

HIV ACTIVIST SEAN STRUB TALKS ABOUT HIS MEMOIR, 'BODY COUNTS'

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WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

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BURNING BOWL MARKS POINT OF REJUVENATION
PAGES 8

Indiana House talks marriage

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The Indiana House Judiciary Committee, on Jan. 13, heard four hours of testimony but did not yet vote on a bill that would constitutionally ban same-sex marriage.

Committee Chairman Greg Steuerwald, R-Avon, said they would be taking time to weigh the testimony and a vote would not happen Monday.

Even as more states have recognized marriage equality, along with the federal government, many LGBT Indiana residents now find themselves up against legislation that would not only enshrine a gay marriage ban in the state's constitution, but would also disallow categories that were "identical or substantially similar," such as civil unions. A law banning gay marriage is already in place; Indiana is one of just four states that does not have its anti-gay marriage law in its constitution.

Companion legislation ostensibly clarifies the constitutional ban, explaining that it is not intended to circumvent anti-discrimination ordinances nor existing legal arrangements between couples.

Indiana University General Counsel Jackie Simmons, testifying before

Turn to page 5



Tammy Vaughn-Kajmowicz (left) and her children Tenley, Jackson and Taylor sit with Lindsey Clark of the Human Rights Campaign. Tammy's partner, Karen, testified before the House Judiciary Committee against the proposed amendment to ban gay marriage. Picture by Tim Carroll Photography



TALKING WITH FILM DIRECTOR RODNEY EVANS
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VERY ENTERTAINING



PROFILING EVANSTON'S NEW LESBIAN POLICE LIAISON
PAGE 6



page 15

Windy City Times profiles two distinctly different entertainers: American Idol judge Harry Connick Jr. and local drag performer Shea Coulee. Photo of Connick from Fox; photo of Coulee by Kriss Abigail



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Images on cover (left, from top): Photo of Sean Strub (on the left) with Gore Vidal and John Berendt in 2001 by Howard Austen; photo of entertainer at Burning Bowl by Gretchen Blickensderfer; PR photo of Rodney Evans; photo of Sgt. Melissa Sacluti by Matt Simonette

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'PHANTOM' MENACE

Ben Jacoby (left) talks about being in The Phantom of the Opera at the Cadillac Palace Theatre.

Photo from The Second City e.t.c.



Lambda Legal's Hayley Gorenberg talks about the status of marriages in Utah.
Photo from Lambda Legal



Dr. Sue Ellen Foley gives the 411 on seasonal affective disorder.
Photo from Foley

POSITIVE OUTLOOK

PositiveSingles.com allows people with various STIs to meet each other.

RENT AND RAVE

An article looks at the ups and downs of the rental market.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Find out the latest about Lea Michele, Julia Roberts and Bryan Singer.

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LGBTs laud Holder announcement on Utah marriages

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

LGBT legal activists applauded an announcement by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Jan. 10 that the federal government will recognize marriage licenses issued to same-sex couples in Utah despite the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court put a stay on enforcement of the district court decision that allowed those couples to marry.

"It was the right call," said Mary Bonauto, Civil Rights Project Director of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders. "The U.S. is obliged to follow its laws and rules about treating married people alike and these marriages occurred in conformity with law."

Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said the Holder decision was "extremely important for these couples and their families, and means they will have the full protection of all federal benefits."

"The federal government has already stated that it will recognize legally married same-sex couples, regardless of whether their state of residence does so," said Minter. Minter was referring to the announcements following the Supreme Court ruling in June in *U.S. v. Windsor*, that most federal agencies would recognize marriage licenses obtained by same-sex couples even if the licenses were obtained outside the couples' states of residence.

In his Jan. 10 press release, Holder noted that an "administrative step" by the Supreme Court "cast doubt" on the marriage licenses issued to same-sex couples in Utah, adding that Utah Governor Gary Herbert has announced "the state will not recognize these marriages pending additional court action."

"I am confirming today that, for purposes of federal law, these marriages will be recognized as lawful and considered eligible for all relevant federal benefits on the same terms as other same-sex marriages," said Holder. "These families should not be asked to endure uncertainty regarding their status as the litigation unfolds."

"In the days ahead," added Holder, "we will continue to coordinate across the federal government to ensure the timely provision of every federal benefit to which Utah couples and couples throughout the country are entitled—regardless of whether they are in same-sex or opposite-sex marriages. And we will continue to provide additional information as soon as it becomes available."

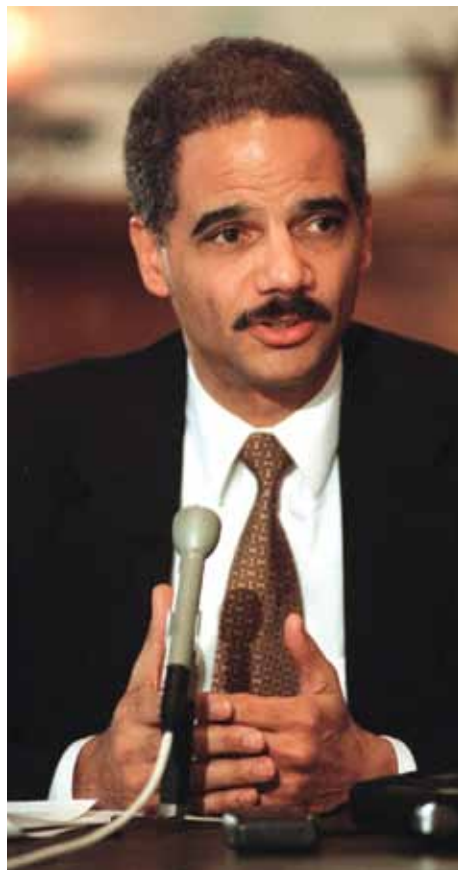
Camilla Taylor, head of Lambda Legal's Marriage Project, said the Supreme Court's order "merely stayed the further issuance of marriage licenses" and "did not in any way affect the validity of marriage licenses that previously were issued—these licenses were validly issued, and remain valid."

