Equality Illinois Marks 20 Years

Equality Illinois co-founder Art Johnston leads a toast at the group's gala Feb. 12 at the Hilton Chicago. With him are event chair Mark Cozzi and EI board first vice president Dalila Fridi. The parade of politicians at the event included Gov. Pat Quinn, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Treasurer Dan Rutherford, Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka, U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, and mayoral candidates Rahm Emanuel and Gery Chico. Many aldermanic candidates and sitting politicians also attended, and President Barack Obama sent his well wishes on EI's 20th anniversary in a letter. There was only one protester at the event calling attention to the firing of EI co-founder Rick Garcia, and only one brief mention of his first name was made at the event. Garcia's firing several weeks ago caused concern among some activists. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald/www.mysticimagesphotography.com.

See many more photos inside and also online at www.windycitymediagroup.com

Kiss, Congeniality

A couple shows affection (left) and National Museum of Mexican Art Director of Performing Arts National Museum of Mexican Art Jorge Valdivia (below) speaks at Lambda Legal's annual Freedom to Marry gala, held Feb. 8 at the museum. Among the events were bouquet-tossing and a skit about the state's new civil unions measure, which will take effect June 1. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com); see page 15.
Chicago thrives on its diversity. Rahm Emanuel has been a supporter of equality for the LGBT community throughout his life. He has fought for legal protection, funding and opportunity across the diverse spectrum of our community.

WE are proud to be part of the LGBT and Allied Committee in support of Rahm Emanuel for Mayor. We urge you to vote for Rahm February 22.

Endorsed by Human Rights Campaign
Black History Month profiles

E. Denise Simmons

Former Cambridge, Mass., Mayor E. Denise Simmons was the first openly-gay African American mayor in United States history. Adding to the landmark appointment was the fact that Simmons won the seat unanimously. Her term lasted from 2008-2009.

Simmons made the following statement following her election:

“Just like being a Cantabrigian, a grandmother, a Justice of the Peace, a small business owner, and Mayor, being gay is part of who I am. I live in a city where my friends, family and colleagues just know me as Denise, not as the first African American lesbian mayor. One of the main reasons that public service has drawn me is that I believe in fairness and equality for all people, whether they are gay or straight, African American or of another background, women or men.”

“Equity and access to services and opportunities is what raises all of us to a higher quality of life. I started the GLBT Commission in Cambridge for that reason, to engage the broader community in policy issues that would make Cambridge a better place to live and work for gay individuals and families. I’m proud of the progress the Commission has made. All of my work centers around civic engagement—I truly believe that is how the strongest communities are built, on the vision, involvement and actions of their citizens. Although being a lesbian is not something that defines my work, I realize that this is a great step for the GLBT community and I am truly honored to have this opportunity to be a leader.”

Lee Daniels

Fifty-year-old, openly-gay producer/director Lee Daniels was the first African-American solo producer of an Academy Award-winning film, for Monster’s Ball (starring Halle Berry, Billy Bob Thornton and Heath Ledger). The 2001 film about race, politics, feminism and the legal system won a Screen Actors Guild Award (SAG) for outstanding performance by a female actor in a leading role. Daniels prior to his work on Monster’s Ball, Daniels worked as a casting director on the films Under the Cherry Moon and Purple Rain.

Following the success of Monster’s Ball, Daniels produced the Kevin Bacon/Rya Seegewick film The Woodman in 2004. He would make his directorial debut with the film Shadowboxer in 2006. Shadowboxer starred Helen Mirren, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Mo’Nique, Joseph Gordon-Levit, and Macy Grey (among others). 2008 would bring the film production of Tennessee starring Adam Rothenberg, Ethan Peck, Mariah Carey and Lance Reddick. Daniels teamed up again in 2009 with Mo’Nique and Mariah Carey for the two-time Academy Award-winning film Precious. The movie was based on the novel Push by Sapphire and depicted a tumultuous mother-daughter relationship on the brink of multiple emotional disasters. Daniels would be honored at the GLAAD Media Awards in 2010 for his work on the film and for being a celebrated gay Black director in film.

The Simmons and Daniels selections are from the forthcoming book Black, Gifted and Gay by LGBT media pioneer Leyla Farah (with assistance from LGBT celebrity reporter Sarah Toce).

Giffords’ hero Hernandez to be honored

Daniel Hernandez, Jr.—the openly gay intern who is credited with helping to save the life of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in a January mass shooting in Tucson, Ariz.—will speak at a Feb. 19 luncheon at the 29th Annual National Conference of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI).

The USHLI conference will be held Feb. 17-20 at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, 301 E. North Water. The luncheon will take place 12:15-1:45 p.m.

In a statement Hernandez said, “I really do not consider myself a hero, but I am extremely humbled by the idea that great organizations such as USHLI believe that I am. To me, the real heroes are the people that spend their entire lives helping others.”

For more about USHLI and the conference, visit http://www.ushli.org.

Rumsfeld supports end of military gay ban

Palm Center Director Aaron Belkin issued a statement in response to former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s comments in support of the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

On Feb. 11, Rumsfeld told ABC News Radio that repealing the ban on openly gay service is “an idea whose time has come.”

“With Secretary Rumsfeld’s statement that the ‘time has come’ to repeal the ban, there are now three Republican Secretaries of Defense—Cohen, Gates, and Rumsfeld—who have come down on the side of allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly,” Belkin said.

“Support for the end of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ is unambiguous and transcends party lines. We have now entered the next phase of the repeal process in which certification and implementation should be completed swiftly in keeping with the practices that have been proven to minimize any disruption to the military.”

Belkin added that former Vice President and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney stated in 2010 that it was “time to reconsider the policy.”

E. Denise Simmons.

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FEBRUARY 22ND, LET’S STAND BY GERY CHICO

THE CHICO RECORD:

• As President of the Chicago Public Schools, Gery worked to extend full benefits to domestic partners.

• In 2004, Gery was the ONLY candidate for U.S. Senate to support full marriage equality.

• Chico was the first mayoral candidate to release a comprehensive LGBT policy.

“LONG BEFORE IT WAS POPULAR AND THE POLITICALLY CORRECT THING TO DO, GERY STOOD WITH THE GAY RIGHTS COMMUNITY.”
-- RICK GARCIA

“CHICO ONLY CANDIDATE TO SUPPORT GAY MARRIAGE [IN ‘04 SENATE RACE].”

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES
NOV. 29, 2010

NBC
NOV. 29, 2010
Vida/SIDA to open LGBTQ homeless shelter

BY KATE SOSIN

While much attention in past months has been paid to Lake View-based organizations like Howard Brown for its near closure and Equality Illinois for its firing of Rick Garcia, Humboldt Park-based HIV outreach organization Vida/SIDA has been on track to do something no other organization in the Midwest has done.

Vida/SIDA is planning to open the region’s first LGBTQ homeless shelter. If all goes as planned, the shelter will open by August.

“We have the space,” said Vida/SIDA Director Juan Calderón. “It’s just a matter of finishing the bureaucracy.”

Vida/SIDA will relocate its current Division Street office into a building next door, and convert its third floor into transitional apartments: one floor each for homeless gay men, lesbians and transgender people. The shelter will house 15 young people, for up to two years each.

The project is more than two years in the making. Vida/SIDA had announced the shelter project as a 2010 goal last January, but struggled through fundraising and red tape to make it happen. Calderón said Vida/SIDA needs the kind of support that many LGBT people give Lake View-based organizations if the project is to succeed. Vida/SIDA raised more than $300,000 for the project with help from local politicians, but it remains $50,000 shy of its goal.

A 2007 report from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force calls LGBTQ youth homelessness an “epidemic,” and asserted that LGBTQ youth are often violently targeted by straight peers in the shelter system. Several studies in recent years suggest that youth of color, especially transgender youth of color, face homelessness at alarmingly high rates.

“I think that solidarity is very important,” said Calderón. “I would really like to encourage some of the LGBTQ constituents of Chicago to really contribute to some other organizations [than they usually contribute to].”

Vida/SIDA is the only HIV/AIDS outreach organization that specifically serves LGBTQ Latino/as. The organization opened in 1988 to address a lack of culturally competent healthcare for HIV-positive Puerto Ricans. Over the years, Vida/SIDA has expanded to address social, political, and economic issues facing its constituents, but it has also struggled through difficult economic times, most notably in 2004 when it nearly shut down for lack of funds.

Today, the organization is growing. The shelter is not the only ambitious project Vida/SIDA is spearheading this year. In addition, Vida/SIDA is opening an “entrepreneurial incubator” for transgender people and queer women. The Division Street storefront will open next month and help participants get trained, certified, and develop business plans.

“Youth staying in the Vida/SIDA transitional home will have an opportunity to hone their skills as well.”

Roberto Sanabria is a board member of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, which oversees Vida/SIDA. He said the incubator is closely-linked to the plan for an LGBTQ shelter because both are necessary to change the circumstances of homeless youth in the community.

“You don’t want to put a band-aid on a problem,” he said. “The problem is economic.”

Juan Calderón said that transgender youth of color in Chicago have a particularly difficult time finding work because they face discrimination. Calderón and Sanabria hope the incubator can provide a more sustainable solution to LGBTQ homelessness.

“Youth in the incubator will be able to learn sewing, cosmetology, hair dressing, and other skills based on their interests and talents. They will also learn how to run their own businesses.”

“It is a community grassroots approach to develop entrepreneurship in Chicago,” said Calderón.

The incubator, a bright two-room shop which sits less than a block from Vida/SIDA, is currently being renovated. Its first entrepreneurs will be participants from Vida/SIDA’s annual Paseo Boricua Female Impersonator Pageant, which spotlights Latino/a transgender women, drag queens and female impersonators.

Calderón and Sanabria said it is not only a matter of getting the neighborhood supportive of both the incubator and the transitional housing projects, including current 35th Ward Alderman, Rey Colon. But the two say the projects’ biggest advocate has been Rick Garcia, the now-former political director of Equality Illinois whose recent firing spurred outrage from some in the LGBTQ community.

Calderón will be honored by Vida/SIDA at its March 25 fundraiser for the shelter.

Calderón is hopeful that with Garcia’s help, Vida/SIDA can secure the support it needs to finish the shelter and to grow the project further. Calderón experienced homelessness in Humboldt Park himself at the age of 16. He knows that that Chicago needs more than 15 beds for queer homeless youth.

“My goal is to create this at a citywide level,” he said. “I want for them to feel like it’s their home, that they’re not in some sort of institution just because they’re homeless.”

Vida/SIDA will hold a fundraiser for the transitional housing project on Friday, Feb. 18, 6:30-8 p.m., at Roberto Clemente High School, 1147 N. Western. Tickets are $25.

More information on both the February and the March fundraisers can be found at http://prcc-chgo.org/vidasida.
Thank You


20th anniversary
LGBT liaison among state’s attorney’s cuts

BY TRACY BAIM

Longtime lesbian activist Vernita Gray, who worked in the Cook County state’s attorney’s office for almost 18 years, was among those laid off in the recent budget cuts ordered by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. Gray’s most recent position was LGBT liaison, and she had previously served as a victim/witness coordinator.

The current LGBT Hate Crimes Victim Witness coordinator, Ann Huffman, did keep her post, as Cassidy, interviewed about the cuts, said a big chunk of the state’s attorney’s prevention budget “is just gone. It was not a desire to eliminate this unit, but there were no other real choices. It is not something that [Anita Alvarez] thinks is for the good of the office or the community. There’s going to be an unfortunate impact because of this.”

Cassidy commented about Gray’s layoff: “There is not anyone who would suggest that she was not a valued member of the staff and that the work she does is not important and central to what we do. It is a huge loss to the office and to the community. I’m really sad.”

Alvarez, who attended the Equality Illinois gala Feb. 12, sent Windy City Times the following statement about Gray, noting that she was “disappointed to lose Gray in the cutbacks imposed” by Preckwinkle:

“Vernita has been a trailblazer for justice and change on the important issues that affect our communities, particularly those that impact the citizens of our LGBT communities,” Alvarez said.

“She is recognized for her commitment to serving people and being a voice for those who have not always had one in the criminal justice system. I was very proud to have Vernita lead our efforts and I am deeply saddened to lose her.”

Death penalty the focus of annual Clarence Darrow event

CHICAGO—Aflorians of the legendary attorney Clarence Darrow will gather at the Darrow Bridge in Jackson Park Sunday, March 13, at 10 a.m., as they have every March 13 for more than 50 years to honor Darrow’s memory. Darrow did March 13, 1938, in Chicago and his ashes were strewn at the lagoon. The focus this year is the death penalty, which Darrow opposed. By March 13, Illinoisans will know if Gov. Pat Quinn agrees with Darrow, because the state legislature has sent him a bill banning the practice in Illinois.

The March 13 event will feature a special tribute to the late Lila Weinberg, who was a member of the Darrow commemorative committee and one of the founders of the Bridge ceremony in 1958. She and her husband, Arthur, authored a trilogy of books on Darrow.

After the outdoor wreath-laying, guests will move inside to the Museum of Science and Industry’s New Columbia Room for a dual tribute to Darrow and his work on capital punishment. As Darrow said during a 1924 debate: “[W]hy am I opposed to capital punishment? It is too horrible a thing for a State to undertake.”

The speakers will be Edward Mogul and Joey Mogul, his niece, who are both longtime civil rights attorneys. The topic of Edward Mogul’s speech is “Justice is Not a Legal Term, or the Gulf Between Justice and the Law.” Joey Mogul’s speech is, “Dreaming of Darrow and the Fight for Human Rights in the 21st Century.”

Death penalty is a loss for our community, to not have this voice in government,” Gray said. “But change happens, and we see cuts everywhere. I feel so blessed to have done this, to have had this position to represent the community in a real way, it has been phenomenal. To go into the schools, it has been an incredible gift in my life. These are the times we live in.”

More than 100 Darrow devotees, including attorneys, labor leaders, social justice advocates, civil libertarians and First Amendment buffs will attend the outdoor wreath-laying ceremonies behind the Museum of Science and Industry before moving to the New Columbian Room for the program.

As president of the Illinois Academy of Criminal Law, Edward Mogul successfully proposed that the Illinois Supreme Court adopt what is now the standard of law: “That it is the duty of the prosecutor to seek justice, not merely to convict.” Mogul is a federal trial attorney concentrating in the area of criminal law, and a professor of humanities in the City Colleges of Chicago.

Joey Mogul, partner at the People’s Law Office in Chicago and an adjunct law professor at DePaul University College of Law, co-authored Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People. Mogul represents Darrell Cannon, Ronald Kitchen and Michael Tillman, alleged victims of police torture at Area 2 and 3 Police Headquarters, in their pending civil rights cases.

Loyola Law Professor Anita Weinberg, daughter or Arthur and Lila Weinberg, will preside over the indoor program. Tracy Baim, daughter of the late Joy Darrow, will preside at the bridge.

Darrow, characterized as the “attorney for the damned,” who was born in 1857 in Farmdale, Ohio, practiced in Chicago and represented the underdog and vigorously opposed capital punishment. None of his many clients was sentenced to death.

