



TALKING WITH SINGER FRENCHIE DAVIS

PAGE 19



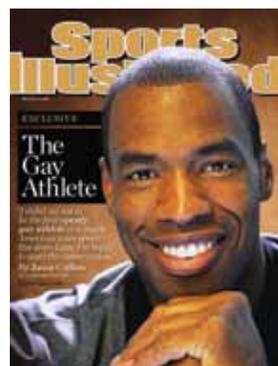
'BEYOND MARRIAGE' FORUM HOSTED AT URBAN LEAGUE

PAGE 8



LGBT ACTIVISTS PROTEST CARDINAL GEORGE

PAGE 8



JASON COLLINS PART OF YEAR IN LGBT SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT

PAGE 17

Looking back

The year in national news

COMPILED BY ANDREW DAVIS

It was a year that saw some astonishing examples of progress, whether legislative (more than a half-dozen approving marriage equality) or simply physical (Diana Nyad's swimming feat). Here's the skinny on what transpired in the LGBT community nationally in 2013:

—**Approved:** In 2013, eight states approved marriage equality—including Rhode Island, Delaware, Minnesota, New Jersey, Hawaii, New Mexico, Utah and Illinois—bringing the total to 18, along with the District of Columbia.

—**Stonewall folds:** National Stonewall Democrats Executive Director Jerame Davis said in January that his organization would cease operations through at least the end of this year after it failed to bridge a \$30,000 budget gap. Davis said that when he took over in 2011, there were "\$1,800 in the bank and a boat load of debt."

—**Four more years:** President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden were reinaugurated Jan. 21. The Lesbian and Gay Band Association (LGBA) once again participated in the inaugural parade—the only LGBT group invited to do so. Also, 44-year-old Richard Blanco was



U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin.

the first Latino, first gay man and youngest person to read an original poem at the inaugural ceremony. During his speech, Obama mentioned Stonewall and marriage equality.

—**Baldwin makes history:** Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., was sworn in as a U.S. senator Jan. 3 in Washington, D.C.—becoming the first member of the LGBT community to be a part of the national legislative body. After her swearing-in, Baldwin ran into former GOP vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan (who's also from Wisconsin)—and they gave each other a big hug, with Ryan saying, "Congratulations!"

—**Hagel controversy:** Then-Defense Secretary nominee Chuck Hagel prompted controversy over anti-gay remarks he made 14 years ago when he characterized then-Defense Secretary nominee James Hormel's openness about his sexual orientation as an "aggressive" act. Hagel apologized, and was eventually approved.

—**Leaving Family:** Family Equality Council, in January, announced the departure of Executive Director Jennifer Chrisler following an eight-year tenure. Chrisler—

Turn to page 4



TOXIC?

Britney Spears talks with Windy City Times in an interview that may paint a surprising portrait of the singer. Read page 16. Photo by Michelangelo Di Battista

page 16

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NEWS

Looking back at LGBT news	4
2013: In memoriam	5
N.M., Utah join marriage train	6
TWO leader; Dwyer, Brun obits	7
Urban League; GLAAD; protest	8
IEWS: Flowers, Rudolph	10

ENTERTAINMENT/EVENTS

The year in dance	11
Knight: Top LGBT films of 2013	14
Pop Making Sense	15
Britney Spears; trans awards	16
Year in LGBT sports, entertainment	17
Dish: Brixton	18
Talking with Frenchie Davis	19
Trans in the Life	20
Marksman comes out	21
Boitano says he's gay, joins delegation	22

OUTLINES

Classifieds	18
Calendar Q	20

Photos on cover (left, from top): Publicity photo of Frenchie Davis; photo of Lisa Pickens by Tracy Baim; photo of Andy Thayer by Matt Simonette; Sports Illustrated cover of Jason Collins

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THE HAYLEY NEWS

Paramore (with frontwoman Hayley Williams, left) is among those in Bent Nights' look back at 2013.

Photo by Vern Hester



Gay singer Branden James made the audience swoon at City Winery.

Photo by Vern Hester



WCT takes a look at the Lincoln Park restaurant Macku Signature.

Photo by Andrew Davis

AUTO SUPPORT

Windy City Limo shows that it backs the LGBT community.

DIGGING THE DIRT

Billy Masters has his weekly lowdown on what's going on with celebrities.

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Find out the latest about Don Lemon, Demi Lovato and the U.S. women's hockey team.

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Photo from Gaywheels.com

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LOOKING BACK from cover

who joined Smith College in March as vice president for alumnae relations and executive director of the Alumnae Association of Smith College—remained with the council until March 15.

—**“Fil” of it?:** Fast-food giant Chick-fil-A, despite some reports to the contrary, is still contributing to anti-gay organizations and causes, Media Matters reported. Chick-fil-A donated \$1.9 million to anti-gay groups in 2010 alone through WinShape Foundation. The majority of that money went to groups like the Marriage & Family Foundation, the Fellowship Of Christian Athletes, and the National Christian Foundation.

—**Move against violence:** The U.S. Senate passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization bill, which includes explicit protections for LGBT survivors of domestic violence and enhanced protections for Native American and immigrant survivors.

—**Chelsea lately:** Judge Col. Denise Lind sentenced U.S. soldier Chelsea Manning (formerly Bradley Manning) Aug. 21 to 35 years in a military prison for turning over more than 700,000 classified files to WikiLeaks. (Manning was also dishonorably discharged from the military, lost her pay and had her rank reduced to private.) In an Aug. 22 announcement, Manning said she wanted to live as a woman, and desired to begin hormone therapy as soon as possible.

—**Bowing out:** Owing creditors more than \$750,000, the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, and announced it is going out of business 30 years after it was founded in 1983.

—**Our people:** The percentage of adults in the United States who identify as LGBT ranges from 1.7 percent in North Dakota to 5.1 percent in Hawaii and 10 percent in the District of Columbia, according to findings from a new study released by Williams Institute Distinguished Scholar Gary J. Gates and Gallup Editor-in-Chief Frank Newport.

—**Stung:** Federal election regulators want ex-U.S. Sen. Larry Craig to pay \$140,000 in fines and return more than \$216,000 to his campaign, claiming he misused the money to fund his legal defense after his 2007 arrest in a Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport bathroom sex sting.

—**By the numbers:** As many as 6 million adults and children in the United States have an LGBT parent, and an estimated three million LGBT Americans have had a child at some point in their lives. Including single and married or partnered LGBT people, the study found that nearly half of LGBT women and a fifth of LGBT men under age 50 are currently raising a child.

—**Revolutionary rulings:** In late June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional and allowed a lower-court ruling to stand that struck down California’s Proposition 8, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman. In the wake of the former decision, several federal departments (including social security and education) revised its policies to include same-sex couples.

—**Taxing situation:** The National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality, the leading anti-LGBT organization advocating for dangerous efforts that falsely attempt to change one’s sexual orientation, had its tax exempt status revoked by the IRS for failure to fill out proper and routine tax forms.

—**Appointments:** President Obama continued his track record of appointing LGBT individuals, including Fred Hochberg as president of Export-Import Bank of the United States, Daniel Baer to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Rufus Gifford as ambassador to Denmark, James Costos as ambassador to Spain, and Wally Brewster as the U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

—**It’s an honor:** Lesbian writer Judy Rickard was one of 11 people the White House honored March 26 as Cesar Chavez “Champions of Change.” Rickard—author of Torn Apart: United by Love, Divided by Law—has worked to promote civil rights since 1973 as an LGBT-rights



Diana Nyad and John Berry were part of the LGBT news landscape this year. Nyad photo by Julia Bagg; Berry photo from the Office of Personnel Management website



activist. She is a pioneer in applying for a green card for her wife, UK national Karin Bogliolo, with The DOMA Project.

—**A fine day:** After two years of legal battles, the trial of gay military activist Lt. Dan Choi ended after a federal judge convicted him of a misdemeanor and fined him \$100. Choi was on trial for disobeying a lawful order by police to disperse, stemming from a 2010 protest at the White House against the United States military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.

—**Denied:** An Arizona judge denied Thomas Beatie’s request for divorce from his wife of nine years. The so-called “pregnant man” kept his female reproductive organs while transitioning to a man in his early 20s, and later gave birth to three children. The judge ruled that since Beatie and his wife have female organs, their marriage can be viewed as a same-sex marriage, and Arizona doesn’t recognize such unions.

—**Goodbye hello:** John Berry left his post as director of the Office of Personnel Management, ending a four-year term as President Obama’s highest openly gay employee. He later replaced Jeff Bleich as U.S. ambassador to Australia.

—**OUTgoing:** OUT magazine presented its seventeenth annual Power 50 list. Apple CEO Tim Cook was number one, while this was the first time Anderson Cooper (No. 5) is publicly out on the list. Among the other people on the list were Ellen DeGeneres (2), statistician Nate Silver (5), U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (9), singer Frank Ocean (10), fashion designer/actor Marc Jacobs (19), financial guru Suze Orman (28) and RuPaul (50).

—**Hazing aftermath:** Former Florida A&M (FAMU) band members pled not guilty to increased charges of manslaughter related to the death of drum major Robert Champion. More than a dozen former FAMU band members were charged last year with hazing, a third-degree felony, from Champion’s death in 2011; however, prosecutors increased the charges to manslaughter. Champion Jr., a 26-year-old openly gay student, died after being beaten aboard the charter bus parked at the Rosen Plaza hotel.

—**ENDA push:** U.S. Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.) introduced a trans-inclusive ENDA bill in the House while Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) introduced an ENDA bill in the Senate. Later, the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee approved ENDA by a 15-7 vote. The Senate approved ENDA Nov. 7 64-32 but the measure is expected to encounter more resistance in the Republican-controlled House.

—**Exchanging stances:** Republican U.S. Sen. Rob Portman announced his stance on same-sex marriage, and now is in support of its legalization. The development occurred two years after his son Will came out to Portman and his wife as gay in 2011.

—**Reagan revelations:** Patti Davis, the daughter of former President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan, made headlines when she said her father would have backed same-sex

marriage. In a subsequent interview, she said that her mother, who rarely speaks on public policy issues, supports marriage equality.

—**Departure:** Barely a year after GLAAD named its new president, Herndon Graddick resigned from his position with the LGBT media-watchdog group. Media executive Sarah Kate Ellis succeeded Graddick following a nationwide search.

—**Teenage nightmare:** In Florida, teenager Kaitlyn Hunt was expelled from school and faced criminal charges as a result of her same-sex relationship. Hunt, who attended Sebastian River High School, began dating another girl when Hunt was 17 and the other girl 15; when Hunt turned 18, her girlfriend’s parents had Hunt arrested. Hunt, now 19, pleaded no contest to five charges as part of a deal brokered by prosecutors and her attorneys; she agreed to four months in jail followed by two years of house arrest with electronic monitoring, and nine months of monitored probation after that.

—**Historic leader:** Dr. Saul Levin was announced as the new chief executive officer and medical director of the American Psychiatric Association. Levin, a psychiatrist with roots in substance abuse treatment, is the first openly gay person to hold this position.

—**Revealing:** Lesbian New York City mayoral candidate Christine Quinn went public about her past battles with bulimia and alcoholism that apparently started while her mother battled cancer. Quinn said that, starting at 16, she secretly binged and purged for a decade until she entered a Florida rehabilitation center.

—**Beck and call:** Trans woman Kristin Beck traveled around the country, promoting her memoir, Warrior Princess: A U.S. Navy SEAL’s Journey to Coming out Transgender. As Christopher, Beck served as a U.S. Navy SEAL in some of the most dangerous battlegrounds in the world. After retiring in 2011, Beck started living as Kristin.

—**This is SPARTA:** Servicemembers, Partners, and Allies for Respect and Tolerance for All (SPARTA) announced its launch, just weeks after the alleged forced resignation of Allyson Robinson at OutServe-SLDN that precipitated the group’s reported impending dissolution. Robinson officially resigned July 12. Board co-chair Josh Seefried launched an effort to force Robinson’s resignation; however, both Seefried and Robinson ended up leaving the military organization.

—**Study time:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released the nation’s first-ever national study examining housing discrimination against same-sex couples in the private rental market. Among other things, the study showed that gay male couples experience more discrimination than lesbian couples.

—**Southern exposure:** A murder trial in Kentucky marked the first legal test in the state involving whether same-sex partners can be

forced to testify against each other. Prosecutors said Geneva Case heard her spouse, Bobbie Joe Clary, admit to killing a man two years ago, and saw her clean blood out of the man’s van and abandon it in southern Indiana. Case and Clary entered into a same-sex civil union in Vermont in 2004; however, Kentucky law does not recognize union or marriages, even though it exempts spouses from being compelled to testify against each other.

—**Bedding day:** Longtime gay-rights activist and award-winning playwright Larry Kramer married long-term partner David Webster from his hospital bed in New York City as he recovered from surgery. The Normal Heart writer, 78, initially planned to wed Webster on the terrace of their Manhattan apartment, but they had to scrap that idea after Kramer fell ill.

—**Foreign affair:** In what’s been called one of the first cases of its kind, a Belarusian gay man tied the knot with his U.S. partner in Washington, D.C. and will be allowed to stay in the country. Vyachaslau Bortnik, a rights activist from the city of Homel, and Shawn Gaylord, a U.S. lawyer and adviser for a gay-advocacy organization, married July 11.

—**Maine event:** President George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush attended and witnessed the wedding of friends in a same-sex ceremony in Maine. Bonnie Clement and Helen Thorgalsen—who own HB Provisions, a Kennebunk, Maine, general store—got the former president’s official stamp of approval, although Bush has not officially declared his position on same-sex marriage.

—**Cory daze:** Democrat Cory Booker—the mayor of Newark, N.J.—was the unofficial winner of a state special election Oct. 16, handily defeating a conservative Republican to fill the state’s vacant U.S. Senate seat. Booker, a pro-gay candidate who had been heavily favored in polls, defeated conservative Republican Steve Lonegan by double digits.

—**Gates way:** More than two years after playing an influential role in the Obama administration’s repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates was named president-elect of the Boy Scouts of America. The Boy Scouts voted in May to approve a resolution removing any ban on members based on sexual orientation alone, although gay Scout leaders are still prohibited. The policy change is slated to take effect Jan. 1, 2014.

—**Going to the chapel:** The U.S. Military Academy at West Point marked a historic moment with the marriage of two former male graduates at its Cadet Chapel Nov. 2. Larry Choate III, 27, and Daniel Lennox, 28, were married before about 20 guests, making it the academy’s first wedding between two men.

—**Family affair:** The debate between the daughters of former Vice President Dick Cheney over same-sex marriage has reignited on social media. Mary Cheney and wife Heather Poe took to Facebook to express their disappointment after Liz Cheney—a GOP candidate for Senate in Wyoming—repeated her opposition to same sex marriage during a television interview.

—**Freedom riders:** Late gay icons Sally Ride and Bayard Rustin were among the recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. (Tam O’Shaughnessy and Walter Naegle, respectively, accepted for them.) Among the other recipients were Gloria Steinem, Oprah Winfrey, former President Bill Clinton and Loretta Lynn.

—**In the swim:** Lesbian endurance swimmer Diana Nyad finally set a record she had chased for more than three decades, completing the 110-mile swim from Cuba to Key West, Fla., on Sept. 2. The team for Nyad reported that she completed the trip in 52 hours, 54 minutes and 18.6 seconds—with no shark cage. She initially attempted the swim in 1978. The last previous attempt (number four) was last year; she made it 41 miles before succumbing to storms and jellyfish stings.

Read the entire year-end roundup online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Next week will feature the highs and lows in 2013’s local and world news.

Looking back: National deaths

—**Aaron Swartz:** The Internet activist, hacker, author and programmer who created the web-feed format RSS committed suicide at age 26. Swartz, who battled depression, had both male and female lovers; he refused to label himself as bisexual or gay.

—**Michael Triplett:** The president of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) died Jan. 17 after battling cancer. He was 48. Jen Christensen of CNN succeeded Triplett.

—**Gerda Lerner:** Lerner died Jan. 2 at age 92. The historian/author is considered one of the founders of women's studies, having created the first graduate program in women's studies in the country and providing the template for other programs across the U.S. over the years.

—**Ed Koch:** The former New York City mayor who used the catchphrase "How am I doin'?" died of congestive heart failure Feb. 1 at 88. The former mayor never married, and his sexuality was the subject of constant speculation. Playwright/LGBT-rights advocate Larry Kramer once told New York Magazine that Koch "was a closeted gay man, and he did not want in any way to be associated with [AIDS]."

—**Charlie Morgan:** Morgan—a career soldier from New Hampshire and part of one of eight couples named as plaintiffs in a lawsuit challenging the federal Defense of Marriage Act—died at age 48 of breast cancer. U.S. Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) introduced The Charlie Morgan Military Spouses Equal Treatment Act of 2013, the Senate companion bill to the Military Spouses Equal Treatment Act of 2013, in the House; Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) with lead co-sponsor Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.H.) introduced it in the Senate.

—**Jadin Bell:** The Oregon teen, 15, died after a suicide attempt that took place in the schoolyard of an elementary school. Family and friends said the boy was the target of vicious bullying, both at school and online. On top of that tragedy, father Joseph, 48, died later this year after being struck by a big rig in Colorado; Joseph was walking across the country to bring attention to the issue of bullying.

—**Marco McMillan:** The body of the openly gay Clarksdale, Miss., mayoral candidate was found in a levee. Lawrence Reed, age 22, was arrested in connection with the case after he reportedly drove McMillan's SUV when it was involved in a head-on crash.

—**Rudy de la Mor:** Rudy de la Mor, a cabaret entertainer who performed in Chicago for decades before working on boat cruises and in venues in California, died at Kaiser Permanente Irvine Medical Center in Irvine, Calif., at 73.

—**Jason Lynch:** Lynch, Mr. International Rubber (MIR) 2013, passed away Feb. 25 in Boston at age 38. Lynch was planning his first international trip as MIR to Montreal when he died.