"In fact, even the Utah attorney general's office itself admits that these marriages may well be valid," said Taylor. "Consequently, DoJ [the Department of Justice] reached the only conclusion it could, given *Windsor*—that it must respect these marriages for purposes of federal benefits, protections, rights, and responsibilities."

Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes issued a statement Jan. 8 saying that he was "unable to reach a legal conclusion as to the ultimate validity of marriage between persons of the same sex who completed their marriage ceremony in Utah between December 20, 2013, and January 6, 2014."

"That question," said Reyes, "remains unanswered and the answer will depend on the result of the appeal process."

On several occasions before, same-sex couples have been able to obtain marriage licenses only to have them declared invalid at a later date. That happened most notably in San Francisco af-



Attorney General Eric Holder.

ter then Mayor Gavin Newsom directed city clerk in February 2004 to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples even though a state law prohibited them at the time. The California Supreme Court later invalidated those marriages.

But GLAD's Bonauto said Holder's action is "very different than the one in California."

"In that case, the mayor decided to deviate from existing law in California," said Bonauto. "Here," she said, the Supreme Court "has already put the federal government on notice not to discriminate" against same-sex married couples.

"And there are legally married couples in Utah," she said. "It's entirely different."

One organization opposed to same-sex marriage was quick to characterize Holder's move as overreaching executive branch authority.

"The Justice Department's edict today expressly contradicts the determination of Utah's Governor and Attorney General, and represents one of the most significant overreaches of federal authority imaginable," said Brian Brown, head of the National Organization for Marriage.

But other groups were quiet—at least, so far.

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U.S. customs broadens family definition

U.S. Customs and Border Protection sent a final rule to the Federal Register designed to broaden the definition of "members of a family residing in one household" to more accurately reflect relationships for U.S. citizens, residents and international visitors who are traveling together as a family.

The expansion of the term will include long-term same-sex couples and other domestic relationships; the change in regulation will create less paperwork for people who are traveling together as a family.

More information can be found at CBP.gov.

State Dept. issues Olympics warning

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The U.S. State Department issued a travel advisory Jan. 11 for citizens traveling to Russia for the Winter Olympics next month, including a specific warning that "vague guidance" from Russia about its new laws making "it a crime to promote LGBT equality in public" could be used to fine, deport, or jail foreign visitors.

The LGBT warning was part of a longer advisory alerting Americans traveling to Sochi, Russia, for the Olympics that such highly publicized global events are seen as an "attractive target" for terrorists and that several acts of terrorism have already been perpetrated in Russia in the past few weeks.

The advisory, issued Jan. 10, urges American citizens to "avoid large crowds in areas that lack enhanced security measures" and to use caution "in any areas where protests, demonstrations, or other public disturbances are taking place."

"Demonstrations intended to be peaceful can develop quickly and unpredictably, sometimes turning violent," notes the advisory.

The possibility of LGBT-related protests in Russia has been a concern since last June, when the Russian government approved its anti-gay laws. Although the Russian government says the laws are just focused on protecting children from "non-traditional sexual relations," the legislation goes much further.

Signed by President Vladimir Putin in June and July, they also prohibit any public displays of affection by same-sex couples and any public events related to LGBT people.

Early talk by activists of staging protests or wearing rainbow pins or waving rainbow flags at the Olympics was met with promises by the Russian government of tough enforcement of its laws. Putin and Russian officials have softened their tone in recent weeks, and earlier this month and said they would provide a designated area in a nearby village for protests. Then earlier this month, Putin signed an executive order that will require protesters to secure approval in advance.

But tensions seemed to be ready to escalate again over the weekend, when the head of the Russian Orthodox Church suggested the Russian people vote on whether to re-criminalize homosexuality.

The State Department advisory notes that foreign citizens could be fined as much as \$3,100, jailed for 14 days, and deported for violating the laws.

"The law makes it a crime to promote LGBT equality in public, but lacks concrete legal definitions for key terms," notes the advisory. "Russian authorities have indicated a broad interpretation of what constitutes 'LGBT propaganda,' and provided vague guidance as to which actions will be interpreted by authorities as 'LGBT propaganda.'"

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Twitter pic of CeCe McDonald (right) and Laverne Cox.

Trans woman CeCe McDonald freed from prison

In Minnesota, transgender woman CeCe McDonald was released from prison Jan. 13, according to MSNBC.

McDonald pled guilty to second-degree manslaughter in the death of Dean Schmitz in June 2011 in Minneapolis, and was sentenced to 41 months. McDonald said she acted in self-defense after being verbally and physically assaulted while walking to a 24-hour grocery store late at night.

Trans actress/activist Laverne Cox (Orange Is the New Black) met McDonald after she was re-

leased, The Huffington Post noted.

Cox is working on a documentary, *Free CeCe*, in order to heighten visibility and awareness surrounding McDonald's case; her experiences while incarcerated in a men's prison; and the larger implications of her case for the transgender community.

In a statement, The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs celebrated McDonald's release.

"CeCe McDonald is a living exhibition in resilience, beauty and power. She is also a living example of injustice in our culture," said writer/advocate Janet Mock. "When a woman is attacked for merely being herself and sent to prison for daring to survive, we send a message that some lives matter more than others. CeCe McDonald—and our sisters and siblings who continue fighting back—remind us daily that our lives are worth fighting for, and that most of all, we matter."

New guidelines may help end school/prison link

The U.S. Dept. of Education and Dept. of Justice Jan. 8 released groundbreaking federal guidance to assist schools in making their disciplinary practices—which research shows disproportionately impacts youth of color and LGBT youth—less discriminatory while encouraging positive interventions over student push-out or removal, according to a press release.

The guidelines, however, do not specifically reference LGBT youth. Last year GLSEN met with the departments to urge them to include LGBT-specific language to address the particular challenges LGBT youth face.

The development and release of the federal guidance is the result a collaborative project—the Supportive School Discipline Initiative—between the Department of Education and Department of Justice and the School Discipline Consensus Project managed by the Council of State Governments.

See the guidelines at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html>.