Darrow’s death on March 13, 1938 was memorialized throughout the world. His ashes, and later the ashes of his wife Ruby and his son Paul, were scattered from the Darrow Bridge which was dedicated to his memory by the Chicago Park District in 1957.

For more details, see http://www.darrowbridge.org.
GLN leads protest at Holy Name

BY TERRENCE CHAPPELL

Rainbow flags and pro-gay legislation signs decorated the front of Holy Name Cathedral as Gay Liberation Network (GLN) members and supporters protested for the freedom to marry for the LGBT community.

GLN, a group that focuses and rallies for LGBT equal rights, launched its “Freedom to Marry” protest Feb. 13 to target Catholic leaders’ opposition to LGBT equality. In particular, the protest was in opposition to Cardinal Francis George and other Catholic leaders who have worked against LGBT legislation in Springfield.

The protest centered on three demands that included the opposition of anti-LGBT bigotry of the Catholic hierarchy and instead support of the many pro-equal rights Catholics organizing for change within the denomination; demand of full equal marriage rights in Illinois; and demand that tax dollars no longer go to tax-exempt religious groups that refuse to commit to equal rights for LGBT people. According to GLN co-founder Andy Thayer, the protest is not against the Catholic Church, but instead opposing the anti-gay leadership found in the Catholic Church.

“Their leadership is out of step with reality. It’s important for anti-gay leaders to be called out for their bigotry. There’s also no secret that anti-gay leaders will clothe their bigotry with the cloth,” said GLN co-founder Andy Thayer.

GLN’s demonstration actually served a dual purpose. In addition to fighting for LGBT rights, the protest was a stand for freedom to assemble and freedom of speech. Current city legislation prohibits demonstrations in the public way within 150 feet and one half hour of a religious service in a place of worship. However, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Illinois deemed such legislation as a violation of the First Amendment. According to the ACLU, the ordinance that bans protesting near places of worship contains an exemption for labor picketing, creating speaker-based and content-based discrimination. ACLU asked the Chicago Police Department to alert it if officers were going to enforce the ordinance at the GLN’s demonstration. In response on January 25, Chicago Corporation Counsel Mara Georges said that the city “does not intend to enforce” this ordinance at this time.

Also present during the protest were other pro-LGBT organizations and LGBT allies such as PFLAG. After hearing about GLN’s protest, PFLAG members came to show their support.

“One of the aspects of PFLAG is that we support our gay and lesbian family members. Whenever there is injustice, there is injustice for all of us. The tone of the Catholic Church is against gays and lesbians,” said PFLAG member Damian Moschak.

Spirit & Truth, a Catholic-based organization, showed up to the protest wearing light-blue T-shirts reading “Love is the answer.” The group, made up of devout Catholics, wishes to mend relationships with the LGBT community.

“Unlike the messages that are often received, true devout Catholics are about love. We are apologetic that they have had a negative experience with the Catholic Church. The freedom to marry issue is a legislative one, not a religious issue,” said Spirit & Truth member Jennifer Nowakowski.

Still, GLN protestors and LGBT allies believe that they are simply fighting for equal rights.

“There’s a lot of oppression from religious establishments that should support love; we just want the right to stand up for our rights,” said protestors and Rockford College ENRACE member Brittany Salvador.

As with any protest, there are two sides. Americans for Truth, a group dedicated to exposing what it calls “the homosexual agenda,” held up signs thanking George for defending marriage.

“I think its [GLN’s protest] is especially brazen. There’s an uprising of the gay and lesbian community towards people of faith. There’s an inherent contradiction between religious rights versus gay rights. GLN is always trying to block out other messages and that is a form of bigotry,” said Americans for Truth Founder/President Peter LaBarbera.

Thayer felt the energy of his protestors. He urged the LGBT community and its allies to not be complacent and to constantly push the issue.

“Separate but equal institutions are never really equal,” he said.

Pro-equality advocates rally Sunday at Holy Name Cathedral. Photos courtesy of the Gay Liberation Network
Mayoral candidates speak at LGBT forum

By Joseph Erbentraut

In an unprecedented event organized by a coalition representing more than 30 Chicago LGBT groups, three of the six remaining candidates vying to succeed Mayor Richard M. Daley appeared Feb. 9 at a community forum held at the Adler School of Professional Psychology. The three mayoral candidates missing from the forum all attended a rescheduled Chicago Defender candidate debate instead. Patricia Van Pelt Watkins and William “Donk” Wallis were no-shows at the forum, while Gery Chico had asked forum organizers if his scheduled speaking time could be moved earlier in order for him to attend both forums. Organizers argued such a concession would have been unfair to the other candidates. Chico, instead, greeted attendees as they arrived at the forum.

Rahm Emanuel, Carol Moseley Braun and Miguel del Valle each spoke before an audience of roughly 200 (with hundreds more watching online live) and answered a series of questions that addressed five core concerns the coalition had identified: education, HIV/AIDS, youth homelessness, transgender issues and public safety. The questions were posed by forum moderator and Windy City Times Publisher/Executive Editor Tracy Baim.

Speaking first, Emanuel said he would prioritize hiring new superintendents to both the city’s police department and public schools who share his concern for LGBT issues, including bullying in schools and accusations of police harassment of LGBT Chicagoans. He also described his support for HIV/AIDS funding—out of its public health concern—throughout the city, not just on its North side.

Regarding public safety, President Obama’s former chief of staff emphasized the role he played in helping Democratic leadership in Washington pass the Matthew Shepard Act federal hate crimes legislation. The next step, he argued, is ensuring “enforcement to the full force of the law, carried out at every level.”

And in response to a question regarding LGBT youth homelessness, Emanuel offered general comments that veered unexpectedly toward a discussion of the overrepresentation of war veterans in the city’s homeless population.

“The mayor laid out a good plan but how we’re going to make sure we have the resources to see that plan through to completion,” he said. “I have no problem with gay and lesbian individuals, you should know veterans are over-represented in the homeless community... If I said something here that wasn’t also cognizant of the fact that our Vietnam veterans and veterans overall are represented over sample in the homeless population, I’d be taking care of one population at the expense of a population that has given a great deal to this country.”

Emanuel concluded his comments with one last appeal to the audience centered on what he sees as all Chicagoans’ common challenges.

“The only question—whether it’s on crime, education or our economy—is whether we will face those issues with common purpose.”

Former U.S. Senator Carol Moseley Braun spoke next, stating that she is “very proud of my record on these issues.”

On education, Braun said that she plans to introduce an LGBT liaison team with Chicago Public Schools as part of a zero-tolerance policy on bullying. She spoke of pursuing more housing options—both temporary and long-term—for struggling LGBT youth and elders and also emphasized her hope to set a tone of inclusiveness across the city to help combat hate and bias crimes.

In response to a question on HIV/AIDS funding, Braun emphasized that the city will need to strengthen its private/public partnerships in order to combat new HIV/AIDS infections, particularly in traditionally underserved African-American and Latino communities on the city’s South and West sides.

“We can build on what we have but also make sure there is divisional distribution and access throughout the city of Chicago,” Braun said. “We need to break down the silos that are keeping our funding from going around to the organizations that are presently providing important services.”

Closing her comments, Braun encouraged voters to look to her record on LGBT issues—including her opposition to both the Defense of Marriage Act and “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” while a U.S. senator—as proof of the sort of advocacy they could expect from a Mayor Braun.

“Maybe when you come out of the perspective of looking like me, you become doubly sensitive—I hope—to the travails and concerns of others and this is something I’ve been concerned about, worked on and devoted my life to promoting in my career in public service,” she added.

Finally, City Clerk of Chicago Miguel del Valle addressed concerns about public safety and harassment in schools and from police with an emphasis not only on the implementation of new, more protective policies, but also on continued professional development and close monitoring to ensure policies translate into real change.

Addressing HIV/AIDS prevention and education, del Valle spoke of his experience protecting proposed cuts to minority outreach HIV funding both as a State Senator and during his stint on the AIDS Foundation of Chicago’s board—a post Dr. Ron Sable asked him to take.

Throughout his comments, del Valle characterized himself as the “people first” candidate and emphasized that the strength of Chicago derives from its neighborhoods and community organizing.

“I look forward to the day when we have real...”

Turn to page 31
Mayoral appointments project launches

BY JOSEPH ERBENTRAFT

Borrowing a page from the campaign that resulted in the appointment of a previously unmatched number of openly LGBT people to President Obama's administration, a coalition of Chicago's leading LGBT community organizers has launched a project it hopes will make a similar impact on the city's newly elected mayor later this year.

Announced Feb. 9 at the mayoral candidate forum held at the Adler School of Professional Psychology, the Chicago Appointments Project is a campaign intended to identify and recruit well-qualified, openly LGBT individuals from the community and advocate for their appointment to the next mayor's administration. The project is a joint effort between Equality Illinois, the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Institute.

Debra Shore, the openly lesbian commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, said the idea came after witnessing the success of the Presidential Appointments Project, a campaign led by the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Institute in collaboration with other groups.

Beginning in mid-2008, Shore and other LGBT leaders throughout the country began to identify, recruit and gather the resumes of openly LGBT people who were well suited for appointment to the Obama administration.

"The Obama administration, I am told, was so impressed by the organization and the thoroughness of the effort," Shore said. "They said they the LGBT community was better organized than any constituency group in this regard."

The next step, she said, seemed natural—to plot the model at a state or municipal level.

With Chicago on the verge of electing its first mayor in just over two decades, the opportunity to do exactly that is now. While acknowledging current Mayor Richard M. Daley has done "very well" in appointing quite a few LGBT people to leadership positions within the city, Shore said the interest is now in avoiding a backlash from that achievement.

"We want to be ready and be able to assist [the next mayor]," Shore added. "We want to make the case that there are many worthy, talented members of our community and that the next mayor and the city as a whole would be well-served to have them working in the new administration."

Bernard Cherkasov, Equality Illinois chief executive officer, said the project, if successful, would help de-sensationalize the fact the community is already present in vastly diverse areas of government and city life alike.

"We are already everywhere, in every profession and industry but are often invisible," Cherkasov said. "But we are one of the largest cities in the world and this effort would communicate a strong message. We are certain this will be a quite productive effort for our community."

Both Cherkasov and Shore indicated they had received positive feedback from all the leading candidates who remain in the mayoral race.

Shore added that the benefit of having openly LGBT people in within city administration can be crucial not only in terms of visibility but also in terms of decision-making and educating co-workers. As the first open lesbian elected to a countywide office, Shore is no stranger to this fact. Prior to her election, the district did not offer domestic partner health benefits. When she asked why the benefits had not been offered, Shore recalls being told, "Nobody asked."

Shore recalled being told, "Nobody asked.

Harry is a longtime friend and advocate for the LGBTQ community.

• He fought to pass Civil Unions legislation.

• He fought to amend Illinois' Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, lending, public accommodations, and other areas based on an individual's sexual orientation.

• Harry fought for expanded funding for programs for individuals living with HIV/AIDS.


• He has supported many local organizations with state-funded grants including the AIDS Foundation, TPAN, LCCP, Open Hand, and BeHIV.

• As Alderman, Harry will continue to be a strong ally to the LGBTQ community.

Vote February 22 for Harry Osterman
Democrat for Alderman, 48th Ward
www.harryosterman.org
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Paid for by Neighbors for Harry Osterman
**Election 2011**

The Windy City Times election guide charts include the candidates’ responses to 16 LGBT-related questions sent by the newspaper. Windy City Times does not endorse candidates for election. Approximately 90 percent of the candidates in all the mayoral and aldermanic races were sent surveys. (Windy City Times was not able to reach a few candidates.) We have also included our questionnaire. **NOTE:** Regarding the mayoral candidates’ answers, neither Bill “Dock” Walls nor Patricia Watkins favors marriage equality. In addition, Walls is not pro-choice while Watkins has not employed any LGBT campaign staffers. For AIDS Foundation of Chicago question responses from mayoral candidates see [http://www.aidschicago.org/advocacy/candidate_questionnaire.php](http://www.aidschicago.org/advocacy/candidate_questionnaire.php). Also, a broad coalition of Chicago-area LGBT organizations has assessed LGBT issue positions of candidates in areas including transgender rights and marriage equality; see [http://www.equil.org/nextmayor.html](http://www.equil.org/nextmayor.html).

**NOTE:** Regarding the candidates’ answers, neither Bill “Dock” Walls nor Patricia Watkins favors marriage equality. In addition, Walls is not pro-choice while Watkins has not employed any LGBT campaign staffers. For AIDS Foundation of Chicago question responses from mayoral candidates see [http://www.aidschicago.org/advocacy/candidate_questionnaire.php](http://www.aidschicago.org/advocacy/candidate_questionnaire.php). Also, a broad coalition of Chicago-area LGBT organizations has assessed LGBT issue positions of candidates in areas including transgender rights and marriage equality; see [http://www.equil.org/nextmayor.html](http://www.equil.org/nextmayor.html).

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**WCT** = Windy City Times questions, number listed is of the total questions correct for that race

**IVI** = Independent Voters of Illinois Independent Precinct Organization

**PPAC** = Personal PAC

**NOW** = National Organization for Women Equality PAC (includes CNOW endorsements)

**PLAN** = Planned Parenthood

**EI** = Equality Illinois

**HRC** = Human Rights Campaign
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The following 16 questions appeared on the survey that Windy City Times sent out to candidates in the 2011 election. Surveys were sent out to all candidates for whom we had contact info; we estimate that surveys were sent to 90 percent of all candidates. The questions were the same for candidates in all races. **NOTE:** Regarding the mayoral candidates’ answers, neither Bill “Duck” Walls nor Patricia Watkins favors marriage equality. In addition, Walls is not pro-choice while Watkins has not employed any LGBT campaign staffers. This is why they each scored 14/16.

1) Do you have or would you install a written policy in your office regarding sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination?
2) What is your position regarding funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and education?
3) Have you taken or would you take any steps to further HIV/AIDS treatment and education programs?
4) What are feelings regarding abortion?
5) Have you started or would you start sensitivity training for your staff members regarding LGBT-related issues?
6) Do you favor same-sex marriage?
7) If you were in the state legislature, would you have voted in favor of the civil-unions bill that recently passed through the Illinois General Assembly?
8) Do you favor hate-crimes legislation that increases penalties for crimes committed based on the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person attacked?
9) Do you believe that LGBT individuals should become foster parents if they are qualified?
10) Do you believe that LGBT individuals have the right to adopt children if they are qualified?
11) Would you keep committees around such as the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations’ Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues and departments such as the Office of LGBT Health?
12) What are your thoughts on a school that would be designed specifically for LGBT students, much like the Harvey Milk School in New York City?
13) Would you advocate for mandatory anti-bullying policies/training in Chicago public schools?
14) Are any members of your current staff—either campaign or general office personnel—openly LGBT?
15) Please list any and all experience you have on LGBT-related issues.
16) What do you feel is the biggest problem facing the LGBT community today?
Talking with HBHC’s board-nominating chair Ron Nunziato

BY YASMIN NAIR

Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) recently announced the formation of a volunteer nominating committee to identify its new board members. As announced at the end of last year, all of the board members will be replaced at that time. In the controversial period when the agency allegedly mishandled its money and lost the MACS grant to Northwestern will be gone by June of this year (half have already stepped down), Kimi Israelson, who became a member of the board after the period of mismanagement, was recently made board chair.