—**Richard Griffiths:** The British actor best known for playing Uncle Vernon in the Harry Potter series died at age 65 from heart-surgery complications. Among his many other films were The Naked Gun 2 1/2: The Smell of Fear, Guarding Tess, Hugo and The History Boys, where he played gay teacher Douglas Hector.

—**Roger Ebert:** Ebert, the world-renowned film critic and longtime Chicago resident, died at 70 after a long battle with cancer. He was best known for his At the Movies show with fellow critic Gene Siskel, coupled with their "thumbs up/thumbs down" reviews.

—**Kenny Kerr:** Las Vegas drag queen Kerr, known for over-the-top impersonations of celebrities like Barbra Streisand and Cher, died at age 60. In 1999, Kerr became the first female impersonator to be inducted into the Tropicana's Hall of Fame.

—**James Gandolfini:** Gandolfini—known primarily for his role as Tony Soprano on the TV show The Sopranos—died June 19 in Rome at age 51 of cardiac arrest. LGBT audiences may

remember that Gandolfini played gay hitman Winston Baldry in the Julia Roberts-Brad Pitt movie The Mexican.

—**Cory Monteith:** Monteith, who played Finn on the Fox show Glee, was found dead in a Vancouver hotel room July 13 at age 31—and the cause of death involved a fatal mix of heroin and alcohol. Monteith's body was discovered by staff members at the Fairmont Pacific Rim Hotel after he missed his checkout time.

—**John Arthur:** Arthur—the marriage-equality advocate who made headlines in July after a federal judge ordered Ohio state officials to recognize his marriage, performed in Maryland, to his longtime partner, James Obergefell—died Oct. 22. Arthur and Obergefell had been together for more than 20 years; on July 11, the Cincinnati couple took a specially equipped medical jet to marry on the tarmac of Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

—**Doug Ireland:** New York journalist and gay-rights activist Ireland died Oct. 26 at 67. Friends said that Ireland suffered in recent years from



Charlie Morgan. Photo from OutServe-SLDN

diabetes, kidney disease, severe sciatica, and weakened lungs and progressive muscle deterioration related to childhood polio.

—**Sean Sasser:** AIDS activist Sasser died at age 44. Sasser entered the U.S. consciousness as Pedro Zamora's boyfriend on MTV's The Real World: San Francisco in the early 1990s. Sasser's

life partner, Michael Kaplan, said Sasser died of mesothelioma, a rare cancer of the lungs that has been linked to a weakened immune system in some people with AIDS.

—**Jose Julio Sarria:** Sarria, one of this country's pioneers regarding gay rights, passed away Aug. 19 at age 91. Sarria was a proud World War II veteran and the very first openly gay candidate to run for public office in North America, as he was a candidate for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1961. After his discharge from the Army, Sarria became the most famous "drag queen/female impersonator" entertainer in San Francisco.

—**Darren Manzella:** Manzella, a gay veteran of the Iraq war who fought against "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," died in a car accident in Rochester, N.Y., at the age of 36. Manzella came out as gay in 2007 while serving in the Army during an interview on CBS' 60 Minutes. His 60 Minutes interview was filmed, in secret, in Kuwait City while he was still a staff sergeant in the Army.

—**Paul Walker:** Walker, best known for his lead role in the Fast and Furious film franchise, died Nov. 30 after a high-performance red Porsche he was riding in crashed and exploded near a charity event near Santa Clarita, Calif. Walker was 40, and is survived by his 15-year-old daughter.

Read the full list of deaths online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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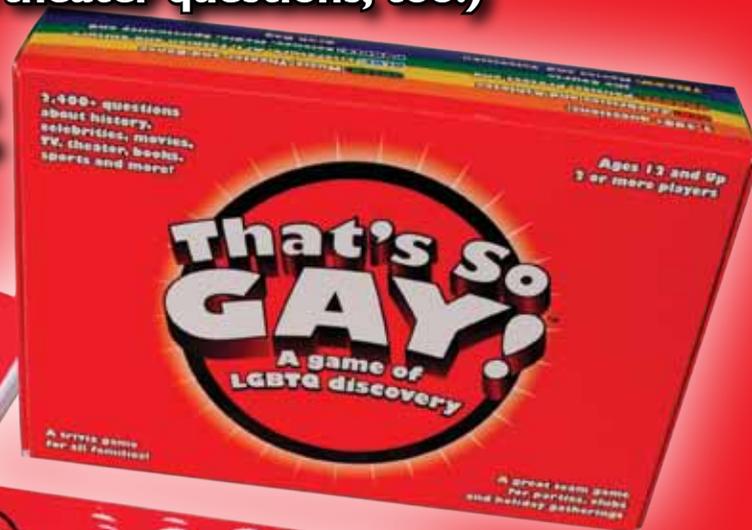
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New Mexico becomes 17th state to OK marriage equality

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

For the eighth time this year, a state has declared that same-sex couples have the right to marry. On Dec. 19, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled unanimously that state laws that "have the effect of precluding same-gender couples from marrying" violate the equal protection guarantee of the state constitution.

"We hold that the State of New Mexico is constitutionally required to allow same-gender couples to marry," wrote the court, "and must extend to them the rights, protections, and responsibilities that derive from civil marriage under New Mexico law."

The ruling not only makes New Mexico the 17th state plus the District of Columbia to provide marriage equality for same-sex couples, it represents a new milestone: As 17th, it marks one-third of the 50 states, and its population puts more than one-third of the country's population as living under marriage equality laws.

"Today's decision by the New Mexico Supreme Court is a powerful affirmation that same-sex couples are equal members of New Mexico's diverse culture and must be given the same legal protections and respect as other families," said Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), which pressed the lawsuit with the ACLU.

Lambda Legal, which has itself pressed many such lawsuits, hailed the Dec. 19 ruling, saying, "This beautiful unanimous decision explicitly underscores the argument we and our sister organizations have long made: denying same-sex couples the ability to marry imposes significant emotional and dignitary harm and is discrimination, pure and simple."

New Mexico does not have a law explicitly banning same-sex couples from marrying. But five same-sex couples were denied licenses in Albuquerque, and the ACLU and NCLR filed the lawsuit, *Greigo v. Oliver*, in March. A district court judge ruled in favor of the couples in August, and clerks in several counties begun issuing marriage licenses. In its decision, the state supreme court noted that, by the time of the oral argument in October, "over 1,466 marriage licenses had been issued" to same-sex couples in the state.

The decision, which Justice Edward Chavez wrote, took pains to discuss the plaintiff couples in everyday terms, mention their children, and explain how the inability to marry negatively impacted them.

"The inability to legally marry has adversely impacted several of the Plaintiff couples who have endured significant familial and medical hardships together," wrote Chavez. "On one occasion, when Rose [Griego] was hospitalized, the hospital refused to provide Kim [Kiel] with any information about Rose's condition or treatment until Rose's other family members arrived, despite the fact that it was Kim who took Rose to the hospital."

Referring to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in June, striking down the key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in *U.S. v. Windsor*, the opinion said, "Interpreting our statutes to authorize committed same-gender couples to enter into civil marriage will grant them the rights and privileges available to opposite-gender married couples in approximately one thousand statutes and federal regulations that refer to a person's marital status, thereby avoiding a constitutional challenge on that basis."

"The purpose of the New Mexico marriage laws," wrote Chavez, "is to bring stability and order to the legal relationships of committed couples by defining their rights and responsibilities as to one another, their property, and their children, if they choose to have children."

In reaching its decision, the court concluded that the laws preventing same-sex couples from marrying treat people differently because of

their sexual orientation and that courts should examine such laws using an intermediate level of scrutiny—more than mere rational scrutiny, less than strict scrutiny. The court said "the LGBT community is a discrete group that has been subjected to a history of purposeful discrimination, and it has not had sufficient political strength to protect itself from such discrimination."

"When fundamental rights are affected by legislation, the United States Supreme Court has applied strict scrutiny when determining whether the legislation is constitutional," wrote the court. "However, regarding marriage, the United States Supreme Court does not demand 'that every state regulation which relates in any way to the incidents of or prerequisites for marriage must be subjected to rigorous scrutiny.'" It also noted that the U.S. Supreme Court in *U.S. v. Windsor* "left unanswered the level of scrutiny it was applying to same-gender marriages."

"We conclude from the United States Supreme Court's equivocation in these cases that whether the right to marry is a fundamental right requiring strict scrutiny is a question that remains unanswered," wrote Chavez. "We do not need to answer this question here because Plaintiffs prevail when we apply an intermediate scrutiny level of review under an equal protection analysis." According to the court, under intermediate scrutiny, the state offered no sufficient reason for denying same-sex couples the right to marry.

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Federal judge strikes Utah ban on marriage

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

On Dec. 20, a federal judge in Utah issued a decision striking down that state's ban on same-sex marriage.

Obama appointee Judge Robert Shelby issued a 53-page decision, in *Kitchen v. Herbert*, saying the state's current definition of marriage is not permissible under the U.S. Constitution.

Noting that a court interferes with a law adopted by voters "only under exceptional circumstances," Shelby said, "Utah's prohibition on same-sex marriage conflicts with the United States Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process under the law."

"The State's current laws deny its gay and lesbian citizens their fundamental right to marry," wrote Shelby, "and, in so doing, demean the dignity of these same-sex couples for no rational reason."

Shelby's order immediately enjoined the state from enforcing its ban, but Republican Gov. Gary Herbert's administration will almost certainly seek an emergency stay of the decision from the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

It is, nevertheless, yet another surge of momentum in the direction of marriage equality in the United States, coming just one day after the New Mexico Supreme Court said that state could no longer interpret its marriage laws to exclude same-sex couples. That decision made New Mexico the 17th state in the country, plus the District of Columbia, to provide marriage equality and putting more than one-third of states and one-third of the nation's population in jurisdictions that treat same-sex couples the same as straight couples.

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[Note: The office of Utah Attorney General Brian Tarbet has filed a notice that it will appeal a federal judge's ruling striking down the state's ban on same-sex marriage.]



Twitter pic of Seth Anderson (right) and husband Michael Adam Ferguson, who married in Utah. Photo from Anderson

McDonald's: No political stand in Sochi

BY MATT SIMONETTE

An official from Oak Brook, Ill.-based McDonald's Corp. said at a Chicago Sports Commission luncheon last week that the company would not make a statement about anti-gay laws implemented in Russia last summer, Crain's Chicago Business reported Dec. 17.

The company has a high-profile sponsorship of the Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

"If we as a sponsor, or any sponsor, were to pull [out of their deal] or boycott, we'd be hurting the U.S. Olympic team," said John Lewicki, McDonald's director of global alliances. "Our mission really is to make sure that we do not penalize the U.S. athletes. The [U.S. Olympic Committee] is not going to boycott, so we're not going to subjugate that by not supporting athletes."

McDonald's has been a regular sponsor of the Olympics since 1976 and recently renewed that sponsorship through 2020.

Lewicki said that, while the company wants to see the athletes perform in an atmosphere free from discrimination, "We try to keep the politics out of it and try to focus on sport."

In August, activists from a number of Chicago-based organizations, among them StonewallAgain and Gay Liberation Network, protested at McDonald's headquarters.

AIDS groups ask CDC to change reporting methods

Several AIDS groups have issued a statement asking the Centers of Disease of Control (CDC) to change reporting methods in the wake of a report it recently released in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).

The groups stated, "The press release for the report, headlined 'Sexual risk lower among U.S. gay and bisexual men who accurately know their HIV status,' provides a constructive and accurate emphasis on the success of gay and bisexual men who know their HIV status."

"However, the full MMWR article is quite dif-

ferent in its messaging and emphasis, skewing sharply to language that could encourage sexual stigma and blaming.

"We urge CDC to take this opportunity to re-evaluate language, methods and recommendations regarding the sexuality and HIV prevention practices of gay, and bisexual men and other MSM [men who have sex with men]."

The groups who signed the statement include ACT UP Philadelphia, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), Positive Women's Network-USA (PWN-USA), HIV Prevention Justice Alliance (HIV PJA) and Transgender Law Center, among others.

The full statement is at <http://www.windy-citymediagroup.com/lgbt/AIDS-groups-ask-CDC-to-change-reporting-methods-/45605.html>.

Edgewater path petition presented

Citizens of the Chicago North Side neighborhood of Edgewater presented a petition and online straw poll in support of the construction and funding of a promenade and bike path (with lighted median from Ardmore to Devon avenues) to the offices of Ald. Harry Osterman, Ald. Patrick O'Connor, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Board of Elections on Dec. 16.

Almost 1,500 signatures were collected from May to November.

The winner of the rendering competition is Chicago muralist Paul Noah, artist-in-residence at the Institute of Cultural Affairs in Uptown. A landscaping design competition is now ongoing, with a prize of \$100. See www.EdgewaterBeachwalk.com.

Center receives \$45K grant from Comcast

Lakeview's Center on Halsted announced it received a three-year grant totaling \$45,000 from the Comcast Foundation to support the Dr. David J. Lochman Cyber Center.

The cyber center offers free Internet access for visitors, along with classes ranging from how to use Microsoft Word and PowerPoint and photo- and video-editing software, to how to set up a blog and use Twitter.

Truth Wins Out founder moves to Chicago

BY MATTHEW C. CLARK

While Wayne Besen loves New York City, where he originally headquartered Truth Wins Out (TWO), Chicago has also always been a love of his.

"I've called Chicago my mistress for a long time—or 'my mister' would be more appropriate," he told Windy City Times.

This December Besen moved TWO operations to Chicago.

The non-profit organization, dedicated to eradicating LGBTQ prejudice, found New York to be too expensive to base its operations from



Wayne Besen. Photo by Michael Murphy

there, and moved to Burlington, Vt., a small college town with a population a little more than 40,000.

"We have a luxury in terms of [being] a small organization. We can run it as long as we have an Internet hookup and a satellite dish somewhere near by, we can run it," Besen said.

But Besen said he longed for the resources and organizations that a bigger city could offer.

"We looked at other factors: livability, affordability, a strong LGBT community. Chicago just seemed like a really great fit," he said. "Chicago just made a lot of sense. It's an incredible city with a very strong LGBT community and it's also a lot more affordable than Manhattan, or even Brooklyn now."

Besen said he was excited to be moving to the Midwest, but also said the region in general can be a contentious place, with organizations like Americans for Truth About Homosexuality, which is based in Illinois.

"I think the general region where you have incredibly strong community," he said. "Also in the Midwest there's a lot of fundamentalists as well, as you know, in the area. Even our nemesis Peter LaBarbera is right around the corner."

"I'm sure the ex-gay organizations aren't going to be thrilled with our presence there," he later added.

While he and his husband Jamie Brundage had already planned on moving before the Illinois marriage equality bill had gone for a vote before the Illinois House of Representatives, Besen said he was relieved that they will not have to downgrade their marriage.

Besen said TWO is currently working on three major projects: the Not All Christians Are Like That Project, an LGBTscience.org website, and a definitive website on the extremism of what he terms the ex-gay movement, which is still in its developing stages.

"We want to do some more in-depth research and really look at these groups and make a persuasive case, not just slap some stuff up there or do things that have been done before," he said.

Besen—who said he has spoken at the Cen-



Wally Dwyer.

PASSAGES

Walter J. 'Wally' Dwyer

A wake and funeral were held Nov. 24-25 in honor of Wally Dwyer, following his passing Nov. 19 after a critical episode in his long-term illness, which he had been surviving and dealing with fairly well.

His immediate family includes his mother Joan, his brother Nick and wife Liz, and his sister Anne and husband Bob. He was a loved uncle of Constance, a friend to his special cousin Loretta, and many cousins and extended family and friends.

ter on Halsted, worked with the Gay Liberation Network, and conducted press conferences with gay-rights activist Rick Garcia—said the move to Chicago will open the organization to better fundraising and less travel, among other things.

"I think we'll be in a much better position in terms of getting people involved, and I think it will improve the development arena," he said. "We work together whenever possible, and so we're looking forward to making some new friends, and reconnecting with some old ones."

Besen sees the current cultural state for gays and lesbians as a decisive one, which can put an end to discrimination.

"The ex-gay industry has been fairly discredited and severely weakened in the United States. This is the time to finish the job," he said. "That doesn't mean they won't still be there, to some extent. As long as there is prejudice and discrimination there will be a market for these types."

As for the city of broad shoulders, Besen said he and his husband are looking forward to a thriving LGBT community, making new friends, and returning to city life.

"Just the energy," he said. "You just can't manufacture that anywhere. As much as you'd like to, you can only get that in a few places."

Miller Lite, Hailo offering \$1M in free taxi rides

Miller Lite and Hailo are teaming to help prevent drunk driving by giving away \$1 million in cab rides in Chicago this holiday season.

Through Jan. 5, 2014, participants can obtain a \$10 Hailo discount code by visiting select bars throughout the city where Miller Lite is served. To redeem the code, simply download the Hailo app, enter the code and use it to summon a taxi.

Some of the local participating bars include North End, Roscoe's, Spin, Lucky Horseshoe and Charlie's.

The Hailo partnership in Chicago is part of MillerCoors largest drunk driving prevention program to date: together, the companies are providing \$3 million worth of cab rides throughout the holiday season in Chicago, Boston and New York.

Visit www.Hailocab.com/CelebrateSafe.

Walter—or as he liked to be called, Wally, or "Waldemere"—was well-known and loved in the community, and was a friend to so many people.

He worked with many theaters over the years, most notably The Wellington/Ivanhoe, Bailiwick and Lionheart Gay Theater Company. He was versatile, and worked box office, backstage crew, and occasionally as an actor onstage. At the Wellington/Ivanhoe, he worked crew on one of his all-time favorite shows, Theda Bara and the Frontier Rabbi, appreciating all of the musical drama and comedy of that subject.

Rick Paul, founder and director of Lionheart Gay Theater Company, was Wally's mentor on several original productions. Wally also worked extensively with Syzygy Productions, a theater group founded by Chicago playwright Jeff Hagedorn, who wrote early groundbreaking plays dealing with the personal and social impact of the AIDS epidemic. Appearing in several of their plays, Wally took part in Syzygy's revival of pub theater.