ELECTIONS 2014

Ferrand off ballot, is appealing decision

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Melanie "Mel" Ferrand, an openly lesbian Chicago Public Schools librarian who was running as state representative for the 40th District—a post Ald. Deb Mell vacated last year—has been removed from the ballot of the March 18 primaries.

However, Ferrand told Windy City Times she is appealing the decision, and said that the matter will likely have to be decided in the courts.

An official from City of Chicago Board of Election Commissioners told Windy City Times that Ferrand's name was removed on Jan. 6.

Her candidacy was challenged in December by Marisa Brown, of the 2600 block of North Sacramento Avenue, and John Parizek, of the 2600 block of North Washtenaw Avenue. Attorney Michael C. Dorf of Adducci, Dorf, Lehner, Mitchell and Blankenship filed the objection on their behalf. Ferrand said that Dorf also is attorney for one her opponents, Nancy Schiavone.

The complaint said that Ferrand turned in incorrect paperwork when filing for candidacy, alleging that she submitted a receipt for filing her statement of economic interests from the Cook County Clerk's Office, but not one from the Illinois secretary of state's office. It also alleges



Mel Ferrand. Photo from Ferrand

that Ferrand did not file the statement of economic interests with the secretary of state at all.

Ferrand admitted to submitting the documents incorrectly, but said that both forms contained the same information, adding, "I wanted to be 100-percent transparent."

The paperwork is now properly on file, and she said she expects to have the matter resolved, and be back on the ballot, within a few weeks.

"We're not going to let machine-style politics bully us," Ferrand said. "I must be a challenge, or this wouldn't be done. Lots of my volunteers and supporters feel the same way."

The 40th District is currently represented by Jaime Andrade, who stepped in after Deb Mell left. Andrade was assistant to Mell's father, Dick Mell, and served as the City Council's assistant sergeant-at-arms. He is running this year to retain the seat. Other candidates include Schiavone, Aaron Goldstein, Bart Goldberg, Wendy Jo Harmston and Mark Pasieka.

Ferrand said that, for now, her campaign is "moving forward—I've been outside knocking on doors, and, when the weather was so horrible, I was inside making phone calls."

The district is on the Northwest Side and includes parts of Logan Square, Albany Park, Avondale and Irving Park.

Nigeria bans same-sex marriage

Nigeria President Goodluck Jonathan has signed a law that bans same-sex marriage and criminalizes same-sex associations, societies and meetings with up to 14 years in jail, according to the Associated Press.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Jan. 13 the United States is "deeply concerned" by a law that "dangerously restricts freedom of assembly, association, and expression for all Nigerians."

In a recent interview, Olumide Makanjuola, executive director of the Initiative For Equality in Nigeria, had said, "If that bill passes, it will be illegal for us to even be holding this conversation."

INDIANA from cover

the Committee, said that IU's domestic partner benefits would be in jeopardy because of the two bills, and that the need for clarifying language pointed to inherent problems with the amendment in the first place, according to Evansville Courier & Press.

If the legislation passes the committee, it will go onto the full House. Since the bills apply to a constitutional amendment, they must pass the full legislature in two consecutive sessions, and will then be put on a ballot for voters to decide.

Opponents of the legislation arrived at the statehouse wearing red T-shirts. "It was such an amazing sight to look around the House chamber and Statehouse halls and see so many Hoosiers decked out in red to show their opposition to this divisive amendment that would harm our friends, neighbors and families," said Megan Robertson, campaign manager for LGBT-rights organization Freedom Indiana, in a statement. "Hoosiers opposed to this amendment have made thousands of calls to lawmakers and written nearly 15,000 letters to make it clear that we will not rest until our Constitution is protected and all Hoosiers are protected under it."



Overflow from the hearing room. Picture by Tim Carroll Photography

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Sgt. Melissa Sacluti. Photo by Matt Simonette

Sacluti begins as Evanston LGBT police liaison

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The City of Evanston last year decided to appoint a liaison between its police department and its LGBT residents. In December, Sgt. Melissa Sacluti, of the department's Internal Affairs division, was named to the new position.

"The powers that be at City Hall wanted somebody to take on the responsibility of fostering positive relationships between our LGBT residents and the police department," Sacluti said. "It's something that they wanted to get out in front of, and be proactive about."

Among those "powers that be" were members of the city council, including openly gay 6th Ward Ald. Mark Tendam, she added.

In a press release announcing the appointment, Tendam said, "I am extremely grateful to the Evanston Police Department [EPD] and Sergeant Sacluti. With the establishment of a police liaison, the LGBT community now has a dedicated voice serving them."

Sacluti, who has been with EPD for about a decade, said her added responsibilities came about because police and city officials "wanted to make sure that the LGBT community has a sense of inclusion, and that their voices are heard. I think that's why this position is so important—so that people who don't feel like they're being heard have someone to go to and find out what their resources are."

She could not recall any LGBT-related hate crimes in Evanston during her time with EPD, "but I have, as a patrol officer, been called out to situations where a same-sex couple is in a dispute and we have to treat it no differently. ... Responding to a domestic disturbance where

there's a same-sex couple or a child offense where the child might have same-sex parents are the most common situations that we would encounter."

Police officers have to attend diversity trainings year-round. Sacluti said that interacting with LGBT Evanstonians makes up a large part of that training.

"I've met numerous LGBT people here, patrolling and meeting people and business owners. Evanston is extremely diverse. There's not one specific area where they live either—they're scattered," said Sacluti. As of the 2010 census, there were 327 same-sex couples in Evanston.

Beyond the police work, she'll have a hand in helping plan more LGBT-centric activities in Evanston. "We've been thinking about having a pride run, which is something that Chicago does, or a bike ride."

A native of Morton Grove, Sacluti currently lives on the North Side of Chicago; Evanston does not require its police officers to be residents. She and her partner have been together for 17 years and have two kids, with a third on the way.

Sacluti has always been out to colleagues and "I've always brought my partner around—they know her and it's never been a big deal."

She added that, in recent years, more of her fellow officers have come out as well. "Our police department is representative of our community and is so diverse. We have people from all walks of life—different races, religions and backgrounds. The majority of people here are accepting of everybody else's differences."