The volunteer nominating committee is to be headed by Ron Nunziato, a certified healthcare compliance officer who also served on Howard Brown’s board from 1985 to 1992. His tenure included two years as president; he recently completed a term as the board’s strategic vision chair, and he was a member of the board after a decade of service. In addition to Nunziato, the committee members are: Lisa Kuhn, Ph.D., Howard Brown staff; Matt Neilson, current Howard Brown board member; Tom Klein, M.D., physician and partner in Klein, Slotten and French Medical Associates; Leslie Ramyk, executive director, Ravenswood Health Care Foundation; and Alicia Ozier, executive director, Taskforce Prevention Services.

Windy City Times spoke with Nunziato about the formation of the committee and what it was looking for in board members at the time Howard Brown board of directors meeting. [WCT: Are you the chair of this committee?]

RN: What kind of range are you looking for within this board?

Ron Nunziato: What we have done is talk to staff and to the current board chair and, obviously, [Executive Director] Jamal [Edwards] and, using the committee’s impressions of what the organization needs to move forward, we’ve identified some key strengths, kind of prioritizing key strengths or experience that we’re looking for. Specifically, we’re looking for people with senior levels of healthcare operations, ability to do strategic planning, strategic planning, people with senior level of corporation and business experience and people that understand finance. Those are the key strengths that we’re looking for, specific to an experience level.

And then, as to that, I think it’s important that board members understand their role as a governing body. Getting that piece with an understanding of the fiduciary responsibility that a board member has, I think it’s important, the process for the first set of priorities.

Now there are some other things we’re looking for. We want to make sure people have time to do it, and people have a passion to serve, that people have an understanding of non-profits and things like that.

WCT: Could you clarify what you mean by fiduciary responsibility, and these will be unpaid roles on the board?

RN: Yes. The fiduciary responsibility of a board member is to ensure the funds of the organization are used appropriately as they were intended. There are some rules and—many, many rules and—guidance is a better way—of board members that you have to accept and it’s a legal obligation; the board has a legal obligation regarding the management of the money and the property of the organization.

It’s important for people to understand that because I don’t know if people really understand the responsibility of a board. I think the hearts are in the right place when they say they want to volunteer on a board and do whatever they need to help the organization move forward. But with that comes a sense of responsibility and a responsibility that I have taken really seriously for the numbers of years that I was on Howard Brown’s board, previous boards and then the Vital Bridges board.

WCT: Has this process been in place before

RN: Well, these are community organizations and community funders that have a vested interest in ensuring the organization moves forward and I think they’re unbiased, serious leaders in their respective areas who might want to serve and, as well the board person should be represented and one board members should be represented so that we have a flavor of the organization.

And then we started talking about community leaders, people that were well respected, well-rounded, had some drive toward wanting Howard Brown to move forward and we recognized what lists of names of people that we thought would be beneficial to the process and then further looked at [if there were people on the health-care and funding side of the organization that also we want to be involved and ensure that the organization moves forward. And from that we came up with our list.

WCT: Has Leslie Ramyk had a previous association with HBHC?

RN: I believe that Ravenswood Health Center are funders of the organization.

WCT: With regard to the committee, it does seem that most of the people have had some experience with the Howard Brown. [Note: At first, Nunziato thought, though he was clear that we would need to confirm, that Alicia Ozier, organization might be a funder of HBHC, but that turned out not to be the case.]

RN: I think it would be irresponsible for the board to appoint a committee of someone that has no connection with the organization.

WCT: Why is that?

RN: Because you’re asking people to select people for the board and overwhelming responses people from some kind of experience that we would need to confirm, that Alicia Ozier, organization might be a funder of HBHC, but that turned out not to be the case.

WCT: What if the board would select someone, say, from another healthcare foundation or organization that is invested in healthcare, they could still be invested in the well-being of a healthcare organization without funders or community and only two of them, one staff person and one volunteer. We would want on the committee. We all agreed that a number of somewhere between six to eight would be manageable from a time perspective, in terms of getting people to meetings and things like that. And we started talking about the opportunities of who might want to serve, and we all believed that one staff person should be represented and one board members should be represented so that we have a flavor of the organization.

‘Chicago Takes Off’ at Park West March 5

Test Positive Aware Network’s (TPAN’s) annual event “Chicago Takes Off” will take place Saturday, March 5, at the Park West, 322 W. Armitage, with shows at 7:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

Murray Hill, dubbed as “the hardest working middle-aged man in show business,” will emcee the second consecutive year.

The theme for the 2011 Chicago Takes Off is modeled after the famed Lido cabaret in Paris. “Mr. Showbiz” will share his return appearance alongside famous entertainers L’Amour, French Kiss and Stage Door Johnnies. In addition to the 130 volunteer performers and dancers the show will also feature celebrities and musical acts by The Midnight Circus; vocals by Black Betty’s lead singer, Molly Callinan; modern dance by Fabrice Cameys of Jeffery Ballet Chicago; and a special appearance by NBC Chicago’s LeAnn Trottier and Alex Perez.

Tickets range from $50 to $300 and can be purchased online at http://www.chicagotakeoff.org. For more information, call 312-431-8400 or visit http://www.concernusa.org.

‘Women of Concern’ event Feb. 25

Concern WorldWide will hold its annual Women of Concern Brigid Awards luncheon on Feb. 25, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., at the Renaissance Chicago Downtown Hotel, 1 W. Wacker Drive.

The 2011 Women of Concern Brigid Awards luncheon honors three Chicagoan women (Justice Anne Burke, Patricia Blunt Koldyk and Terrie McDermott) for their achievements. A silent auction featuring national and local celebrities will be present, and door prizes, raffle tickets and donations will be raised.

Sykes, Eder at Human First gala

Center on Halsted’s Human First gala is scheduled for Saturday, May 14, at 7:30 p.m. at the Halsted Theatre for Music and Dance, 200 E. Randolph.

A comedian/actress Wanda Sykes and Broadway singer Linda Eder will perform. Tickets are $100-$500; see http://www.centersonhalsted.org or call 773-661-0794.

‘Living Legends’ gala Feb. 20

A Church 4 Me and the alumni of YFC (Frankie Foundation) will present the annual “Living Legends: Black History Gala” Sunday, Feb. 20 at 11 a.m. at the Center on Halsted Theatre, 3rd Floor, 3665 N. Halsted. (The event is free and open to the public.)

Among the honorees are Otis Mack, Sanford Gaylord, Nikki Patin, Anna Deshawn, Otis Richard and Nicole Scarver.

E-mail YouthPrideCenter@gmail.com.
Lambda marks unions bill

By Emmanuel Garcia

With the recent passage of civil-unions legislation in Illinois, those who attended Lambda Legal’s 10th annual “Freedom to Marry” reception on Feb. 8 at the National Museum of Mexican Art had a lot to celebrate.

The event, which took place for the fourth consecutive year at the museum, was buzzing with hundreds of supporters enjoying cocktails and vegetarian appetizers. “I think people feel a little bit closer to the goal. I certainly think a year ago at this time we did not think a year from now we would have had this legislative victory. It’s good to take another step up the ladder,” said Jim Bennett, Midwest regional director at Lambda Legal. In years past, the event, which is free and open to the general public, encouraged people to take action around the issue of marriage equality.

Bennett explained that this year Lambda Legal partnered with Equality Illinois to create the Illinois Civil Unions Tracker, an online registration for gay couples who marry in and outside of Illinois.

Jorge Valdivia, director of performing arts at the museum, enthusiastically introduced the facility’s president, who attended the event for the first time. This year the event included a singles mixer message board where attendees were given numbers to write messages to one another that were delivered by guys dressed as cupids.

GayCo members Bennett and Kelly Beeman performed an educational comedy skit about what the civil-unions law does and does not do. They were both followed by singer Stephen Leonard’s acoustic performance of his original song Out Loud.

The room, decorated with pink and red hearts, displayed a beautiful wedding cake that was later cut for dessert. Simon Aronoff, community educator at Lambda Legal, chose three couples from the crowd to go up on stage and toss bouquets. For the rest of the evening DJ Harry T had everybody shaking and moving the night away.

For more information on Lambda Legal or any of their partner organizations visit http://www.LambdaLegal.org.

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Equality Illinois (EI) held its annual gala on Feb. 12 at the Hilton Chicago and Towers. An estimated 1,600 people attended the event, titled “Justice for All,” marking the 20th anniversary of the organization.

The gala began with a silent auction, which showcased items ranging from small Chagall prints to gift certificates for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Several politicians, including mayoral candidates Rahm Emanuel and Gery Chico and all three openly gay candidates for 46th Ward alderman (James Cappleman, Don Novotny and Emily Stewart) were in attendance.

President Barack Obama sent a letter to Equality Illinois congratulating the organization on 20 years. Others in the “parade of politicians” at the gala included Gov. Pat Quinn, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, State Treasurer Dan Rutherford and State Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez were also there. Openly gay politicians Rep. Greg Harris, Rep. Deborah Mell, Ald. Tom Tunney and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Debra Shore also attended.

Mayoral candidate Carol Moseley Braun was conspicuously absent; according to a member of her team, she had refused to pay for a table, saying that candidates should not have to pay to interact with voters. Asked about the issue, Equality Illinois CEO Bernard Cherkasov said that as a 501(c)(3) organization, free seats would have counted as illegal gifts to a candidate. Mayoral candidate Miguel del Valle also skipped the event.

U.S. Rep. Congressman Mike Quigley told Windy City Times, “This year is special because last year we had not repealed ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ … and we had not passed civil unions in Illinois. It’s rare that we have that much progress in one year.”

Similar thoughts were echoed by speakers at the dinnertime program that followed soon after, with several noting that Illinois’ passage of the civil unions bill in December was a hallmark for both the state and the country. Christina Kahrl, who welcomed attendees, spoke of a “shared vision of America, with full equality under for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.”

Quinn said the event was “an occasion to celebrate a great civil-rights victory.” Art Johnston, a co-founder of Equality Illinois, listed the year’s progress, including the passage of the Illinois anti-bullying legislation, and in proposing a toast for “full equality and justice for all,” emphasized that while the community is “three giant steps towards a goal,” there was still work to be done. Joining him on stage for the toast were event chair Mark Cozzi and EI Board First Vice President Dallas Fridi.

Johnston was the surprised recipient of a lifetime achievement award that, according to Equality Illinois Board President Jeremy Gottschalk, had been kept secret for a year because Johnston would have balked at the idea. The award was presented by Mayor Richard Daley, who spoke glowingly of Johnston having been “a consistent presence” who helped build a relationship between the community and the city. Daley also addressed the community, thanking it for “making me a better mayor and a better citizen.” Johnston appeared on stage to accept the award with his long-time business and life partner, Jose “Pepe” Pena, who was also called upon by Daley.

Cherkasov spoke of the occasion as one of celebration and of the need for ensuring that the civil unions bill’s benefits would indeed be made available to those who needed them. Absent from the evening was Rick Garcia, whose presence nevertheless was felt by those who knew of the organization’s history and his recent controversial ouster. Garcia, a co-founder of Equality Illinois, was only mentioned once in passing—by his first name, by Quigley but by no one else. Attendance at the event seemed only minimally impacted by the controversy, and just one protester was outside the gala.

The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance received the Equality Illinois Freedom Award for its work on the state’s Safe Schools Act. Shannon Sullivan accepted the award on behalf of the group.

State Rep. Greg Harris concluded the evening with a brief speech, saying that the civil-unions bill was “one step in Illinois but there were many more steps” still to come. Noting that Illinois had turned the tide after Proposition 8 in California, he cautioned that states like Indiana were now pushing marriage amendments and that the right-wing, if not stopped, would “take away the rights we have fought so hard to achieve … and push us back into the shadows where they think we belong.”

“Taking away the rights we have fought so hard to achieve … and push us back into the shadows where they think we belong.”

Saying that it would take a collective effort across the city and state to push back against such efforts, he urged the audience to continue its support.
‘Womansist’ and saying who we are

Black History Month is that time of year when the achievements and courage of people of African descent are acknowledged and celebrated. However, for decades now, Black History Month has not once acknowledged or celebrated the contributions of its LGBTQ communities.

Our omission from the annals of Black history would lead you to believe that only the shades and movers in the history of people of African descent in the United States were and still are heterosexuals. And because of this heterosexist bias, the sheroes and heroines of LGBTQ people of African descent like Pat Parker, Audre Lorde, Esso Hemphill, Joseph Beam and Bayard Rustin, to name a few, are most known and lauded within a subculture of Blackness.

Along with the pantheon of noted Black heterosex- ual leaders who will laud this month, I want to personally celebrate one of my queer and crossover sheroes, renown writer and poet Alice Walker for giving Black women everywhere on the globe a new name we all can embrace—“womanist.”

While “womanist” is my favorite term to de- pict Black women, no word, however, captures the totality of the women of the African Diaspora in popular culture today than Pulitzer prize author Alice Walker. Alice Walker coined the term in her 1983 collection of prose writings “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens.” The term “womanist” derives from African- American women’s folk expression “You are a womanist.” The phrase illustrates little African- American girls’ precociousness as they attempt to comprehend and overcome the chal- lenges adult African-American women face in their strategies for survival in an oppressive so- ciet.

Walker defines a “womanist” as a Black femi- nist who continues the legacy of “outrageous, audacious, courageous, and willful, responsible, in her own way.” For womanist Christian ministers and seminar- ians, Walker’s definition serves as a springboard for their preaching style, liturgy and pastoral ministry. For womanist Christian academicians, the definition shapes and frames their analyti- cal and theoretical approaches. By using Afri- can-American women’s experiences of struggle and survival as their starting point of inquiry, these clergywomen and scholars examine the simultaneous forces of race, class and gender oppressions in African-American women’s lives. A “womanist” approach also celebrates African- American women’s religious history, and vali- dates their theological beliefs.

Although Walker’s definition includes lesbians as womanist, lesbian voices in the womanist Christian discourse as well as their contributions to African-American women’s religious histories have been suppressed. Proponents for the exclusion of lesbians in the discourse argue that sexual orientation is a distraction, that it diverts the tenets and survival of the Black Church and Black family. As a result, many Christian lesbi- ans in the womanist Christian discourse have opted not to engage in this discourse by not engaging themselves, by not disclosing their sexual identities or by opting not to engage in it at all.

The secular use of “womanist” by African- American women who have either left the Black Church because of its gender bias and homopho- bia, or who do not come from the Black Church religious experience. These women use the term to identify a culturally specific form of women- centered politics and theology. They claim that the term “feminist” is inappropriate because of its historical sexism and racism, and its orientation is a white movement that has often excluded and alienated African-American women. In addition, because the term, “feminist” has been used to identify women as lesbians regardless of their sexual orientation, “womanist” provides a way to affirm one’s identity without being associated with lesbianism. Because of this, however, some women have challenged the term “womanist” because of its homophobic implications.