Lori Cannon, of Vital Bridges/Open Hand Food Pantry, has been a special friend of Wally, and she and her volunteer staff have many fond and extraordinary memories of their association with Wally.

Wally worked for several businesses in the Community, including The Eagle, where he was outstanding in his full regalia. A collector, he was known for his keen eye in spotting treasures that others overlooked or discarded, and was famous for his collection of "Leopard Print Everything" ... from photo frames to scarves to book jackets to well-turned accessories.

Wally had a near-encyclopedic memory and knowledge of all things musical theater. He especially enjoyed backstage anecdotes, dish and gossip about the goings-on of the stars and productions, and remembered everything. Being a connoisseur of irony with a wicked sense of humor, "Waldemere" was very entertaining.

Wally passed less than a month before his 50th birthday. On his birth date, his family placed a memorial in the Chicago Tribune: "We remember your courage, your caring and your birthday." He will be missed, with love and lots of thanks.

PASSAGES

Hal Brun

Hal Brun recently passed away at 66.

He was the lifetime partner for 30 years of Jeff Ginsberg (Columbia College Chicago); son of the late Harold and Eleanor (Fortmiller) Brun; and fond brother of Barbara Brun and David (Trina) Brun, according to the Chicago Tribune.

Brun received his masters degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

He was the director of special education at New Trier High School, director of special services Evanston/Skokie District, and executive director of the East DuPage Special Education District, Villa Park.

In lieu of flowers, donations to can be sent to American Brittany Rescue or the charity of your choice. For info, contact Michalik Funeral Home at 312-421-0936 or sign the guestbook at www.MichalikFuneralHome.com.

Rauner says he would have vetoed same-sex marriage

Republican gubernatorial candidate Bruce Rauner was recorded saying that he would have voted against same-sex marriage in Illinois, according to a Dec. 19 Capitol Fax report.

Rauner has maintained that the gay-marriage issue should be decided by a referendum vote, not by the legislature. In the recording, made at a Tea Party gathering in Quincy, Ill., on Nov. 5, the day the Illinois House approved SB10, Rauner was asked whether he would have vetoed the bill were he governor.

"The answer is, it would all depend on whether the voters had approved it in a referendum,"

Rauner said. "Today, they haven't approved it in a referendum so if I were governor I would veto. I believe that voters, on some new concept like that—that's a totally new concept—in a contractual relationship between two adults, voters should decide in a referendum. Politicians shouldn't be putting that on people if they don't want it, or blocking it if they do."

Rauner, a venture capitalist and confidant to Mayor Rahm Emanuel, was asked by Carol Marin on WTTW's Chicago Tonight in June whether he was "ducking" the topic of marriage equality, to which he replied, "I will not lead on that issue."

The original article and recording are at: <http://capitolfax.com/2013/12/19/rauner-says-he-wouldve-vetoed-gay-marriage-bill/>.

—Matt Simonette

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DARINGLY MOVING

Black LGBT activists discuss steps after marriage

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A group of about 50 community activists and service providers, many of them affiliated with organizations serving African-American LGBT community members, gathered Dec. 21 at the headquarters of the Chicago Urban League, 4510 S. Michigan Ave., for a forum assessing what issues they should address now that marriage equality is on its way to Illinois.

Some activists from the African-American LGBT community regard the push for marriage equality as a promising moment when individuals and organizations were able to set aside differences and work for a common goal. Now that the goal has largely been won in Illinois, many people want to see that momentum applied to other initiatives.

"This is the first time in 30 years that we've had the chance to coalesce," said activist Michael O'Connor.

The forum was divided into three policy sessions addressing issues pertinent to the Black LGBT community: School Environment and Health Care Access; Criminal Justice; and Economics and Employment Discrimination.

State Rep. Greg Harris was in attendance, but

should be asking, "How do we grow the pie?"

Dr. Travis Gayles of Lurie Children's Hospital discussed health issues that disproportionately affect LGBT African-Americans, among them HIV/AIDS and diabetes, while Dr. Phoenix Matthews of the University of Illinois at Chicago addressed the marketing of cigarettes to the African-American community, and the problems with the high use of menthol cigarettes among African-American smokers.

O'Connor, lobbyist Coy Pugh and Algie Crivens III of ASCME local 1006 discussed issues pertaining to mandatory sentencing and criminal record expungement. They acknowledged that it's difficult to get politicians on board with ideas regarding criminal rehabilitation since many fear the consequences of not looking tough on crime.

"Just because a person is convicted does not mean that we [as a society] should throw them away," said O'Connor, who added that many politicians are scrambling to support and devise laws with tough penalties, even though the crime rate in the state has dropped.

During the Economics and Employment Discrimination panel, Mona Noriega, commissioner of the Chicago Department of Human Relations,



From left: Craig Johnson, Channyn Parker, Amara Enyia and Mona Noriega. Photo by Tracy Baim

representatives from some larger LGBT policy organizations were not.

Khadine Bennett of the ACLU of Illinois began the school environment panel by speaking of a need for strong legislation that can help to curb school bullying.

ACLU of Illinois is advocating for a bill that requires school districts to define their bullying policies. The legislation was attempted in 2011 but did not get far thanks to opposition from the Illinois Family Institute, who said that the legislation would tacitly imply it was "okay to be gay."

"That's the climate we were dealing with in Springfield," said Bennett.

Caryn Curry of Mental Health America of Illinois added that the state's schools must ramp up opportunities for "social and emotional learning" (SEL), which she said was "acquiring skills to navigate the world."

SEL initiatives could heighten both a student's self-awareness and their abilities to interact productively with others, Curry said, adding that parents quite often can benefit by engaging with the initiatives as well.

"We're talking about some basic civility," Curry said. "The way we talk to each other is the core of everything."

Ramon Gardenhire of AIDS Foundation of Chicago then discussed a number of political barriers impeding the funding that provides medical assistance for underserved populations. He suggested that a progressive state income tax, which is the norm in most states, could improve the revenue stream. Current funding strategies "pit different communities against each other to get a piece of the pie," Gardenhire said. "We

described the relative ease with which Chicagoans could file a discrimination complaint, even without an attorney, adding that it is illegal to discriminate under several categories, including sexual orientation, gender identity and credit history. "For example, you will no longer see want ads here that read, 'Only employed applicants need apply,'" said Noriega.

She acknowledged, however, that more people needed to come forward with complaints—just 237 have been filed in the city in 2013.

Panelists Channyn Parker of Chicago House TransLife Center discussed challenges facing transgender individuals, including disparate rules concerning ID's. She said that all too often authorities fail to address the broad range of people on the transgender spectrum while presenting difficulties that could only be resolved if a person had gender confirmation surgery.

"As of today, a trans woman's greatest protection is her invisibility," said Parker.

Amara Enyia of ACE Municipal Partners, also spoke of difficulties facing LGBT immigrants of color, pointing to not only prejudices held against immigrants by the wider community, but prejudices against LGBT people in their own communities.

Introductory and closing remarks at the forum were given by activist Lisa Marie Pickens, co-founder of Affinity Community Services, while Kim Hunt of Affinity and Craig Johnson of Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus were panel moderators.

The online version of this article has more photos and videos of each of the panel discussions.



Kevin Boyer and Christina Kahrl at the GLAAD event. Photo by Tracy Baim

GLAAD honors Kevin Boyer

The Chicago Leadership Council of GLAAD hosted a holiday party at Downtown Bar & Lounge Dec. 18, celebrating a year of LGBT victories and honoring former Leadership Council co-chair Kevin Boyer.

New GLAAD board member Christina Kahrl introduced Boyer at the event, pointing to his decades of service at various organizations as a leader, including with Gerber/Hart Library, Gay and Lesbian History Month, the Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Gay Games VII in Chicago, and as co-chair of the March on Springfield Oct. 22.

Boyer said now that marriage equality has passed in Illinois, it is time to continue the coalition work that helped achieve that goal, by the LGBT community showing up and supporting a wide range of social justice issues.

Activists protest George celebration

BY MATT SIMONETTE

About 25 activists, mostly members of the Gay Liberation Network (GLN) and Rainbow Sash Movement, on Dec. 18 protested a celebration honoring the retirement of Cardinal Francis George held at the Drake Hotel, 140 E. Walton Pl.

"The majority of lay Catholics favor equal rights for gays and equal rights for women at a rate in excess of the general population," said GLN co-founder Andy Thayer. "This protest is not against Catholics [or] Catholicism. It's against those in the minority, who are in the leadership of their faith, preventing equality for others—not just people of their own faith, but also of the nation at large."

Thayer said that even though Illinois had made great strides towards equality, "the battle is not over" for the LGBT community.

"We may have won formal legal equality, but as the experience of others has shown us, formal legal equality is not all its cracked up to be," Thayer said. "We need full social equality, and the record of not just the archdiocese of this city, but archdioceses around the country, has shown that when we push for a measure of social equality, they are bitterly opposed to it."

Bob Schwartz of GLN said the lavish celebration was unseemly given the financial straights of the Chicago Archdiocese.

"When the Archdiocese is \$40 million in the red, personnel layoffs are being threatened, potential school closures are talked about, there's plenty of money to spend on a banquet to honor this man who has spent his time here in Chicago opposing equal rights for LGBT people as well as equal rights for women—something is wrong with these men, and they are all men, since there are no female leaders in the Roman [Catholic] Church," Schwartz said.

"I am an out and proud lesbian, and I do not want to celebrate this man," added Deborah Goodman of GLN. "It angers me that he is celebrated at all."



Joe Murray at the protest. Photo by Matt Simonette

Joe Murray of Rainbow Sash Movement said that George has "dragged his feet" in addressing sexual abuse scandals that have been pervasive throughout the church.

George "cares more about his clergy who abuses children than the victims. It's time for a readjustment of our traditional agenda."

In a Dec. 18 interview in Chicago Sun-Times, George said of the scandal, "When I was ordained, I never thought any priest could do something like that. To suddenly realize, yes there are priests who can do things that evil was a shattering moment as it is for many Catholics."

George was a high-profile opponent of marriage equality in Illinois. Shortly after the passage of SB10 he wrote a letter denouncing the legislation, which he asked be included in all church bulletins in the diocese. SB10 "is bad law because it will contribute over the long run to the further dissolution of marriage and family life, which are the bedrock of any society," wrote George in the letter, published Nov. 17.

George submitted a letter stating his intention of retiring at the beginning of 2012, as is customary when a cardinal reaches age 75. Pope Francis, however, has yet to actually name a replacement.

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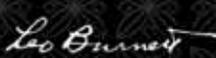
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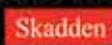


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Community Marketing, Inc.



**KIM
FLOWERS**

The pope?

In the midst of congratulatory equal-marriage news and controversial pieces like "Twitter's Gayest Responses to Beyonce's New Album," The Advocate magazine has caused possibly the biggest uproar yet by naming Pope Francis its Person of the Year in the December issue.

It even features him on its cover rocking a NOH8 logo on his face. I wonder if the magazine accidentally swapped out its December issue for April Fool's. The Advocate's Facebook page has been swarmed with comments ranging from happiness to confusion, disgust and even subscription cancellations. I don't plan to stop reading The Advocate, but I do think it's given the pope an honor that could have better served someone who is actually working for the LGBT community.

After listing some of its finalists, The Advocate says, "There has not been any vote cast or ruling issued, and still a significant and unprecedented

shift took place this year in how LGBT people are considered by one of the world's largest faith communities."

I'm afraid The Advocate has been sadly misled. There has been no shift at all, and there won't be one, at least not without more work. It's true the pope said some nice words about not judging others, but this will not change one thing in mainstream religion for the LGBT community. At best, the translation is, "Don't hate and don't judge, but gay people should still change their ways."

As a survivor of a religious upbringing and Christian college experience, including a brief stint in ex-gay therapy, I know the words the pope have said will in no way be implemented into a radical new agenda for people who believe the Bible is infallible. The Bible says in Leviticus that two men who lie together have committed an abomination and should be put to death. Regardless of whether this translation is accurate, if the verse is taken in appropriate context, or if any of it even matters at all, these are the words printed on the page. Homosexuality, as a sin, is something the vast majority of Christians believe, while conveniently overlooking other verses in the same book (and chapter) that forbid beard-shaving and tattoos, and commands the death penalty for adultery and cursing one's parents.

The Advocate even admits that "Pope Francis is still not pro-gay by today's standard." I respectfully believe the magazine should have given the award to someone who is truly pro-gay, not someone who is just telling his followers they should change the subject, and who says that gay marriage is "an attempt to destroy God's plan." (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/13/pope-francis-quotations-by-him-about-him>)

Religion is important to many people, including some of us in the LGBT community. Many of us have struggled to reconcile our faith and sexuality; some of us never will. Maybe we should take a good look at what the Bible actually says, and consider all the multiple denominations out there —many Protestants consider Catholicism to be a borderline pagan religion and most don't listen to the Pope at all.

Admiring the pope for saying, "We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods" is fine, but giving him a top honor in the LGBT community just for saying a few neutral words is a slap in the face to those who actually fought for gay rights in our country this year.

Kim Flowers is a YA author from Indiana.
<http://kimflowersbooks.weebly.com>



**DANA
RUDOLPH**

MOMBIAN LGBT parents and children in 2013

This past year has been full of events—positive and negative—that have impacted the struggle for equality of LGBT parents and our children. Here are some highlights.

—Marriage equality in eight new states: LGBT parents were active in all of them (California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Rhode Island) to make this happen.

—The U.S. Supreme Court's repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act's (DOMA's) ban on federal recognition: This was a boon to all same-sex couples, but had an immediate impact on binational couples with children, who can now keep their families together. Cathy Davis, an Irish mom raising three children with her American spouse Catriona Dowling, was the first same-sex spouse to receive a marriage-based green card, just a week after the ruling.

—Increasing recognition for same-sex couples not legally married: In another repercussion of the DOMA ruling, the U.S. Department of Education said in December that it will consider the finances of both parents in a legally married same-sex couple when calculating their child's college financial aid. The department had, however, announced last April that it would consider a dependent student's legal parents regardless of the parents' marital status or gender, as long as the parents live together. And U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced same-sex couples and their children can complete a customs declaration as a family, even if the couple is not legally married or if the parent is not related by blood or adoption to the children.

—The passing of two lesbian mothers who had been fighting for marriage equality: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Charlie Morgan of the New Hampshire National Guard, who was raising a child

with her spouse Karen, died in February from breast cancer. Morgan was a plaintiff in a lawsuit brought by Outserve-SLDN challenging the constitutionality of DOMA and pushing for spousal recognition from the military. Karen finally received a military ID in October.

Jennifer Neuman-Roper, mother of three and a plaintiff in the ACLU marriage lawsuit in New Mexico, died in November of brain cancer. She and her spouse Angelique had won an emergency court order that allowed them to marry in August, several days before a district court judge ordered the Santa Fe County clerk to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

—The Every Child Deserves a Family Act reintroduced in both houses of Congress: The bill, which failed to make it out of committee in the last two sessions, aims to find more permanent homes for children by withholding federal funding of foster care and adoption organizations that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

—Same-sex parents recognized in President Obama's proclamation of National Family Week: The president wrote, "Whether united by blood or bonds of kinship—whether led by a mother and father, same-sex couple, single parent, or guardian—families are the building blocks of American society."

—The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) passed the Senate for the first time: ENDA would give job security to many, including families with children. House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) will not, however, let it come up for a vote in his chamber.

—The ban on gay and lesbian leaders upheld by the Boy Scouts of America: This includes both former scouts and parents of existing ones, even though the organization decided to allow gay scouts.

—Differing family structures recognized in California: Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill to allow a child to have more than two legal parents, and another that requires health insurers to offer fertility coverage to all plan holders, regardless of sexual orientation or marital status.

—Adoption and foster care equality still a struggle: In Nebraska, three same-sex couples, along with the ACLU, brought a lawsuit challenging the state ban on gay men and lesbians becoming foster parents. Over in Michigan, however, a House committee passed three bills that would give taxpayer-funded adoption agencies the right to deny an adoption based on

the agency's moral or religious beliefs. Equality Michigan is urging House leaders to kill the bills.

—Child custody cases increasingly recognized nonbiological parents: In Kansas, when a biological mother tried to prevent a nonbiological mother from seeking custody, the state Supreme Court ruled that a nonbiological parent may be recognized as a parent and has the right to seek custody. The Colorado Court of Appeals ruled similarly in a case there. In an Indiana Court of Appeals case, however, the court said a nonbiological mother may seek visitation, but does not have full parental rights. The Court noted, however, that it would welcome clearer legislation on the matter.

And the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled in the case of a divorced gay dad with a new, male partner that the state does not automatically ban the presence of a nonmarital partner during child visitation. Instead, it should weigh evidence of whether the children are likely to be harmed by the partner's presence.

—Increased visibility in mainstream media: The continuing success of the Emmy Award-winning Modern Family, along with new shows The Fosters and Sean Saves the World, put gay- and lesbian-headed families on millions of television screens each week.

—Mixed news from abroad: Russian legislators introduced a bill that would let the state take children away from parents who are gay or lesbian. On the good side, Northern Ireland lifted its ban on same-sex and unmarried couples applying to adopt children. And Germany's highest court ruled that same-sex partners may adopt children already adopted by their partners. Previously, they could only adopt the partner's biological children.

Overall, I'd say it was a year of progress, aided by the ever-increasing visibility of LGBT parents and our children in our neighborhoods and communities. Here's to a great 2014 for all of us.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), an award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBT parents.

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Oleg Volk

TAKING AIM

Marksman Chris Cheng has officially come out of the closet. Read more on page 21.

THEATER

Going 'Dutch.'
Page 12Photo from Dutchman
by Joshua Willcox

DISH

Hitting the Brix.
Page 18Photo of Brixton
by Shira Kollins

SPORTS

What would Brian do?
Page 22Photo of Brian Boitano
from The Food NetworkYear in review:
Chicago dance 2013

BY LAUREN WARNECKE

To say 2013 was a good year for dance is an understatement. Visitors dazzled with technical panache and theatricality, while our home-grown companies pushed themselves to work with new genres, push production values upward, and revisit old haunts. Below is a top 10 of 2013 at home (in no particular order), with three out-of-towners thrown in for good measure.