PASSAGES

Carl Occhipinti

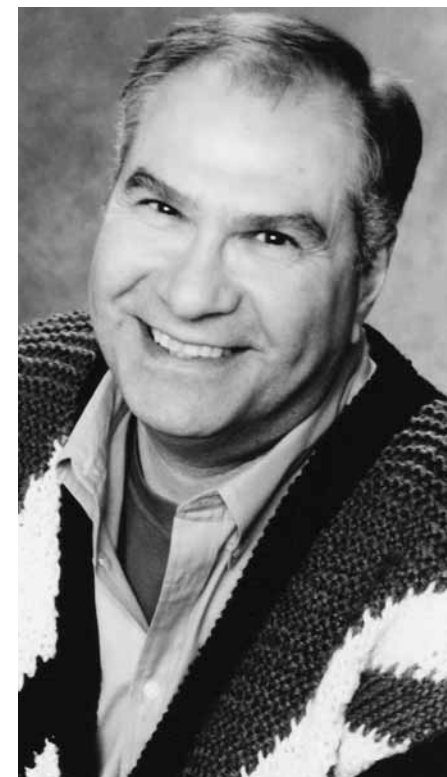
Carl Occhipinti, the retired artistic director of Village Players, passed away Jan. 3. He was 61.

According to Legacy.com, he is survived by his beloved life partner, Gary Shum, of Chicago; his two sons, Jason (Cheryl) and Todd Occhipinti; and grandchildren Derek and Emmy of Eastlake, Ohio.

He was also the dear brother of Vincent, Jacqueline (Randy) Petersen, Peter (Carol), Joseph (Laura) and Salvatore; and uncle to 14 nieces and nephews. His parents, Carlo and Josephine Occhipinti preceded him in death.

In a statement, former Oak Park Festival Theatre Managing Director Galen Gockel said that Occhipinti "single-handedly kept Village Players afloat for years. ... It was his passion." He added, "At the final tribute to him to him upon his retirement, the theater was packed with admirers and those with whom he had worked. A perfect gentleman."

A service of remembrance was held Sunday, Jan. 12, at the Sax-Tiedemann Funeral Home at 9568 W. Belmont Ave., Franklin Park, 1-5 p.m. For info, call 847-678-1950 or visit www.sax-tiedemannfuneralhome.com.



Carl Occhipinti. Photo from OakPark.com

Medical marijuana patients have to wait

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Legislation allowing for the use of medical marijuana in Illinois took effect Jan. 1, which many HIV/AIDS advocacy groups see as good news, but the state has yet to iron out many specific plans for the law's full implementation. Consequently, marijuana won't be available for patient use until well into 2014 or later, according to state officials.

"We ask that people be patient," said Melaney Arnold, spokesperson for Illinois Department of Public Health. "We understand that some people are happy that this passed, so we are trying to do it in the most expeditious manner possible."

Arnold added that the state "wants to make sure that we are being transparent and responsible."

Gov. Pat Quinn signed the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Act, sponsored by state Rep. Lou Lang, D-Skokie, and state Sen. Bill Haine, D-Alton, on Aug. 1, 2013.

The legislation, which currently is set to expire in four years, is some of the most restrictive medical marijuana legislation in the country, placing extremely tight controls on cultivation centers and dispensaries. Users will not be allowed to grow their own plants.

Numerous studies have shown that using marijuana can help persons with HIV/AIDS ease their pain and cope with side effects from their medications, said Ramon Gardenhire, government policy director for AIDS Foundation of Chicago. Nevertheless, he added, the legislation required significant logistical planning and compromises just to be acceptable for legislators.

"The saying goes, the hallmark of good legislation is that nobody is completely happy," Gardenhire said. "Whenever you do something innovative, it takes a long time to see the fruits of that labor."

Ann Fisher, executive director of the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago, said the law would bring relief for many of her agency's clients and "they also can be free of the stigma of having to use marijuana in the shadows."

She said that the state is proceeding extremely cautiously because so many lawmakers felt their credibility was at stake. "Lou Lang wanted

this to be medical marijuana, not 'medical marijuana.' This is the bill we could get right now."

Dan Linn—executive director of Illinois NORML, which advocates for the legalization of marijuana—said his organization is trying to help craft emergency legislation that would be able to provide some individuals with relief in the short-term.

"It's disappointing that it'll take so long, when there are people who can actually get some relief from having this available," Linn said.

He questioned why the state is "dragging its feet" on the licensing aspects of the process. "It's not like they have to reinvent the wheel with that, since there have been 20 other states that did it before them."

But Linn said the legislation was a good first step, and that Illinois NORML is continuing to advocate for legalization for recreational use.

"The first time a medical marijuana bill was brought up, it was sponsored by [openly gay] state Rep. Larry McKeon, and it never made it out of committee," Linn said.

LaBarbera talks Robin Roberts, trans people

Naperville, Ill.-based anti-gay activist Peter LaBarbera appeared on a Christian radio program Jan. 2 and disparaged, among others, Good Morning America host Robin Roberts, who publicly came out in December.

While a guest on Voice of Christian Youth America's Crosstalk, LaBarbera said that "every coming out is a tragedy," advocate.com reported.

LaBarbera also said that trans individuals "are people who believe that their biological sex, male or female, doesn't match what they feel ... Satan really works through feelings, doesn't he?"

The host of the program, Vic Eliason, later characterized trans people as "freaks."

Advocate.com's article is at www.advocate.com/politics/media/2014/01/03/anti-lgbt-activist-links-trans-people-satan-calls-robin-roberts-tragic.

Celebration of Gary's life now Jan. 19

Details of a celebration of William "Feathers" Gary's life have changed.

The event will now take place Sunday, Jan. 19, at Little Jim's, 3501 N. Halsted St., starting at 12 p.m.

Gary tended bar for many years, notably at Bulldog Road and Buddies Restaurant and Bar, which was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2003.

