.

With six years as top salesman and store man-

ager for Pacific Stereo in St. Louis and Chicago, Gould became one of Chicago’s top Tupperware salesmen. He quickly shot to fame as “Mr. Tupper-

ware,” with features in newspapers, maga-

zines and on television covering an astounding 30-year career with the company. As the photogra-

pher for Cab magazine in 1984, Gould had everyone in Chicago snuggling up to him to get their picture in the publication. Gould also consulted on marketing and group sales for such organizations as Tupperware, producers of Late Night Catechism, Sunday School Cinema, Saints & Sinners, Mother Superior’s Ho-Ho-Holy Night and the Nuns in Charge! Gould, who successfully beat HIV for more than 20 years, also found great work for many non-profit or-

ganizations including Stop AIDS Chicago, Vital Bridges and Felines, Inc. A civil-rights activ-

ist at heart, Gould was among the first three people he could legally perform their wedding.


Gould was well known for his famously twist-

ed sense of humor. From taking a pair of den-

tires into Berlin and randomly setting them on the bar, to going on Manhole wearing a toupee (or sombrero) with a 1970s leisure suit (in the 1990s and not on Halloween), to mak-

ing sure you woke up cuddling a prosthetic leg when you passed out on his couch, Gould loved to see others’ reactions to his arbitrary antics. If you watch closely, you can spot Gould in the audience during uncountable episodes of Oprah and The Jerry Springer Show. In 2004, Gould acquired his divinity degree from a questionable online school, earning the title of “Reverend”—he took great joy in telling people he could legally perform their wedding ceremonies.

Gould was preceded in death by both parents; his feline family members, Roger and Danny; and many good friends. John is survived by his partners-in-adventure Duncan, Cornflake, Baby Girl, Jennifer Peach, Julie Johnson, Alexis and many good friends. John is survived by his partners-in-adventure Duncan, Cornflake, Baby Girl, Jennifer Peach, Julie Johnson, Alexis and many good friends. John is survived by his partners-in-adventure Duncan, Cornflake, Baby Girl, Jennifer Peach, Julie Johnson, Alexis and many good friends. John is survived by his partners-in-adventure Duncan, Cornflake, Baby Girl, Jennifer Peach, Julie Johnson, Alexis and many good friends.
Chicago company shines in HRC report—again

BY ROSS FORMAN

Starcom MediaVest Group (SMG) has this perfection thing down pat.

For the fifth year in a row, the media agency network scored 100 percent on the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Corporate Equality Index. SMG’s perfect score in the advertising and marketing category was based on the criteria of employer equal opportunity, employee benefits and company-wide diversity programs.

“We’re thrilled about our performance on the Corporate Equality Index as it reflects our continuing tradition of and support for diversity,” said SMG Executive Vice President and Global Talent Director Bernard Bedon. “Starcom MediaVest Group applauds the work of the Human Rights Campaign as we aim to promote and support initiatives for our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees. We will continue to work to enrich our employee population with varied backgrounds and unique perspectives to deliver innovative ideas, foster growth and connect with people in our diverse world.”

Added Alyson Stevens, SMG senior vice president/global director, human experience strategy: “Five years with a perfect score? Not to be cliché, but it feels pretty fabulous. Honestly, we consider it a real point of pride, representative of our long-standing and rigorous dedication to all forms of personal diversity here at the agency— in terms of how we relate to consumers and how we nurture our own talent.”

Stevens, 37, who has worked for SMG for 14 years, said it’s very important for companies from the advertising industry to be properly represented on the Index, “as it’s our shared profession to speak to people from all walks of life, fairly and respectfully, on behalf of marketers.

Respect for diversity within our companies will lead to respect for diversity in our communications and campaigns, and the Index is a good benchmark for our collective progress as an industry in this area.”

SMG employs about 1,000 people in its Chicago office, with a mix of males and females, and a very diverse workforce. “We really work hard to create a work environment that is inclusive and rewarding for people from diverse backgrounds with diverse interests, and that takes into account that not all people are inspired and motivated by the same things,” Stevens said. “We have, many, many ways for people to get involved and make a difference with their teams both at work and in the community.

“Starcom MediaVest Group has spent the year reinvigorating itself as a company dedicated to human experience, meaning, we’re aiming to look at and understand people from a growing variety of perspectives, to create for them the sort of brand experiences and interactions they want. In short, our 100 percent is a strong sign we’re providing our own people with a satisfying human experience, and empowering them to better understand all sorts of people—which improves our business.”

Stevens said the five-year stretch truly shows that SMG’s management “has made respect for GLBT people and all human beings a consistent priority. This lays a solid groundwork for more positive momentum and action moving forward.

“As a company, we have continually strived to achieve high standards of policies, benefits, training and employee engagement each year. Even in the most challenging economic times, we continue to offer same- or opposite-sex domestic partner coverage on all of our benefits, provide parental leave for new parents as well as their spouses and partners, and two paid days off annually for marriage or commitment ceremonies. We recently enriched our Adoption Assistance offering, covering two weeks of paternal leave plus $15,000 in adoption assistance to employees.”

Stevens said SMG’s strong push for diversity helps create “more creative solutions to whatever the market sends our way.”

SMG, for instance, supports a variety of L.I.N.K.S. (Lifestyle and Interest Networks for Knowledge and Support) communities. “These communities serve to provide a sense of connection among different groups of employees depending on their background, interests and beyond,” Stevens said.

“By how will SMG score perfection again in 2011?”

“We understand that the requirements will get much more rigorous in 2011, but we are looking at ways to strengthen our already rich benefits and perks package, as well as training programs and to continue to support our employee-led GLBT/affinity group,” Stevens said.

“We’re particularly proud that we’ve been the leading advertising and marketing company in the index for so many years. It’s good to belong to a group of people that not only respects your individuality, but also really encourages you to use your personal strengths towards the growth of some of the world’s most creative, well-known brands. We’re all just people trying to connect with people in the best way we can, inside and out, and that’s a really good feeling.”

HRC releases an annual Corporate Equality Index that details the progress of LGBT rights in Corporate America. Beyond the index report, businesses rated 100 percent are recognized in the companion document Best Places to Work list, released at the beginning of each calendar year.


Durnil to head youth foundation

Simon Youth Foundation (SYF), a Indianapolis-based nonprofit that provides alternative education opportunities for at-risk high school students throughout the United States, has named J. Michael Durnil as its new president/CEO.

A native of Decatur, Ill., Durnil earned his Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Loyola University-Chicago, and both his master’s and bachelor’s degrees from Illinois State University. He has served as a village commissioner in Arlington Heights and Schaumburg, and was once interim president and senior vice president for GLAAD (the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation).

Since its inception in 1998, SYF’s nationally recognized program has graduated more than 7,000 at-risk students at a 90-percent rate, and nearly $8.6 million has been awarded in post-secondary scholarships. To learn more, visit http://www.syf.org.
**LOCAL from cover**

—Kelly girl: Dana V. Starks, chairman and commissioner of the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations, announced that Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed Elizabeth A. Kelly, Ph.D., as the new chairman of the Commission’s Ad-

—Trial and error: Federal regulators decided not to disqualify Northstar Medical Center’s Dr. Daniel Berger, whose clinic had submitted false information in a drug trial. Berger, who has been the subject of a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) investigation following alleged improper-
thorities at the center, had reached an agreement with the FDA that will allow him to continue coordinating HIV/AIDS drug trials.

—Agency dust: Howard Brown Health Center noted its 25th anniversary—an event that—which will allow him to continue coordinating HIV/AIDS drug trials.

—Transitions: Jim Lobianco, an openly gay man who was deputy commissioner at the Office of Homeless Services for the City of Chicago, left his post after having an accident while report-
ed for driving drunk. He is now executive director of StreetWise.

—End of an era: Local gay newspaper Chicago Free Press closed. CFP was launched in August 1999 by former staffers of Windy City Times. The two papers battled it out in the community and the courts for a year before Jeff McCourt shut down WCT and then sold it to Outlines Publisher Tracy Baim, who co-founded WCT with McCourt, Bob Beard and Steve Batalion in 1985. Baim merged Outlines newspaper with WCT in the fall of 2000. In addition, WCT marked its 25th anniversary in 2010.

—Marching 25: The AIDS Foundation of Chicago marked its 25th anniversary with a gala that raised more than $500,000 as The Bangles performed. Also marking a quarter-century: the LGBT organization Asians United.