Best new work

—Episode 31: The Joffrey Ballet
Everything about Alexander Eckman's Episode 31 is exciting. Dressed in black and white, Joffrey's dancers are pushed outside their comfort zone, and pull it off amazingly. The process and product are entirely new for Joffrey, and Episode 31 becomes even more interesting when juxtaposed with November's full length *La Bayadere*. Premiered last August during the Chicago Dancing Festival, Episode 31 visits the Auditorium Theatre as part of Joffrey's winter program in February 2014, and is not to be missed.

—The Floating City: Kristina Isabelle
Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist Kristina Isabelle exploited every penny of her \$15,000 award in making *The Floating City*. Video, sound, lights, set and dance were beautifully calibrated in the evening-length exploration of "the muck" and "the middle".

—Cloudless: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC)

A short new duet for two women sandwiched by bigger, flashier, full company works, *Cloudless* premiered as a part of HSDC's fall series. Uncharacteristically patient for resident choreographer Alejandro Cerrudo, *Cloudless* is elegant,

intimate, and simply beautiful.

Best remounts

—Monument: The Seldoms
Carrie Hanson and her company of wonderful Seldoms benefitted from the return of Christina Gonzalez-Gillett, as well as a revisit of the 2008 work *Monument* at Stage 773. A timeless eulogy on waste, *Monument* marked a pivotal shift in Hanson's process that has influenced more recent works.

—Cinderbox: Lucky Plush Productions
Cinderbox 2.0 impressively transformed the main space in Links Hall's new location, and featured an equally beefy cast of dancers (some of whom were returning from the original 2007 cast). The cheeky Julia Rhoads always manages to startle and surprise, even when you know the punchlines.

—One Thousand Pieces: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago

A remount of a 2012 work seems odd at first, but HSDC chose wisely in re-presenting its first evening-length effort from Cerrudo. *One Thousand Pieces* is a feat of technical magnificence—though it bears little resemblance to its inspiration (Marc Chagall's *America Windows*). The encore was presented just a few weeks ago for HSDC's Winter Series, and rightly so with its icy blue overtones and majestic fog curtain.

—The Rite of Spring: The Joffrey Ballet

Many Rites of Spring popped up throughout the year in tribute to the centennial of the Ni-jinsky ballet. The Joffrey opened its 2013-14 season with a program of "Russian Masters," but the true master was the reconstructed original choreography complete with authentic costum-ing and sets.



Joffrey Ballet's "Le Sacre du Printemps," part of its Russian Masters program. Photo by Herbert Migdoll

Best of the small-budget companies

—bully.punk.riot: BONEdance
Rumored to be a final curtain call for BONEdance, Artistic Director Atalee Judy created an immersive performance surrounding the theme of herding and crowd theory at the then new Links Hall space. Perhaps a memoir of Judy's life as a run-away teen embedded in the New York punk scene, *bully.punk.riot* revisited work from throughout her thirteen-year history, expertly sewn together to create a fun, cohesive experience.

—The Nexus Project

The two man show featuring Michel Rodriguez Cintra and Benjamin Wardell was a long time coming; coveted seats to the intimate performance in a Pilsen warehouse space were sold-out for all ten performances, and for good reason. Wardell, the brain-child of the project, crafted a choose-your-own-adventure show built from material provided by 12 duets set on the two men by 12 Chicago choreographers. In doing so, he completely dispels any assumptions about partnering and man on man duets.

—Rituals of Abundance and Lean Times: Peter Carpenter Performance Project

Peter Carpenter's ongoing mission explores the economic crisis and its impact on art. Parts nine and ten were presented at *Dance in the Parks* and on a double bill with *Same Planet Different World*, respectively, and appeared to be more about bringing transparency to the creative process than economic doldrums. Carpenter's comedic timing, use of text, and theatrical stylings are just three of the many things that make him brilliant.

Best out-of-towners

—Underland: Stephen Petronio Company
It feels like a long time ago that Stephen Petronio traversed down a scaffolding upstage at The Dance Center of Columbia College into his *Underland*. Much more than an exercise in the art of the quick change (though it was most certainly that), multiple viewings of *Underland* reveal its choreographic intricacy and deep connection to Nick Cage's ominous score.

—Story/Time: Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Dance Company

The highly anticipated return of Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Dance Company to Chicago was nestled amongst an impressive fall line-up at The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, who celebrates its 40th season this year. *Story/Time*, a Cunningham/Cage-inspired chance operation, navigates 70 stories in as many minutes narrated by the stoic Jones surrounded by granny smith apples. Each story is a page from Jones' diary, and exquisitely interpreted by the dancers with varying degrees of literacy.

—Having Words: Casebolt & Smith
You probably didn't see this, but it's definitely worth a mention. Los Angeles-based Liz Casebolt & Joel Smith are known for their dance theater duets—primarily because that is all they make. *Having Words* is a brilliantly constructed handshake dance for two dancers and an audience, built for DanceWorks Chicago and premiered by dancers Angela Dice Nguyen & Liv Schaffer at The Art of Partnering: Audience Architects' final *Moving Dialogs* series at the gorgeous Logan Center for the Arts in November.



Tribes. Photo by Michael Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

Tribes

Playwright: Nina Raine
At: Steppenwolf Theatre,
 1650 N. Halsted St.
Tickets: 312-335-1650;
www.steppenwolf.org; \$20-\$82
Runs through: Feb. 9

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The overeducated and overachieving family whose surname we never learn dwell in a household of harangues, soliloquies and pronouncements making for a domestic atmosphere vibrating with enough crossfire oratory to ignite psychokinetic manifestations.

Papa Christopher is given to fulminating against society in general and his kinfolk in specific, while Mama Beth writes marital-murder mysteries when not striving to keep the peace among her own brood. It's no wonder that daughter Ruth withdraws into dreams of a singing career and older son Daniel is afflicted with a peripatetic stutter exacerbated by aural hallucinations. Then, there is younger son Billy, who dwells in silence, having been born deaf.

Billy is no allegorical-innocent Tiny Tim or Lenny Small, however. Having been taught to lip-read and vocalize by parents opposed to "self-definition by disability," his introduction to Sylvia—a young woman acclimated to deaf culture, who is gradually losing her hearing to a hereditary illness—opens up new vistas for the sheltered lad, but also mandates uncomfortable decisions: can these sensory-crossed lovers find contentment as second-class citizens amid the auditory-unchallenged, or should they instead seek acceptance in the equally snobbish world of the auditory-impaired? How will their filial loyalties—specifically, the fraternal bond between Billy and Daniel—be tested by their growth? What if their goals cease to be mutually compatible?

Nina Raine doesn't make the choices any easier for playgoers. Yes, the staging includes projected subtitles—for sign language and, significantly, for Daniel's increasingly halting speech—but we are also confronted with conversations where no translations are offered. Music is played in increasingly narrow tonal ranges, fading into white noise. The characters interrupt and overlap one another in logorrheic frenzy (rules of discourse apparently viewed as bourgeois affectations).

What speaks louder than the verbiage hurled at one another by this noisy, vulgar, fiercely affectionate tribe is the undeniable pain of individuals struggling to articulate their needs to loved ones seemingly—well, deaf to their entreaties. A journey's first step can be a single word (or gesture), though, and while audiences may resent Raine for refusing to provide her densely textured play a tidy resolution, when your story is all about taking those risky first steps, an ending that sends us home thinking "NOW what?" is a compelling reminder that only with the *next* step can progress occur.

CRITICS' PICKS

Christmas Dearest, Hell in a Handbag Productions at Mary's Attic, through Dec. 29. Hollywood icon Joan Crawford gets her chance to become a tyrannical Scrooge in David Cerda's gender-bending and campy spin on Dickens' A Christmas Carol. SCM

A Klingon Christmas Carol, Commedia Beauregard at Raven Theatre, through Dec. 29. Even adapted for science-fiction audiences and performed in an artificial language (with English subtitles), Dickens' seasonal parable conveys, literally, universal wisdom and warmth. MSB

Once Upon a People, Black Ensemble, through Dec. 29. Courageous princesses do the rescuing and powerful female monarchs decide the fate of their realms in Rueben Echoles' jubilant music-and-dance-filled holiday adaptation of an African Folk tale. MSB

Port Authority, Writers Theatre, through Feb. 16, 2014. Exquisite acting, and commonplace speech elevated to poetry, infuse this tender and introspective piece about three Irishmen of different generations who bare their rueful souls about the women who got away. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge
 and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Dutchman

Playwright: Amiri Baraka
 (formerly LeRoi Jones)
At: Definition Theatre Company
 at Collaboraction Theater,
 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave. Room 336
Tickets: 847-868-2528;
www.definitiontheatre.org; \$20-\$25
Runs through: Jan. 5

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Dutchman is very much a theatrical remnant of the 1960s. Not only does the play ferociously comment on simmering antagonism between repressive white people and striving African-Americans, but Dutchman also embodies much of the defiant, if pessimistic, mood of the soon to be emboldened Black Power movement.

Dutchman also points to burgeoning pride in African heritage—made clear from the fact that playwright LeRoi Jones changed his name to the more Afrocentric Amiri Baraka not long after he became known for writing this provoking one-act drama.

Yet Dutchman can also come off as dated and a tad too obvious with its allegorical archetype characters and blunt symbolism. Definition Theatre Company makes a game attempt at presenting Dutchman, deliberately staged to start a dialogue on how things haven't changed for African-Americans in the ensuing years since the civil-rights movement. (There is a moderated post-show discussion after each show.) But the play itself doesn't always cooperate with director Tyrone Phillips' ultimate execution of the material.

Dutchman takes place in a New York subway car and Definition's production launches with a

monologue from a beggar played by Mercedes White. While asking for change, White's character goes on and on about trusting authority figures of the time and how her ultimate reward will come in the afterlife. It's a view that was common among Blacks during slavery as the one way of freedom from so much suffering, so the irony is not lost on the fact that the person delivering it is homeless and so supplicant in her views.

The real dramatic tension of Dutchman comes when the hippie-like white woman Lula (Carley Cornelius, entering eating a symbolic apple) flirts with and then provokes the aspiring young African-American poet Clay (Julian Parker). Lula continues to needle Clay throughout the play before Dutchman ends in murderous act of violence with hints that it will continue again and again (sort of like the mythical title Flying Dutchman who was cursed to live through eternity until he can find the love of a virtuous woman).

Parker and Cornelius offer solid performances, and director Philips has added some interesting staging conceits. These include having having Djembe player Ayinde Cartman add percussive punctuation to Clay and Lula's sparring, and adding Danielle Banks singing "Fever" as a subway busker.

But the inclusion of dancing and seat-hopping passengers (choreographed by Leila Henry) is just plain distracting on Moon Jung Kim's far-too-expansive subway set. It's puzzling why these folks don't really react to the elevating anger of the central characters' arguments.

You can tell Definition Theatre's intentions for reviving Dutchman are noble in terms of starting a dialogue through a provocative 1964 theater piece. But the ultimate execution of the play is problematic for such a work so strongly rooted in the 1960s.

THEATER REVIEW

Sherlock Holmes and the Christmas Goose

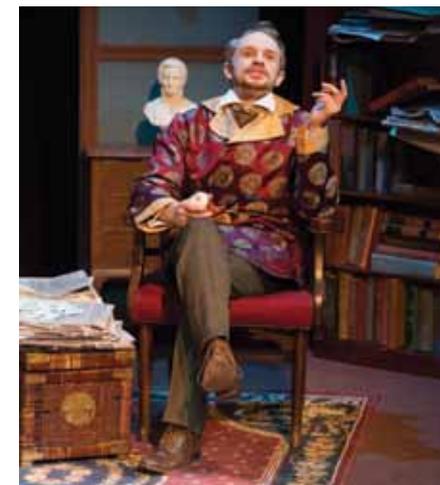
Playwright: J.B. Priestley
Playwright: adapted by Michael Menendian and John Weagly from the story by Arthur Conan Doyle
At: Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark St.
Tickets: 773-338-2177;
www.raventheatre.com; \$20
Runs through: Dec. 29

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

What lends this Sherlock Holmes whodunit its seasonal theme is the prominent clue provided by that indispensable centerpiece of Victorian Christmas repasts, roast goose. The key to solving the mystery is not in the cooking or eating, however, but the journey of these fowls from their barnyard coops to the tables of London.

The incident launching our story is the theft of a precious brooch, set with a rare blue gem, belonging to a guest staying in a Mayfair hotel. Holmes and Watson are intrigued by the case after the stolen bijou is found in the craw of a goose purchased at the Covent Garden market. Despite the property's recovery seeming to conclude the matter, Holmes thinks the police may have arrested the wrong man, and proposes to trace the progress of the jewel through a labyrinth winding over the urban landscape of 1892, with its prototypical shopper's clubs, backyard farming industry, and newsboys hawking the latest headlines. Oh, and since this is a Christmas tale, the criminal, upon being exposed, pleads—and is granted—mercy after promising to cease his dishonest ways.

Michael Menendian and John Weagly's adaptation appears to have undergone some changes since making its debut in 2012. The presence of stageside technicians supplying incidental music and sound effects (think radio plays) is minimized after the dramatic action commences, lest it become a distraction.



Sherlock Holmes and the Christmas Goose. Photo by Dean La Prairie

Actors swap costumes and shift scenery, story theater-style, to create a vivid array of period images, their transitions bridged by catchy original arrangements of traditional carols.

What still needs to be addressed is the ambiguous tone of our vaudeville's narrative segment. If intended as straightforward detection, then its personnel must be played straight-faced, with the thief's reformation rendered plausible within the context of his character. If, on the other hand, the goal is slapstick of the kind associated with Panto aimed at juvenile audiences, more mugging and winking is necessary, the quaint (in 2013) concept of freshly butchered—as opposed to frozen and plastic-wrapped—poultry emphasized, and the intellectual enjoyment of the plot discarded altogether.

It's difficult to imagine how a production performed only three weeks a year can provide feedback for the authors in sufficient quantity to fulfill its undeniable potential as an annual treat for holiday audiences of all ages. Look to 2014 for Menendian and Weagly to decide what kind of goose they will serve up.



The Little Prince. Photo by Liz Lauren

THEATER REVIEW

The Little Prince

Playwrights: Rick Cummings and John Scouliar after Antoine de Saint-Exupery
At: Lookingglass Theatre Company, 821 N. Michigan Ave.
Tickets: 312-337-0665;
www.lookingglasstheatre.org; \$45-\$75
Runs through: Feb. 23

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There are lots of wowing theatrical surprises in store for audiences at Lookingglass Theatre Company's new adaptation of Antoine de Saint-Exupery's beloved children's novel *The Little Prince*. And while that's just great for easily distracted kids, adult fans of the book might be put off by the circus-based hard-sell drive to the production overseen by director David Catlin.

Lookingglass Theatre certainly has its heart in the right place for *The Little Prince*, so you can't fault them there. Story adapters Rick Cummings and John Scouliar have structured the well-known tale about a stranded Aviator (Ian Barford) who encounters a mysterious and unearthly Little Prince (Amelia Hefferon) as a paean to childlike imagination that questions the hollow motivations of grownups for power and attention.

To visually emphasize this point, set designer Courtney O'Neill's dominating image is an oversize, curvy blank sheet of paper that alternately functions as a drawing pad and an oversize slide among other uses. The attractive and physically fit supporting cast also get a rigorous workout with Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi's acrobatic and circus choreography. Fine actors like Adeoye, Kareem Bandlealy, Kasey Foster, Raymond Fox and Lauren Hirte lower down from up above or rise

up from down below in places you would least suspect for them to appear.

In terms of visual splendor and theatrical whimsy, this is a prime all-ages Lookingglass staging that could easily tour regionally like the theater's past hits. Sally Dolemba's costumes are a clever mix of centuries-old styles and up-to-date freshness, and William Kirkham's lighting helps transport audiences to imaginative galaxies far away. Director Catlin also emphasizes the human-made quality of theater by showing the actors creating music with instruments or vocally, showing how moods are made while also receding into the dramatic background.

But what's lacking in this Lookingglass *Little Prince* are more quiet charming moments for the show's symbolism and messages to be contemplated. Many insights are delivered either in a shiny, or physically dynamic way, but the meanings can get muddled in the rush to show off the next dazzling theatrical trick (like that cool but ultimately distracting swarm of extra-strength soap bubbles).

The cast is consistently crafty and characterful, although it would have been nicer if the actors had some more depth to play from the show's script (particularly Louise Lamson's lovely and vain Rose). The Little Prince's death also might have benefited with a little more grievous loss to heighten the drama.

So even if it might move a bit too speedily for my taste, Lookingglass Theatre's visually resplendent take on *The Little Prince* is consistently entertaining and full of visual wonder to spur anyone's imagination. Hopefully, the *The Little Prince* will spur kids and parents to start a dialogue on the show's many symbolic flourishes after the fact to make up for the rushed dramatic impacts from mid-show.

SPOTLIGHT



Puerto Rican actress/writer Ravi Batista teams up with Neo-Futurists co-founder Greg Allen for a one-woman show called **Blasted Fool: Hamlet, Hope and the Madness in Our Blood**. The work employs five languages, 10 characters and loads of Shakespearean passion to deal with suicidal thoughts, worries of inherited madness and the stress of the holiday season. Soul Theatre's production of *Blasted Fool: Hamlet, Hope and the Madness in Our Blood* continues through Sunday, Jan. 5, at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 3 and 7:30 p.m. Saturdays and 2 and 6 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$20 and \$10 for students and seniors; call 773-975-8150 or visit www.lyricopera.org. Photo by Joe Mazza

PPF to present Hellman's 'The Children's Hour'

Pride Films and Plays (PPF) continues its 2013-14 season with Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, which will run Jan. 9-Feb. 9, 2014, at Collaboraction's Pentagon Theater, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave.
 Written in 1934, *The Children's Hour* is based

on a true story, and was originally banned in Chicago and not seen here until the 1950s.
 Tickets are \$15-\$30; call 800-838-3006 or visit www.brownpapertickets.com.
 For more about PPF, visit www.pridefilm-sandplays.com.