Hmmm??

Inactive BEHIV

Dear Editor,

I, along with the staff of Alexian Brothers Bo- naventure House, was saddened to hear the news of BEHIV’s closing. For 21 years, BEHIV has served our community through its holistic ap- proach to those affected by HIV/ AIDS. Whether through housing and case management, art therapy or HIV testing, BEHIV has been a strong partner in providing expertise and care in the area of HIV/AIDS. We would like to express our gratitude to the staff of BEHIV for their diligence and perseverance in this critical, but often over- looked area for so many years.

The need for housing and services for men and women living with HIV/AIDS in Chicago is great. Current estimates indicate that roughly 15,000 people living with HIV in Chicago are in need of housing and we have only about 1,300 units of AIDS housing available. Housing is par- ticularly important because it provides stability and a safe, healthy environment which increases individuals’ ability to maintain necessary medi- cal care. Because of this, we must continue to provide supportive services and housing for those living with HIV/ AIDS in our communities.

As a provider of AIDS supportive housing and services, Bonaventure House’s vision is to trans- form the lives of people struggling with HIV/ AIDS within a compassionate, supportive com- munity by providing a home, comprehensive services, and spiritual care. We, and other organi- zations working in this field, cannot do this without the on-going support of members of our community. As this economy hits individuals hard, it also hurts the organizations struggling to provide vital services for their community. BEHIV has been the latest casualty of this im- mensely difficult time.

This is a reminder to us all of the importance of working together to sustain vital community services—especially in tough times. Cash con- tributions are great, but in-kind donations and volunteering one’s time and talents are equally needed. As Bonaventure House continues to work alongside other AIDS service providers like BEHIV, we hope that more and more of our neighbors, friends, partners, and clients will come together to support each other in these daunting days and into a brighter future.

Michelle Wetzel
CEO, Alexian Brothers Bonaventure House

A Adoption program

Dear Editor,

In the mid-1980s as a way to challenge racist, sexist, and white feminist religious politics and discourses that excluded African-American women’s participation and which ignored their experiences in church and society.

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Sex, racism and homophobia

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Playwright Thomas Bradshaw knows his dark comedy Mary, now in the midst of its world premiere run at the Goodman Theatre, is bound to prompt controversy. And that’s largely due to the fact that Bradshaw strategically pushes the buttons of racism and homophobia in unexpected patterns in Mary.

“The play is based upon a true story,” said Bradshaw during a telephone interview. Bradshaw has a gay opera singer friend who recounts his own horror about visiting his boyfriend’s family in Southern Maryland back in 1983, where the parents casually referred to their African-American maid as “nigger Mary.”

“Mary had been in the boyfriend’s family for hundreds of years,” Bradshaw said. “Mary’s family officially became domestic servants after slavery ended.”

This decidedly non-politically correct story proved to be the starting point for Bradshaw’s Mary, which follows the gay couple Jonathan and David and their dealings with David’s Southern family starting in 1983. But Bradshaw throws in a few dramatic and character-defining curves into the mix.

“When stories like this are told, it’s often too easy to say here are the good guys and here are the bad guys,” Bradshaw said. “People watching the play are going to assume that Mary is the character they should identify with or should be rooting for. I wanted to make the play more about the characters and their often fact-based dialogue. But Bradshaw clearly instructs in his play notes for directors not to do that.

“It’s very important that everything be played as if what he has written instead finding out what to think,” Bradshaw said. “What’s being shown on stage, some of it is funny, but these are realities of our world and it’s not a joke.”

In tackling such contentious issues of racism and homophobia in Mary, Bradshaw did find it somewhat amusing as he noticed an unspoken sense of relief from some administrative theatrical workers when they first realized that the play was written by an African American at readings for the play. But Bradshaw wants audiences to focus on what he has written instead finding out all the personal particulars of his life.

“I’m more interested in sparking a dialogue and letting the audience really have to think about what they just saw and sifting through the material themselves and coming to their own conclusions instead of telling them what to think,” Bradshaw said. “What’s being shown on stage, some of it is funny, but these are realities of our world and it’s not a joke.”

Mary continues until March 6 in the Owen Theatre space of the Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn. Tickets are $10-$62; call 312-443-3800 or visit http://www.goodmantheatre.org.

Legalized prostitution

Another world-premiere drama deliberately courts controversy in the Windy City is Aline Lathrop’s Bordello at Chicago Dramatists (see review in this issue).

Set at a state-sanctioned brothel in Nevada, Bordello offers playwright Lathrop the chance to question what drives women to prostitution sans the illegal criminal aspect if it were set elsewhere in the United States.

“It’s often identified as a victim-less crime,” said Kyra Morris a self-identified bisexual actress who plays the part of Godiva, a married ex-military woman who falls into this line of work in order to help pay bills in Bordello.

“But the play is also examining whether or not it does damage to a woman, or if they’re there because they’re damaged,” said Morris, who has learned quite a lot about legalized prostitution as due course from appearing in Bordello. “And what if they weren’t damaged, what would they be doing and what have they done and what would they be capable of?”

Morris pointed out that many of the women in Bordello lack education and do the work as an “easy” way to pay bills.

“The question is, ‘Am I harming myself, or am I in control?’” said Morris, who also identifies herself as “sex positive.” “A lot of the controversy surrounding this type of employment is the taboo of sex to begin with, and especially sex with multiple partners.”

Speaking of multiple partners, Lathrop in Bordello doesn’t shy away from the fact that many women sex workers often perform together to fulfill heterosexual male fantasies about lesbians.

“A lot of clients expect prostitutes to have sex with each other and if you’re one of the girls, a lot of times that’s a bump up in pay,” Morris said. “The issues of lesbianism or what constitutes a lesbian does bring up the subject of how does sex interfere with or construct my identity and does it have to do either of those things.”

Bordello continues until March 6 at Chicago Dramatists, 1105 W. Chicago. Tickets are $15-$32. Call 312-633-0630 or visit http://www.chicagodramatists.org. (Also, see the review on page 20.)
**THEATER REVIEW**

**Trouble In Mind**

Playwright: Alice Childress  
At: The Artistic Home, 3914 N. Clark  
Phone: 866-811-4111; $28  
Runs through: March 20

By Mary Shen Barnidge  

It was once said of statesman Ross Perot, after his embarrassing “you people” speech to the NAACP in 1992, that he wasn’t really racist, but “just didn’t know any better.” It was an accurate assessment, acknowledging as it did, the obstacles to self-defined autonomy presented by, not only that generation’s black opponents, but its often misguided supporters.

Al Manners is a Hollywood director returning to Broadway, his proposed project a “trunk” drama set in the uneasy years following the American civil war, when emancipated slaves attempting to exercise their newly-granted voting rights risked fearful retribution at the hands of hostile vigilantes. He also looks forward to experimenting with the new “method” acting techniques, where performers’ personal experiences inform the characters they portray. The younger, classroom-trained cast members take readily to sharing with their fellow artists, but the seasoned troopers fear putting their jobs in jeopardy by voicing opinions—until a veteran of stage and screen invokes her analytical freedom to challenge the boss, himself, thereby eliciting a confession elucidating even its confessors’ raised consciousness.

We in 2011 are quick to identify smug paternalism passing as humanitarian empathy, especially as professed in a play-within-the-play maskshy enough to make The Octoroon look like Dutchman. But while the fictional producer-director of Alice Childress’ critical commentary emerges as an unwitting proponent of the inequities he sincerely believes that he deplores, the Artistic Home’s decision to revive—during Black History Month, of course—the controversy of nearly a half-century past addresses unresolved prejudices still prevalent in our society today.

The faux fly-lines at the side of the Artistic Home’s storefront stage and the leading ladies’ Dor wardrobes locate us immediately in a dramatic universe where lunching on pizza and chianti was an adventure in exotic cuisine. And the well-chosen ensemble—none of whom appear old enough to recall the early days of the civil-rights movement—evoke the climate ofundoing that shaped according to their private preconceptions and desires. Playwright Aline Latifhp arrived at her topic from the standpoint of a sexual victim and, despite the psychological distance her extensive research was supposed to facilitate, the initial prejudice engendered by this one-time encounter cannot help but permeate her conclusions generally.

Our milieu purports to be one of the licensed brothels permitted under Nevada law, but restrictions on its off-site privileges (a legal measure designed to reduce fraternization with the local citizenry) quickly reconfigure the dramatic action into that of an old-fashioned Prison Play. We meet the personalities typical of this genre, embroiled in the usual petty intrigues: who put the razor blades in the porn-star’s soap? Who rescued the youngest sorority sister after she slit her wrists for love of her worthless man? Is one of the “girls” really pregnant, and how, with condoms a house regulation, did she get that way?

It’s not all the same old melodrama, however, or even the same new melodrama (did I mention the adrenaline-snorting Iraq war veteran or the Asian med-school dropout?). Amid the predictable women-in-bondage dynamics are many interesting facts about the Harriet’s Profession and those practicing it today under arguable the most favorable conditions offered by our American society: the prizes awarded by the boss for the highest monthly earnings, for example. Or the top-price diva whose profits provide homes for her siblings. And then there’s the no-nonsense achiever drawing up plans for an employee-owned sex-for-hire start-up (such as now exist in parts of California).

The study cast assembled by director Meghan Beals McCarthy lend their by-the-numbers dialogue a welcome freshness and humor to render the play a pleasant, if uninspiring, two hours. And no theater ever last money on the promise of nibble chicks dressed scanty undies. But so rigidly does Latifhp adhere to her mission of presenting the negative aspects of her play’s universe that what could have been an enlightening study of an alternative culture ultimately emerges as simplistic watch-and-propaganda. Is the author afraid that we will embark on a career in the skin trade at the slightest hint of encouragement?

*Critics’ Picks*

**As You Like It**, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, through March 6. Director Gary Grif-fin’s concept is no concept: He guides its comedy and romance with an invisible but steady hand, thereby allowing the play to sing for itself, clear to all comprehensions. JA

**The Beauty Queen of Leenane**, Shattered Globe Theatre at Athenaeum Theatre, through Feb. 27. A revitalized Shattered Globe Theatre picks up the pieces of this almost-defunct company to produce a strong and dramatically satisfying staging of Martin McDonagh’s bleak and violent Irish drama. SCM

**Carmilla**, WildClaw Theatre at the Storefront, through Feb. 20. Forget Bram Stoker and his masculine posturing—the vampire legend as we know it began with its women, and WildClaw delves its romanticist roots with this erotic no-giggies prototype starring cult diva-in-training Michelle Pet-tror and Brittany Burch. MSB

**Eclipsed**, Northlight Theatre, through Feb. 20. Danai Gurira’s drama set amid the recent Liberian Civil War is a disturbing, yet compelling, examination of the choices that women have to make in order to survive amid a violent-cruel conflict. SCM

—By Ababanel, Barnidge and Morgan

**Bordello**. Photo by Jeff Pines

**THEATER REVIEW**

**Bordello**

Playwright: Aline Latifhp  
At: Chicago Dramatists, 1105 W. Chicago  
Phone: 312-633-0630; $32  
Runs through: March 6

By Mary Shen Barnidge

For most people, the world of prostitution is a fantasy—glamorous, lurid, romantic or titillating—but their own individual fantasy, nevertheless, to shape according to their private preconceptions and desires. Playwright Aline Latifhp arrived at her topic from the standpoint of a sexual victim and, despite the psychological distance her extensive research was supposed to facilitate, the initial prejudice engendered by this one-time encounter cannot help but permeate her conclusions generally.

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*Critics’ Picks*

**The Big Meal**

Playwright: Dan LeFranc  
At: American Theater Company, 1909 W. Byron  
Phone: 773-409-4125; $35-$50  
Runs through: March 6

By Scott C. Morgan

American Theater Company definitely has a winner on its hands with Dan LeFranc’s world premiere play The Big Meal. Not only is this fast-paced multi-generational drama a thought-provoking and emotionally moving experience about the fleeting nature of life, it has already secured a New York berth off-Broadway later this year as part of Playwrights Horizons’ upcoming season.

Initially The Big Meal plays like a short-attention-span romantic comedy with fragmentary dialogue sounding like it was keyed in on a BlackBerry. We get to see drama’s main couple of Sam and Nicole (a.k.a. Nikki) in their 20s speed through their first few months of their relationship in very amusing scenes often lasting less than a minute (a great credit to the actors Andrew Goetten and Lindsay Leopold).

But then LeFranc expands the parameters and scope of the play by bringing in other family members who come into and then exit Sam and Nicole’s lives. And it’s all speedily played out in scenic changes set in a series of changing suburban restaurants.

LeFranc also hits on a clever (albeit potentially confusing) device to show the play’s characters aging through life by having other age-appropriate actors assume the roles previously played by others. For example, when Sam and Nicole hit their 40s, actors Philip Earl Johnson and Lia Mortensen take over from Goetten and Leopold. And when Sam and Nicole hit their 60s, actors Will Zahrn and Peggy Roeder take on the characters after having previously played Sam’s difficult parents Robert and Alice.

Director Dextar Bullard confidently has his finger on the pulse of LeFranc’s play, skillfully putting his acting company and design team through their paces to maximum effect. Despite the brevity of the actors’ dialogue, Bullard coaxes out great emotional performances from his company that often fill in for LeFranc’s deliberately chosen blanks. Bullard has also found two great child actors with Noah Schwartz and Emily Leahy, who both sound spontaneous and annoyingly accurate as the play’s various whiny and pushy kids.

Although the outfits are everyday wear, costume designer Tiff Bullard finds ways to accent certain characters so you can follow their progression through a variety of performers. For instance, a pink scarf worn by Sam and Nicole’s daughter Maddie helps identify the character as she ages through three different actresses (the scarf’s color also has symbolic resonance when Maddie suffers an untimely death).

LeFranc’s The Big Meal certainly hits all the right dramatic buttons, and will no doubt prompt a plethora of chuckles for anyone who has endured an extended family dinner outing. But more importantly, LeFranc has crafted a modern-day spin on Thornton Wilder’s 1938 drama Our Town by poignantly showing how quickly life can pass people by.
Theater Review

Starship

Playwright: Matt Lang, Nick Lang, Brian Holden, Joseph Walker, Darren Criss

At: StarKid Productions at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre, 3656 N. Halsted

Tickets: SOLD OUT!

Runs through: Feb. 23

By JONATHAN AABARBANEL

At its best moments, Starship is reminiscent of the legendary Warp!, the world's first science-fiction epic in serial form, a seminal hit (along with Grease) of Chicago's young, early 1970s off-Loop theater movement. At those moments Starship displays inspired silliness, clever staging on a shoestring and bold parody of the heroic space-opera formula.

Alas, those moments are few and far apart in a repetitive extravaganza that runs a stupefying three-and-a-half hours (with intermission).

C'mon, StarKid Productions, get real and cut, cut and cut some more! There's potential here for a wonderful 100-minute or two-hour show if they do the hard work.