"Feathers was a larger than life figure in the community, known for his antics and special-customer service, he leaves a memorable



William "Feathers" Gary.

legacy," Heartland Health Outreach Food Program Coordinator Lori Cannon told Windy City Times.

A memorial service took place Nov. 26, 2013, at Barr Funeral Home.



Gay Christian Network's Justin Lee. Photo by Matt Simonette

Gay Christian Network founder challenges ideas about Christianity

BY MATT SIMONETTE

In his keynote address at the annual gathering of the Gay Christian Network (GCN)—an organization he founded in 2001—Justin Lee lamented that many Christians in this country are willing to keep themselves isolated in “bubbles,” detached from mainstream society.

“Growing up, I kind of wanted to be like Ned Flanders on *The Simpsons*,” said Lee, GCN's executive director. “Or at least I would have if I had been allowed to watch *The Simpsons*.”

Lee was speaking Jan. 12 as GCN wrapped its 2014 conference, entitled “Live It Out,” held Jan. 9-12 at the Westin River North, 320 N. Dearborn St.

Ned Flanders was a caricature of the American Christian as squeaky-clean, pure and living in self-imposed isolation from life's harsher realities, Lee said. “But there's not a single Ned Flanders in the bible. Jesus was not squeaky-clean. ... Jesus was not about building a wall between the clean and unclean. He was about knocking it down—that is grace.

“God does not call us into conformity ... God creates diversity and delights in it,” he added.

Lee said that many Christians have relinquished the public voice of their religion to individuals and communities who mainly stand against others, refuse to see nuances, and link scripture to their own fears and prejudices. “That's what Westboro Baptist Church does. They speak out so strongly but they show no grace or

love, and grace and love is what we're supposed to be showing.”

GCN, which is headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., is comprised of several regional networks as well as an online community of about 20,000 people, according to Lee. About 700 people attended the GCN gathering, which is held in a different city every year. This was the first time it was in Chicago.

“We got some teasing about being here in January,” Lee admitted.

“We get mostly gay Christians, and some straight Christians who are interested in learning about LGBT issues,” he added. One couple told him their child had just come out to them New Year's Eve. “They somehow found out about us and got here.”

Among those also appearing at the conference were singer Derek Webb and author and blogger Rachel Held Evans.

For more information on GCN, visit www.gay-christian.net.

Marriage forum with officials Jan. 15

Several prominent officials are speaking at a forum on the marriage-equality law Wed., Jan. 15, at the Loyola Park Fieldhouse, 1230 W. Greenleaf Ave., at 7 p.m.

Among those speaking will be state Rep. Kelly Cassidy and Cook County Clerk David Orr.

See www.RepCassidy.com for more info.

Equality Illinois releases transgender name-change guide

BY KATE SOSIN

Signaling a shift for the organization after the passage of same-sex marriage, Equality Illinois has released a guide that helps transgender Illinoisans navigate name changes and gender marker revisions on state documents.

The organization announced the 44-page “Guide to Name and Gender Marker Changes” in a media statement Jan. 7.

“Negotiating your way through all of the additional hoops you have to go through as a trans person is difficult enough, even in a state that has made as much progress as Illinois. One of the benefits of this resource is its comprehensiveness to provide quick answers to unavoidable questions,” said Christina Kahrl, an Equality Illinois board member who sits on the organization's Transgender Leadership Council, in the statement.

The guide covers documentation change including Illinois driver's licenses, birth certificates, social security cards and passports.

The new resource comes just two months after Illinois saw the passage of marriage equality, a major goal for Equality Illinois and a major funding source for its advocacy work. In other states that have passed same-sex marriage legislation, local groups have tended to shift focus to transgender rights, which have largely trailed mainstream gay rights issues.

A number of local LGBT groups, Equality Illinois included, have already been active on transgender issues for years. Last year saw the opening of Chicago House's TransLife Center, a home for transgender Chicagoans that houses legal, employment and other services. In 2012, The Civil Rights Agenda, another statewide equality organization, launched a Transgender Rights Project.

Kahrl said Equality Illinois will also be redoubling efforts on transgender rights, where work remains.

“This is part of the natural lifecycle of all LGBT rights organizations,” Kahrl said.

She said that Equality Illinois will focus on other trans issues going into 2014. The organization wants to ensure that transgender Illinoisans have gender-related healthcare covered in the Affordable Care Act. It is also hoping to improve conditions for transgender people detained in jails and prisons in Illinois and advocate for slight changes to Illinois

High School Association guidelines for high school athletics.

Kahrl said that Illinois is ahead of the curve when it comes to transgender policy but noted that trans advocates are continuing to push for policy change, especially when it comes to rules governing Illinois birth certificates.

Kahrl added Equality Illinois will be happy to play a supporting role to organizations like Chicago House and Lambda Legal already heading up those efforts.

As for the new document guide, Kahrl said, that resource has been in the works for several months.

The Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois, a transgender criminal defense organization, has been helping people with name changes in Chicago since 2011. Kahrl acknowledged that work and said she hopes Equality Illinois can serve as a resource outside of Cook County.

According to the press release, the Illinois Bar Foundation and the Tawani Foundation, Jen Pritzker's charitable organization, supported the publication.

The guide can be accessed at: tinyurl.com/EQIL-Name-Toolkit.

Loyola student apologizes for anti-gay tweet

An incoming student at Chicago's Loyola University has apologized for an anti-gay tweet.

The student, who owns the Twitter account Pipe_Dawwg, originally posted, “Got into Loyola Chicago with \$70,000 MERRY CHRISTMAS YOU FAGGOTTS [sic]!!!”

The student emailed an apology to Windy City Times: “I just wanted to reach out to you and apologize for any way in which I may have offended you or anyone else.

“In no way was my tweet meant as an insult to anyone in the LGBTQ community. I go to an arts high school where many of my peers and friends are part of the LGBTQ community. In no way am I anti-gay. ... I completely understand why people would be offended by this and again I am extremely sorry for my tweet.”

Inquiries to admissions staff at Loyola were not answered as of the press deadline.