Hubbard Street seeks applicants, dancers

Terence Marling, director of Hubbard Street 2 (HS2), and Hubbard Street Artistic Director Glenn Edgerton encourage experienced dance-makers to apply for commissions through HS2's 15th annual National Choreographic Competition (NCC).

NCC applicants must complete the form available online at <http://bit.ly/HS2NCC2014>. Applications and materials must be submitted by Jan. 1, 2014.

NCC winners will create and premiere their works during Hubbard Street 2's 2014-15 season. Email ncc@hubbardstreetdance.com for more info.

In addition, early-career and professional dancers, male and female, are encouraged to

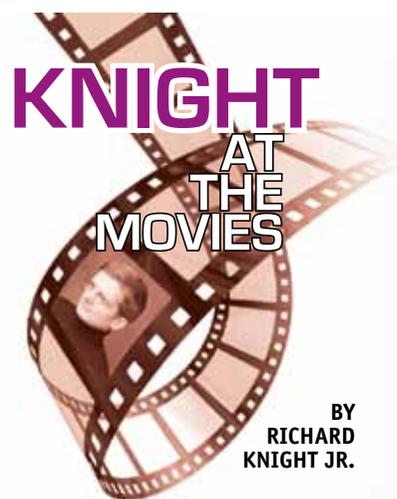
audition for 2014-15 season contracts with Hubbard Street's main company and HS2. Each audition includes a \$10 fee; email auditions@hubbardstreetdance.com.

'Chicago Casting Auction' raises \$60K for Bailiwick

Bailiwick Chicago's annual Chicago Casting Auction raised more than \$60,000 for the company, earning the top bidders starring roles in Bailiwick Chicago's upcoming production of *The Drowsy Chaperone*.

Thirty-five roles were auctioned off during the Nov. 2 event at Chicago's Dank Haus German American Cultural Center Grand Ballroom, 4740 N. Western Ave. Additional supporting and chorus roles were won via silent auction.

Scott Jaack with Heidi Kettering and Kelli Fox; photo by Bill Burlingham



Favorite LGBT films of 2013

Blue Is The Warmest Color and Interior. Leather Bar, the two most talked about queer-themed movies of the year were, in my estimation, prime examples of the emperor wearing no clothes.

By that I mean that all the hype and folderol about these being cinematic breakthroughs was nothing more than yet two more examples of straight white guys giving us their limited view of Our People through their stereotypical lens. (I know that the “experimental” Interior was co-directed by the openly gay Travis Mathews, which, for me, made it that even more disconcerting.) Blue had a strong first hour and some tremendous acting from its two leads but I think has been overhyped. (See my past discussion with Windy City Times editor Tracy Baim for further thoughts about the film.)

There were other high-profile and must-see LGBT-themed movies this year that I quite liked—Dallas Buyers Club, Kill Your Darlings, Behind the Candelabra, Laurence Anyways, Concussion—but when discussing the year in queer cinema in Chicago the first distinction that needs to be made is always the small number of LGBT-themed movies that actually get theatrical runs here, as opposed to the coasts.

That number has been diminishing for several years—the causes of which are varied (changing tastes being one). But the primary reason is always less-than-spectacular box-office returns. Until movie patrons in Chicago make big fat fi-



Joji Yoshida (left) and Matthew McConaughey in Dallas Buyers Club. Photo by Anne Marie Fox-Focus Features

nancial hits of some of these queer-themed pictures, I wouldn't expect to see more of them get theatrical bookings here.

All of which speaks to the importance of audiences supporting any venue—especially the independently owned theaters—that are helping to keep the torch lit for queer cinema in Chicago. So, too, is the urgency of patronizing the various film festivals, as these are often the only chance to see these movies in the theatrical setting for which they were made. As both the programming director for this year's Reeling Film Festival and a jury member for the Queer Hugo section of the Chicago International Film Festival, I have seen firsthand the profound impact seeing these movies in a theater can have on audiences. There still is nothing like the anticipation that comes when the lights are about to go down and you're sitting with an audience of your peers.

This, I realize, is a typical exhortation from a

film critic. But even without more LGBT movies playing in Chicago proper, the increased advent of Video on Demand and other online services as well as Netflix has made it a lot easier to find access to queer-themed movies—and more are being made directly for television as well. (Behind the Candelabra for HBO being 2013's most prominent example.)

I have been putting together a list of Top Ten LGBT films since 2004 in preferential order but this year have decided to group my favorites (most with a runner-up) in categories. I love all these movies, some more than others and don't want to lessen my desire for you to see them by numbering them.

Queer icons: I Am Divine—Out director Jeffrey Schwarz's illuminating portrait of the 300-pound drag queen Divine who, with his creative partner in crime, John Waters, changed the face of cinema, elevating trash to the mainstream. Runner-up: Six By Sondheim—Director James Lapine's documentary about the openly gay dean of musical American theater is revelatory and creatively assembled (now showing on HBO, where it debuted earlier this month).

Queer Lives: The Happy Sad—Out director Rodney Evans followed up his acclaimed debut Brother to Brother at long last with this sexy romantic drama.

Runner-up: Two: The Story of Roman & Nyro—Heather Winters' moving and humorous portrait of an extended group of individuals all gathered together to help raise the adorable twin sons of two gay men truly captures the modern family at its best.

Art-house darlings: Dallas Buyers Club—Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto give award-worthy performances in this based on a true story of two disparate men with AIDS—one straight and homophobic, the other a gay, drug-addled, sweet-spirited drag queen—each battling for their lives in the 1980s.

Runner-up: Kill Your Darlings—Out writer-director John Krokidas made an impressive debut with this look at poet Allen Ginsberg (memorably portrayed by Daniel Radcliffe) at the outset of his coming of age as a college student in the mid-1940s and his relationship with mentor Lucien Carr (Dane DeHaan), who murdered his lover in what was then an acceptable defense called an “honor killing.”

Women in love: Reaching for the Moon—The torrid, true life affair between poet Elizabeth Bishop and her Brazilian architect lover is gorgeously retold in this sumptuous romantic drama set in the 1950s.

Runner-up: Cloudburst—Olympia Dukakis and

Brenda Fricker play a long-term lesbian couple who head to Canada to legalize their union to prevent Fricker's daughter from taking their home away in this bittersweet road film.

Queer teenage angst: Animals—A gay cross between Donnie Darko and Elephant, this Spanish film is a strangely fascinating coming of age story of a teen whose best friend is his English accented teddy bear.

Runner-up: Geography Club—Based on gay writer Brent Hartinger's bestselling novel, this is a familiar yet welcome story of a group of high school misfits who form a club for queer teens but have to keep its identity secret.

Queer (fabulous) history: Behind the Candelabra—Michael Douglas and Matt Damon went all out in this over-the-top biopic of the ultimate Vegas entertainer, pianist Liberace, and his much younger lover Scott Thorson. It's kitsch heaven with surprising moments of depth.

Runner-up: Portrait of Jason—Director Shirley Clarke's 1967 classic of a real life gay raconteur, the African American queen of the title, who delivers a non-stop monologue that is insightful and sensationally entertaining from the get go.

Blurring the lines: Laurence Anyways—Queer French-Canadian auteur Xavier Dolan's three-hour magnum opus follows the male-to-female transition of the title character in the 1980s and his fractious relationship with his sympathetic but conflicted girlfriend (a luminous Suzanne Clement).

Heartbreaking: Valentine Road—Marta Cunningham's documentary about the murder of 15-year-old Lawrence King, a gay teen with trans tendencies, by his classmate is explored in this eye-opening film that played festivals and is currently showing on HBO. Unforgettable.

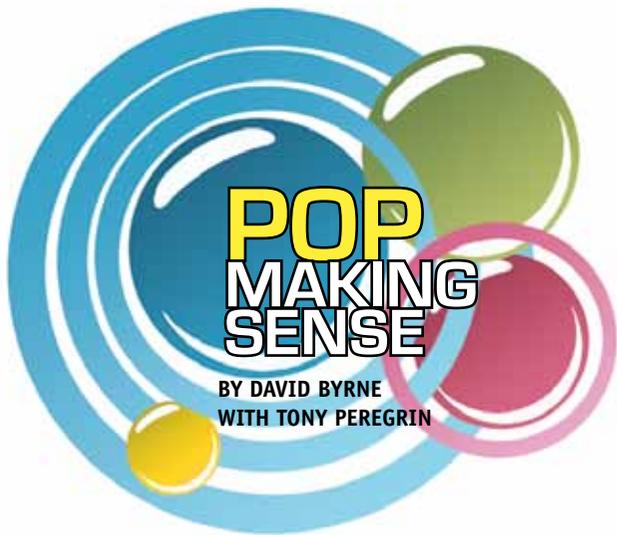
Runner-up: Philomena—Judi Dench is sensational in this based on a true story of a simple Irish woman looking for the child she was forced to give up 50 years before. The film, which co-stars Steve Coogan (who also co-wrote the script and produced) features a moving gay twist that comes as the film heads into the final section. Get out your hankie.

Let's go sexin': Concussion—Lesbian writer-director Stacie Passon's sexy update of Belle du Jour has an affluent, lesbian suburban housewife who becomes an escort by day. It features a tremendous leading performance by Robin Weigert.

Other notable queer-themed films of 2013: Beyond the Hills, In the Name Of, North Sea Texas, Free Fall, and The Last Match and, my personal fave, Hawaii



Robin Weigert in Concussion. Photo courtesy of Mark Umbach



Blonde divas **Britney Spears** and **Beyonce** have new albums out to add to the year-end rush. "Perfume" and "Now That I Found You" dare to shed the overproduced dance sound Spears has been favoring. But she sings as if clothespins are pinching her nose and her tongue during "Work Bitch." The club-ready tracks—like "It Should Be Easy," the mindless "Tik Tik Boom" and "Til It's Gone"—surely will give her extended live engagement in Las Vegas an extra jolt of energy. Just be mindful of cliché-plagued fillers "Passenger" and "Don't Cry" on Britney Jean.

There is a video for all 14 tracks plus bonus clips on Beyonce's self-titled album, which becomes a bit too much. Beyonce has a mighty guest list contributing here. Frank Ocean appears on the midtempo "Superpower" and husband Jay-Z is on the dreadful "Drunk in Love." Beyonce's daughter Blue Ivy has a cameo on "Blue." The lead single, "XO," is very pop, yet is forward-thinking for the "Single Ladies" superstar. "Jealous" ranks as my favorite here with its stripped-down electronic arrangements. Even though released earlier than planned, Beyonce debuted on top of the charts.

On Light Sweet Crude (Act 1: Hybrid), **Vanessa Daou** puts her music into motion. "Revolution" has strings with a groove that the body cannot resist. On "Danger Ahead," Daou opens with spoken word as if at a beat club, then steps next door to a lounge once the slick electronic beat sneaks in. Love is many things.

Daou creatively illustrates the powerful emotion and then silences the opposition by unveiling love's universal definition on the standout "Love Is War" by singing, "Love is peace, love is war. Love is what we're fighting for." "One Think I'm Missing" finds her mesmerizing and

breathless over a drawn-out, hypnotic beat. Light Sweet Crude never loses its groove or sensuality. Whether it is her vocal's timing, her phrasing of lyrics or captivating me in her music's rhythm, once again Daou is simply spellbinding. The self-released Light Sweet Crude and remixes to "Danger Ahead" are available now digitally.

New York dance artist **SirPaul** returns with Seventh Star and he has love on his mind. "Turning Me On" and "Black Leather" are lyrical foreplay, letting his lover know what is to follow. The edgy electro vibe on "He's So Unusual" adds more spice to Seventh Star. "Every Single Moment" is a dance ode about missing his partner, while the youthful "Be Mine" is very flirty. "Love Sick" is asking for remixes or even a video. Seventh Star is out now on SirPaul's label Controversial Records.

This year's success story belongs to **Mary Lambert**. The lesbian singer-songwriter wrote and sang the chorus on "Same Love" by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. This popular testimony pleading for marriage equality received a Grammy nomination. Lambert expanded the chorus into a proper composition called "She Keeps Me Warm," which is on her new EP, Welcome to the Age of My Body. The accompanying video finds Lambert at a coffee shop, eyeing a barista. Expect a full-length debut in 2014 on Capitol Records. Lambert showcases a positive image for all body types, as seen on two versions of "Body Love" and her collection of poetry, 500 Tips for Fat Girls.

The British rock quartet **Bastille** manages to keep its credibility with the track "Of the Night," which is a clever medley of the euro-dance songs "Rhythm of the Night" by Corona and "Rhythm is a Dancer" by Snap. The song became a huge hit overseas and can be found only on the forthcoming extended edition All This Bad Blood. Bastille topped the alternative charts stateside with "Pompeii," which has a catchy chant as its hook. Bad Blood also boasts noteworthy cuts like "Overjoyed," "Icarus" and "Laura Palmer."

As part of the Rock 'N' Roll Ball, **JC Brooks & the Uptown Sound** will perform to its hometown crowd on Tuesday, Dec. 31 at Montrose Room, 5300 N. River Rd., Rosemont. The soulful



Bastille.

rock band's latest Howl is out now on Bloodshot Records and contains the remarkable tracks "Rouse Yourself" and "River." For a tickets and complete line up of Rock 'N' Roll Ball, please visit nye.icohare.com.

Beloved female rock group **Luscious Jackson** reunited and released the hilarious video "#1 Bum." Here, women gawk over a guy who wears jeans well. The clip is so outrageously done, especially with its conclusion. The song itself does not stray from the band's style during its Riot Grrrl prime, showing that its shtick has not gone missing since the last effort, 1999's Electric Honey. "#1 Bum" is from the comeback album Magic Hour.

Centaur Music's **Outright** series is making sure my workout playlist never gets tired. There are three exceptional installments; Outright Tea Dance, Outright '90s and Outright Divas. These continuous mixes contain updated remakes of memorable classics, keeping the best traits of the originals intact. Tea Dance cherishes big choruses, as heard on "If You Could Read My Mind" and "Oh L'amour," as well as reinterpretations of Heather Small's anthem "Proud" and Christina Aguilera's showstopper "Beautiful." The '90s summarizes the eclectic decade with new versions of Black Box's "Strike It Up," Amber's "Sexual" and Olive's "You're Not Alone." Some of the sirens saluted on Divas are Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, P!nk and Cher. Centaur Music's Outright collections can be found at theoutclub.com and on iTunes.



Marvin Hamlisch.
Photo from Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

'Marvin Hamlisch: What He Did for Love' on Dec. 27

With exclusive access to composer Marvin Hamlisch's personal archival treasure trove and complete cooperation from his family, Dramatic Forces and THIRTEEN's American Masters explore his life and career in the series' season 27 finale, Marvin Hamlisch: What He Did For Love, premiering nationally on PBS Friday, Dec. 27.

In the first film biography about Hamlisch, award-winning filmmaker and four-time Tony Award-winning Broadway producer Dori Berinstein presents an insider portrait, complete with interviews with Hamlisch's family and such figures as Barbara Streisand, Carly Simon, Steven Soderbergh, Quincy Jones and Ann-Margret, among many others.

See www.pbs.org/americanmasters.

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My eight minutes with Britney Spears

Pop star on (not) being a gay icon, feeling like an outsider and that 'adorable and hilarious' comment

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

It's Britney, bitch.

No, really, it was. She was on the phone. And Britney Spears—the meek, reserved, media-shy entertainer—doesn't get on the phone with press very often these days.

She spoke to me from L.A. on a busy day full of frenzied promo leading up to her eighth release, Britney Jean, when she drops the word that elicited eye rolls from some in the gay community.

The word is "adorable," and Spears—who, in a radio interview with San Francisco radio station 99.7 NOW FM, used it to describe her beauty team (they're also "hilarious," she said at the time)—mentioned it to me when I ask her how wild the gay boys go when they're in the midst of their pop princess.

"They're adorable," said Spears, 32. "They're absolutely adorable."

It seemed like an appropriate time to tell her how that "adorable and hilarious" comment went viral and rubbed some the wrong way.

"Wait, what? Who felt the other way?" she asked, sincerely concerned she's offended people, and even a little lost. You get the impression Britney Spears doesn't Google herself.

So, I filled her in.

"I would never say anything to be mean to them. I love my gay fans. Gay people are always usually my best friends in the whole world," she said. "I completely adore them."

Considering the pop star's clout in the gay community, it's obviously mutual. From the then-17-year-old's sexually suggestive breakout hit "... Baby One More Time"—when the once-Mouseketeer, dressed in that iconic Catholic schoolgirl getup, merged childhood innocence with the onset of sexual desire—to "Toxic," easily one of the greatest gay club jams of the aughts, Spears has influenced the queens and queers of the dance floor as much as they've influenced her.

"I get inspiration from them on almost all of my songs," Spears said of her gay fans. "They're somewhat girls, so it's so inspiring to do stuff that they like to hear, like the cool 'in' stuff. Whatever I do for each record is definitely inspired by them."

If you've heard 2007's defiantly bold Blackout and its pop-dance follow-up Circus, and then, obviously, Femme Fatale, you know Britney isn't just full of it. These are really gay albums. But her gayest? Is it Britney Jean?

"I would say so, yes," Spears said, sounding almost unsure, as if the gayness exists equitably on all her releases (and, really, it does). "I just feel like it has that feeling. You can't really put your finger on it. It just really has that feeling of ... that."

"Work Bitch" has the feeling of "that"—of gay—so much so that Spears herself has said it's a salute to her queer fans. The title is "a term of endearment" and was inspired by gay patter among her pals. What other queer street slang has she picked up from them?

She snickered, letting her Louisiana drawl fully flex: "I don't really know that much. I mean, I hang out with gays all the time. They always surprise me. It changes weekly, you know?"