—Marching on: The Chicago Dyke March took place in the neighborhood of South Shore this summer, with an ending rally in Jackson Park. Following a 2009 decision for the march to re-
main in the same neighborhood for consecutive years, the march will take place in South Shore this year as well.


—Openly gay Chicago LGBT leader Ogletree, 55, deliv-
ered Chicago gay publications, including Windy City Times, for many years. Ogletree, who died April 23, was diagnosed with cancer; she was 62. She founded the Northside Parent’s Network in 1980 and chaired Kindred Hearts, a women’s support organization for more than 20 years. Ogletree also helped her husband, Frank, operate the Burgundy Inn, a popular South Chicago res-
taurant, for three decades.

—Laird Petersen: Laird Petersen from Chicago was found May 16 by Chicago police officers in his Chicago home of cancer; she was 62. She was a founding member of Ami-

**WINDY CITY TIMES**

Jan. 5, 2011

**Kevin Dugger**

**Nancy Griesenauer**

**Debra Amsel**

**Paula Meyers**

**Irene Madaras**

**Janine Denomme**

**Evelyn Garcia**

**Gregory Glass**

**Jennifer Bartlett**

**Suzanne Simon**

**Steve Wirth**

**Sarah Kruesi**

**Nicholas Kowalski**

**Jennifer Folds**

**Nancy Huyck**

**Rene Ogletree**

**Sandra Minton**

**Melanie Greene**

**Mike Rogers**

**Stuart Berman**

**Jennifer Petesci**

**Gary Zuckerman**

**Jill Greenwald**

**Trevor Hall (left) with friend, Facebook photo run with permission**

—Sign language: Addressing a problem whose publicity was beginning to mushroom across the nation, Gov. Pat Quinn signed the Jason Flatt Act, which provides for suicide detection and prevention training, over Pride Weekend. He also signed an anti-bullying bill.

—Cuffed: Local gay-rights activist Marc Love-

—Leslie was arrested and charged with simple bat-

—tery after allegedly throwing the Coalition for Justice and Respect’s (CJR) board chair, John Hickman. (Charges were later dropped.) Multiple allegations then transpired, from both Loveless and CJR.

—Testing, testing: Cook County Jail resumed HIV/STD testing for the first time since 2007. Cook County Board Commissioner Bridge Gainer announced a program that will screen county detainees for HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis, and revealed a new 22-room intake fa-

—ility.

—Exodus: Mary Ann Smith, alderman of Chi-

—cago’s 48th Ward on the North Side (which in-

—cludes Andersonville and Edgewater), announced she was not seeking re-election—joining at least seven other aldermen (including 43rd Ward Al-

—der Daley and 46th Ward Alderman Helen Shiller).

—Protest: In what Gay Liberation Network’s Andy Thayer called Arlington Heights’ largest LGBT demonstration ever, more than 120 pro-

—testers filled the sidewalk in front of Arlington Heights’ Christian Liberty Academy Aug. 5 to condemn Americans for Truth About Homosexu-

—all’s Truth Academy.”

—Dean’s list: A historic conference took place Aug. 6-7 in Chicago when a group of lesbian and gay parents of higher-education institutions convened at the Adler School of Professional Psychology and Roosevelt University.

—Art and soul: After 17 years serving the Chicago community, the Aldo Castilla Gallery closed Aug. 28. Director Aldo Castilla accepted the offer of a new position at the Miami Inter-

—national Art Fair.

—Hero effect: Openly gay Trevor Hall, 17, saved another teen from drowning at Silver Lake in Kenosha, Wis., on Aug. 23. However, there was a rash aftermath: The Aurora Medical Cen-

—ter billed him $2,000 for the tests it performed on Hall. However, after public pressure, the hos-

—pital relented and waived the bills.

—Daley news: In an announcement that had local, even international ramifications, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley announced he would not seek a seventh term in the Febru-

—ary 2011 elections. Daley, who has been mayor of Chicago since 1989, has been one of the most pro-LGBT public officials in the country. His an-

—nouncement led to a wealth of potential su-

—cessors, including former Obama Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and former U.S. Sen. Carol Mose-

—ley Braun.

—Like a Rock(ford): Representatives from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the Gay Liberation Network, and Diversity of Rockford showed up to protest the Exodus International “ex-gay” conference in Rockford Sept. 25. Among those present was former ex-

—member of the organization’s current Lake Cou-

—ntry Relentless.

—School daze: Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn ap-


—Terror targets: In one of the most bizarre stories from last year, the local LGBT synagouge Congregation Or Chadash was one of two Jewish places of worship that were initially thought to be the targets of a terrorist plot that was foiled Oct. 28. It later was discovered that terrorists intended to blow up the cargo planes.

—School daze, part two: A week set aside to promote anti-bullying at St. Charles North High School became enveloped in controversy as some students decided to show their opposition to the LGBT community. Three male students wore T-shirts with the slogan “Straight Pride” hit the front and a Bible verse from Leviticus on the back.

—School daze, part three: Openly gay Chi-

—cago Public Schools CEO Ron Huberman stepped down from his post Nov. 29 after serving fewer than two years in the position.

—Historic passage: The Illinois Senate passed the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act 32-34 on Dec. 1, completing a historic sweep through the General Assembly. Openly gay state Rep. Greg Harris described the process to pass the measure as “enormous. ... We had to turn the tide.”

— testing, testing: —Historic passage:

—Former: —Daleva, —Rick Garcia—seen by many as the voice of local LGBT activism—was let go from his position as director of public policy for Equality Illinois. However, Garcia has not gone away quietly, as the activist and Equality Illinois CEO Bernard Cherkasov (among others) have weighed in on the situation.


—Openly gay Chicago LGBT leader Ogletree, 55, deliv-

—ered Chicago gay publications, including Windy City Times, for many years. Ogletree, who died April 23, was diagnosed with cancer; she was 62. She founded the Northside Parent’s Network in 1980 and chaired Kindred Hearts, a women’s support organization for more than 20 years. Ogletree also helped her husband, Frank, operate the Burgundy Inn, a popular South Chicago res-
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—Laird Petersen: Laird Petersen from Chicago was found May 16 by Chicago police officers in his Chicago home of cancer; she was 62. She founded the Northside Parent’s Network in 1980 and chaired Kindred Hearts, a women’s support organization for more than 20 years. Ogletree also helped her husband, Frank, operate the Burgundy Inn, a popular South Chicago res-
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Benjamin Sprunger is a busy man. He currently stars in the Griffin Theatre production of Company at Stage 773. “I always wanted to be an actor,” he said. “I majored in theater in college in Ohio and after I graduated, I came to Chicago specifically to work in theater. I went to L.A. for a while, did theater, film, TV work, but the Chicago theaters kept calling me back to do shows so I decided to return in 2006. “I came out to myself when I was 18. Being in the theater department provided an insulated environment that made it easy. Coming out to my parents was much harder. They’re very religious and there was some distance in our relationship at first, but they’ve come to accept me as I am.”

Sprunger works as an accountant for Live Nation Entertainment during the day, but his heart lies in theater. Realizing that he owes a lot to the off-Loop theater community and About Face, in particular (“I’ve done six shows with those people. We’re close and I do what I can to support them”), he raised funds for the theater last year by entering five bar contests (wet boxers, etc.) and donating his winnings.

He is also a member of the Lutheran Gay Chorus, which puts on programs in various churches every two months or so. “I do it because I enjoy it and it also helps me keep my voice in shape,” he explained.

In addition, he recently served as a judge in the Great Gay Screenplay Contest, organized by David Zak, a friend at Pride Films and Plays. “I was on the screening committee, narrowing the entries down to five semifinalists. I won’t be part of the final judging because of scheduling conflicts but it’s been interesting.”

Sprunger and partner Erik Burns travel frequently, and will go on a gay cruise to the Bahamas and St. Martin next spring and then attend a wedding in the Mexican Riviera. They will then go to the mountains in Mammoth Lakes, Calif. “Three years ago I discovered a new passion—snowboarding—and since then, we do a gay ski week each year.”

He feels the greatest danger facing the LGBT community is complacency: “I know myself that I feel good about where I’m at. I have some professional success and don’t experience any direct discrimination or insults. I have a settled life with a loving partner. I own my own condo, I have a car—an old car, but it’s paid for—and I’m somewhat complacent.

“But I think we need to remember that we’ve only come so far, that there are still many barriers that need to be knocked down and we need to keep working at that.”

His vision of the future includes the possibility of parenting: “I haven’t really thought about it too, too much, but I would like a child. I’ve thought about it in that glowing way without thinking about the consequences but it would be nice to rear and teach a child. We’ll see.”