Now, the reviews won't matter one iota of space dust because StarKid Productions is an Internet phenomenon that's already drawn more than 50 million YouTube hits for previous theatrical endeavors. Starship is completely sold-out for its brief two-week run, and its audience is solidly teen-aged, wildly enthusiastic and totally lacking in critical faculties. They squeal, cheer, sigh and applaud every moment of this long slog, which will be recorded in HD video and uploaded to YouTube one 10-minute segment at a time.

But one day StarKid Productions (now headquartered in Chicago after being created a scant two years ago by University of Michigan students) may want to fry bigger fish and attempt more mature work, and to do that successfully they'll need discipline Starship doesn't display.

There's plenty of talent onstage and some sharp writing, but the effort is inconsistent, sometimes childish and loooooooong.

Starship borrows freely from Alien, Avatar, Star Trek and Avenue Q in a story about human Starship Rangers on a planet inhabited by giant, sentient insects. One insect, actually called Bug, has his brain transported into a human body and proceeds to fall in love, experience human emotions (as does a human android named Mega-Girl), and intervene in affairs to the final betterment of both humanity and bugdom. A half-dozen or eight songs are interspersed, but not nearly enough to make it a real musical, and the music itself is ordinary (albeit pleasant) soft rock.

All the bugs are puppets, and the puppet work is worthy and notable. However, video and special effects are tame and too often described rather than seen. Several performers are gifted in the show's unsuitable, oversized style (especially Meredith Stephens's Mega-Girl and Dylan Saunders in two juicy roles), while others are weak as actors and singers.

Starship has humor, high spirits and an enviable niche audience but it's inconsistent, far too long, musically uninspired and lacking technical pizzazz. The StarKid kids needs to be ruthless with themselves if they want to take the Next Big Leap, and why bother coming to Chicago if they don't?

Spotlight

Why revive choreographer John Cranko's previously seen ballet version of The Taming of the Shrew when you can present the Chicago premiere of Ronald Hynd 1975 ballet adaptation of Franz Lehar's beloved operetta The Merry Widow? That's the decision Joffrey Ballet artistic director Ashley C. Wheater made last year, and fans of big story ballets are the winners in the repertory exchange.

The Merry Widow plays 7:30 p.m. Feb. 16-24 and Fridays and Saturdays with 2 p.m. matinees on Saturdays and Sundays through Feb. 27. Tickets are $24-$145; call 800-982-2787 or visit http://www.joffrey.org. Photo of Count Danilo (Miguel Angel Blanco) and wealthy widow Hannah Glawari (Victoria Jani) by Hebert Migdoll.
“Keep young and beautiful. It’s your duty to be beautiful,” Annie Lennox trilled in her delightful remake of the flapper-era standard “Keep Young and Beautiful” on her first solo album. And that tongue-in-cheek maxim can certainly be lobbed at the comedy young actors prominently displayed in two disparate yet equally pleasurable youth obsessed movies opening this week. (Both also offer plenty of overt and covert voyeuristic pleasures for queer audiences.)

Kaboom is the first of these. It marks the return to cinemas for writer-director Gregg Araki after a three-year hiatus. For Araki, who broke through as one of the leading lights of the Araki after a three-year hiatus. For Araki, who return to cinemas for out writer-director Gregg Araki after a three-year hiatus. For Araki, who

Kaboom is the first of these. It marks the return to cinemas for writer-director Gregg Araki after a three-year hiatus. For Araki, who broke through as one of the leading lights of the New Queer Cinema movement 20 years ago, the youth-centric Kaboom is both a return to roots and to form. Using his own college experiences as a film major, Araki crafts a sex comedy that spins off into deeper and deeper territory that’s delightfully dark, playful and, naturally, queer as hell.

Smith—Araki’s 18-year-old version of his younger self, with his permanent five o’clock shadow and deathly pallor—is a film studies major who muses, “Is kind of like devoting your life to an animal that’s on the verge of extinction” at a fictional southern California college. But Smith never picks up a camera or goes to class; instead, he’s focused on getting laid as often as possible. In particular, he’s fixated on his new roommate, Thor (Chris Zylka), a quintessential blonde surfer dude who struts around naked, boffs a series of female bed partners and tries out a bit of self-fellatio in front of Smith without embarrassment (in one of the film’s most hilarious scenes), “I’m undeclared,” Smith answers an unfazed Thor to his query about whether he’s gay or not.

But then nothing sexually fazes any of the pretty young things inhabiting Smith’s free-wheeling world—certainly not Stella (Haley Bennett), Smith’s best gal pal who’s an acid-tongued dyke and a junior-league Eve Arden who adroitly tasses one zinger after another. The gorgeous Lorelei (Rosane Mesquida), unfortunately, doesn’t get Stella’s dry humor and doesn’t take the hint when Stella wants to break up (something to do with Lorelei’s uncanny witchcraft abilities and stalker tendencies).

Smith himself picks up a male hottie on the beach, jumps into a turst with the Aussie-accented London (Juno Temple) and finds plenty of time to masturbate in between. London, a lively little number, is as avid sexually as her new lover and her birthday present for Smith is the stuff of wet dreams. Alas, though the sex lives of these beauties are in spectacular overdrive as they drift through school, trouble’s afoot. Did Smith, while tripping on drug-laced sugar cookies, really witness the murder of a pretty red-haired ally by a group of men wearing animal masks, or did he just get a bad dose? Are his nightmares about whether he’s gay or not.

As the sexual romping proceeds, Araki interweaves an array of mystery and paranoid-thriller elements, and the result—part screwball comedy, part David Lynch and a whole lotta sexy and stalker tendencies)—the film is an illuminating, fi

Teen Flick Exhibit B is a sci-fi blockbuster (produced by Michael Bay) called I Am Number Four. These days it’s not enough for teen heart-throbs to be beautiful and angst-ridden for movie audiences. Now the gloomy ones in question must have fantastical powers as compensation for their endless ennui. So they’re secret superheroes, vampires, werewolves, shape-shifters and mythical gods/goddesses or, in the case of John Smith (played by mega blond hottie Alex Pettyfer), aliens.

John is a conflicted teenage orphan from another world, running from a passel of leather-clad, tattooed testosterone aliens with sawed-off teeth and (shark snouts) who want to kill him. “We are the last of our kind,” he’s told by his protector, pseudo-uncle Henri (Timothy Olyphant), who has moved them from place to place for years to avoid detection (kinda like Cher constantly moving Winona Ryder and Christina Ricci in Mermaids). Though John revels in regular teen experiences like attending high school, making friends with the science nerd and dating pretty, free-spirited Sarah (Glee’s Dianna Agron), those murderous thugs are hot on his trail and time is running out. For now, destiny will trump true love—at least for this and, if the box office proves durable, a batch of sequels.

Familiar, none-too-taxing and featuring a likeable, fetching cast expertly hitting their marks, director D.J. Caruso’s Disturbia, Eagle Eye) makes the wait for those inevitable sequels something rather nice to anticipate.

Film notes:
—You only have two more days to catch The Woodmans. C. Scott Willis’ fascinating, elliptical documentary portrait of the art-driven family of the late Francesca Woodman, whose stunningly evocative black-and-white self-portraits (mostly nudes), influenced by Diane Arbus and Deborah Turbeville, revealed an extraordinary talent but whose suicide at 22 in 1981 came decades before she received recognition from the art world. Questions surrounding the artistic agenda laid down by Francesca’s surviving mother Betty, father George and son Chuck play at the edges of the movie—along with the cautiously discussed topic of Francesca’s enormous talent trumping all the other family members’. The result seems both a tribute to the artist’s way of life and an unspoken cautionary tale. It’s at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, through Thursday, Feb. 17. See http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org.

—The late monologist Spalding Gray, an artist of the spoken word is profiled in Steven Soderbergh’s And Everything Is Going Fine. Constructed from Gray’s own monologue films and videotaped performances (which include a vivid and humorous homosexual encounter Gray had as an adult) the film is an illuminating, final monologue performed by a man seemingly haunted all his life by chronic anxiety and depression. Although no mention of Gray’s own probable suicide in 2004 is mentioned, the loss of this bitingly funny, insightful storyteller is palpable throughout. It opens Friday, Feb. 18, at the Siskel.

Check out my archived reviews at http://www.windycitymediagroup.com or http://www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter website.
Gregg Araki on queer cinema and sexual identity

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Out writer-director Gregg Araki—avatar of the New Queer Cinema movement of the early ’90s—is back in theaters (and On Demand) this week with Kaboom, his first film since 2007’s stoner comedy Smiley Face.

Araki’s latest—the tale of Smith, a disaffected, ambisexual college student (Thomas Dekker) delving into mysterious occurrences on campus (in between copious bouts of sex with various partners male and female)—is as audacious, funny and darkly energetic as the movies that brought him initial fame as an outlaw indie filmmaker. As Kaboom reveals, at 51, Araki hasn’t settled down creatively one whit (although his technique has most assuredly matured) and this queer-hipster artist remains a lively, outspoken prophet for Our People.

Windy City Times: Kaboom is like the return of New Queer Cinema 20 years on, right?

Gregg Araki: [Laughs] Oh, is that what it is?

WCT: Well, you yourself have said this harkens back to The Living End, Doom Generation, your college experience, etc. And once again you’re leading the charge here—the idea of sexual labels being much more fluid has certainly changed in 20 years which you acknowledge right off the bat when Smith says that his sexual preference is “undeclared.” You have said there should be no labels, that there’s just “attraction and desire.” Can you talk about that?

GA: It’s a theme that I’ve been very interested in. Some of my earlier movies, particularly Doom Generation and Nowhere, were rooted in this idea—that sexuality is a gray area and, for a lot of people, it’s about experience and not so much about labels and categories. I don’t want to discount the importance of identity politics. The more sophisticated answer that I’ve sort of learned to give [laughs] on this particular press tour is that when I find that I’m talking about sexuality it depends on who you’re talking to, you know?

WCT: Yes.

GA: I mean if you’re talking to a Sarah Palin Republican, obviously it’s important to come out and say, “I’m gay” and be confrontational about it, but I feel if you’re talking to a sophisticated audience that is “on our side” [laughs] at that point you’re able to open up questions of what is gay, what is straight and what is the need for naming what people experience.

I think there’s obviously a huge importance to coming out and, particularly for young gay people, to have positive models and gay pride and a sense of community and all of that. But at the same time, it is very much like the character London talks about in the movie: “It’s not the black and white”—particularly, for this younger generation. A lot of the younger people that I know—those that are the same age as those of the cast in the movie (early 20s)—that’s very much their experience. Their sexuality is just a really important part of growing up and those experiences whether they be gay, straight or otherwise or somewhere in the middle are all a very significant step in their evolution. It’s those steps that make you the person that you’re going to be. That’s a major theme of the movie in a way for me: These sexual experiences are not there to be judged.

WCT: Another issue here is labeling and the need for people to do that. Liberal or conservative, it’s so ingrained—Are you gay? Are you straight? And I get that. I’m always wanting to tout “out” filmmakers like yourself and proudly proclaim movies like Kaboom as great examples of “queer cinema.” Do you have a problem with that?

GA: I don’t have a problem with it—depending on who I’m talking to. I do consider myself predominantly gay although I’ve had major relationships in my life with women and again, it depends on who I’m talking to. If it’s a case where it’s important to be black and white about it, I can be black and white about it. But if I’m talking to someone who is more open minded I think there’s room to raise questions. I do think its human experience and there’s room for the mystery and the exception.

WCT: What about the specific label “queer movie”?

GA: We won the first Queer Palm award at the Cannes Film Festival and, for me, that was a huge honor. It was an incredible, surreal experience to be in Cannes in the first place and the Queer Palm was the cherry on top of the sundae for me. I think it’s both. I made the film for the outsider kids that are growing up out there in some sort of little hostile small town.

WCT: There’s a lot of ’em.

GA: There are. And one of the things that inspired me to make this after the last few movies was that I run into these younger people that are fans of my earlier movies—in particular Nowhere—and they come up to me at festivals and tell me how important the movie was to them and how it got them through a really tough time. Because they grew up in Kentucky or North Dakota or some other God-forsaken place and it was my movie that helped them. And as a filmmaker, that’s sort of the highest compliment anyone could ever pay you. So I wanted to make Kaboom for the next generation, though I’m certainly not artistically in the same place and I certainly see life in a very different way now. The film is obviously not going to be Nowhere II but it incorporates a lot of those themes.

Turn to page 35
Anne Rice on vampires, Tab and her gay son
BY JERRY NUNN

Anne Rice is one of the most widely read authors of our time. Ms. Rice has sold almost 100 million copies of her books and many have been made into feature films. It was high time to talk angels and devils with this writer "Of Love and Evil."

Windy City Times: Hello, Anne. How are you?

Anne Rice: Great. I just tore into the artificial sweetener for the coffee here. I drink cof-
fee all afternoon trying to stay awake. I don’t know what is the matter with me lately. I keep wanting to sleep and dream, productive, but not.

WCT: You were the J. Lo of your time [re diva demands]?

AR: “Anne has to have her Tab!” I heard an old lady in an airport once said, “Do you know Anne Rice takes a chest of Tab everywhere she goes?” and the other lady said, “If I was Anne Rice then I would do that too, I guess!”

WCT: Hilarious. I drove down to Tennessee once to make one of your signings for a vampire book because the line was so long in Chi-
cago.

AR: There was a point when our signings were really huge. I think now with social media that is not the case anymore. Back then, people really wanted to see each other at the signings. They would turn out in droves.

WCT: You were so sweet and talked to peo-
ple for a while.

AR: We did our best. Sometimes I felt like we were rushing people through. We did what we could. I did a couple of eight-hour signings.

WCT: Wow. It means a lot to fans.

AR: I really get a lot out of it, too. I will be do-
ing a signing in Arizona in a couple of weeks.

WCT: Do you miss New Orleans?

AR: Oh, horribly. I will always miss New Or-
leans. But California is where I have to be now. I don’t think I will ever be able to go back and live in New Orleans. I had a wonderful time there.

WCT: Do you still have a big Halloween party there?

AR: The Vampire Lestat Fan Club does it. Only one year did I actually take it over, and it was called The Mennusch Ball—where, at the height, of it we had 8,000 people there that year. They always host it and they are still doing [it]. It is usually 300 or 400 people that attend every year. People come from all over the world to show off the costumes and be part of the event.

WCT: I read your latest book, Of Love and Evil. I had missed your style of writing since the last one I read.

AR: Well, that’s good. I am glad to hear it. I really loved writing about this character Toby. I like the idea that you can be picked up out of the world by angels and moved around in time to help with answering prayers.

WCT: It’s the second book in a series of an-
gel books.

AR: Right. I am going to do a third but I am taking off to do another book. I am writing now about the ancient legends of Atlantis. It is about five immortals who come to the planet. I am having a great deal of fun with this one. It is getting bigger and bigger. I will go back to Toby O’Dare and the angels when I am finished with this. My brain is just exploding. If I die anytime soon it will be at this table reading and writ-
ing.