"The slang you learn?" I asked, just to be clear.

"Yeah."

So maybe Britney doesn't watch RuPaul's Drag Race on the regular, maybe she isn't out getting all crazy at the gay clubs (she tells me that being a mom doesn't allow for nights out with her friends at queer bars, but before children: "Yeah, always"), but part of her—a part she's not really

addressed until now—can empathize with the plight of growing up gay.

"Alien," one of the most self-reflective tracks on Britney Jean, alludes to her own feelings of being an outcast, of being alone, of being Britney Spears: "Had to get used to the world I was on / While yet still unsure if I knew where I belong / That was then, like an alien."

"The song is basically about when you're all alone and you feel like you're alienated from the world," Spears said. "I think it's human nature; we all innately do that sometimes and keep to ourselves, and that's what the song is about."

It was during her second release, 2000's Oops! ... I Did It Again, with its self-empowerment mantra "Stronger," that she recognized a big gay following. "I really started noticing more coming to the shows," Spears recalled. "People were emulating my clothes and wearing the same outfits, and it was just really fun."

Through the years, she's met many of these gay boys after shows, where, she said, "a couple of them have told me about their heartbreaks and shared stories about their boyfriends, which has been really kind of sweet."

I told her we relate to people who fall down and get right back up. Britney, for all her success, has been to the top, but not without seeing the bottom. Between 2006 and 2008, Spears divorced Kevin Federline, fought tirelessly for the custody of her two boys and sobered up at a drug rehab facility. There was also the party-less partying, the British accent, the head-shaving and the time she attacked a paparazzo with an umbrella. Life was looking bleak for Britney then, and she knew it. On "Piece of Me," a track off Blackout, Spears called herself "Miss Bad Media Karma."

But when she talks about the time she felt alienated, there's no mention of this more recent regrettable history. It's clear—not just from our chat, but the rare times she's been on the phone with a journalist in the last five years—that she doesn't care to look back. For the most part, anyway.

"Since I was in high school, I've been kind of a shy person," Spears admitted to me.

I asked, "Would you say you felt like an outsider then?"

Her voice dropped. "A little bit, yeah."

Because she felt different as a kid, but also, of course, musically—Spears, despite her public ups and downs, has been a mainstay in the queer scene for the last 15 years—I wonder if Britney considers herself what many call her: a gay icon.

"I don't know about that," she said, surprisingly frank. "But I know I do have gay fans."

I remind her that a large part of the community sees her as a gay icon.

Her response? "That's nice. I don't know about that."

But surely she's thought about her status in the gay community, right?

"Not really, no."

What about equal marriage? Would Britney like to see her gay friends—she tells me later, via email, that she has an "amazing" relationship with them, many of which are her dancers—get married?

"Yeah," she said. Then silence. (I give her the opportunity to elaborate over email after our phone chat: "Yeah, it would be a special moment.")

"So you believe gay people deserve equal rights?"

"Yeah," she assured. (Via email: "I think everyone should be treated equally.")

At this point, seven minutes into the conversation, a publicist grabbed Spears' attention. She told me to hang on a second. Because she's getting whisked away for a Britney Jean listening session that she's already late to, "This has to be the last question," she informed, sounding



Britney Spears. Photo by Michelangelo Di Battista

distracted.

I ask about Las Vegas, where she's launching her two-year residency, Britney: Piece of Me, at Planet Hollywood.

Expect half-naked men—she said, because obviously—but also "look forward to a really good time. They're gonna definitely feel like they're a part of a show."

Milking every second of my scheduled 10 minutes with her by sneaking in one final question, I asked her which girl kiss she preferred: the cheek peck Rihanna gave her during the 2011

Billboard Awards, or the legendary Madonna lip-lock at the Video Music Awards?

There's brief silence, a "thank you" and then a sudden click. That's it. Our eight minutes together.

And just like that, Britney Spears gave exactly what she promised: a piece of her.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com.

New trans art awards recognizes Chicagoans

BY KATE SOSIN

Chicago's transgender community has gained national visibility in recent years for its activism on housing and legal issues, but its artists have been less visible. That could be changing, thanks to a new award spotlighting four local artists.

Trans Chicago artists KOKUMO, Andre Perez, H. Melt and Dalice Malice are recipients of Museum of Transgender History & Art Awards (MOTHA Awards).

The awards, in their first year, aim to bring visibility to trans artists nationally. They were created by Chris E. Vargas, a transgender artist and filmmaker.

"I just don't see a lot of opportunities for trans artists to be recognized for their work," said Vargas. "I wanted to give that opportunity to people in the most inclusive way possible but from a critical stance."

Vargas held an open-nomination process online in September and October, taking in nearly 100 names in 16 categories. Winners were chosen by popular vote in November.

Vargas said that due to close votes, each award saw multiple recipients.

The awards are among the first projects for the museum, which Vargas describes as "conceptual" in that it remains online, instead of housed in a physical space. Vargas is building an archive for the museum and would like showcase transgender art history. But the founding of the museum is intended to create potential more than anything, Vargas said.



"I'm asking people to imagine with me what could exist," said Vargas.

Chicago MOTHA Award winners included: —KOKUMO (KOKUMOMedia.com)

Musician of the Year, alongside Big Freedia and Rae Spoon

New Upcoming Artist of the Year, alongside Hannah Barrett, Erika Bijeljic, Imogen Binnie and Morgan M. Page

—Trans Oral History Project, of which Andre Perez is the founder (<http://transoralhistory.com>)

Archives of the Year, alongside Center for Sex and Culture

—Dalice Malice (dalicemalice.com) and H. Melt

Unrecognized Artist of the Year, Hermit, alongside Malic Amalya, Elliott DeLine, Raphaële Frigon, Nicki Green, Mirha-Soleil Ross, Thu Ha Vu, Tobaron Waxman and Quito Ziegler

More information on MOTHA is available at: sfmotha.org.

Looking back: Sports & Entertainment 2013

COMPILED BY ANDREW DAVIS

—**"Heart" felt:** HBO announced that it will adapt the Tony-winning Larry Kramer play *The Normal Heart*. The movie will star Julia Roberts and Mark Ruffalo in the key roles, along with out actor Matt Bomer (*White Collar*). *Glee* creator Ryan Murphy will direct the film, which will feature Roberts as Dr. Emma Brookner, the paraplegic physician who treats several of the earliest victims of the disease. Ruffalo portrays Ned Weeks; Bomer plays Felix Turner, a reporter who becomes Weeks' lover. *The Normal Heart* will run in 2014.

—**She runs the world:** This was arguably the year of Beyoncé: She went on tour, performed at halftime of the Super Bowl (which had a notable power failure in the second half), premiered her HBO documentary, caused a "controversy" over possible lip-synching at the presidential inauguration; and (without any fanfare) released a self-titled CD that broke a record on iTunes.

—**Foster wild:** Actress/director Jodie Foster raised some eyebrows at the 70th annual Golden Globes. In an speech of the Cecil B. DeMille Award that some loved and others derided, she thanked her ex-partner and co-parent, Cydney Bernard (they have two sons), but added that she has lived virtually her entire life in the public eye and wanted to keep some things private.

—**"Dead" resurrected:** Lifetime dropped LGBT fave *Drop Dead Diva* after four seasons. However, fan reaction over the show (about an attorney played by Brooke Elliot) resulted in the channel bringing it back.

—**Soy it isn't so:** Former pro football player Kwame Harris faces felony domestic violence charges for allegedly beating an ex-boyfriend in the parking lot of a Menlo Park, Calif., restaurant after arguing over, among other things, soy sauce. Harris, 31, was found guilty of misdemeanor domestic violence, battery and assault.

—**Being Frank:** Out R&B singer Frank Ocean won two Grammys at the 55th annual Grammy Awards that were aired on CBS Feb. 10. Pro-LGBT group fun. won Song of the Year for "We Are Young" (which features Janelle Monae).

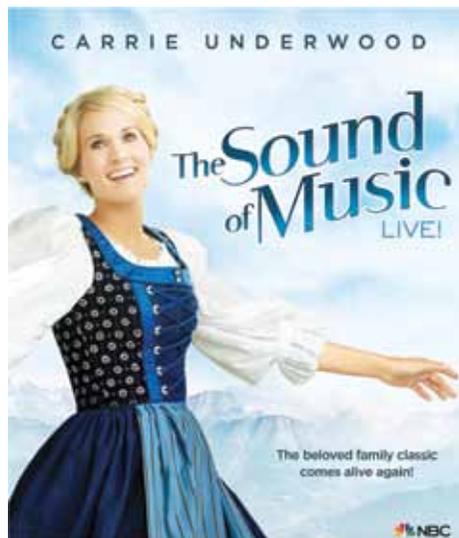
—**All the way Clive:** Legendary music producer Clive Davis—who signed Whitney Houston and Bruce Springsteen, among many others—came out as bisexual in a new book. In his new memoir, *The Soundtrack of My Life*, Davis details long-term, monogamous relationships with men for the past two decades. Davis writes that his first same-sex encounter was during "the era of Studio 54" and wrote that being with a man provided "welcome relief."

—**Going Gaga:** It was an interesting year for entertainer and LGBT icon Lady Gaga. She had to cancel part of her tour after injuring her hip. However, she stayed in the news, thanks in part to her CD (which didn't sell as well as some hoped/expected) as well as continuing colorful award-show appearances and performances.

—**Neil appeal:** Openly gay actor Neil Patrick Harris again endeared himself to audiences, through his show *How I Met Your Mother* and by hosting the Tonys (for the fourth time in five years) and Emmys.

—**Piano man:** Buzz swelled around the HBO movie *Behind the Candelabra*, which was based on the late Liberace's autobiographical novel, as soon as production was announced. Premiering May 26, the movie (which starred Michael Douglas as Liberace and Matt Damon as his much-younger lover Scott Thorson) has won numerous awards, and will likely increase its haul in 2014 at the Screen Actors Guild Awards and the Golden Globes.

—**Miller time:** Actor Wentworth Miller came out as gay in a letter he wrote denouncing Russia's anti-gay law. Miller, known for his role on the television show *Prison Break*, declined an invitation to participate in the St. Petersburg International Film Festival. In his letter, Miller wrote, "Thank you for your kind invitation ...



Carrie Underwood starred in *The Sound of Music Live!*

as a gay man, I must decline." Miller went on to call the atmosphere in Russia toward LGBT people and their allies "in no way acceptable."

—**Star turn:** Lesbian actress Jane Lynch received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The actress received star number 2,505 at the unveiling Sept. 4, accompanied by *Glee* creator Ryan Murphy. Murphy said of Lynch, "She is the hardest-working person on the set... she makes everybody better and everybody happier. She is one of the comedy greats in our business—a true class act."

—**The hills are alive:** NBC aired *The Sound of Music Live!* Dec. 5, with Carrie Underwood as Maria von Trapp. (It followed the 1959 Broadway production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical rather than the movie.) Reaction was mixed, to say the least, but it was a ratings gold mine for NBC.

—**I get a kick out of you:** Abby Wambach, one of the most successful and decorated female soccer players in history, confirmed Wednesday, Oct. 9, that she is gay—and that she married fellow soccer player Sarah Huffman. They married Oct. 5 in Hawaii.

—**What a Card:** Pro-LGBT negatively reacted to the opening of the film *Ender's Game*—primarily because anti-gay activist and former board member of the National Organization for Marriage Orson Scott Card, 62, was a credited producer on Lionsgate Entertainment's adaptation of Card's sci-fi novel. At last report, the film had yet to break even from its \$110-million budget.

—**Shocked, I tell you:** Singer Michelle Shocked—who came out as bisexual in *Outlines* newspaper (which purchased and merged with *Windy City Times* in 2000) two decades ago—told a San Francisco crowd that "God hates fags" and that she lives in fear of same-sex marriage. In the wake of that, her tour was cancelled. She reportedly tried to have the anti-gay rant erased from YouTube.

—**Here's "Looking" at you:** HBO shot a pilot for *Looking*, a series about gay thirtysomethings in San Francisco. The script was written by Michael Lannan, who helped produce *Remember Me*, and *Interior. Leather Bar.*, a San Francisco-based experimental gay flick by Travis Matthews. In addition, it stars Jonathan Groff, the openly gay actor famous for playing Jesse St. James on the TV show *Glee*. The show will debut in January 2014.

—**Magic moment:** Basketball legend Magic Johnson's gay son went public with his romance. Earvin Johnson III, one of Magic's three children, stepped out hand-in-hand with an unidentified boyfriend on Los Angeles' Sunset Strip.

—**Making history:** The NBA's Jason Collins made history by coming out as gay—the first time an NBA player has done so while still actively playing. Collins, a center, finished the

2012-13 season with the Washington Wizards, and has also played for the Boston Celtics, Minnesota Timberwolves, New Jersey Nets, Atlanta Hawks, and Memphis Grizzlies. Collins made the announcement in an interview with *Sports Illustrated*.

—**Novel idea:** Kevin Keller, the gay character introduced in the pages of *Archie Comics* in 2011, has his own novel. The hardcover young adult novel, simply titled *Kevin*, is from Penguin Books. The novel is written by comic and children's book author Paul Kupperberg, who also penned the popular *Life With Archie* issue that depicted an adult Keller marrying his partner.

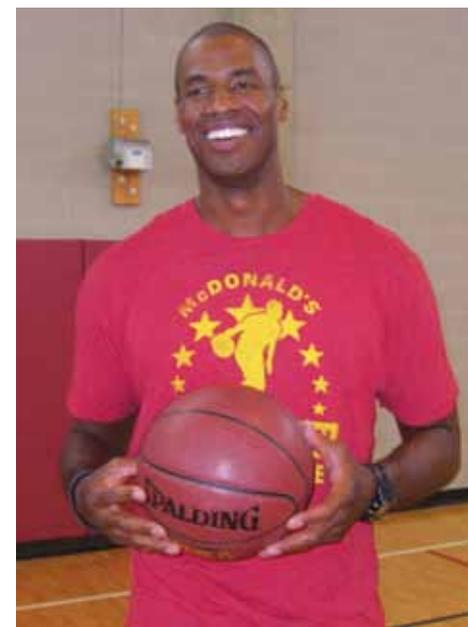
—**Ups and downs:** NBC cancelled the Broadway-centered show *Smash* after two seasons, and also dropped *The New Normal*, the Ryan Murphy-produced show about a gay couple. Meanwhile, ABC renewed *Modern Family*, *Once Upon a Time*, *Scandal*, *Suburgatory*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Castle* and *Nashville*, but cancelled *Body of Proof*, *Red Widow* and the comedy *Happy Endings*.

—**Oh, the "Horror":** The third season of the FX show *American Horror Story*—called *American Horror Story: Coven*—featured actresses Patti LuPone and Angela Bassett. Producer Ryan Murphy (who also helms *Glee*) tweeted, "Two legends are joining the cast of *American Horror Story: Coven*—Oscar nominee Angela Bassett and Tony winner Patti LuPone!" LuPone and Bassett joined Sarah Paulson, Evan Peters and Frances Conroy as well as new actors Kathy Bates and Gabourey Sidibe (*Precious*). It's been renewed for a fourth season.

—**Returning:** Ellen DeGeneres confirmed that she'll host the Academy Awards for the second time in 2014. She previously hosted the 2007 Oscars, which earned her an Emmy nomination. The show will air March 2.

—**I'm coming out:** Actress Raven-Symone came out, voicing her support on marriage equality via Twitter Aug. 2 and saying she's thrilled to finally be able to wed. She tweeted, "I can finally get married! Yay government! So proud of you."

—**Orange you glad?:** One of the biggest



Jason Collins. Photo by Ross Forman

shows of the year was the Netflix series *Orange Is the New Black*. The black comedy focuses on Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling), an engaged woman living in New York City who is sentenced to 15 months in a women's federal prison for transporting a suitcase full of drug money to her former girlfriend—an international drug smuggler. Trans actress Laverne Cox was a particular standout on the show.

—**Mello Bello:** Actress Maria Bello revealed that she is in a lesbian relationship in a New York Times essay Dec. 1, making an appeal to be embraced for her own "modern family." Bello wrote that she struggled with revealing to her 12-year-old son her relationship with a woman who happened to be her closest friend. However, she also urged a broader definition of sexuality and love than what currently passes for social norms.

Read the entire roundup online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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NEXT LECTURE

SAT., JAN. 4, 2014, 11AM-1PM
HYACINTH PIEL

Ethical Problems in Gender Identity Construction

Hyacinth Piel is a graduate student in philosophy at UIC. Ze lives in Edgewater with hir corgi, Poggibonsi. This lecture begins with the idea that as people who seek to lead good and authentic lives, we are repeatedly confronted with profound and difficult questions about how best to develop, identify, and express our genders. Although our genders are uniquely our own existential projects, they are never only that: the way we live our genders is bound to affect others too, and since our existing gender templates are deeply influenced by the oppressive gender hierarchy from which they are drawn, it looks like the building blocks we must use to develop genders in which we can be free may also tend to threaten the freedom and well-being of those around us.

UPCOMING LECTURES

SAT., 2/1/14
Beth Richie
Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America's Prison Nation

SAT., 3/1/14
Lourdes Torres
Making Familia from Scratch: Towards a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago

SAT., 4/5/14
Anne Balay
Steel Closets: Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Steelworkers

SAT., 5/3/14
Timothy Stewart-Winter
From Civil Rights to Gay Rights in Chicago

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Brixton

BY MEGHAN STREIT

The Clark Street space that once housed In Fine Spirits restaurant and bar (the liquor store by the same name remains in the building next door) has been like a revolving door over the last couple of years. A few weeks after In Fine Spirits unceremoniously shuttered in early 2012, Premise, a mercifully brief failed experiment in bizarre and overpriced cuisine, took over. Next came Brasserie 54, a charming but modern French bistro with a sexy cocktail lounge upstairs. Like Premise before it, Brasserie 54 didn't have that *je ne sais quoi* that it takes to win over discerning but loyal Andersonville diners—it closed down within six months of opening.