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**the stats**

- **Name**: Benjamin Sprunger
- **Age**: 36
- **Occupation**: Actor
- **Relationship status**: In a committed relationship
- **Hometown**: Columbus, Ohio
- **Hobbies**: Music geek: Has 8,000 songs in his iTunes library
- **Favorite food**: Cereal—of all kinds
- **Favorite movie**: Empire of the Sun

---

**GAY in the LIFE**

**TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHUCK KRAMER**

Benjamin Sprunger

Actor

5233 N. Clark
(773) 769-9299

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Photo courtesy of Sprunger.
Surviving the ex-gay program

The following is a personal essay by a gay man formerly of northwest Illinois who now resides in Vancouver, British Columbia.

I was involved with an Exodus-affiliated min-
istry for about three years in the late '80s. Com-
pared to many, my story was brief. But the effects, some positive, some negative, have been lasting. Here is my story.

I graduated from a Midwestern private Christian high school in the mid-80s. Like many schools, my high school was filled with homophobes. My classmates were more interested in the Church. But beneath the postureing, there was also a delicious level of unresolved social tension. After graduation, I burst out of this tension into junior college, where no one watched or cared where I went or what I did. I plunged into the gay underground of my dying industrial town, which offered little warmth or compassion to chubby 18-year-old.

I lacked funds, beauty and a 30-inch waist. So, although I burned down a few men in me interested in me until I met my boyfriend in junior college. With no gay role models, I had no idea how to build a relationship with him. Thus began a fairly short string of men who I dated for a few weeks or months and then recollected from. During my ruinous dating life, I was smoking both cigarettes and pot. I was also flunking out of junior college and up to my neck in debts. I decided to go to Exodus in the church newsletter seeking members for a few weeks or months and then recollected from.

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ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE

The Obamas’ winter home in Hawaii is featured in our real-estate section. See page 17.

THEATER

One in a ‘Million.’
Page 12.
Photo by Sara Yen

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Gary Griffin
gets around

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

When it comes to musicals, operettas and, now, Shakespeare, out Chicago director Gary Griffin has certainly been getting around. And he’s not just wowing the Windy City, either.

Time is running out to catch Griffin’s superlative revival of Meredith Willson’s The Music Man for Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire (playing through Jan. 9), while performances resume Jan. 5 for the remaining seven performances of Griffin’s 1920s take on Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic operaetta The Mikado for the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Later this month, Griffin returns to New York to direct the City Center Encore’s concert staging of Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson’s Lost in the Stars (an ambitious 1949 musical adaptation of Alan Paton’s anti-apartheid novel Cry, the Beloved Country) for a Feb. 16 to Oct. 30.

But Griffin’s most pressing assignment is his current one: Shakespeare’s romantic cross-dressing-filled comedy As You Like It for Chicago Shakespeare and the city’s Lyric Opera of Chicago.

It begins previews Jan. 5 and ends March 6.
Griffin is happy to have a full plate of work, though he recently pointed out that the different productions roll out on very different time-tables.

‘What’s fascinating, for me anyway, is that they all have different pre-production processes,’ Griffin said, noting that Lyric Opera of Chicago productions are often planned years in advance with technical lighting rehearsals months ahead in the summer. That’s compared to City Center Encore’s, where rehearsals with the cast are only 10 days.

“They all have different trajectories of arriving,” Griffin said. “I love that no process is the same, but at the same time on paper, it’s like ‘Wow, how do you do that?’”

When interviewed mid-December via telephone, Griffin said he was “deep in the Forest of Arden” for rehearsals of As You Like It. Collaborating with costume designer Mara Blumenfeld, Griffin said they opted for an early 19th-century Regency-period setting for the work.

“The period reflected a lot about what we thought were important things that we might be able to explore,” Griffin said. “We thought that Celia and Rosalind felt like characters that easily could fit comfortably in the universe of intelligence and wit of Jane Austen.”

Griffin said he was particularly interested in looking at not so much the matter of intelligence and wit of Jane Austen.”

The way the clothes defined sexuality fascinated us,” Griffin said, focusing on the heroine Rosalind’s decision to disguise herself as a man through much of the play. “I was more interested in looking at not so much the matter of confusion, but the matter of roles and identity and the play to me has so much to say about actually exploring your identity not knowing what you like when you get into the forest and the whole journey of finding out what you do like.”

In terms of casting, Griffin is very proud to boast that both his productions of As You Like It and The Music Man feature completely Chicago-based acting companies.

“In neither case did I set out to say, ‘I’m going to do this as Chicago-only,’” Griffin said. “When we started our casting process and worked our way through it, it was the Chicago actors that felt most right to create those companies. So we have fortunately a repertory company of Shakespeare and musical theater here and it’s just been fortunate that I’ve been able to do projects where they’ve been available.

Griffin said that since many of the local actors already know each other from previously working together, there’s pre-existing trust in the rehearsal room and much more willing to explore and take risks than with actors who might be unfamiliar with each other.

Not that Griffin is against using out-of-town actors in favor of a Chicago-centric view of casting. Instead, Griffin said that he often wants to expose visiting performers to how strong the talent is in Chicago and how local actors work together with a strong sense of community.

“I have thought that out-of-town artists learn more from us more that we learn from them,” Griffin said. “That overserved word ‘ensemble’ in Chicago maybe gets a bad rap, but it is alive and working.”

For more information on Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s As You Like It, visit http://www.chicagoshakes.com. For more information on Lost in the Stars at City Center Encore’s, visit http://www.stratfordfestival.ca.

Fallen Stars?
Page 22.
Photo of Megan Rapinoe in action courtesy of the Chicago Red Stars

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Please send theater news and other related tidbits to scottishplayscott@yahoo.com and to Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com.
Blue Man Group. Photo by Ken Howard

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Blue Man Group

Playwrights: Chris Wink, Matt Goldman and Phil Stanton
At: Briar Street Theatre, 3133 N. Halsted
Phone: 773-348-4000; $49-$59
In an open run

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Can a show still be hip when it’s been mass-produced and customized to multiple cities around the world? In the case of Blue Man Group, the long-running performance art hit that incorporates mime, rock-and-roll drumming and comically existential questions about modern art and technology, the answer would be a surprising “yes.”

True, if you’re finally seeing Blue Man Group this late in the game after its 1992 off-Broadway debut (where it had the original show subtitle: Tubes) and its 1997 Chicago bow at the StataCreep Exhibition of Sequential Art and its 1998 national ad campaign microchip processors in a national ad campaign that astutely denigrate manufactured pop stars instead of the loud grunge rock thrashing that built-in audience participation into its moves than their digitally cleaned up vocals.

But the beauty of the revue-style makeup of Blue Man Group is that it also allows for changes. Videos about mind-blowing mathematical fractal art have been jettisoned in favor of video bits that astutely denigrate manufactured pop stars of today who are better known for their dance moves than their digitally cleaned up vocals.

And the fact that Blue Man Group has prominently built-in audience participation into its running order (particularly the ever-delightful Twinkie dining sequence), there’s a guarantee that each show will be unique and memorable.

Though I could predict many of Blue Man Group’s gags and routines in advance, it was still a delight to see how they would dazzle and play out with at this particular performance (which by the way, was completely sold out).

So I’m happy to say that Blue Man Group remains as sleek, smart and silly as ever. Who cares if you can also get it in Boston, Las Vegas or Orlando? Blue Man Group is a theatrical franchise that repeatedly justifies its indomitable staying power.

MUSICAL REVIEW

Major Million Dollar Quartet

Playwrights: Colin Escott and Floyd Mutrux
At: Apollo Theater, 2540 N. Lincoln
Tickets: 773-935-6100; $46.50-$80
Runs through: May 29 (at least)

BY JONATHAN ABBABANEL

Million Dollar Quartet is the Little Show That Could, chugging merrily along for 30 months in a commercial production at the Apollo Theater. Last April it leapt to Broadway, earning three Tony Award nominations and one win (by openly gay singer Levi Kreis). Meanwhile, it chugs on in Chicago. It’s “inspired” by the fact that December 1956 jam session of Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis in the primitive studio of Sun Records in Memphis, Tenn., where each of the four cut his first hit.

I attended a late-afternoon holiday matinee. Everything onstage was just ducky but the nearly-sold-out audience was bizarre, split 50-50 between grandparents and grandchildren, with Granny/Grandpa evidently trying to convince the young’uns that they were hip and rebellious 50 years ago. Alas, their kidneys couldn’t hold out for the 105-minute show, and dozens of codgers walked in and out of the intimate house to pee, crossing corners of the stage as the band played on. I’ve never witnessed anything like it.