—Andrew Davis



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Burning Bowl participants Shisha Thomas and her sons, Michael Thomas and Michael Angelo. Photo by Gretchen Blickensderfer

Affinity's 'Burning Bowl' fans the flames of rejuvenation

BY GRETCHEN BLICKENSDERFER

"Be transformed by rejuvenation!" That was the battle cry at the 2014 Affinity Burning Bowl held Jan. 11 at the Christian Theological Seminary.

"No matter where you come from, today we are family," Mistress of Ceremonies, actress, model and entrepreneur Brandee Young said before encouraging the 300-plus enthusiastic attendees to rise and hug each other. "Burning Bowl is a long standing event of purging, celebration and fellowship," she added. "There's a purpose and a reason why you are here today!"

Audience members were encouraged to write down a list of thoughts, actions or associations that had affected them negatively in 2013. The lists were then taken to an outdoor fire that had been set up outside the Seminary offices and "purged" through the act of throwing them into the flames. The act was followed with each attendee making a list of objectives to focus upon in 2014. Those lists were placed in a self-addressed stamped envelope that Affinity volunteers will mail in June in order for participants to determine if their goals are being met.

Affinity is a social-justice organization focusing on civic engagement, health, wellness and leadership development. The organization works with and on behalf of Black LGBTQ communities, queer youth and allies in the causes of freedom

and human rights. Next year will mark the 20th anniversary for the organization and the Burning Bowl event.

In looking back over the organization's achievements last year, Affinity Board Chair Ebonie Davis said that the organization "brought the voices of Black LGBTQ people and allies to Springfield, Washington DC, Raleigh, Orlando, Houston, Dallas, Los Angeles and throughout Chicago. We did that and more with two part-time staff, our Board, volunteers and supporters who made sure we were in the room."

Davis, who recently appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show discussing colorism discrimination, said off-stage that being in the room meant increasing Affinity's visibility. "We need to identify emergent needs under the promise of equal rights," she said. "Instead of political leaders bringing issues to us, we need to bring our issues to them."

Setbacks in fundraising for Affinity in 2013 led to the suspension of their Scholars Program that develops future leaders in the LGBTQ community and has brought young participants to the White House. However, the day's rejuvenation helped to spur Affinity Executive Director Kim Hunt forward to new achievements in the coming year. "Affinity has always done a lot of work around bringing awareness to health disparities of black women and black queer and trans women in par-

ticular," she told Windy City Times. "But we are also moving more into public policy work that takes us beyond marriage equality and into access to health and wellness and looking at violence in our communities. All of those issues are important to us."

Hunt introduced the day's keynote speaker and co-founder of Affinity Community Services, Christina M. Smith, to a standing ovation. "When we think about the power of rejuvenation, what it means to our lives is probably as complex as all of us are in this room," Smith said. "The power is in how we decide to use whatever strengths we need to make our lives better."

Smith talked frankly about her own challenges fighting unemployment during the economic downturn of 2008 along with diagnoses of dia-

betes and colon cancer. "Know your body and show up in defense of your life!" She urged the audience. "Hope is fragile and it has to be nurtured. I wish you all rejuvenation this coming year and all the love and joy you can stand."

The event included rousing performances from Drum Divas, Gira Dahnee and Stacy Rene. A lunch and reception followed.

Two young participants, 13-year-old Michael Angelo and 12-year-old Michael Thomas, summed up their feelings about Burning Bowl after they had incinerated their own challenges of 2013. "That felt great!" Thomas said.

To make a donation to Affinity or for more information, go to <http://affinity95.org/acsccontent/>.

Man accused of 2011 shooting found not guilty

A man accused of killing an aspiring fashion designer in 2011 has been found not guilty, according to DNAInfo.com.

Dione Deshawn Moody, 31, was shot and killed just as he was returning to his apartment in the 2000 block of East 68th Street on Dec. 11, 2011. The shooter asked Moody for change. When he realized he was being robbed, he tried running into his building.

Cortez Smith, then 17, was accused of the shooting. Four young men, approximately the same age as Cortez, witnessed the incident, prosecutors said, but did not inform the police. A friend of theirs eventually came forward.

At Smith's trial, however, testimony from the four subpoenaed witnesses was insufficient for jurors to overcome reasonable doubts, and Smith was found not guilty Jan 7.

Moody's mother, Veronica Moody, posted on her Facebook page, "Not guilty ... I'm sick to my stomach," according to DNAInfo.com.

The original story can be found at <http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20140110/south-shore-above-79th/family-of-murdered-fashion-designer-deshawn-moody-upset-over-acquittal>.

HBHC terminates several staff positions

BY YASMIN NAIR

Following whispers that Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) is set to hire a new leader of the organization comes news of employment terminations at the agency.

The most recent involve six administrative positions at varying levels. They include Marlon Wells, recently hired as president of accounting and finance in the fall; Chandler Howell, vice president of shared services; and Amy Miller, associate director of Broadway Youth Center (BYC). The latter decision comes in the wake of the departure of Lara Brooks, BYC's executive director, who has since been replaced by Imani Rupert. Others include development associate Kitri Steigerwald and communications manager David Dodd.

WCT confirmed this news with Barbara Tieder, vice president of development and communications. She said that the terminations were necessary as a result of the new Strategic Plan that HBHC adopted in August 2013. Wells is said to have been hired in September 2013, which raises the question of why his hire went through at that time, but HBHC would not comment on that.

Tieder also said that all the positions were "full-time administrators, non-grant-funded, and non-patient-facing," and that the decision to let them go would have no effect on the quality of HBHC's healthcare. Asked about Wells' hiring in particular, she stated

that it was policy to not comment on individual personnel decisions.

As WCT has reported extensively in the past, HBHC has often been criticized for having a top-heavy administrative profile, but it is unclear whether this new set of terminations comes about because of a rumored hiring of a new leader or not.

WCT will continue to follow and cover this and related stories.

WCT seeks nominations for 30 Under 30 Awards

CHICAGO—Windy City Times is seeking to recognize 30 more outstanding LGBT individuals (and allies) for its annual 30 Under 30 Awards.