A week or so ago, **Brixton** opened in the seemingly doomed space. No doubt the owners, who



Brixton. Photo by Shira Kollins

also reportedly own The Drum and Monkey, are hoping third time truly is the charm. It doesn't appear that they've gone to great lengths to re-vamp the decor. Brixton has the same dark flooring, low lighting and simple modern aesthetics of its predecessors. They have, however, inexplicably, replaced all normal sized dining tables on the main floor with eight gargantuan booths. They are covered in a subtle masculine plaid fabric that works nicely from a design perspective. But, if you are a party of two or four, your only main floor seating option is one of these gigantic booths (or a stool at the bar), which just feels awkward. And, as the place becomes more crowded, I imagine the lack of seating could become a logistical nightmare.

The guys behind Brixton have chosen to emulate one aspect that I believe made our beloved In Fine Spirits a success: the focus here is indisputably on the cocktails. They've got a nice list of craft cocktails that incorporates the stuff of modern mixology that we've come to know and love: egg whites, rhubarb bitters, ginger beer, thyme, infused rye, mint, Fresno chiles—you name it. Bottles of wine veer a tad toward the pricy side, but there's an ample selection of mostly American varietals by the glass that range from \$6 to \$12. Further evidence that booze is front and center at Brixton is the fact that they have no edible desserts -- not a single piece of cake or scoop of gelato in sight. But, if you don't mind drinking your dessert, you're all set. They've got a hot cocktail made with bourbon and condensed milk, a strangely delicious eggnog-like concoction. It's topped with an egg white and sugar mixture that coagulates into a sort of "frosting." Despite my initial skepticism, I thoroughly enjoyed my hot liquid dessert on a

cold December night, and I'm pretty sure I'll be back for a few more before Chicago emerges from its deep freeze.

Now, all of this is not to say that the food is an afterthought at Brixton. There's a small selection of upscale bar bites like popcorn with bacon powder and chives and peanuts gussied up with sumac and mint. Or, nibble on high-end small plates like mussels and sweetbreads. I particularly enjoyed the crab dip. The creamy mixture is served at room temperature in a tiny mason jar. The best part is the artichoke and pearl onion relish it's topped with, which provides a tangy acidic contrast to the sweet crab. It's served with paper-thin olive oil-soaked crostini, which are great for dipping.

You can also get a bona fide meal here. The entree choices are limited and straightforward, but, from what I can tell, expertly prepared. The hanger steak is a worthwhile \$25 indulgence (cheap for a nice steak, but expensive for bar food). The steak is prepared in classic "sous vide" style, which means it is essentially boiled in a vacuum-sealed bag until it reaches the minimum temperature safe for human consumption and then it is given a quick sear on each side. Wow! I was expecting an average and possibly tough steak and what I got was one of the most

tender and succulent pieces of beef that's ever melted in my mouth. Flavorful chanterelle mushrooms pair nicely with the hanger steak. And as a finishing touch, bone marrow and brown butter béarnaise are smeared on the plate in what looks at first glance like the world's smallest scoop of mashed potatoes and gravy. In fact, it's a delicious and decadent sauce in which to dip a delectable steak.

I also enjoyed the scallops, which are seared to a deep golden brown on the top and smeared with generous portion of rich black truffles. The scallops are served atop a slab of nicely seasoned cauliflower with leeks and parmesan. It's a tasty dish, if not particularly memorable. The entree portions are on the small side and by and large not served with any sort of starchy sides—good for the waistline, bad for soaking up all of that booze. My recommendation is to order a basket of fries. They are crisp and well seasoned and go perfectly with the hanger steak. Add a big old glass of robust red wine and you've got a quintessential hearty winter meal. The aioli that comes with the fries is funky tasting in a bad way. So, for the first time in my life, I opted for ketchup over aioli—a relatively minor misstep in an otherwise thoroughly pleasant meal.

I enjoyed my first experience at Brixton and, as an Andersonville resident, I can see myself visiting again. Whether this newcomer has what it takes to become a go-to neighborhood joint remains to be seen.

The Brixton is located at 5420 N. Clark St.; call 773-961-7358.

Do you need some more Sugar & Spice in your life? Follow me on Twitter: @SugarAndSpiceMS—for inside scoop and commentary on Chicago's dining scene.

MUSIC

Frenchie Davis: From reality TV to the high sea

BY SARAH TOCE

Franchell "Frenchie" Davis presents as a spiritual powerhouse female, composed of both vim and vigor with a splash of uncompromising vivacity. Early on, in 2002, her career was nearly stunted when American Idol executives made the decision to cut her at the proverbial knees on stage in light of her admission to racy photos pre-spotlight.

No harm, no foul. Frenchie's next consecutive move would prove to be bigger and better than her appearance on the FOX show in its second season, anyway.

Broadway. The Great White Way. Frenchie's road. That last one was made up, but apropos nonetheless. The passionate persona that so often caught controlling chiefs off-guard had paid off nicely. She landed the role of a lifetime in Jonathan Larson's famed musical *RENT*. From there, she embodied the role of Effie White in *Dreamgirls*, also on Broadway, before joining the cast of *Ain't Misbehavin'*. This last role would result in a Grammy nomination for the artist.

In spite of her previous reality television let-down, it was time to give it another go-round on a different stage—*The Voice*—with celebrity judges Adam Levine, Cee Lo Green, Christina Aguilera and Blake Shelton. Davis performed "I Kissed a Girl" by Katy Perry and the crowd roared with excitement. She had advanced to the next round as a member of Aguilera's team of eight. Ultimately, she would place fifth in the singing competition and begin touring.

Windy City Times: American Idol and The Voice—many artists would love to be on either of them, and you were on both.

Frenchie Davis: American Idol was over 10 years ago! It baffles me that people still want to talk about it.

WCT: How did you feel about the dynamics on the set of *The Voice*?

FD: I think *The Voice* is a great show, conceptually, but I think it's sad that the only artists who seem to truly reap any benefits from being on the show are the judges. At least Idol had their winners on magazine covers and tried to push their music. People win *The Voice* and you never really hear from them again. But all the judges get to debut their new music on the show. [There are] strange dynamics over there.

WCT: Do you think that being a strong woman is the best way to make it in Hollywood? How has it served you or harmed you?

FD: I think being a strong woman is the only way to make it in life. Celebrity comes and goes. The necessity of being ok with what you see in the mirror does not. I think in the beginning I was afraid that being so outspoken may be harmful to my career, but I soon discovered that I wasn't afraid enough to stop being outspoken. Now my outspokenness is starting to open all kinds of doors.

WCT: You starred in *RENT* on Broadway. How did that show's message of love, forgiveness, triumph and struggle affect you personally?

FD: There are so many stories. Recovering addicts who would come to the show religiously; Jonathan Larson's parents and the bond we have with them; the young people who would sleep outside of the theatre every night to get tickets... The list goes on. There are no words to describe what it felt like to get on that stage every night to do what we love to do, knowing that we were touching people's lives the way we were. It was a spiritual experience.

WCT: Do you find that you can still relate to the struggling artist mentality post-fame and recognition?

FD: Honey! As long as I am Black, female and openly LGBT in Hollywood, the struggle remains very real.

WCT: Where is the funniest place you've been recognized?



Frenchie Davis.

FD: The ladies' room. There is something hysterical about finding yourself in a public bathroom saying things like, "...Sure! I'll take a picture with you. Um, let me just wash my hands first..."

WCT: What causes and charities are close to your heart?

FD: Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and any cause having to do with building the esteem of young people.

WCT: If you could inspire a generation with only five words, what would they be?

FD: Never. Apologize. For. Being. You.

WCT: Sweet is going to Cozumel and you'll be on board! How did this partnership arise?

FD: My musical best friend and pianist, Kathryn, [did] Sweet before and she thought they would totally dig our Pop Cabaret: *The French And Kat Show*.

WCT: What can your fans expect if they book a ticket to your concert on the sea?

FD: They can expect me to serve Broadway-meets-Britney with Clair Huxtable realness, along with a dash of Bach and a teaspoon of Kander and Ebb. They can expect to laugh out loud and enjoy some SANGIN! Not singing—SANGIN!

WCT: Music is obviously a huge inspiration of yours. What are some of your current pet peeves about the music industry?

FD: My biggest pet peeve about the music industry is that it tends to be about a lot of bullshit having absolutely nothing to do with music, itself.

WCT: When you seek calm and clarity, where do you turn?

FD: The water. I live a mile from the very ocean I was baptized in as a girl. It's my happy place. When I go for walks on the beach and I hear those waves crashing, it's really difficult to feel stressed about anything.

Find out more about Frenchie Davis in Cozumel by visiting <http://discoversweet.com>.

CALENDAR

Brought to you by the
combined efforts of

WINDY CITY
TIMES

nightspots

Wed., Dec. 25

Red Cup Party Every Wednesday. Featuring DJ Cooper Thomas and tasty drink specials. 9:00pm Scarlet Bar 3320 N Halsted <http://www.scarletbarchicago.com>

You're The Star Karaoke with Honey West Join hostess with the mostess, Honey West for You're The Star Karaoke, 10pm in Roscoe's front bar. Take your place in the spotlight! There's not a bad seat in the house. 10:00pm Roscoe's Tavern 3356 N Halsted St <http://www.roscoes.com>

Thursday, Dec. 26

Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer David Cerda's parody of the classic children's television special "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer". Now celebrating its 15th year, Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer is the longest running holiday show featuring a transvestite reindeer in the history of Chicago. \$12- \$22 Thurs. - Sat. until Dec. 30 7:30pm Mary's Attic 5400 N Clark <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/131657>

We Three Lizas Fresh from a concert at Joe's Pub in New York City with a revamped book and expanded score, last year's sparkly, queer holiday hit is back... and better than ever! Box maker Conrad Ticklebottom's life has hit a block. Once, Conrad and his purple box ignited an entire movement in art and design, but now he finds himself alone, forgotten and teetering on ruin. The holidays bring three magical figures to his door - a trio of Liza Minnelli to escort him on a fabulous journey through what-was, what-could-be and what-the-f*?!., redeeming his lost promise and re-inventing a brand-new Conrad Ticklebottom. A quirky holiday musical tale of hope, transformation... and the power of Liza! 7:30pm Stage 773 1225 W Belmont (773) 327-5252; <http://www.aboutface theatre.com>

Weekend Pre-Party Join Spin every Thursday for \$1 cocktails, wine, and beer. Featuring DJ Chester spinning the hottest music videos and dance hits! 9:00pm Spin Nightclub 800 W Belmont Ave

Friday, Dec. 27

It's A Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago! Pink Previews, where tickets sales benefit the Lynn Sage Foundation for breast cancer research, are Friday, Nov. 22 and Saturday, Nov. 23 at 7:30 pm. \$19-\$49. Through Dec. 29. 7:30pm Greenhouse Theater Center 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-4047336 <http://americanbluestheater.com>

com

Christmas Dearest A Joan Crawford Christmas Carol. Hell in a Handbag is proud to introduce Chicago to a new holiday show that is sure to be a camp holiday, classic tells the tale of Hollywood superstar, Joan Crawford and the important lessons she learns one Christmas Eve. 7:30pm Mary's Attic 5400 N Clark <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/455598>

Taverna 750 Five-Dollar Late Night Friday Taverna 750's popular Friday \$5 late night menu features the perfect treat to end or prolong your evening. 11:00pm-1:30am 11:00pm Taverna 750 750 W. Cornelia Ave., <http://www.Taverna750.com>

Saturday, Dec. 28

Saturday Brunch at Taverna 750 Not everyone can do Sunday-Funday, so by popular demand Taverna 750's Martini Brunch is available on Saturday's too. 11:00am - 2:00pm Taverna 750 750 West Cornelia Ave <http://www.taverna750.com>

Boobs of the Dead: A Walking Dead Burlesque Parody of the popular Walking Dead television series. 11:45pm Gorilla Tango Theatre 1919 N Milwaukee Ave 773-598-4549 <http://www.gorillas.com/zombies>

Sunday, Dec. 29

Beers, Boys and Beats Who Needs A's When You Can Get B's! Beers, Boys and Beats at Roscoe's. Beers! \$1 Miller Lite Drafts. Boys! Male Call at 5pm. Beats! Via VJ Bobby Marley 2:00pm Roscoe's Tavern 3356 N Halsted St <http://www.roscoes.com>

Monday, Dec. 30

HambINGO Join Mary's for "HambINGO Mary's" every Monday night at 8pm downstairs in the dining room, with your host, Velicity Metropolis calling the balls. You know this ain't your church bingo! 8:00pm Hamburger Mary's 5400 N Clark <http://www.hamburgermarys.chicago.com>

Dollar Drink Night with DJ Laura B! Due to popular demand, \$1 drinks have made a return to Monday's at Hydrate. Featuring DJ Laura B spinning your favorite drinking tunes till 4am! All house level cocktails are just a dollar and \$4.00 4 Rebel Bomb Shots. Get there early to catch the hilarious Ruff N Stuff show starting at midnight! 9:00pm Hydrate Nightclub 3458 N Halsted <http://www.hydratechicago.com>

Tuesday, Dec. 31

Bi discussion group Every other Tuesday we get together to chat about upcoming bisexual events, concerns, and answer each other's questions about the community. Soft drinks & water are provided by the Center, but feel free to bring anything else you'd like to share, whether it's snacks or a good book! 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Unlock Your Future New Year's Eve night of fun and friends with Equality Illinois. Champagne Toast at midnight, noisemakers and leis. Fabulous door prizes courtesy of Orbitz travel. Complimentary coat check. Limited Valet Parking available at Sidetrack the evening of the event. Your contribution supports Equality Illinois. Contributions are not tax-deductible. 7:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St <http://www.sidetrackchicago.com>

NYE 2014: Royalty Takes Over Countdown to the New Year with Chicago's very own royals: current reigning Ms. Continental Naysha Lopez and current reigning Miss Continental Plus Farra N Hyte and party the whole the night away to the sounds and beats of DJ Laura B. \$50 or VIP IN/OUT Privileges. Service fee. 8:00pm - 4:00am Hydrate Nightclub 3458 N Halsted <http://www.hydratechicago.com> Tickets: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/524830>

New Year's Eve Monster's Ball Guests dressed in their most horrific, startling attire ring in 2014 with the ghosts and ghouls of Stage 773. \$70 per person/\$120 per couple. Unlimited specialty drinks, diabolically delicious appetizers, live music and a haunted house. 9:00pm - 2:00am Stage 773 1225 W Belmont 773-327-5252 <http://www.Stage773.com>

Replay/Reboot A New Year's Eve Party to benefit Lambda Legal with DJ Moose providing a full on 80s soundtrack remixed and rebooted for 2014 all night long. Hors d'oeuvres and top shelf drink package plus free arcade games. \$40 advance/\$45 at door. 9:00pm Replay Beer & Bourbon 3439 N Halsted St Tickets: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/523164>

Redmoon's New Year's Eve: Revolution. Festive evening of relentless elegance and wild imagination, with signature Redmoon moments of spectacle, ceremony and ritual for an unexpected interpretation of the classic New Year's Eve celebration. \$100 includes five hours (9 pm - 2 am) of open bar and sweets service and free shuttle. Access to one of three Lounge Areas is available through VIP tickets \$150. 9:00pm Redmoon 2120 S. Jefferson St. 312-850-8440 x123, <http://www.redmoon.org>

Wed., Jan. 1

Red Cup Party Every Wednesday. Featuring DJ Cooper Thomas and tasty drink specials. 9:00pm Scarlet Bar 3320 N Hal-

sted <http://www.scarletbarchicago.com>

You're The Star Karaoke with Honey West Join hostess with the mostess, Honey West for You're The Star Karaoke, 10pm in Roscoe's front bar. Take your place in the spotlight! There's not a bad seat in the house. 10:00pm Roscoe's Tavern 3356 N Halsted St <http://www.roscoes.com>

Pumped Each Wednesday Minibar lets you spoil your self with hot entertainment and surprises around every corner. 9:00pm Minibar 3341 N Halsted St., <http://www.minibarchicago.com/#!events/c9qb>

Saturday, Jan. 4

Ethical Problems in Gender Identity Construction Hyacinth Piel. Part of Lavender University LGBTQ programs, a nine-month series of LGBTQ educational programs featuring prominent scholars known nationally for their innovative research and work. Reservations online or tickets at door. Questions to publisher@windycitymediagroup.com or lkartlic@centeronhalsted.org 11:00am - 1:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Tickets: <https://community.centeronhalsted.org/lavenderuniversity>

Welcoming the New Year with SoulCollage The beginning of a new year brings hope for a fresh start and the energy for manifesting goals and intentions. This workshop will provide you with an opportunity to take a look at what's stirring within and a chance to give voice to those desires. Take a few hours of dedicated time to activate your inner guidance and let your creative juices flow. Contact Shari to reserve your spot today! 12:00pm - 4:00pm 4400 W. Lawrence Ave., <http://www.soulcollage.com/finder/wc/Chicago>

Tuesday, Jan. 7

Intersex Chicago Intersex people physically differ from the "standard" male and female. Intersex Chicago is a safe, confidential meetup for all intersex people and their allies in the Chicago area. Meet other intersex people. Make new friends. Find out more about intersex. Explore and celebrate your difference. intersexchicago@gmail.com 6:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Thursday, Jan. 9

Parents of Transgender Individuals For decades, PFLAG has been proud to be a resource for transgender and gender non-conforming people, their families, and friends. For More Info: parentsoftransgender@pflagillinois.org 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://community.pflag.org/transgender>

Pride Films and Plays presents The Children's Hour A revival Of Lillian Hellman's classic play of loves and lies. 8:00pm Collaboracion's Pentagon Theater, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave., 800-838-3006 <http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com> Tickets:



POWER OF THREE

Through Jan. 5

We Three Lizas is running at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com>

Monday, Jan. 13

On Grace & Politics: Conversation with Anna Deavere Smith, Toni Preckwinkle Part of Anna Deavere Smith and cellist Joshua Roman's work-in-progress play On Grace. Smith is known for her one-woman performances that meld theater, journalism and social commentary. Toni Preckwinkle is Cook County Board President. Free and open to the public. Walk-ups welcome; reservations recommended. 7:00pm Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts 915 E. 60th St Tickets: http://www.eventbrite.com/e/on-grace-politics-a-conversation-with-anna-deavere-smith-and-toni-preckwinkle-registration-9621521229?utm_campaign=Anna+Deavere+Smith+PR1&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_content=RSVP

Friday, Jan. 17

GayCo at Chicago Sketchfest 2014! GayCo performs for its 12th time in the nations largest sketch festival. Featuring highlights from GayCo's #GodHatesHashtags, find out what will happen to the gay community after #GayMarriage and #Equality are no longer trending topics. Tickets online or by phone. 8:00pm Stage 773 1225 W Belmont 773-327-5252 Tickets: <http://www.chicagosketchfest.com>

TRANS in the LIFE

Nero Ray Caesar Wolfe Germanicus
BY ROSS FORMAN

Age 54	Hobbies Golf, weight training, fine dining, theater, opera, and writing
Neighborhood North Beverly	
Relationship status Single	Orientation Straight male
Job titles Semi-truck driver, funeral director/embalmer, electrician, horse trainer, and writer	It's a fact "I love and admire a person with brains and have a weakness for geeks because I'm a very shy nerd."