At $80 top, it’s not an off-Loop bargain but you get an awful lot of musical bang for your bucks. Million Dollar Quartet has been well-maintained during its long run and the current cast is dead-on in physical and musical impersonations of the four great stars. It’s refreshingly difficult to find capable singer-actors who also can play musical instruments at a professional level and look/sound like the people they are portraying. Babe Bowling plays Carl Perkins to a fare-thee-well and doubles as lead guitar with all the right chops. Lance Lipinsky dazzles as boogie-woogie piano man-gone-crazy Jerry Lee Lewis. Sturdy Sean

SEKINO’S WORKS AT FLOATING WORLD

Floating World Gallery (FWG), 1925 N. Halsted, is running the exhibition “Behind Paper Walls: Self Printed Masterworks by Jun’ichiro Sekino.” The exhibition features more than 100 woodblock prints, many of them never before exhibited. The exhibition opened Dec. 3, 2010, and runs through Jan. 14, and is supported by an impressive 90-plus-page catalog containing essays by Sekino’s son; gallery owners Bill and Roberta Stein; and FWG Director of Exhibitions Elias Martin.

From an early age, Sekino (1914-1988) studied printmaking and oil painting and learned the Japanese woodblock method and Western techniques of etching. He was influenced by styles of old Japanese and European masters.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 1-5 p.m. and by appointment. For more information call 312-587-7800, fax 312-575-3555 or e-mail artwork@floatingworld.com.

Lance Lipinsky captures Elvis’s spirit and moves, all sound might have had more of a hip hop edge rather than the loud grunge rock thrashing that.

Sekino’s works at Floating World

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StatiCCreep Exhibition at The Las Manos Gallery

The StatiCCreep Exhibition of Sequential Art at The Las Manos Gallery, 5220 N. Clark. The exhibition’s opening is Friday, Jan. 14, 6-10 p.m., and will run through Sunday, Feb. 6.

Sequential art (of which the best-known example is comics) refers to the utilizing an order of images to tell a story or convey information. Las Manos Gallery show more than 100 original, hand-drawn and painted pieces by more than 20 artists, including Nicole Hollander, Andrew Pepoy, Corinne Mucha, Steven Krakow and Hilary Barta. See http://www.lasmanosgallery.com or e-mail galleryassistant@lasmanosgallery.com.

CRITICS’ PICKS

Million Dollar Quartet. Sullivan effectively underplays Cash, while David Lago captures Elvis’ spirit and moves, although not his height. (Elvis was six feet tall.) Kelly Lamont, as Elvis’ singing girlfriend, adds visual and vocal flash.

Of course, Million Dollar Quartet is ersatz history, and is honest when it says it’s “inspired” by the jam session. The raucous string of greatest hits the boys rattle off bears very little resemblance to the actual jam, which was heavy on gospel music, Bill Monroe songs and acoustic instruments. The Jam is just an excuse for a jukebox musical with a thin storyline and a meaty dose of rockabilly history, courtesy of studio owner and producer Sam Phillips (played to tremendous effect by the personable Tim Lago). It serves up narration directly to the audience.

Be warned that Million Dollar Quartet is much, much louder and more jangly than the original artists ever sang these songs, and louder than necessary. Critics back then thought rock was the devil’s music or a Communist plot, but it’s easy to understand this show’s appeal today. It offers a goodtime dose of “roots” rock played at modern volume by faithful interpreters.
THEATER REVIEW

Aftermath

Playwright: Ronan Marra
At: Signal Ensemble, 1802 W. Berenice
Phone: 773-283-7071; $25-$30
Runs through: Jan. 30

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

When we think of “jukebox musicals,” what first comes to mind is a string of Top-40 songs and medleys safely located in a distant past now suffused with nostalgic glow. Whether the Hollywood-bio or the behind-the-music variety, whatever setbacks the protagonists may confront, the evening always ends on a triumphant note to send patrons home secure in their conviction that hey-hey-my-my, rock-and-roll will never die.

This is not the kind of feel-good docudrama that Ronan Marra wanted to write. And so though his subject is the legendary Rolling Stanes, Aftermath does not celebrate the band whose refused to stop the music, but instead acknowledges the sacrifices necessary to their achievement of eternal life. Oh, we get a few greatest-hits re-enactments—not accompanied by foleyed-in screams and cheers, but performed without impersonating, the iconic heroes who forevermore parcel their way to a genuine emotion, hinting at their bellicosity’s function as a means of staving off infection by their misanthropy—Brittany Burch’s defiant Grillem Kelleher, peddling bootleg whisky to finance her escape, and Paul D’Ardario’s despair-racked Father Welsh, whose dying wish is for reconciliation—further evidences the fostering oftakes, the raw and provocative subject matter of A Fire in My Belly, shot mainly in Juarez, Mexico, and carried a deeply spiritual undertone—particularly in one shot that particularly incensed Catholic League president Bill Donohue, incoming U.S. House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, and Rep. Eric Cantor, R-Va., who launched their campaign against the film’s inclusion in Hide/Seek: An image of ants crawling over a crucifix. Cantor described the film as “an outrageous use of taxpayers’ money and called for the closing of the entire exhibit.”

The Smithsonian Foundation responded to the criticism by removing the film Dec. 1, claiming “the way in which it was being interpreted by many overshadowed the importance and understanding of the entire exhibition.” The film’s removal has ignited widespread protest from the art community and resulting in many art institutions screening the film out of protest.

University of Chicago graduate student Jenn Sichel, who worked as a research assistant to the Hide/Seek exhibit, has become a leading voice speaking out against the apparent censorship.

“The show is under serious attack from the right … I am outraged — almost 20 years after his death, Wojnarowicz is still being silenced!” wrote Sichel in a message that’s been circulated to many art institutions screening the film out of protest.

By Joseph Erbentraut

A Fire in My Belly, the film that has been at the center of controversy since it was pulled from the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery’s LGBT-themed Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire exhibit in American Portraiture exhibit, is coming to Chicago in a special exhibition at the University of Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood, through Sunday, Feb. 6.

The unfinished 13-minute film was edited by artist and activist David Wojnarowicz during 1986-1987 as a tribute to his lover, lauded photographer Peter Hujar, who had died of AIDS-related complications. Wojnarowicz never completed the work and, in 1992, also succumbed to AIDS.

The raw and provocative subject matter of A Fire in My Belly, shot mainly in Juarez, Mexico, and carries a deeply spiritual undertone—particularly in one shot that particularly incensed Catholic League president Bill Donohue, incoming U.S. House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, and Rep. Eric Cantor, R-Va., who launched their campaign against the film’s inclusion in Hide/Seek: An image of ants crawling over a crucifix. Cantor described the film as “an outrageous use of taxpayers’ money and called for the closing of the entire exhibit.”

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In addition to screening Wojnarowicz’s original, 13-minute film and a seven-minute follow-up on a continuous loop, the Smart Museum also plans to hold a faculty panel discussion in the debate surrounding the work at a yet-to-be-determined date in January. See http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu.

Debated Smithsonian film comes to Chicago

By Joseph Erbentraut

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Laurie Anderson: All hands on tech

BY JERRY NUNN

Laurie Anderson needs to be seen live as a performance artist and musician to experience the full effect. She’s bringing her highly original performance piece, “Delusion”—consisting of music, puppetry and visuals—to Chicago. Anderson shared some insights Nunn on One by telephone before her trip to the Windy City.

Windy City Times: Hello, Laurie. How are you today?

Laurie Anderson: I am having computer problems. Why does everything go down when I am trying to leave the house?

WCT: I have no idea. It’s funny how you have such a technologically driven career, and now you have computer issues.

LA: Doesn’t everyone? The more tech you have the worse the problem.

WCT: Definitely.

LA: I have gotten used to it. If you think things are going to run smoothly; then, you are out of your mind.

WCT: How do you feel technology has changed? Has it been hard for you to adapt to things?

LA: Well I’m always updating like everyone else and trying so hard not to get sucked into it, but it’s harder and harder. The book that is on top of my list these days is How to be Idle and this is my new obsession of projecting images like that.

WCT: What did you write in the Bush days when you were really frustrated and angry so no American could hear that phrase without having huge quotes around it. And it has gotten more extreme in living here; the paranoia, the way that people’s lives are being more and more restricted, it’s not a great direction. Especially when you are running around the holidays, it’s really tortuous to search all the time and watch children get searched as well.