Nominees should be 30 years or under as of June 30, 2014, and should have made some substantial contributions to the LGBT community, whether in the fields of entertainment, politics, health, activism, academics, sports or other areas.

The deadline to nominate individuals is Friday, April 18.

Windy City Times Managing Editor Andrew Davis coordinates the awards program for the paper. Hundreds of people have been honored by the paper in the more than 10 years since the awards were established. Most honorees have gone on to great success in their careers and educations, including working for the Obama presidential campaign and administration, plus individual successes in music, legal, professional and academic careers and much more.

Individuals, organizations, co-workers, etc. can nominate a person by emailing Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com or faxed to Andrew Davis' attention to 773-871-7609. Self-nominations are welcome.

The nomination should be 100 words or fewer, and should state what achievements or contributions the nominee has made. Nominators should include their own names and contact information as well as the contact information and the age of the nominee.

Note: Following the policy instituted in 2005, individuals can only win once. Those have won the award since that year are ineligible for this year's awards.

Windy City Times, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Center on Halsted and Chicago House are sponsoring the event.

Honorees will be notified in May and recognized at a free ceremony Thursday, June 26, at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

Corrections

A photo of the Chicago Force on last week's Goings-On page should have been credited to Ross Forman. Also, in the theater wrap-up, The Normal Heart should have been credited as a TimeLine production.

Windy City Times regrets the errors.

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GAY *in the* **LIFE**
Paul M. Rathe
 TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROSS FORMAN

Age
48

Neighborhood
Humboldt Park

Relationship status
Committed relationship with John Brandt

Job title
Co-owner, Soggy Paws

Home
Was born and raised in North Dakota; came to Chicago in 1987 and has lived here since, with the exception of 2000-2004 when in California

Hobbies
"I am so busy owning five retail stores that I have no idea what a hobby would be."

Favorite TV show
Downton Abbey

Worst part of your job
"Getting anal glands expressed on you. Seriously. This is not an odor that leaves you quickly."

Little-known fact
"I once made a Caesar salad for Andy Williams in St. Cloud, Minn."

Paul M. Rathe is the owner of Soggy Paws, a dog wash and pet products stores for dogs and cats with three locations in Chicago. Thus, his to-do job list is, well, seemingly never-ending.

Rathe said with a smile that he is, "the guy who is in charge of ordering, inventory, hiring, training, bill-paying, cleaning, education, sourcing new products, cleaning furnace filters, changing hose nozzles, buying cotton balls, administering the security systems, making sure the phones and computer systems work ... and then I also talk to customers after all that is done."

He wouldn't have it any other way.

"The most enjoyable and rewarding part of what we do is being able to get through to someone that quality food makes for a much healthier dog or cat," Rathe said.

Years ago, at the South Loop store, a couple was standing in front of the wall of dog foods sold at Soggy Paws, Rathe said. They asked, "What do you suggest for an overweight dog?" The manager replied, "Um, feed less?"

The customers said, "Oh great, show us where that bag is," thinking 'feed less' actually was a brand name of food.

Rathe urged all pet owners to visit an independent pet store. "It makes a difference in the health and longevity of your pet," he said. "Quality food makes a difference. One way I start to get through to people is to ask them, 'If your pet's food has corn in it, just think about what corn does when you eat it.' That gets their attention."



Rathe also found a fun side job this past October, when he joined the Lyft ride-sharing community. Yep, Rathe has a pink mustache attached to either his Volvo or Mercedes and transports people around the city and suburbs. He usually signs up to drive for six hours per week, but ultimately drives about double that.

Lyft-ing is addictive, he said.

"I was at brunch with a friend [last October] who took a Lyft to meet me there. She said, 'You should do this.' I thought, 'Yeah, I should'—and signed up [to drive for Lyft] that day," Rathe said.

One of Rathe's first Lyft rides also was, and still is, one of his favorites. He picked up an opposite-sex couple at a bar along Diversey Street, and she immediately said, "This sucks."



Rathe was stunned and asked her what was wrong.

She said, "I'm usually a f@#\$-ing hoot." Apparently, she had been drinking way too much that day and was not feeling her best and was upset that she couldn't be fun in the car," Rathe said. "Two months later I ended up taking her and her man, and her parents, to a restaurant. She got in the front seat and said, 'You remember me?!' We had a good laugh over her state of being at the last ride. It's good to have that connection with your riders."

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BETH RICHIE

Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation

Beth E. Richie, PhD is an anti-violence activist and author working in several social justice movements. She is a Professor and Director of the Institute For Research on Race and Public Policy at UIC. This lecture will focus on the ways that the prison industrial complex has served to exacerbate violence against Black women. The emphasis will be on intimate partner abuse as well as systematic violence and the role that race, class, gender, sexuality and other markers of social disadvantage put people in the path of the punishment industry. It will include the redemptive possibility of prison abolition as philosophical and practical solution.

UPCOMING LECTURES

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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VIEWPOINT

WINDY CITY
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 Community Marketing, Inc.



REV.
IRENE
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Robin Roberts loosens grip of Black homophobia

While I will continue to argue that the African-American community doesn't have a patent on homophobia, it does, however, have a problem with it.

Black homophobia still has a deadly hold on African-American life. And while I would like to say its oppressive grip only impacts lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people of African descent, in truth, Black homophobia maims the entire community.

For example, to date more than a quarter of a million African-Americans have died of AIDS—both straight and gay.

There are many persistent social and economic factors contributing to the high rates of the epidemic in the African-American community—racism, poverty, health care disparity, violence, to name just a few—but the biggest attitudinal factor still contributing to the epidemic and showing no sign of abating is homophobia.

Like many of us who have grown up in communities of African descent—here and abroad—we cannot, however, escape the cultural, personal, interpersonal, and institutional indoctrinations in which homophobia is constructed in our very makeup of being defined as Black.

The community's expression of its intolerance of LGBTQ people is easily seen along gender lines. For example, sisters mouth off about us while brothers get both—verbally and physically—violent with us.