Nero Ray Caesar Wolfe Germanicus completed his transition last year, at age 53—a journey he started at age 16.

"I was unable to complete it because of LGBT problems with laws, [plus], operation procedures weren't as safe or perfected as they are now and just a whole lot of overwhelming issues with living my life as I am," he said. "I lived most of my life as a tortured soul."

Germanicus drives an 18-wheel semi-tractor trailer, hauling 53-foot-long rail containers. He also has driven doubles, triple trailers, tankers, flat beds and car haulers. He has worked for Ford Motor Company for 15 years, U.S. Robotics and others.

"I like the idea of people accepting me for who I am and not a label," he said. "I'm currently driving a big truck and completing my degree in computer science."

Germanicus is a U.S. Army veteran, who spent six years as a military police officer. He said truck driving "is a peaceful career [that] allows me to think. It gives me freedom unlike an office environment. I find that my creative thought for my writing comes very easy with this type of work environment."

He has been driving trucks on and off since 1998.

In addition, funeral directing is one of his passions, he said. Germanicus has been a licensed funeral director and embalmer for 20 years. He graduated from Worsham College of Mortuary Science in 1992.

"I've seen a lot of things and I've done a lot," he said. "I've seen just about every way a person can die. I've embalmed thousands of bodies over my career. I've visited with a multitude of families over the years. What I love most about being a funeral director is the true compassion that is shared among fellow human beings. When fellow human beings are going through a traumatic time, they don't think [if the] person that is helping them is gay or straight; they don't care. The only thing that matters is that this person is there for [them] and this, to me, is sincere human nature at its highest form of compassion."

"The highlight of my funeral career was the famous heat wave in Chicago in 1995 that killed [more than] 750 people. Everywhere I went to pick up a body the news cameras were there. I wore shorts while working that summer."

Germanicus said the worst part of trucking is that "the public is unaware of how dangerous these trucks are and they're constantly darting in and out of traffic in front of us."

"Unfortunately we cannot stop on a dime and their lives are in our hands," he added. "I think they should be trained better as regular automobile drivers that 80,000 pounds of steel can kill them or someone else."

The worst part of funeral directing is that "families don't realize nor do they care that there is absolutely no room for error with the funeral director," he said. "Unlike a movie script, he can't just yell cut and rewrite the funeral. This leaves the funeral director overworked and stressed."

Still, they are "great, rewarding careers," he said.



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Shooting straight with gay champion marksman Chris Cheng

BY ROSS FORMAN

Chris Cheng, winner of The History Channel's Top Shot (season four), revealed Dec. 17 on his blog that he is gay.

Cheng and partner Nate Smith have been together for almost five years—and their families will be together for Christmas, just as they are annually for Thanksgiving. Cheng has participated three times, including this year's annual AIDS LifeCycle bicycle ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. He is a member of the board of directors for the San Francisco Opera BRAVO! Club and is a volunteer baritone singer for the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Cheng also is a co-founder of Home For A Home, a nonprofit organization that builds homes for the needy. Cheng spoke with Windy City Times reporter Ross Forman for his first newspaper interview since coming out.

Cheng was the "gay guy applying for a shooting competition" when he auditioned two years ago for Top Shot. That was part of his persona—no doubt, a hot button.

But the gay card was never played.

"The entire cast of Top Shot knew that I was gay, and there were plenty of recorded discussions about [my sexual orientation]," Cheng said. "The interesting thing was, it really was a non-issue for the other marksmen on the cast. The History Channel never aired any of that footage because, and this is the quote that they gave me: 'It never became relevant.'"

"The uniform response that I got from everyone [associated with the TV show] was, 'Chris, we don't care that you're gay; this is a shooting competition; we want to see how well you shoot.'"

Cheng admits he was "caught off guard" by that response. "I was expecting much more of a fight, so to speak," he said.

The finale for Cheng's season on Top Shot—when he learned he was the champion, winner of a \$100,000 cash prize and a professional marksman contract with the show's sponsor, Bass Pro Shops—aired in May 2012.

Cheng was the winner—not the gay winner.

"For the past year and a half, I have learned how very tolerant the gun community is with respects to LGBT rights and the LGBT community," Cheng said. "There are a ton of gun owners who are supportive [of the gay community], and many gun people don't care about [others' sexual orientation.]"

"What prompted the announcement was, now that I've spent a year and a half in the gun community, and am a mini-celebrity in the gun world, I keep thinking, 'What do I want my place to be in the gun community?'" Cheng said. "I'm very interested in diversity in the gun industry and the gun community. The interesting thing is, the diversity is already there, but we just don't have a lot of outdoor media people talking about it. So that's where I saw an opportunity to shine this light on diversity in the gun community, that gun owners are not just this stereotypical white, redneck, bigoted gun owner."

Showcasing diversity, particularly in the gun community, is Cheng's drive.

On his coming-out blog, Cheng thanked many, including the National Rifle Association and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, "who are supportive of my decision as they recognize the diverse perspective I bring to the conversation about the safe and responsible use of firearms," he wrote.

Cheng said he has received 60 percent positive/supportive responses to his coming-out, while 5 percent have been negative, "which I



Chris Cheng. Photo by Oleg Volk

think is to be expected and I'm not really caught off-guard by that." He said that the remaining 35 percent have had a "So what, who cares, why is this an issue," attitude. "I think that's actually a great response," he said.

"Overall, it has been a supportive, accepting and tolerant response. There is much more support for gay rights in the gun community than one may think."

Such that, a gun-supporter friend of Cheng's who quickly came to his support. The man lives in the Deep South, is white and married with kids, Cheng said. The two have shot together for two days, and he didn't know that Cheng was gay at the time.

"I wasn't expecting to receive a positive response [from him], but he has been very, very supportive," Cheng said. "He gets it, that this is about breaking stereotypes."

Cheng comes from a diverse background. His dad, Benjamin, is Chinese-American; his mom, Maggie, is Japanese-Cuban. Cheng said his parents were "a little hesitant and concerned" about his coming-out blog, though they have known he is gay since 2008.

Benjamin asked his son, "Why do you need to do this? Why is it important for you to come out?"

Cheng replied, "This is important because gay people are a marginalized group [so] we have to be vocal and visible if we want to have an impact in the world."

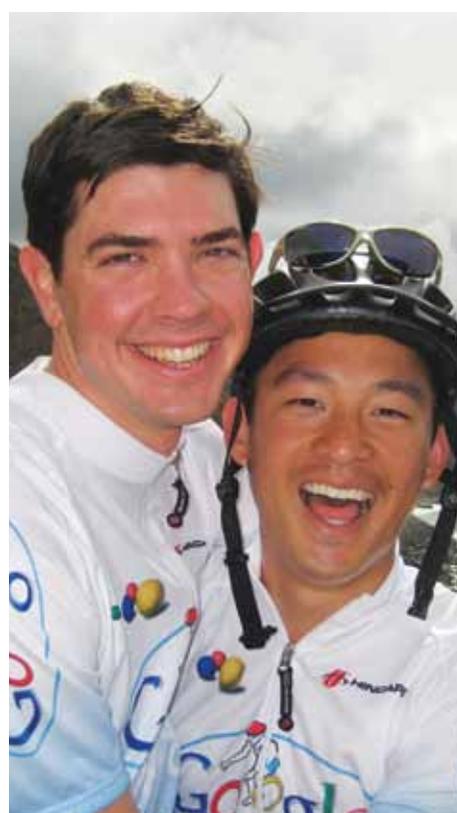
After all, Cheng admitted he definitely wanted to be a role-model to others in the LGBT community.

"Coming out is not easy. You may lose friends or family members; that is the reality; it can happen," he said. "But coming out has been nothing but a very good experience for me."

Cheng, 34, came out to friends at 19 while attending UCLA. He graduated in 2003, and worked for Google 2007-2012, primarily in technical support.

He came out to his parents in 2008 at a pizza restaurant in San Francisco.

"Like a lot of gay people, I ran this narrative



Chris Cheng and partner Nate Smith. Photo from Cheng

through my head, [including] how I'm going to do it, what I'm going to say, and how I'll respond to any reaction they may have. It was like I had a contingency plan for anything," Cheng said.

Today, his parents are "totally fine" with his sexual orientation, he said. "Things are at a great place with my folks."

Cheng and Smith, 29, the CEO and co-founder of a start-up company in the Silicon Valley in the software industry, have been together for almost five years. They met at Google.

"The impact I want to have [for the gay com-

munity] is to just show people that you can be yourself, and if you want to do something, just go do it," Cheng said. "If I'm at any way able to put people at ease, help them be themselves, be who they are, that's great, definitely something I hope I can do."

Cheng tours the country for Bass Pro Shops, competes in various shooting competitions, and works with the NRA and others to promote the sport of shooting.

He is writing a book, Shoot To Win, due out next July, and developing a gun-related TV show for 2014.

"I love what I do for my job. I'm living the American dream, doing stuff that people often only dream about," Cheng said. "I have a lot of fun competing, demonstrating weapons, and just learning as much as I can about the shooting community."

"I never envisioned this is where my life would be. While at UCLA, I was debating whether to be an engineer, working for Apple or Google. Then, I envisioned working in government, either for the government or for an elected official."

"Even five years ago, if someone had said, 'Chris, you are going to have a career in the gun industry,' I would have said, 'No way; that just doesn't make any sense.'"

But Cheng has shined in the gun community, a self-taught marksman who never was in the military or with law enforcement experience.

Cheng has participated in the annual seven-day, 545-mile AIDS LifeCycle three times—in 2009, 2010 and 2013.

"It truly is a wonderful event," Cheng said. "You are around LGBT people, and supporters, for a week, and it really is a warm, open, loving and accepting community."

"The impact of the week is really all about seeing [participants] from areas that are not as gay-friendly as San Francisco. It's a very emotional experience. I would love to do it again in 2014, but the challenge is, my schedule. I absolutely will do the ALC again, just not sure if it will be in 2014."

Brian Boitano comes out, joins U.S. delegation to Sochi Olympics

BY ROSS FORMAN

The speculation has been silenced, and now he's heading to Sochi.

Brian Boitano, who won a figure skating gold medal at the 1988 Olympics and was named by President Obama to the official U.S. delegation to the 2014 Sochi Olympics, announced Dec. 19 that he is gay.

Boitano's announcement ended years of speculation about his sexual orientation. The 50-year-old Boitano also competed in the 1984 and the 1994 Olympics, finishing fifth and sixth, respectively, and has appeared on the Food Network's show *What Would Brian Boitano Make?*

Boitano is joined on the official U.S. delegation to the Sochi Olympics by tennis legend Billie Jean King and former Olympic hockey player Caitlin Cahow, both out lesbians. The presence of prominent out gay athletes has been viewed by many as a strong message from Obama against Russia's anti-gay legislation.

Obama will not be attending, nor will a member of Obama's family or an active Cabinet secretary, marking the first time in at least 20 years that no U.S. president, vice president, one of their wives or a current cabinet secretary will be in a U.S. Olympic delegation.

The highest-ranking official will be former Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano.

Boitano said in a statement on Dec. 19 that he is currently skating in Europe.

"I have been fortunate to represent the United States of America in three different Olympics, and now I am honored to be part of the presidential delegation to the Olympics in Sochi," Boitano said in a statement. "It has been my experience from competing around the world and in Russia that Olympic athletes can come together in friendship, peace and mutual respect regardless of their individual country's practices.

"It is my desire to be defined by my achievements and my contributions. While I am proud to play a public role in representing the American Olympic Delegation as a former Olympic athlete, I have always reserved my private life for my family and friends and will continue to do so. I am many things: a son, a brother, and uncle, a friend, an athlete, a cook, an author, and being gay is just one part of who I am. First and foremost I am an American athlete and I am proud to live in a country that encourages diversity, openness and tolerance. As an athlete, I hope we can remain focused on the Olympic spirit which celebrates achievement in sport by peoples of all nations.

USA TODAY sports columnist Christine Brennan called the selection of King "a stroke of genius." Kevin Boyer of Chicago, an openly gay market-



Brian Boitano. Photo courtesy of The Food Network

ing executive, said Obama's delegation decisions "are brilliant."

"It sends a clear message about U.S. values," Boyer said. "It makes a political statement, but focused on the athletes, and makes potential Russian protests impotent. The President not going sends an equally important message. I hope that NBC in its coverage and the sponsors in their advertising all make equally smart decisions. This issue is literally life and death for Russian LGBT people."

Anthony Nicodemo, the out basketball coach at Saunders High School in Yonkers, N.Y., said the inclusion of three out athletes in the delegation is "great."

"What an awesome way for the president to make a statement on the injustices in Russia: [sending] gay former Olympians, representing the USA," said Nicodemo, who came out this summer. In his team's first game of the season on Dec. 15, which Saunders won, all Saunders players wore "Be True" T-shirts from Nike for warm ups in support of their coach.

Jack Neilsen, the commission of the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) Sunday open division softball league, added: "What better way for President Obama to show support of the LGBT athletes and [the gay] community [than] by choosing members of the community. This sends a strong message to many that we are PROUD of our LGBT community and support them in this time of turmoil in Russia. Hopefully, as more LGBT athletes and community members come forward and show their face in Sochi, the repressive government will see that everyone deserves to be treated equally."

SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT 'Duck Dynasty' in anti-gay controversy

Duck Dynasty star Phil Robertson is under fire for bashing gays in a GQ interview in which he grouped homosexuality with "drunks" and "terrorists," according to TheWrap.com.

After he complained that "everything is blurred on what's right and what's wrong ... sin becomes fine," the magazine asked what he considers sinful. He said, "Start with homosexual behavior and just morph out from there—bestiality, sleeping around with this woman and that woman and that woman and those men." Duck Dynasty is cable's highest-rated reality show.

GLAAD has issued a statement condemning the remarks as "littered with outdated stereotypes and blatant misinformation."

CNN reported that A&E has suspended Robertson indefinitely. "We are extremely disappointed to have read Phil Robertson's comments in GQ, which are based on his own personal beliefs and are not reflected in the series Duck Dynasty," the network said in a statement.

Season five of the show is set to premiere Jan. 15.

Bull riders stop in Chicago Jan. 11-12

For the second year in a row, the Professional Bull Riders tour will stop in the Windy City, with its elite Built Ford Tough Series slated for Jan. 11-12 at the Allstate Arena.

During the two-day Chicago Invitational, fans will see the Top 35 bull riders in the world. The event will take place Saturday, Jan. 11, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Jan. 12, at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$20-\$125; they're on sale at the Allstate Arena box office, www.ticketmaster.com and 800-745-3000. For more information, visit www.pbr.com.

Gay Games accepting applications

The 2014 Gay Games is announcing a participation scholarship for those who wish to be part of the event but do not have the financial means to attend.

There is a limited number of scholarships available, ranging in estimated value from \$750 to \$1,350. The funds can be applied to general registration fees as well as fees for one sport/cultural event; transportation to and from host cities Cleveland and Akron, Ohio; and housing.

The Gay Games are open to everyone over the age of 18 by Aug. 9, 2014, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, transgender status, religion, nationality, political convictions, age, physical condition or athletic ability.

Interested parties can download the appli-

cation online at <http://bit.ly/GG9ScholarApp>. The deadline to apply is Feb. 15, 2014. Those awarded scholarships will be notified by April 1, 2014.

Nashville Grizzlies rugby team's calendar on sale

The Nashville Grizzlies—a USA Rugby Division squad that describes itself as "a socially and ethnically diverse group of guys ages 19-50"—has put together a calendar to raise funds to attend the 2014 Bingham Cup in Sydney, Australia.

The team welcomes new players, regardless of experience or sexual orientation.

Every two years the team travels to the Bingham Cup, named in honor of Mark Bingham, who died on United Airlines Flight 93 during the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

The calendar is \$20; see www.GrizzliesRugby.org.

'RuPaul's Drag Race' season six cast named

Fourteen contestants have been announced for the upcoming sixth season of the Logo TV show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, which will start in February.

Gia Gunn is the only contestant from Chicago. Some of the other entrants include April Carrion (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico), Vivacious (New York City), Laganja Estranja (Los Angeles), Milk (New York City) and Adore Delano (Azusa, Calif.).

The prizes will be \$100,000 and the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar."



Gia Gunn. Photo by Anthony Meade

New Year's Day run

The city's New Year's Day 5K Run & Walk returns for its 29th year Wed., Jan. 1.

The first official 5K of 2014 will take place at 11 a.m. at 1600 N. Stockton Dr.

Pre-registration for the event's 5K competitive-time run, 5K fun run and 5K walk is \$30.

To register, visit www.chicagoevents.com or call 773-868-3010.



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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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