Last time I was in Chicago I saw three little boys being searched all over their bodies. They were standing there going, “Momma, is everything okay?” I don’t want to live in a place like that.

WCT: I listened to your track “Only an Expert,” and it was all about the recession.

LA: Oh, isn’t it amazing? How come the first guys were never brought up to account for anything? Not one person in the elections had to stand up and say, “I kind of did a stupid thing.” It’s happening all over again. I used to think that my formula was when conservatives were empowered it will be politics and when liberals empowered it will go back to poetry. It’s too much to complain about.

WCT: Is your music therapy for yourself as well as the audience?

LA: I don’t want to say therapy because I think that’s more of an individual thing. I try not to use people to vent. I try to make things where other people can understand on another level not just so they can feel sorry for me. That is not the theme of what I am doing. Instead of having to put it in a sentence, why not keep it in the language of your mind? I’m quoting a little bit of a speech my mother did on her deathbed. It was so touching.

It’s going to be weird doing it in Chicago, where she died—[it’s] kind of intense for me. In that sense it is very personal but also a lot of political stuff into the mix as well.
Blue Valentine; film notes

It’s official: All Good Things and Blue Valentine, two new films starring Ryan Gosling, confirm him as the heir to the “beautiful but tortured” movie persona created by Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando and, especially, James Dean in the 1950s. Brooding and beautifully hunky in both these new movies (his first since 2007’s criminally overlooked black comedy, Lars and the Real Girl), Gosling exhibits a mix of danger, sullenness, sensuality and tenderness that has become his standard bearer—an irresistible portrait of alternately creepy but tantalizing portrait of the seriously damaged young heir and his scenes with Frank Langella as his sinister father.

I have no such reservations however, for director David Clanfield’s emotionally searing Blue Valentine, which he co-wrote over a period of years with Joey Curtis and Cami Delavigne. The movie is a non-linear portrait of a relationship gone sour that is astonishing in its detailed acting from Gosling and his equally moving costar, Michelle Williams. As Dean and Cindy—a furniture mover and medical assistant—move toward what might be the end of their romance the biography of their life as a couple is slowly revealed in splintered flashbacks of joy, sexual excitement and pain.

By giving us one piece of the couple’s relationship at a time, Clanfield alters expectations and alliances as the movie progresses. For example, David has what appears to be a sublime relationship with the couple’s daughter, Frankie (the natural and unaffected Faith Wadeka), and we’re irritated that Cindy doesn’t seem to appreciate his ease and light-hearted abilities with the little girl. However, as the relationship unravels, we come to understand her point of view as well. The sexual allure the two share for each other is at the heart of the relationship, and, in the film’s penultimate sequence, David caresses Cindy into joining him at a fantasy motel for the night, booking the “future” room for their tryst. Like many real-life relationships the night portrays sexual familiarity masquerading as true intimacy among other emotional plights plaguing the couple. Gosling and Williams are fearless in these scenes (the film was at one point given an NC-17 rating) and the willingness of the two actors to go the distance is essential to putting across the difficult material.

Williams matches Gosling’s intensity but from a very different place. The more David pushes forward, the more Cindy withdraws. Not unlike Gosling, Williams has forged her own path in movies, moving away from traditional leading lady roles into much more tricky territory. The result has been a memorable performance after another (most recently in Shutter Island) and she’s just as much up on the high wire in Blue Valentine as Gosling is.

The risky work by the two stars is enthralling but it’s the missing pieces to the relationship that nags at one at the movie’s conclusion. (Although Cindy’s past is revealed, for example, we don’t get nearly as much insight into what makes the rather odd David tick.) On first examination, this would seem to be a flaw in Clanfield’s conception, but I think it’s actually inspired. As Blue Valentine points out in its tremendously bittersweet way, we can never entirely know who we’re holding in our arms and we may never be sure at what moment they fell for us—or fell away.

Also in theaters this week: In recent months Gwyneth Paltrow has won a host of new fans showing off her vocal chops in a guest spot on Glee and she now returns to a starring role in movies as a country/western singer on the skids who finds herself on the comeback trail after being sought out by a young songwriter in Country Strong. The plot sounds like a tautizing, female variation on Tender Mercies (with Tim McGraw, Tron Legacy’s Garrett Hedlund, and Gossip Girl’s Leighton Meester co-starring) but unfortunately the movie wasn’t screened in time for Windy City Times’ deadline.

Film notes:
—Dyke Delicious, the popular, long-running monthly social/screening event co-presented by Black Cat Productions and Reeling returns for an eighth season this Saturday, Jan 8, with An Evening with Coquie Hughes at Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N. Clark. Hughes is an independent filmmaker whose features have focused on issues pertinent to lesbian and bisexual families in African-American culture, such as Gotta Git My Hair Did, Daughters of the Concret, If I Wuz Yo Gyal and the 2010 mockumentary My Mama Said Yo Mama’s A Dyke. Hughes will present clips and discuss her micro-budget working methods. Social hour starts at 7 p.m., with the screening at 8 p.m; there’s a $10 donation. (Advance RSVP suggested and can be e-mailed to dykedelicious@chicagonfilmakers.org.) Call 773-293-1447 or visit http://www.chicagonfilmakers.org.

—Trouble in Mind, writer-director Alan Rudolph’s dark, cool 1985 neo-noir has finally been released by Shout! Factory in a 25th-anniversary special edition. Kris Kristofferson and Lori Singer star in this romantic crime drama that features an ultra-moody synth-jazz trumpet score by Mark Isham. The stellar, quirky cast includes the tragically underused Genevieve Bujold, Jeff Bridges, Candice Bergen and Kevin Kline. Watch Trouble in Mind tonight at 10p.m. on KCET. (Advance RSVP suggested and can be e-mailed to dykedelicious@chicagonfilmakers.org.) Call 773-293-1447 or visit http://www.chicagonfilmakers.org.

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Nicole Hollander: ‘Sylvia’ cartoonist gets animated

BY YASMIN NAIR

In February, Nicole Hollander’s long-standing comic strip, Sylvia, was axed by the Chicago Tribune, leaving the cartoonist without a place in her hometown paper. The strip is still carried by 30-odd newspapers, but Hollander decided to make the inescapable and sharp-tongued Sylvia into another dimension. This year, she hired social-media consultant Alicia Eler to work with her on crafting a web presence for her character. Hollander, famously liberal on social issues like gay marriage, updates a new blog (http://www.badgirlchic.com) and creates and distributes a number of Sylvia’s comic strips through her own company,-archive.com. She recently published The Sylvia Chronicles: 30 Years of Misbehavior from Reagan to Obama (The New Press, $19.95, 144 pages). In a recent interview, she spoke about Sylvia’s new life, the future of cartooning, and what it means to be a Chicago feminist.

Windy City Times: What would you say is different about working on the blog as opposed to producing comic strips on deadline? Nicole Hollander: I just find it more of an immediate connection. I like the style of writing because I can just write and write and write and cut, but you don’t have to cut the way you do for a strip because a strip has to be much more succinct and much punchier. I can draw it out and have a couple of jokes within the same piece and I like that.

I have no problem coming up with ideas because I respond to something that’s happening in the news right I can change my mind. If I want to talk about Sarah Palin and why I think she has no idea in the world about what mama grizzlies are really like—then I can do that immediately. And then I can go into my archives and find a cartoon about her. It might not have to do with what I’m writing about but it has to do with her and with my different characters’ responses to her. So it’s just incredibly more flexible.

WCT: You’re very much a Chicago cartoonist—and Sylvia is very much a Chicago feminist. Is that a reflection of your own upbringing in this city and the influence of the women in your family?

NH: It’s what I know and it’s my style of talking. I think we speak alike although, because she’s a cartoon, she’s much faster than I am. I’m a kind of slayer formulator of things. But what I think of her as a Chicagoan is that she’s very straightforward and she is sarcastic and ironic in the way the Chicagoans are. And she’s a Chicago feminist because I think of Midwestern feminists as thinking about jobs. They’re very practical. And my family was always looking for a real job. My father, because he’d always get fired when he lost his temper. My mother, just because she would get bored. So that’s part of my growing up. On the west coast, I couldn’t talk to people because they were spiritual and I wasn’t; I was just practical and when I was younger I was part of a class action suit against the Sun-Times having segregated classified ads. We won that and I was so thrilled to be part of that.

WCT: Is cartooning for the papers a dying art? And is the future one where people like have a presence online as much or more than in the papers?