WCT: How much do you write a day?

AR: I don’t really write finished pages every day. When I sit down to do the novel then I re-
ally don’t stop, hardly at all. I can usually get 15 to 30 pages done a day, maybe more depending on where it’s really going. Right now it’s more scribbling, dashing to the computer and making notes. I have chapters done already but I had to stop and let this thing explode.

WCT: Do you wake up at night and write sometimes?

AR: I don’t get out of bed and write but I do wake up when thinking about the novel and get almost shattering revelations that will come on the edge of sleep.

WCT: What advice do you have for writers?

AR: First of all, just write. Don’t let anything stop you from getting the pages down. Writers are what they write. There is not a whole lot else to it. I think also to have courage. It is almost the same as having talent. You have to stand by that vision. You have to not cave to the people that criticize it or don’t get it. You have to go on with it no matter how weird it seems, the more eccentric the better. You just need to keep going.

WCT: Would you ever write a biography?

AR: I did write a memoir called Out of Dark-
ness. It is all about my Catholic childhood and going the church. It wasn’t a full scale autobi-
ography but there was a lot in there that was autobiographical. I would go back and write something but it would be big like a phone book so maybe more essays like that about various as-
pects of my experiences. I feel like I have some experiences to share so I do want to do that.

WCT: Do you feel about the movies made from your books?

AR: I think when he was growing up that he was going to be an actor. He was in plays when he was in preschool. He blossomed in high school with musicals and sometimes had the starring roles. I was very surprised when he became a novelist but very happy. We are very close. It is easy to love a child that makes you as proud as Christopher makes me.

WCT: I love that.

AR: We have a lot in common. We have done some events together. We just did one for a ben-
efit at the West Hollywood Library. We talked about writing from the stage and took questions from the audience.

WCT: I noticed on Facebook that you have 170,000 friends now.

AR: I think we hit it today. We use that page in a unique way. We have serious discussions on there, I post links there and other people do too. We talk about politics, censorship, gay rights and healthcare. We talk about it all. It is sort of like having a radio station.

WCT: You are so approachable as a writer.

AR: I don’t understand the attitude of some artists and writers that don’t think people get what they do or don’t like their own audience. I really think of my readers as part of my world. I have always loved meeting them and getting feedback. It is very organic for me.

To purchase Of Love and Evil along with other classic works by Anne Rice, visit http:// www.annerice.com. For information on the Halloween party, visit http://vampirelestat- fancub.com.

Anne Rice. Photo by Matthias Scheer

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A fully integrated vision by Director Darko Tresnjak of a modern-day Venice as chilly, sleek and calculating as any Wall Street house.

–THE NEW YORK TIMES

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“It’s the second book in a series of an-
gel books.”
BOOK REVIEW

Axis Sally: The American Voice of Nazi Germany
by Richard Lucas
$29.95; Casemate Publishers; 320 pages
REVIEW BY TRACY BAUM

It is not often that a book can offend me so quickly that I almost don’t go further than the preface. But the subject matter of Axis Sally: The American Voice of Nazi Germany interested me enough to move beyond the author’s own homophobia, however unintentional. With a book about an anti-Semite convicted of treason, the words speak for themselves—additional bias is gratuitous.

Axis Sally—a tale of one of the most notorious voices of Nazi Germany’s World War II-era propaganda radio programming—is, of course, a controversial subject. Mildred Gillars (1900-1988) was one of the primary American voices on Nazi radio, speaking anti-American comments aimed at the American troops and U.S. citizens back home. Gillars was anti-Semitic and an opportunist, in addition to being easily dominated by what she believed was love from certain men. But author Richard Lucas almost lost me in the first paragraph of his preface: “Insinuating that Franklin Roosevelt was a homosexual surrounded by ‘Jewish boyfriends,’ her words were jarring and repulsive.” OK, Mr. Lucas, what is “repulsive” about homosexuality or Jewish boyfriends? I don’t even care whether Roosevelt was gay; that is not the point. Lucas could have just let Gillars’ actual anti-gay and anti-Semitic comments stand, without telling us such allegations were “jarring and repulsive.” There was much more that was actually repulsive in what Gillars said, so using the unverified existence of homosexual boyfriends as his example really is offensive. (Later in the book we learn of a more direct link between Roosevelt and his ‘kike’ boyfriends.)

Despite the subtle homophobia in the book—which I don’t even care whether Roosevelt was gay, after all—I did enjoy learning about this mostly forgotten chapter of broadcast history. While other U.S. citizens avoided trial, and while some known Nazis were allowed to come to America and freely thrive in new careers, Gillars was convicted of one of the more benign charges against her (acting in a radio play she didn’t even write), and was sentenced to 20-30 years in prison. She served 12 years and was paroled in 1961. The last part of her life was mostly avoided the photographers and reporters seeking her out. Despite the subtle homophobia in the book (in one place the author leaves unchallenged a comment by someone who thought a prison questionnaire asking “Are you a lesbian?” and other personal questions “despicable”), I did enjoy learning about this mostly forgotten chapter in broadcast history. It is a great companion to studies about the more well-known Tokyo Rose (Iva Toguri). My one quibble is that the book is at times a bit repetitive.

Lucas also provides photos and transcripts of some of Gillars’ radio programs. Her words are what is truly “repulsive,” and Lucas gives us mostly unsympathetic context to understand just how and why this woman so betrayed her fellow Americans.

axis Sally (Mildred Gillars) after her arrest in 1946.
Nora Dunn on judging, Demi and Jonathan Winters

BY JERRY NUNN

Nora Dunn first cracked up audiences on the show Saturday Night Live with her impersonations from Liza Minnelli to Ann Landers. She has continued a long career on television with recent roles on Private Practice and Entourage. She bounces back and forth with the cinema as well with Pineapple Express and It’s Complicated. By phone we talked Nunn on Dunn.

Windy City Times: Hello, Nora. I haven’t talked to you in a while. Where are calling me from?

Nora Dunn: I am in L.A. Let me take my jacket off.

WCT: Must be nice. I am freezing here in your hometown of Chicago.

ND: I have to say that I loved the blizzard. I don’t like being shut in for long but I did like it.

WCT: That makes one of us. What are you doing in Los Angeles?

ND: I am out here to audition for TV stuff and working! It is about right to the red carpet!

WCT: This new movie you are in called Certifiably Jonathan sounds interesting. How did you get involved with it?

ND: It turned out to be a great thing. I made it years ago back in 2007. I had a fax from my manager that two guys are making a movie with Jonathan Winters and they wanted other comedians involved in it. He is so funny. He did all that great improv and characters. I just thought he was so funny when I was little. There are a lot of comedians doing cameos but Jonathan will be the first to tell you that he works alone!

WCT: [Laughs] He is very funny.

ND: He is not the straight man. The scene of comedians doing cameos but Jonathan will be the first to tell you that he works alone!

WCT: [Laughs] He is very funny.

ND: He is not the straight man. The scene that I like of me in the movie is when I am just doing in a way. He is the originator of true improvisation. He can go from one thing to the next. You can give him a ketchup bottle. He called me one night and said he was in a refrigerator, that his wife had locked him in and was in there with all the condiments. He did a whole routine about that.

WCT: That’s wacky.

ND: They have some wonderful footage of him on the Jack Paar show where they just gave him a stick and he went with it. He is silly and crazy. That is how I describe him.

WCT: I always think of him as the son of Mork & Mindy.

ND: I think Robin Williams is Jonathan Winters on fast forward.

WCT: Well put. You have a few movies coming out this year.

ND: I did a fun movie with Demi Moore and Miley Cyrus called LOL. It is a remake of a French movie and the director rewrote the whole movie for America. I loved the set design. It had a European look to it. There were a lot of good shoots in the movie with really good actors. We shoots it up in Detroit.

WCT: I thought they shot some of it here in Chicago.

ND: They came down in to do some of it Illinois. I think it is set in the North Shore, in a Wilmette kind of area.

WCT: I know this because Demi went out to the gay bar Hydrate after the shooting that night.

ND: Really? How cool! She is a great girl. I like her.

WCT: How does she stay looking so young? Must be that young boyfriend...

ND: She is just a youthful person. She looks great. She has that gravely sexy voice. She has a lot of spirit that one. I didn’t get to work with her. We just talked. My scenes were with children.

WCT: You also did a movie called Frankie goes Boom.

ND: I just heard today that it has a really good buzz already. I know this movie is going to be funny. It’s Chris O’Dowd and Charlie Hunnam; Chris Noth is in it also. It’s wild. I had to just let go. It is about an inappropriate dysfunctional family.

WCT: I heard Ron Perlman is playing a transsexual in it and had to shave off all of his body hair!

ND: [Laughs] Yeah.

WCT: That I gotta see! Are you still doing a lot of television shows?

ND: I did the show Psych, which I liked a lot. I was the manager of an amusement park. I also played a lawyer on The Defenders. The pinnacle of my career is that I played a judge, finally, on Harry’s Law. My agent said, “It’s a good role,” Then I know I am in trouble! It was a thankless role.

WCT: You got to channel your inner Judge Judy?

ND: Well, I wish. I played a judge once in a movie with Pierce Brosnan. It was really fun and a real character. When you play them on TV you just play lines like “I will hear that.” And “No, you are out of order.” It is not a real person. If you have a lot of talent then you can make it that. I have a lot of adversity to committing to a main character in a series. If something was great I would crave it and want it. I haven’t seen too many things that I love since Glee.

WCT: I was thinking that show would be great for you.

ND: I would like a crack at it sometime. It will be on for a while. My claim to fame is I am still working!

Certifiably Jonathan plays for a short engagement at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, from Feb. 18 through Feb. 24. Tickets may be purchased at http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org or by calling Ticketmaster at 800-882-2787.

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Center’s Oscar party Feb. 27
On Sunday, Feb. 27, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, will host its annual “On The Red Carpet” Oscar Party. Guests will enjoy sponsored cocktails and buffet while the Academy Awards are broadcast live on the big screen in the Hoover-Leppen Theatre. For those who prefer to mingle, video monitors will be stationed throughout the third floor—even on the roof garden—which will be encased in a heated tent exclusively for the night’s event. Guests may bid on vacations, spa packages and more in our silent auction throughout the evening.

For the first time ever, the center is conducting an Oscar prediction competition. For $10, guests can submit a ballot with their predictions before the telecast begins, and results will be tabulated throughout the night. The person with the most correct predictions will be announced at the conclusion of the ceremony, and will split the winnings with the center.

Doors open for the red carpet pre-show at 6 p.m., and the telecast begins at 7 p.m. Director-level tickets ($75) include admission to the party, and producer tickets ($25) include reserved seating in the theater with table service. See http://www.centeronhalsted.org

Burroughs special Feb. 22 on PBS
Featuring never-before-seen archival footage of the legendary beat author William Burroughs, as well as exclusive interviews with colleagues and confidants including John Waters, Patti Smith, Iggy Pop, Gus Van Sant, and Laurie Anderson, William S. Burroughs: A Man Within looks at the man whose works at once savaged and confirmed cultural mores, spawned countercultural movements, and reconfigured 20th-century culture.

Narrated by Peter Weller, with a soundtrack by Patti Smith and Sonic Youth, Yony Leyser’s William S. Burroughs: A Man Within will premiere on the PBS series Independent Lens, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, Feb. 22. (Check local listings.)

Cinema Q film series in Chicago
The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, the Queer Film Society, the Center on Halsted and Chicago Filmmakers are presenting Cinema Q, a new film series celebrating outstanding LGBT movies made in Chicago.

The free screenings will take place on four Wednesdays—March 16, 23, 30 and April 6—in the Chicago Cultural Center’ s Claudia Cassidy Theater, 78 E. Washington, at 6:30 p.m. All screenings will feature a discussion and Q&A following the film. This series contains films with mature subject matter. Viewer discretion is advised.

Films include Queerborn & Perversion: An Early History of Lesbian & Gay Chicago (March 16); Go Fish and outfits from Fish Out of Water (March 23); JoJo Baby and two music videos of The Joans by Peter Neville (March 30); and Were the World Mine (April 6). For more info, visit http://www.Chicagoculturalcenter.org or call 312-744-6630.

Feb. 16, 2011 WINDY CITY TIMES

NUNN ON ONE: MOVIES

ND: They came down in to do some of it Illinois. I think it is set in the North Shore, in a Wilmette kind of area.

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Tim Cain: Living on the ‘Fringe’

By JERRY NUNN

Tim Cain has been bringing LGBT music to the masses since 1991. He is hosting a monthly music festival called ABSOLUTE Fringe at the Elbo Room where he performs with a variety of acts including his group Boys’ Entrance.

Windy City Times: Hi, Tim. It was great attending your first Fringe night.

TC: It was a good turnout. We had over 50 people there so it was a nice start for us.

WCT: The next one is going to be mainly girl groups.

TC: Mostly. There will be some men present because in the group Plain Ole Delicious, her backup band is male. The only act in the evening that is male is Scott Free. He will be performing in the acoustic lounge so similar to when we see him play a Homolatte gig.

WCT: The softer side of Scott...

TC: What is totally blowing my mind is that I got Tret Fure to play. She is a huge performer in women’s music. She started as a major label artist and toured with Yes at one point. Scott Free plays first, then Tret and they will be third. I liked how it went last time with the audience moving up and down between the floors at the Elbo Room.

WCT: It was good mix in the crowd as well. There were gay, lesbian, transgender and straight people all there that night.

TC: I love it!

WCT: How did this gay Lolalapalooza get started?

TC: I worked on my band, Boys’ Entrance, at the Elbo Room and called the venue. When I met with them I asked if they would consider doing a whole night of gay music here. The manager said, “Yes, I think I booked the L’s, the G’s and the T’s here all before so it would be cool to have a whole night of it!”

WCT: That’s great!

TC: They really have their stuff together and a good reputation in the musician community. What I really wanted to do was give gay musicians a place that is a genuine rock club, a professional venue, that plays music seven days a week, a year round. It is different than playing a make-shift stage on a disco floor in a club or in a coffeeshouse. I wanted lights and that whole level of professionalism. I think that is the whole thing that will benefit everyone. Everyone can play in a professional venue and work up their chops.

WCT: I loved seeing my friends The Joans play at the last event. They did an awesome job.

TC: Yes, they did. They really brought it.

WCT: Is there a dream act that you would like to get?

TC: Oh, there are a few that I am working on right now, like 8 Inch Betsey, who plays at the Flesh Hungry Dog shows. I would love to get The Gossip as well.

WCT: You have to get them!

TC: They are international now and it is hard.

WCT: We can always dream...

TC: Lady Gaga is on the way to Chicago the night before my February show. I would love to get the Scissor Sisters. Those are my dreams.

WCT: They are good dreams to have. Have you always been dreaming of music?

TC: In 2005 I got an award for being 30 years in the business as an out musician. I have always been out and suffered discrimination. People in the past didn’t want to book me because I was too outrageous. I had band members quit on me because I wore a French leotard onstage. I didn’t know the difference between that and any other leotard. They told me that was for women because it was a French cut. I asked, “How the hell do you know all about it?”