NH: I don’t think that newspapers are dying immediately. I think it’s a long, slow death. They’re slowly becoming less of a venue and of course, with new cartoons there was always tremendous competition to get into newspapers. And when there are fewer [papers], then what do you do? I think some people go into standup, into comedy, into acting. But I think there are a lot of online comic cartoon communities and they have their subscribers and people who are interested in following them. The question for all of us is, how do we get more attention?

WCT: Is cartooning more difficult for women to get into?

NH: Not necessarily. There has always been a dearth of women in comics. It was and it is controlled by men. Even if a woman is the features editor…. There is an unofficial group of guys who decide who gets in the paper. Now, I have to say that without the encouragement of my father, I don’t think I would have gotten in. But really, I think it’s a harder road for women, much, much harder. I think that for these editors, one woman is really quite enough, thank you very much. As for women’s humor—I think that we have a different experience growing up and living, period. So a lot of what we write about has to do with that particular situation and our responses to it. When we were growing up, we understood male humor because that was the world. It’s like speaking two languages. So I think that women are not afraid of male humor, they laugh at it. I think it’s a mistake to exclude us.

WCT: Who are the upcoming cartoonists and where do you see their work heading?

NH: I think they went into the graphic novels. Alison Bechdel had a fabulous strip, which had a range of characters that was extraordinary and she followed them every week. Well, she went on to write a graphic novel. That’s what she had to do. Linda Barry is an amazing, brilliant artist and she writes books. Not in the newspaper.

WCT: Does writing for the web change your style in any way?

NH: Not the drawing, because I have to do a certain kind of thing for the syndication. And my writing may be informed by what I’m doing on the blog. But I can’t really analyze it. I can generate more ideas and use them in two different places. That’s helpful. It gets you going. And since I’m doing something every day for the blog, there’s not a time when I can really stop thinking about it. Which is sort of fun. Otherwise you can procrastinate forever. Maybe not forever, but for a very long time.

WCT: What do you see your work heading towards?

NH: I think the future of the cartoon is being done by the women. They’re slowly becoming less of a venue and of course, with new cartoons there was always tremendous competition to get into newspapers. And when there are fewer [papers], then what do you do? I think some people go into standup, into comedy, into acting. But I think there are a lot of online comic cartoon communities and they have their subscribers and people who are interested in following them. The question for all of us is, how do we get more attention?

WCT: What is your U-Haul music video has gotten worldwide attention. What was it like to make?

KL: We had never shot a video, [but] we put out the word, got amazing people and shot probably 25 hours of footage. And we got to shop for food for everyone, which is the best thing in the world.

WCT: In addition to the funny stuff, you wrote “Why is My Right Wrong,” a Prop 8 protest song. Any thoughts on the administration’s handling of gay rights?

KL: I think Obama has good intentions and will do what he can. People need to be patient, [but] that doesn’t mean we can’t continue to be vocal about pushing forward with equality issues.

WCT: What are you looking forward to about performing in Chicago?

KL: These shows have been a long time coming. We had some dates scheduled two years ago [that we had to postpone].

KL: We’ve had Chicago blue balls for a while now. Also, I’m from Milwaukee so it feels like a homecoming; so many of my really good friends from high school and college are in Chicago or nearby.

KL: I’ve never had White Castle. I heard they have chicken rings. That is culinary excellence.

KL: That’s What She Said.

That’s What She Said.
Aqua: Making a Splash in Chicago

BY ANDREW DAVIS

When looking at Chicago’s Aqua, located at 225 N. Columbus, the aspect of the building that catches the eye has to be the waves designed by award-winning architect Jeanne Gang. However, there is much more to this unique building than meets the eye.

Aqua at Lakeshore East is an 82-story tower designed to comply with LEED certification. (It opened in 2009.) Aqua’s Chicago condos for sale are part of the 28-acre award-winning Lakeshore East community located where the Chicago River meets Lake Michigan adjacent to Millennium Park and the Loop Business District.

Aqua is unique in that one may either rent an apartment or purchase a condo. (Apartments and condos are in separate areas of the complex, with separate entrances.) The complex also has a RentBUY program (as do the Lakeshore East properties The Shoreham and the Tides) that allows one to build equity towards the purchase of a condominium.

Aqua’s distinct exteriors are unlike any other condos in the city. Aqua condos, which range from studios to three-bedroom residences, begin on the 53rd floor and rise to the penthouse level. (One of the buzz phrases used is that “The lowest condo is higher than most penthouses.”)

Finishes in apartments and condos include floor-to-ceiling windows; tiled entries; full granite kitchens with contemporary wood cabinetry and stainless-steel appliances; and in-home laundry. Moreover, every balcony is unique and has different dimensions. As for the view, there isn’t a bad one to be had—including the six-acre park, whose walkways form the shape of a sail, continuing the nautical theme present (Aqua, the Tides, Shoreham).

And what amenities! Among the perks revealed during a tour conducted by Magellan Development Group Vice President of Marketing Tricia Schaffel and Van Horn said that there will eventually be 16 buildings that will make up Lakeshore East (currently, there are seven)—essentially making this area a mini-city.


Real estate news:

— In the Loop: A Miami developer has purchased more than 200 unsold units in a South Loop tower, according to Chicago Real Estate Daily. Crescent Heights Inc. paid approximately $45 million for 205 units, or about 83 percent of the 248-unit Astoria Tower, which was taken back in June by lender Geneva Capital Group Inc. Chicago developer William Warman completed the 30-story high-rise at Ninth and State streets about a year ago.

— Aqua plans: J. P. Morgan Asset Management has agreed to invest about $182 million in the building’s 474 apartments, parking and commercial space, according to people familiar with the transaction. See more about Aqua in the main article on this page.

— Hey, big spender: Despite the sluggish economy, some Chicago homes still managed to sell for quite a pretty penny, according to the Huffington Post. An 11,000-square-foot home located at 866 N. Howe (with six bedrooms and five baths) sold for $8.5 million—the biggest sale ever recorded in Lincoln Park. Three condos sold at the Elysian, 11 E. Walton, at prices ranging from $6.28 million to $8.18 million, while a six-bedroom, 5.5-bath single-family home at 1650 W. Surf sold for $17.7 million.
As the military gay ban known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) nears its end, a new novel about life as a lesbian in the military is available on Amazon.com as both a print book and an electronic book on Kindle: $12.99 for the book, published by Prairie Avenue Productions.

The Half Life of Sgt. Jen Hunter, by lesbian journalist Tracy Baim, takes places during the first Gulf War, in the early 1990s, prior to the compromise DADT law. The military banned all gays and lesbians from service, but tens of thousands bravely served the country.

During the Gulf War, many of those soldiers were kept in service under a “stop loss” order, during the war, many of those soldiers were kept in service under a “stop loss” order, only to be discharged upon their return home. Now that DADT has been struck down, this novel is perfectly timed to give a closer look at the military gay ban known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) for what hasn’t been cleaned in many months function at a separate cost that utilizes your assistants, trucks, fully equipped with modern tools, supplies and equipment.

We also have fabulous organizational skills (a separate charge) for what hasn’t been cleaned in many months function at a separate cost that utilizes your assistants, trucks, fully equipped with modern tools, supplies and equipment. Depressed about going home to chaos? We can organize your chaos, straighten out your chaos, remove obstacles, and bring some peace of mind back into your home.

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Did you ring in the new year? Wrung out? Well, at least you may have made it into the Nightspots New Year’s 2011 collage. Thanks for making it a safe, fun and bat-shit crazy night (and following day, in the case of the bottom two bars).

Check out our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/nightspots) for expanded photo galleries. And stay tuned for the next actual issue of Nightspots, hitting stands January 19, 2011.
Wednesday, Jan. 5

Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allen Live at Rahab. Join the zany and talented Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allen for a night of cabaret and comedy at Rahab. 9 p.m., Rahab Lounge, 3431 N. Halsted. http://www.amyfreddy.com/music-and-comedy/

Thursday, Jan. 6

‘80s Top-Sleeve Night at Charlie’s. Charlie’s features half-price on any top shelf drinks you want. DJ Matt spins sweet ‘80s tunes till 4 a.m. 3 p.m., 773-811-8887, Charlie’s, 3724 N. Broadway. http://charliescafeicago.com

Open House at “The Crib”. Hosted by the Night Ministry. Lakeview Lutheran Church, First Slice Cafe: 5 p.m., 773-506-6011, Lakeview Lutheran, 835 W. Addison

Diane Torr: Sex, Drag & Male Roles: Investigating Gender as Performance Performance artist Diane Torr has been experimenting with the performance of gender for 39 years—exploring everything from feminist go-go dancing to masculine gender for 30 years—exploring everything from feminist go-go dancing to masculine gender. Her new book blends her own experimentation with the performance of gender and speaks to the issues concerning lesbians and gay men globally, and their basic human rights to a safe and secure life. 12 p.m., Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, http://www.artworksforchange.org

Wed., Jan. 12

Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allen Live at Rahab. Join the zany and talented Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allen for a night of cabaret and comedy at Rahab. 9 p.m., Rahab Lounge, 3431 N. Halsted. http://www.amyfreddy.com/music-and-comedy/

Friday, Jan. 14

The 22nd Annual Rhinoceros Theater Festival. The longest-running multi-art fringe festival in Chicago, Rhino. Features works in theatre and performance from Chicago companies and now featuring a few acts from across the country. 7 p.m., various locations. http://chicagofilmakers.org

Saturday, Jan. 15

3rd Annual Chicago Hip Hop Arts Festival. The 2011 celebration is dedicated to the hip-hop arts with a special focus on youth and community. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, http://www.chicagoculturalcenter.org

Announcing: The 8th Annual Big Bang 8. Chicago Spirit Brigade: Big Bang 8 is Chicago’s biggest fundraiser of the year. Join us for a day of fun-filled activities with the theme of “Her HRC: a Burlesque Affair.”

Monday, Jan. 10

Live Band Karaoke with Amy Armstrong. Host Amy Armstrong usheres you to your place in the spotlight as you perform live with the band at Roscoe’s! There’s not a bad seat in the house; 10 p.m., Roscoe’s Tavern, 3376 N. Halsted. http://www.roscos.com

Tuesday, Jan. 11

Curious George exhibit opening. The in-satiable curiosity of Curious George—the little monkey who has captured the imagination and hearts of millions of children and adults for 65 years—comes to life at Kohl Children’s Museum of Greater Chicago. 9:30 a.m., Kohl Children’s Museum, http://www.kohlchildrensmuseum.org

Open House at “The Crib”.

MORE OF TORR

Thursday, Jan. 6

Performance artist/drag king pioneer Diane Torr (above) will be at Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark.

I DREAM OF GENIUS

Tuesday, Jan. 18

Dating for Gay Nerds will take place at Downtown, 440 N. State.

Photo from 2010 “Nerds” event by Andrew Davis

Hyde Park Union Church, 5600 S. Wood,

http://www.affinity95.org

Dyke Delicious Screening Series Dyke Delicious is proud to kick off season eight with an evening with Coquie Hughes. Born in Chicago, Coquie is a driving force in the independent filmmaking community and speaks to the issues concerning lesbians and bisexual women in urban communities struggling with the fact of having lesbian noms. Coquie will present a sampling of her work and discuss her guerrilla-style working methods. (various years, total running time approximately 90 min.), 7 p.m., Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N. Clark, http://www.chicagofilmmakers.org

Blue Suede Shoes: The Ultimate Tribute Celebrate Elvis Presley’s 70th birthday at The Center for Performing Arts at Governors State University when “Blue Suede Shoes: The Ultimate Tribute” performs for one night only. 8 p.m., 708-225-2222, The Center for Performing Arts at GSI, http://www.centericketickets/tickets_events.aspx?id=16844

Sunday, Jan. 9

Urban Village Church Purr Pet Park Worship Services LGBT welcoming worship services at Urban Village Church are ecletic and experimental, practical and intelligent, relevant and, hopefully, inspiring. 5:30 p.m., 1502 N. Wayne (at Lofteefy), http://www.newchicagochurch.com

Geja’s Cafe Champagne Festival Geja’s Cafe will celebrate the holiday season with its 31st Annual Champagne Festival featuring champagnes and sparkling wines from France and California. 1 p.m., 773-281-9011, Geja’s Cafe 340 W. Armitage, http://www.gejascafe.com

Urban Village Church Purr Pet Park Worship Services LGBT welcoming worship services at Urban Village Church are ecletic and experimental, practical and intelligent, relevant and, hopefully, inspiring. 5:30 p.m., 1502 N. Wayne (at Lofteefy), http://www.newchicagochurch.com

Rhonda Schiff: Every Imaginable Shade of Gray The story of a family irrevocably damaged by the death of a young boy. The tragic accident that takes his life triggers years of bitter reenactment between his parents, reverberating for decades through their lives and those of their two daughters. Told through the voice of the youngest daughter, Schiff’s novel chronicles a family’s undoing and its for-reaching consequences. 4:30 p.m., Women & Children

Hughes Got It

Saturday, Jan. 8

The Dyke Delicious Screening Series kicks off season eight at Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N. Clark, with films by Chicago director Coquie Hughes (above). Photo from Dyke Delicious

www.windycitytimes.com
“For an actor to be working is a kind of miracle, because most actors aren’t. So it’s just silly for a working actor to say, ‘Oh, I don’t care if anybody knows I’m gay—especially if you’re a leading man. Personally, I wouldn’t advise a gay leading man-type actor to come out.”—the still-employed Richard Chamberlain gives a bit of advice.

Billy’s just left the tundra region known as Greater Boston and, believe it or not, I took part in a bit of shoveling. Yes, I actually indulged in some manual labor that had absolutely no physique-enhancing side effects, and I’m going to share a tip: If you do it 20 minutes after popping an Ambien, it really isn’t all that bad. In fact, it’s rather enjoyable. Around 5 a.m., I thought I’d clear the driveway at Chez Masters. Took my Ambien, put on Big Mama’s heavy coat (not the first time I’ve slipped into her clothing), threw on my mp3 player and off I went. While I was singing away, the streetlamp began to flicker on and off as if the bulb was about to blow. At that very moment, the Ambien kicked in. It took me a half hour before I realized I was the only one dancing in this club. Neighbors were looking out their windows, holding their children close to their bosom as if they were taking a field trip to Neverland! Something tells me my presence will not be a welcomed one at the next block party.

Where were you when the ball dropped? If you were home on New Year’s Eve, you had the choice of spending the night with Kathy Griffin and Anderson Cooper on CNN, or Dick Clark and Ryan Seacrest on ABC. Griffin was on good behavior, yet managed to continuously make Coop giggle like a little girl with demonstrations of the dancing at the Univision pavilion next door. When she promised to get Andy to take his shirt off, a woman watching from below actually registered a look of horror on her face.

Despite earlier assurances that he’d be kissing “girlfriend” Julianne Hough, Ryan Seacrest shared that special moment with nine guys. At the bweetwasting hour, he found himself wedged between the Backstreet Boys and New Kids on the Block—girlfriend, please! As for Dick Clark, I’m happy to report there were no major gaffes this year and he managed to clock in an extra 23 seconds of airtime from last year’s six minutes ... but who’s counting?

Elton John and David Furnish had a baby boy over the holidays—Miss Elton musta been carrying a lot. And in front, Zachary Jackson Levon Furnish-John was born via surrogate on Christmas Day. This had been in the works ever since the couple was denied the chance to adopt a Ukrainian orphan who captured Elton’s heart last year. While the couple continues to support the Ukrainian tyke, they made plans for a child of their very own: “We have fulfilled a dream in finally becoming parents, and are so happy and excited at this very special time.” Congrats!

Not surprisingly, upwardly mobile Neil Patrick Harris is already angling for entree to the empire of Elton. NPH tweeted, “Great congratulations to David Furnish & Elton John on the birth of their son, Zachary! Can’t wait for play dates in the south of France.” Oy!

Colin Firth once again impresses by giving one of the year’s best performances in The King’s Speech. But he’s got other ambitions: “I’m dying to play a transvestite or a stripper or a pop star. He should do the David Bowie story—then he’ll get to play all three at once!”

Clay Aiken recently hit the trifecta by landing a boyfriend who is an actor, dancer and underwear model! Not on the heels of other hotheads, his latest paramour is Jeff Walters, a Dallas-area actor who Clay originally spotted in a production of The Rocky Horror Show. Wanna guess which role he was playing? One that showed off his enormous, er, “talent” (as my predecessors, the Hollywood Kids, would say). One of their first dates was going to the Gaylord Texan Ice Show—which I know nothing about, but sounds like a pretty gay date to me. Of course, we’ve got pics of the couple on our website. But that’s not all. Jeff seems to enjoy showing off on Grindr—and let me again remind Joel Shimko that I’m still waiting for a Windows version of Grindr. Back to Jeff—he describes himself as 26 years old, 5’10” and 160 lbs. A picture is worth a thousand words, because not only is his body impressive, but so is his “talent.” Judging from the position of the hand, the trajectory of the light, and the angle of the camera, I’m thinking a good eight inches worth of talent. Check out BillyMasters.com to see for yourself.