WCT: That’s “leotarded,” as RuPaul would say.

TC: Yeah, it has been a long ride. To play at a place like the Elbo Room that is cool about it. Maybe it says more about how things have changed in our culture but it was never that easy when I was coming up.

WCT: Where is the name Boys’ Entrance from?

TC: I was driving by a school on Belmont and saw a door with a sign carved in stone that said “Boys’ Entrance” and I thought, “That sounds like a band I should be in.” I started recording my first album in ’91. We have had four albums and a multitude of singles since that.

WCT: What is blowing your mind is that the man in this group is male is Scott Free. He will be performing at this event.

TC: I have known this group for about 10 years now. Scott Free came to Chicago where I was performing. He was a great asset to the group because he changed its whole direction. He took Boys’ Entrance and said, “I want to do a whole female band.” I wanted to make a dance record, but would bring in all these other genres that you can dance to and appeal to everyone.


Ariel Aparicio will be releasing his new album, Aerials, via digital distribution March 8 on Rock Ridge Music.

“I wanted to make a dance record, but with all guitars,” he said in a press release. “I was trying to incorporate all the sounds that I heard when I first was going out to clubs where they didn’t just play ‘dance music,’ but would bring in all these other genres that you can dance to and appeal to everyone.”

The Joans performed at a recent ABSOLUTE Fringe show. Photo by Jerry Nunn
Auto Show dazzles

The Chicago Auto Show—running at McCormick Place through Sunday, Feb. 20—is even bigger and better this year. The show, spanning 1.2 million sq. ft. of the complex, showcases a complete range of domestic and imported passenger cars and trucks; sports-utility vehicles, experimental cars and concept autos.

Interactivity is one of the key components of the event, with everything from a huge board in the Hyundai display area that patrons can play with to the Jeep and Chevrolet Volt test-driving tracks. Moreover, as the presence of the Volt and Nissan Leaf will attest, being green is also a goal of many carmakers; even the military (well-represented in one area of the show) highlighted vehicles, including tanks, what were more eco-friendly.

Show hours are 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Feb. 11-19, and 10 a.m.-8 p.m. on the final day, Feb. 20. Regular admission for adults aged 13 and older is $11; for seniors aged 62 and older and for children ages 7-12, regular admission is $7. See http://www.ChicagoAutoShow.com. Photos and text by Andrew Davis
Kate Clinton has the last laugh

BY JERRY NUNN

For over 25 years the comedian Kate Clinton has been keeping audiences chuckling in their chairs. Her views on politics and Catholic religion have her a classic funny lady. She is raising money for the New Friends of Palm Springs Animal Shelter at Dinah Shore Weekend and had this to say about it.

Windy City Times: Hi, Kate. You have been a comedian for over 25 years?
Kate Clinton: It’s true. Almost 30 years! In Roman numerals, that’s “xxx” for triple x-rated!

WCT: That’s a long time.
KC: I know! I just keep coming and going every day. It adds up.

WCT: Did you always want to be a comedian?
KC: I did. I loved making people laugh. It was sort of my family job. I was the Catholic schoolgirl class clown. Everyone would be laughing and I was the silent one, which meant that I caused it. I always wanted to do it but it wasn’t an option so I was an English teacher. It was great preparation to do stand up comedy.

WCT: I can imagine.
KC: If you can keep them amused on a spring day when they are already making more money than you in college then that is an accomplishment. I was just talking about doing standup when a friend of mine booked me in a club. That’s how it started.

WCT: Really?
KC: Yes. I did it and the next day my girlfriend, who became my manager, told me I had to do it more than once. That had never occurred to me. I just wanted to try it once.

WCT: Like jumping out of an airplane just one time!
KC: Yes! But she was way ahead of me. She set it up and I came with the material. That’s how it happened.

WCT: I have been watching a lot of stand-up routines recently and think how hard it must be.
KC: Well, then I look at friends who are insurance salesmen and I think I couldn’t do that! They would just pass out if they were told to do a set of comedy. I am usually pretty confident unless I am starting out a show with a lot of new material. It is a skill set. I probably can’t do anything else at this point. I want to be the Betty White of comedy.

WCT: Oh, would we all?
KC: I love her! You watch her and you realize how much she doesn’t do. She’s brilliant.

WCT: Speaking of comedic legends, you appeared with Lily Tomlin last year.
KC: I did. I did a benefit with her in Providence for their dog park. That’s why I am perfect for this event in Palm Springs. I am all about the dogs. We had so much fun that we did another show together in this fabulous theatre in Staten Island. It was a blast. I did a set, then she did some of her classic characters, then we did a questions and answers section with the audience together.

WCT: So you are an animal lover.
KC: I am all about the animals. I support other species. [Both laugh.]

WCT: Do you have any animals?
KC: No. I am in apartment in New York that is a no pet building. I travel so much and even plants just seem to be sort of safe with me. I don’t think it is fair to do that to a dog. Tons of people come out of their apartments with eight greyhounds.

WCT: Everyone was walking their dogs when I was in New York last time. They have to be overpopulated with them!
KC: Yeah, there are dogs everywhere. I think dogs should have a country area to run free. It humanizes people in New York, which is always a good thing.

WCT: You have a third book out called I Told You So.
KC: My books are collections of things that I have written where I collect columns. That was over a five-year period, the end of the Bush regime.

WCT: Have you been partnered for a long time?
KC: Yes. We are going into our 23rd year. I can’t believe it really.

WCT: You have been in a relationship almost the whole time that you have been in stand-up.
KC: Yes and for that whole 23 years she has said to me, “That show was too long but you need to do more politics.” I think, “When is that going to be?”

WCT: Right—when can you squeeze it in? Is it hard being on the road?
KC: It is. I am trying to do sensible traveling: not Portland, Ore., then Portland, Maine. Somebody please look at a map! Comedy has been affected like the rest of the world with the economy. I love what I do. I still do.

WCT: It’s called the Glee Party Tour, correct?
KC: I have been rapping on the Tea Party forever. My girlfriend says I am just jealous. They have all the money in the world behind them. They have insane people that are willing to do anything. They are basically destroying the Republican party.

WCT: Lots of material for you, I am sure...
KC: I love it! It just keeps giving. There goes George Bush and along comes Sarah Palin. She could make you lazy.

WCT: What are your plans for this year?
KC: My plans are to tour this show, the Glee Party. Hopefully, like the television show, people will start singing randomly.

WCT: I was wondering if you watch it.
KC: Oh god, yes. The show is just so hilarious. There is an odd convergence of Sarah Palin and Sue Sylvester. They are really a lot alike. They have no regulator. Whatever is in their head comes out their mouth. They are really in it to win. They don’t care. Somewhere in the middle, that’s me!

Kate Clinton will bring the laughs at the Dinah Shore Weekend, with two shows Saturday, April 2, at 7:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. For tickets and information visit http://www.theclassic-girls.com or http://kateclinton.com.
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equality because, even within the gay community, there is some classism, you know that. It exists and I see it right now even in this mayoral election, where some individuals are thinking of business and economics before they think of anything else,” del Valle said.

“I’m a mayoral candidate who’s going to put people first in our neighborhoods, in our communities throughout the city of Chicago and I will promote and fight for equality because if we’re going to really stand up and fight on these issues, the kind of issues you’re concerned about, ... It must be a matter of ensuring the city is representative and reflective of all segments of the population.”

Following the candidates’ turn at the mic, representatives from the coalition sponsoring the event addressed the crowd. They spoke of the three community forums held throughout the city late last year that contributed to the development of many of the questions asked both at Wednesday’s forum and in a questionnaire that all the campaigns completed. Responses to that questionnaire can be found on Equality Illinois’ website. The coalition is thought to be the first time such a broad range of LGBT groups came together to organize such an event.

Julio Rodriguez—president of the Association of Latino Men for Action (ALMA), one of the participating organizations—described the forum as a first step toward further empowering the city’s many LGBT communities in the electoral process.

“We need to make the queer, the LGBT community become present in all of our elections,” Rodriguez said. “I think our next step is getting past this election and holding whoever wins accountable. I think a year from now, whoever is in that building not too far away, they need to be here again and we need to be broadcasting their response to a new set of questions: What have you done for me lately?”

Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, added that, as part of its goal of fostering accountability, the coalition has launched the Chicago Appointments Project, an effort intended to strongly encourage the city’s next mayor to appoint well-qualified openly LGBT candidates for positions in their administration. The project is modeled after the Presidential Appointments Project, which has, to date, resulted in more than 150 LGBT presidential appointees under the Obama administration.

Those who missed the forum’s live stream on Windy City Times and Radio Arte can watch it at http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/12578822. The election is Feb. 22.
Wed., Feb. 16
SAGE Dining Troop
Every Wednesday, express your inner Shakespeare or just like him as it a little. Find another dimension of yourself with the SAGE Dining Troop. Learn a little about stage performance, while having loads of fun. Space is limited. 2 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3536 N. Halsted, http://www.centeronhalsted.org
25th Ward candidates Chicago Teachers Union debate for candidates. 6 p.m., Irma C. Ruiz, 2410 S. Lavett
Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allan Live at Reah Join the zany and talented Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allan for a night of cabaret and comedy at Reah. 9 p.m., Reah Lounge, 3463 N. Halsted, http://www.amyfreddy.com/music-and-comedy/

Thu., Feb. 17
Run & Walk Chicago Planning Committee
In order to help grow the AIDS Run & Walk Chicago and to find new ways to increase participation, we will be having a 2011 Planning Committee, 6 p.m., AIDS Founda- tion of Chicago, 200 W. Jackson, Suite 2200, http://www.aidschicago.org
Professional Young Gaye Premiere Shopping Event Join in Professional Gaye’s board of directors for their premier shopping event. The night will feature a special guest speaker, complimentary cocktails, light appetizers, exclusive raffles, gift bags. 7 p.m., 773-615-0863, Envoy Events, 3355 S. Michigan, http://www.b-p-g.com
And Baby Makes More: Known Donors, Queer Parents, and Our Unexpected Families This quirky, funny, and occasion- ally heartbreaking collection of essays offers an intimate and unprecedented look at the relative risks and unexpected rewards of queer-do-figuratively-baby making and the ways in which families are re- made in the process. 7:30 p.m., Women & Children First, 5239 N. Clark, http://www.womenandchildrensfirst.com
All You Drink Miller Lite Buffet!! Help us to help raise money for the Chicago Pride Club. Find us at our table and enjoy Miller Lite and Miller Lite Ultra from 8-10 p.m. 8 p.m., The Glennwood, 3662 N. Glenwood, http://www.cpi-chicago.com

Fri., Feb. 18
Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre’s Sixth Annual “Publication” concert series Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre (CRT) marks Black History Month 2011 with a spectacular live music and dance performance in its sixth annual “Publication” concert series. February 17 at 8 p.m. (one-hour fam- ily matinee Friday, Feb. 18 at 11am) at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Avenue, 11am, 800-982-2787, Athenaeum- theatre, 2936 N. Southport, http://www.cerquarivera.org
Can Queer Film Documentaries? The story of the transgender youth pageant in Humboldt Park followed by a 4:30 - 8 p.m. reception/fundraiser to benefit the soon to come Lucrewake homeless shelter for LGBT youth in our community. 225, 5 p.m., 773-276-6737, Roberto Clemente High School, 1147 N. Western, http://www.vidalida.org
Club Kylie All Kylie Minogue, all night. $5 5-Shot Stella bottles, $1 DeLeery shots. DJ Riley York, 9 p.m., The Call Chicago, 1547 W. Blynn Ave., http://www.calleffichicago.com

Sat., Feb. 19
Miss Rock ‘n Maigl pageant Join the Chi- cago Dragons Rugby Club for Miss Rock ‘n Maigl 2010 at 8 p.m., 200 E Chestnut. $300 bring a participant, $50 must be on the night of, $200 must be in by 10 p.m. Phone in your bid, call Chicago Dragons Rugby Club at 773-227-6555, 1 W. Illinois, http://www.chicagodragons.org
Sappho’s Salon: A Provocative Night of Lesbian Divorces Popular monthly salon night for lesbians and their friends. Invites all lesbian-identified women to show us what you’ve got in the Lesbian Got Talent show, featuring guest judges Ripley Caine, C.C. Carter and Sarahh Beydach. $7-$10 sliding scale for food, $5 and live art auction for fashion, $5 and live art auction for fashion, $5 and live art auction for fashion. $20-$30 in tickets available at www.chicagodragons.org
Sapphire’s Saloon: A Provocative Night of Lesbian Divorces Popular monthly salon night for lesbians and their friends. Invites all lesbian-identified women to show us what you’ve got in the Lesbian Got Talent show, featuring guest judges Ripley Caine, C.C. Carter and Sarahh Beydach. $7-$10 sliding scale for food, $5 and live art auction for fashion, $5 and live art auction for fashion, $5 and live art auction for fashion. $20-$30 in tickets available at www.chicagodragons.org

Sun., Feb. 20
The Living Legends Black History Celebration will honor people such as Nikki Patin (right) at Center on Halsted, 3536 N. Halsted.

Photo from Nikki Patin

NIKKI SITUATION
Sunday, Feb. 20
The Living Legends Black History Celebration will honor people such as Nikki Patin (right) at Center on Halsted, 3536 N. Halsted.

Photo from Nikki Patin

Rivera Dance Theatre (CRT) marks Black History Month 2011 with a spectacular live music and dance performance in its sixth annual “Publication” concert series. February 17 at 8 p.m. (one-hour fam- ily matinee Friday, Feb. 18 at 11am) at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Avenue, 11am, 800-982-2787, Athenaeum- theatre, 2936 N. Southport, http://www.cerquarivera.org

Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allan Live at Fresco’s on Chestnut Join the zany and talented Amy Armstrong and Freddy Allan for a night of cabaret and comedy at Fresco’s on Chestnut. 10 p.m., Shannon and DJ Riley York. 9 p.m., The Call Chicago, 1547 W. Blynn Ave., http://www.spin-nightclub.com
"1 Drink Night at Spin Join Spin every Wednesday for $1 Cocktails, Wine & Beer; featuring VJ Riley York, Teo, Bryan Smith & DJ Cody Donnio and a surprise Performance at Midnight each week! 10 p.m., Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont, http://www.spin-nightclub.com

"WOWE’ OF LUCK"
Friday, Feb. 25
The documentary Woke Up Black, helmed by Mary Morton, will premiere at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State.

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“Hire a stunt person to fall on someone every three or four weeks—that’ll keep the audience showing up!”—Joan Rivers gives directing tips to Julie Taymor an idea of how to keep the musical Spider-Man: Turn Off The Dark from becoming the most expensive flop in Broadway history. Listen to Auntie Joan—she knows a thing or two about flops!

This column is all about love—people I love, things I love, people and things I’d love to love, the song “Love to Love You Baby”, love, love, love. That’s because this column hits the street on Valentine’s Day. And I know that because my birthday was yesterday, and I love my birthday. Valentine’s? Eh, we have a complicated relationship, but that’s something for us to work on in couples counseling. For now, let’s focus on love.