Lastly, Reichen feels that his time on The A-List: New York was not representative of who he really is. He’s apparently shocked that the 3,600 hours of filming was reduced to three hours of footage that he watched “sometimes in horror at all that was left out.” Uh, has he ever seen a reality show before? He wants us to know that far from trying to prove he’s important, he and Rodney are “humble, caring, HUMAN BEINGS” (his caps and questionable use of a comma). He’s so humble that it only took a few sentences before he said, “I just celebrated the end of DADT. I had a really rewarding morning on the Gayle King show, recounting the hard work we have all done to end this policy.” This statement was made to somehow support his argument that he and the rest of the alleged “A-List” boys are not “vapid queens.” Honey, if it walks like a duck... When I’m starting the year with animal impressions, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. You don’t need to go to Old MacDonald’s Farm to get the latest dish. Just check out www.BillyMasters.com, the site that is neither humble nor human. If you’ve got a question burning inside of you, simply drop a note to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before the “quacks like a duck” phase kicks in! Until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
Gay Games IX still set for Cleveland

BY ROSS FORMAN

Gay Games IX still will be held in Cleveland in 2014 ... or so it appears.

There is, though, plenty of controversy lingering about the next quadrennial sports and cultural extravaganza, and no answers from the event’s governing body, the Federation of Gay Games (FGG).

Cleveland was awarded the 2014 Games in October 2009, when the FGG selected the Ohio city over bids from Boston and Washington, D.C. The Cleveland Synergy Foundation was the winning host organization.

But then last summer—ironically on the heels of Gay Games VIII in Cologne, Germany—rumors started that there were “issues” between the Synergy Foundation and FGG. Ultimately, FGG officials terminated the license awarded to the Synergy Foundation because, according to the FGG, the Synergy Foundation failed to meet its obligations under the agreement.

FGG then announced that the Games would remain in Cleveland in 2014, with a new Cleveland-based local organizing group.

FGG awarded the 2014 Games to the Cleveland Special Events Group Corp., a non-profit entity that consists of both LGBT and non-LGBT organizations and individuals from the Cleveland and Akron area.

And what about the Cleveland Synergy Foundation?

Well, it is not going away quietly. The foundation filed a lawsuit against the FGG, charging it with breach of contract and defamation for ousting Synergy as the operator of the 2014 Games.

In its lawsuit, Synergy disputes the claim that it failed to meet its obligations, saying it was the FGG that violated the terms of the license.

Officials with the Synergy Foundation went the legal route, hoping a judge would declare FGG’s new licensing agreement with the Cleveland Special Events Corp. “null and void,” thus forcing FGG to return the license to Synergy.

“We believe that the evidence will clearly show that they … are in breach of the license agreement with us and that they have no authority to award the license to another entity,” Synergy attorney Richard Haber told the Washington Blade.

Haber added that FGG’s bidding rules, which he said were part of the agreement with the Synergy Foundation, prevent the FGG from awarding the license to an entity other than the one who submitted bids for the Games—and the Cleveland Synergy Foundation was the lone Cleveland-area group to submit a bid.

So what’s the FGG take on the 2014 Games?

That’s anyone’s guess. Windy City Times has repeatedly reached out to FGG officials since October, but no one has replied to these requests.

And that’s not it on the 2014 controversy.

The new organizing committee, the Cleveland Special Events Corp., was, apparently, formed to bid for and run the Republican National Convention in 2008 and has since changed its name. (Minneapolis ended up as host for the GOP convention.)

The chairman of the Cleveland Special Events Corp., is, in fact, the mayor of Cleveland, Frank G. Jackson—and the group’s board of directors includes many other political personnel from Cleveland and Akron.

And there are not enough LGBT personnel, many have noted and questioned.

The 2014 Games appear to be headed to Cleveland, but who will be the local organizing committeee? And how will the controversies over the past six-plus months affect the 2014 event? How will the events be changed by being hosted, for the first time, by a non-LGBT community entity?

There are questions, questions, questions—just not a lot of answers.

The Washington, D.C. group, Metropolitan Washington Gaymes, Inc., was named the runner-up bidder by the FGG in 2009, so D.C. would, apparently, be the city that should host the Games if the Cleveland hosting group proved unable to fulfill its licensing agreement—and officials with the D.C. group have said they, too, believe FGG rules prevent the federation from awarding the license to another group in Cleveland that did not submit an original bid for the Games in 2009.

Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson issued this statement when FGG announced the Games were staying in Cleveland:

“The Gay Games in 2014 will shine a national and international spotlight on the City of Cleveland. Our representatives either lead or are a part of some of Cleveland’s and the region’s most dynamic institutions and will help show the world our greatness.”

Chicago Red Stars fold—for now

BY ROSS FORMAN

Women’s professional soccer has ended in Chicago. The Chicago Red Stars announced in December that the team suspended operations due to lack of necessary capital.

“This has been a very difficult and complex decision,” Red Stars part-owner and governor Aminn Whisler said in a statement. “We love this team, our players, staff and fans. Everything was trending well for our breakthrough 2011 season, but the abrupt loss of the Bay Area team scared away some of our planned investors, and we simply could not recover in time.”

Still, the team intends to pursue other soccer-related activities in 2011, and perhaps return to the Women’s Professional Soccer (WPS) league in 2012.

“We are building a special environment in Chicago for women’s soccer, and we hope our fans will stick with us during this transition year,” Whisler said. “Chicago believes in WPS and will continue to help the league to build its brand of top-flight women’s soccer.”

Omid Namazi was named the Red Stars’ coach last June, replacing Emma Hayes. The team featured several popular players, including Cristiane, Ella Masar and Megan Rapinoe.

The 2010 season ran from April to September, and the team ended the season with back-to-back wins over the Philadelphia Independence and Washington Freedom.

“It’s a shame that in the great city of Chicago we can’t support and maintain women’s sports teams,” said Chicagoan Jessica Andrusko. “We support all types of men’s teams no matter how successful or not. We should be able to support women’s teams. However, I do think that it is also very important where the venues are located. The next women’s team no matter what sport needs to think carefully about location.”

The Red Stars were very inclusive in their marketing to all Chicagos, including the LGBT community through Windy City Media Group, and the team held benefits for the Lesbian Community Care Project in the 2009 and 2010 seasons.

Red Stars fans who purchased 2011 season tickets and flex tickets will be fully reimbursed. For more information about the Chicago Red Stars, contact the Red Stars office at 708-496-9500.
found a quarter-century ago—officially came out of the closet. Meanwhile, another Georgia megachurch pastor, the Rev. Eddie Long, fought charges that he sexually abused several young men.

—Southern discomfort: Board Midland School District (Ark.) school board member Clint McCan, in response to a request to wear purple because five queers killed themselves. The only way im wearing it for them is if they all commit suicide.” On Anderson Cooper’s show, AC360, McCance apologized and resigned from his position.

—Family ties: Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum announced Oct. 22 that he would not challenge a Sept. 22 state appellate court ruling that overturned Florida’s ban on adoption by gay men or lesbians, ending the 33-year-old ban.

—Takeover: On Nov. 2, 2010, Republicans won enough seats in the House to take over majority control starting in January 2011. They also increased their margin in the Senate, from 41 seats to 47. The shift immediately marked a change in the chances of pro-LGBT legislation passing, as the next session will undoubtedly be more conservative. However, openly gay Prov-idence, R.I., Mayor David Cicilline was elected to the U.S. House. (See the cover story.)

—Here’s to you, Mr. Robinson: V. Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, announced that he would retire from his position in early 2013. Robinson said that he would continue to support his full energy to his diocese until that date.

—Numbers: Gays are far more likely to be victims of a violent hate crime than any other minority group in the United States, according to a new analysis of federal hate-crime statistics in the latest issue of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Report, released Nov. 22.

—Hide and Leak: The U.S. soldier in the middle of the WikiLeaks scandal involving thou- 23 years old—and gay, Private First Class Brad- ley Manning lip-synced Lady Gaga songs while allegedly downloading thousands of classified documents from military computers.

—Ban overboard: The U.S. Senate approved a bill Dec. 18 to repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” the 17-year-old law banning openly gay people from serving in the military. The roll-call vote on the measure, which came to the Senate from the House, was 65 to 31 (including six Republicans); it had passed the House 250 to 175. President Obama signed the bill Dec. 22 at the Department of the Interior.

Bishop Gene Robinson. Image by B. Proud Photography
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