Gay people love Cher. Last week, the Dark Lady wrapped up her Caesars Palace run to focus on completing her new album and plan her upcoming national tour. So it was no surprise that the faithful trekked to Las Vegas to pay homage to their queen—and among the throngs and multitudes was Kathy Griffin. Prior to leaving L.A., she tweeted a photo of herself decked in an eerily Cher-esque ensemble (circa “Turn Back Time”), with a caption (in Tweet-speak) that read: “Off 2 Vegas 2 cclosing n it 4 the FAB @Cher. Have 2 return her outfit she doesn’t exactly no I bor-rowed :)” Truth be told, Kathy looked pretty good in that drag. At the concert, she ran into one of the divas of drag—the delightful and virtu-ally legendary Randy Roberts. Those two Cher nuts posed for the paps and then made their way backstage to share libations with the Half Breed.

As much as I love Kathy, Randy and Cher, I couldn’t join them in Vegas because I love Mark Sendroff more. These columns have oft chronicled the wizardry capable of this lawyer to the stars. There is nothing he can’t do—both pro-fessionally and personally. And that was highly evident when those he loves most came from near and far to gather in Beverly Hills for a sumptuous feast. Yes, it’s true that the average age was somewhere between 60 and death, and that’s just how I like it—I’ll go anywhere if it means I’ll be considered a “twink” (next stop, that’s just how I like it—I’ll go anywhere if it means I’ll be considered a “twink” (next stop, even Canada). But I have to say, the only one who was really young was the girl who was dressed in a Cher-esque ensemble (circa “Turn Back Time”), tweeted a photo of herself decked in an eerily Cher-esque ensemble (circa “Turn Back Time”), with a caption (in Tweet-speak) that read: “Off 2 Vegas 2 cclosing n it 4 the FAB @Cher. Have 2 return her outfit she doesn’t exactly no I bor-rowed :)” Truth be told, Kathy looked pretty good in that drag. At the concert, she ran into one of the divas of drag—the delightful and virtu-ally legendary Randy Roberts. Those two Cher nuts posed for the paps and then made their way backstage to share libations with the Half Breed.

Joan Rivers had a little advice for Spider-Man’s Julie Taymor.

was no way he could carry a big sci-fi thriller. He actually walked out of the audition, saying, “I’m sorry. I’m not right for this. I can’t. I don’t want to muck up your movie.” After passing on dozens of other actors, the casting people called Alex back in two weeks later. At that point, he thought he had nothing to lose. He screen-test- ed, Spielberg liked what he saw and the rest is history.

Speaking of history, let’s talk about a movie in his past. There’s a little British slasher flick I’m sure none of you saw called Tormented. One reason to watch it is because you get to see all of Alex during a very steamy, hot, almost an-imalistic sex scene with some girl in the backseat of a car. Aside from showing Pettyfer’s anatomy from a variety of angles, it actually contains a message—the girl stops Alex at the moment of entry by producing a condom from inside her bra! See? It’s a safe-sex film. You can watch the entire scene on BillyMasters.com.

When I’ve completely forgotten the theme of the week, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. Oh yeah—love! I guess I was distracted by the hot sex in the back seat of a car. Person-ally, I always enjoyed the front seat—there was a time I couldn’t have an orgasm unless there was a steering wheel between my legs—but that’s another story, and we simply don’t have space for yet another anecdote. In fact, we cut so much gossip for print, you best check out www.BillyMasters.com to see what you’re missing. If you’re got a question, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before I take to carrying a condom in my jock strap (well, they all end up in there sooner or later). Until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
Hudson Taylor starts sports ally program

BY ROSS FORMAN

Hudson Taylor started out as a theatre major at the University of Maryland. He was often around gay actors and actresses, even being there during their coming-out processes. Taylor also was a standout collegiate wrestler—where he often encountered homophobia in its seemingly most common arena: the locker room. The language bothered him.

“So, as an All-American and team captain [as a senior during the 2009-2010 season], I realized that I was in a position to make a difference on my team,” said Taylor, who is straight. He started by trying to correct his teammate’s inappropriate language.

Then he took a huge leap of faith to show that he doesn’t just talk a good game. Taylor put a sticker on his wrestling headgear—it was the blue and yellow, representing the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

“I consider myself a fairly rational person, and me speaking out as an ally could never do more harm to myself than it could do good for others,” Taylor said. “It affects me when I see young LGBT kids taking their lives. It affects me to know that sports may or may not be part of the problem. I love athletics; I love coaching. I’ve been involved in wrestling for the past 18 years. I think I have the ability to make a difference and, in some ways, a responsibility to make a difference.”

He did as an undergraduate, and still is a major league supporter.

Taylor created the Athlete Ally Pledge and Whydoyouflight.org blog to gather support from athletes and advocates around the country. Taylor is on a mission to encourage others to join him in building a fully respectful, inclusive sports culture, and Hudson is authoring, The Athlete Ally: Empowering a New Era of Leadership and Inclusion in Sports. The Athlete Ally will guide and inspire coaches, athletes, administrators, fans and parents who are eager to redefine what it means to be an athlete and a leader.

“I thought the pledge was a really good place to start,” he said. “Little by little, the change would be beautiful—and sports no longer would be the last closet and, instead, an open, accepting, inclusive environment.”

The Athlete Ally pledge asks the public to sign an online form, encouraging athletes, coaches, parents, and other members of the sports community to respect all individuals involved in sports, regardless of perceived or actual sexual-orientation or gender identity or expression.

His website posts the total number of signatures, which is more than 1,300 as of early February, and it’s been active for only a few months.

“It’s going really well,” said Taylor, who has been pushing to get college athletes to bring the pledge to their athletic departments.

Taylor has received hundreds of e-mails from around the world, all supporting his support for the LGBT community. Many from young LGBT athletes, as well as parents of LGBT athletes, “many who just do not have a voice in this fight,” he said. “It’s been quite a process.”

Moreover, it has not always been a smooth road. Take the athlete who reached out to Taylor about five months ago. The athlete is closeted, in high school. “He’s very alone, very scared, doesn’t feel comfortable coming out to his dad, who often uses [anti-gay] language. And he’s just one of many,” Taylor said. “People such as him make our efforts very real, very meaningful.

People often forget that, yes, there are people who are affected by homophobia and bullying— and I think there’s a need and responsibility to do something about it.”

Even if speaking up is not popular, as Taylor found out at Maryland.

Taylor isn’t alone in his support for the LGBT community. His fiancée, Lia Alexandra Manda-gllo, is right beside him. The two are getting married Sept. 24.

“She and I share all the same beliefs and outlooks on the world,” Taylor said. “Actually, if it wasn’t for Lia, I probably wouldn’t be where I am today. As passionate as I am about being an ally, speaking out and making a difference, while I was an undergraduate [student], Lia was a big part of that equation for giving me the self-confidence to start speaking out. Even though I was very sure in my outlook and how I saw things, I think I needed that extra bit of support from Lia to take that next step and keep pushing further and further and further, and doing more and more and more. We’ve very much a team in everything we do.”

Of note: Taylor is being honored by Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) with its Straight for Equality award, given to an ally of gay rights. PFLAG’s Straight for Equality award is in its third year and previously has been presented to author Maya Angelou (2009), entertainer Liza Minnelli (2010), actress Sigourney Weaver (2009), NFL linebacker Scott Fujita (2010) and diversity pioneer Johnnetta B. Cole.

For more information about Taylor, or to sign the Athlete Ally pledge, go to http://www.athleteally.com.

The annual Joe Green Super Bowl Bash, held Feb. 6 at Spin Nightclub, attracted about 250 attendees and raised close to $4,000 for the 2011 Gay Softball World Series, which will be held in the Chicago area this summer.

“This was a great event and we were thrilled that Joe would partner with the 2011 Series for this event and a wonderful fund-raiser; this really shows what kind of person Joe is,” said Jack Neilsen of the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA), which is the local host for the upcoming Series.

Neilsen confirmed that the three official charities for the annual Talent Show at the Series will be Howard Brown Health Center, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and the Families’ & Children’s AIDS Network. Neilsen said series organizers are shooting to raise $35,000 at the talent show, which would be split three ways.

Neilsen also said that organizers are now planning for as many as 190 teams, which would crush the previous series record (149 in Columbus, Ohio, in 2010).

In addition, he said that the 2011 Series will, for the first time ever, include a master’s division for athletes age 50 and older. The new division is inspired by the success of Chicago’s annual Senior Cup. Text and photos by Ross Forman

WINDY CITY TIMES
Feb. 16, 2011

‘Hancock’ Feb. 27

“Hustle Up the Hancock,” sponsored by the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago, will take place Sunday, Feb. 27. The full climb is sold out. However, CBS2 Half Climb (52 floors) and Lung Health Champion spots are still available. The total entry fee, due at the time of registration, is $110 for the half-climb and $110-$130 for the lung health spot. (The Lung Health Champion spot has a mandatory additional fundraising amount of $920.)


LPL bowling event March 19

Lincoln Park Lappomers will hold a “Candlelight Bowl” Saturday, March 19, at Timber Lanes, 1851 W. Irving Park. Registration is at 8:30 p.m.; bowling starts at 9:30 p.m. Two-person teams will compete, with a fee of $30 per person. First prize is $100, second prize is $75 and third is $50. Reserve spots by March 12 at http://www.LPLChicago.com or 773-742-0793.

Series’ Super Bowl fundraiser

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Hudson Taylor.

For more information about Taylor, or to sign the Athlete Ally pledge, go to http://www.athleteally.com.

“You learned a very important lesson,” he said. “My teammates were pretty receptive when I was trying to advocate for word consciousness. But all of a sudden when I wore the HRC sticker, it became very divisive, very political. All of a sudden, sides were taken. And I lost some friends from it. Or I should say, I realized who my friends were, and who I didn’t want to be friends with. That was pretty difficult.”

Taylor said there was no specific issue or incident that pushed him to wear the HRC sticker. Rather, “to repeatedly hear the anti-gay language, and have friends who are gay, it rubbed me the wrong way. It made me want to speak out.”

Taylor actually bought the HRC sticker at the organization’s store in Washington, D.C.

“I put the sticker on my headgear really just because actions speak louder than words,” he said. “Initial reactions were, ugh, kind of comical. Many didn’t know what the sticker was, so I told them it was for the Rights Campaign—and he also explained what HRC does.

“For some of my teammates, it made them very uncomfortable. In fact, some teammates threatened to take the sticker off. Some played cat-and-mouse [games] with my head gear. They were trying to express that they didn’t approve of the sticker.”

After several weeks wearing it, Taylor voluntarily removed the sticker.

“It was beginning to feel more and more like my advocacy was overshadowing why I was there: to win a national championship. Plus, I figured I’d have the rest of my life to be an ally and advocate,” Taylor said.

As a senior in 2010, Taylor went on to finish fourth nationally.

He is now an assistant coach at Columbia College and has been applying to law school for the fall.

“I have so much more that I want it to do, that I think it can do. In order for that to happen, and to push it to that next level, I am seeking non-profit status [for Athlete Ally],” Taylor said.

“I don’t think the majority of athletes would consider themselves to be homophobic. But I think homophobic language has become a standard in athletics. Phrases like, ‘that’s so gay’ and ‘No homo,’ or ‘Don’t be such a fag’ are commonplace in the locker room. A lot of athletes may not feel like that’s a problem, or something they should change, but that’s a product of athletics. And that’s at the heart of the issue, and what we need to work to change.”
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CONNECTIONS

Ray J. Koenig III and Clark Hill PLC

Ray is a legal authority on all of his practice areas, which include probate, trusts, guardianship, estate planning, and elder law, including the litigation of those areas. He is a longtime advocate for and member of the LGBT community, and is involved in several charitable groups, community associations, and professional organizations. Ray is a member of Clark Hill PLC, a full-service law firm consisting of a diverse team of attorneys and professionals committed to our clients and our communities.

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Heartland’s
‘Art of Human Rights’ Feb. 25

“The Art of Human Rights”—Heartland Alliance’s annual silent and live art auction featuring unique works of art from across the world, gourmet fare, cocktails and music—will take place Friday, Feb. 25, at Green Gables, 225 W. Superior, 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Individual tickets start at $125 ($150 at the door). See http://www.heartlandalliance.org/howtohelp/events/artofhumanrights.

Starr honored at ‘Divos’ event

Windy City Times photographer Steve Starr was among those honored at InfoMaven’s “Divos” event, held Feb. 8 at the House of Blues’ Foundation Room.

The Divo series honors influential men in areas such as media, fashion, fitness, music and sports.

Lenox Magee, a former Windy City Media Group associate who now heads 360 Magazine, was also honored. Among the other 14 honorees were FanFueled Tickets CEO/Founder Anderson Bell; Music Masters Entertainment owner Corey Sanford; and Newmar Reality owner/broker Scott Newman.


WCT: You have this way of presenting the younger generation that seems very real, very unforced. What’s the secret?

GA: This is one of the most amazing casts I’ve ever worked with. They’re part of this new generation of actors that really are about doing work that is creative and challenging and that pushes the envelope as opposed to doing the same old formula crap that’s out there for young actors. They were all excited to take the risk; to walk the plank with me.

WCT: How many takes did you shoot of the young actor trying to give himself a blow job?

GA: [Laughs] Not many! We didn’t have the budget or the time to do many retakes. Whenever you shoot any sort of sex or nude scenes it’s just really, really important to make the set feel super, super safe and comfortable. So it’s closed and no one’s there but the camera man, the sound person, it’s really like a safe place and I always make a point to tell all the actors individually that they have my ear.

WCT: How does the “young queer director”—the label that has followed you around for 20 years—go forward as you are now middle-aged? Are you yearning to do something in a different direction?

GA: I’m still a young queer director! [Laughs] My thing as a director is really that it’s important to continue to grow and to make all different kinds of movies. One of my pet peeves is directors who make the same movie over and over again. I feel like it’s important to stretch and grow. The films that I’m working on now are all sort of different.

WCT: Anything specific you can talk about?

GA: It depends on which one gets the money first. [Laughs]

WCT: Let’s circle back to that “label” thing one more time. A batch of queer directors in the past year or so have advised gay actors to stay in the closet if they want to become leading men in Hollywood. What are your thoughts on that?

GA: My thoughts are really that, especially for actors who are completely in the public eye, yes, it’s completely their decision. I feel that it’s up to them. It would be awesome, obviously, if there was a Robert Pattinson or somebody like that that would come out and say, “I’m gay” and there would be some trail blazed in that way, and I do think that’s going to happen in our lifetime.

But I just think it’s a very private matter and it is loaded and it is true that if you’re Tom Cruise or something, you’re in a really difficult position because the audience that you’re appealing to is not sophisticated, not educated and not really enlightened. So, when you’re on a mass global level like that, it’s a tricky situation. But I guarantee you somebody’s going to do it. Somebody of this generation.

WCT: They’re going to see Kaboom and say, “Fuck it, I’m coming out.”

GA: [Laughs hard] That would be great; that would be great.
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