"My son better talk to me like a man and not in a gay voice or I'll pull out a knife and stab that little n-gger to death," Tracy Morgan, comedian and former actor on NBC's "30 Rock," told his audience at the Ryman Auditorium in 2011.

When CNN's Don Lemon came out he told Joy Behar on her HLN show that, "In the Black community they think you can pray the gay away."

So, whenever there's an opportunity to applaud and/or celebrate a person's—especially a high profile celeb, athlete or mega star—coming out moment, it helps loosen Black homophobia's persistent sharp teeth buried in our collective flesh and hold on the community.

Black high profile celebs' public coming out events—correct and heal—if not for only a moment, a community's irrational and persistent fear, shame, taboo, and ignorance about the wide spectrum of human sexuality—even found among people of African descent.

And we had one such moment with one of America's beloved newscasters.

Good Morning America co-anchor Robin Roberts just recently came out of her "open" closet, using a Facebook post to publicly announce what we all knew.

The Obamas—both Barack and Michelle—congratulated Roberts with Michelle gleefully tweeting "I am so happy for you and Amber! You continue to make us all proud."

While many people across the country felt the way the Obamas did about Roberts' admission, some, however, felt a personal congratulation to Roberts (coming especially from President Obama) was not warranted and highlighted "divisiveness" rather than inclusion.

"That message of inclusion is missing in this country, as demonstrated by the president's odd decision to make a news event out of a person being gay. Such solicitous affection is creepy and divisive. It's like gushing over someone with a deformity. Most people don't want to be patronized; they just want to be treated like everyone else," Wendy Murphy wrote in a "Patriot Ledger" op-ed titled "It's fine to be gay, but is it GREAT?"

Murphy, an ex-prosecutor and an adjunct professor at New England Law, is a local legal pundit celeb. She's also white and heterosexual, and has at least one LGBTQ friend or acquaintance. (I know this because Murphy told me before we suited up to appear on Boston's local TV show Greater Boston to discuss her opposing views that perhaps she should have run her op-ed by someone gay before submitting it.)

"If the president and his wife want to use their bully pulpit to influence social norms, they should be congratulating people not because they're gay, but because they did something meaningful for society, without regard for personal risk or gain," Murphy said. "Robin Roberts may well deserve that kind of attention, but we'll never know because the Obamas were thinking more about politics than humanity when Roberts got a presidential salute."

Oddly, Murphy isn't alone with this view. There were also many LGBTQs who felt similar to Murphy, especially with us now in an era of acceptance of LGBTQ people in news broadcasting like CNN's Anderson Cooper, ABC's Good Morning America former weather anchor Sam Champion, MSNBC's Rachel Maddow and her colleague Thomas Roberts, to name a few.

Murphy, like so many, is befuddled about the president's brouhaha with Roberts' coming-out,

since he has used his bully pulpit for that very purpose by legislating on behalf of LGBTQ civil rights—like DADT, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, and the repeal of DOMA, to name a few.

And let's not forget Roberts got the coveted interview when the White House specifically chose her for President Obama's May 2012 coming out interview announcing his unequivocal support for marriage equality.

Roberts has overcome a lot: In 2007, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and in 2012 with myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS), a disease of the bone marrow. And now there's Black homophobia's grip on her.

What Murphy and others also miss in their condemnation of the Obamas' perceived gratuitous applaud of Roberts coming out announcement is how the intersectionality of white queer racism, elitism and sexism not only framed the legislations Obama signed on behalf of LGBTQ civil rights, but how it also shaped which LGBTQ demographic group would most benefit. Consequently, this is another factor feeding and fueling Black homophobia that doesn't exempt Roberts because of her statute or interracial relationship.

Sue O'Connell, a white lesbian and editor and publisher of BayWindows, gets why Roberts' coming-out warranted high praise. In her spot-on op-ed "The harsh lesson of Robin Roberts' coming out," O'Connell understands how the intersectionality of not only white queer racism, elitism and sexism play in Roberts difficult struggle to come out, but how the complexities of African-American community, religion and culture also make Roberts' coming out moment an Herculean feat most definitely worthy of personal shout-outs from the Obamas.

"Challenges of class—of race and gender—are deeply entrenched obstacles to living an open life. Each coming out process is unique, yet African-Americans face a path entwined with family, religion, racism and more. Robin Roberts should be congratulated, again, for her bravery. Let's not let our growing marriage equality success blind us to the very real challenges many still find to living an open and honest life."

It's my hope that Murphy not only reads her op-ed but also takes a look at O'Connell's.

Sources:

—WENDY MURPHY: It's fine to be gay, but is it great? — The Patriot ...

<http://wendymurphy.com/wendy-murphy-its-fine-to-be-gay-but-is-it-great-the-patriot/>

—The harsh lesson of Robin Roberts' coming out - Bay Windows

<http://www.baywindows.com/The-harsh-lesson-of-Robin-Roberts-coming-out>

LETTERS

Confrontation

Letter to the Editor

In my opinion, what affects LGBT Catholic community the most is homophobia.

It is promoted by the Roman Catholic Church under the mantle of "Church Teaching."

Our LGBT identity is the basis for witness and participation in the ongoing reign of the people of God. To deny this would be, in fact, denying our human dignity.

Yes, we are witnessing a tonal change from the Vatican under the leadership of Pope Francis; however, his instruction to the bishops of Malta to oppose the adoption of children to LGBT couples has trappings that must be publicly challenged.

LGBT Catholics can no longer afford to be shy about confronting homophobia in the Church.

Nor can we any longer be silent when elements of the Catholic clergy promote anti gay bigotry from their closet and pulpit. I fear far too many of us have given these clergy a pass. It is time for us to have a public conversation about this outside of the influence of these clergy.

I don't know how I feel about outing these clergy, but I think it is unreasonable not to have the discussion, given the recent activity of the Illinois Catholic Conference and the Archdiocese of Chicago in opposing our civil rights.

In my opinion, these issues are important not because they lack clarity which makes some uncomfortable; such questions are important because no community can remain hermetically sealed, and confident of its own superiority.

Joe Murray
Chicago

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GOINGS-ON

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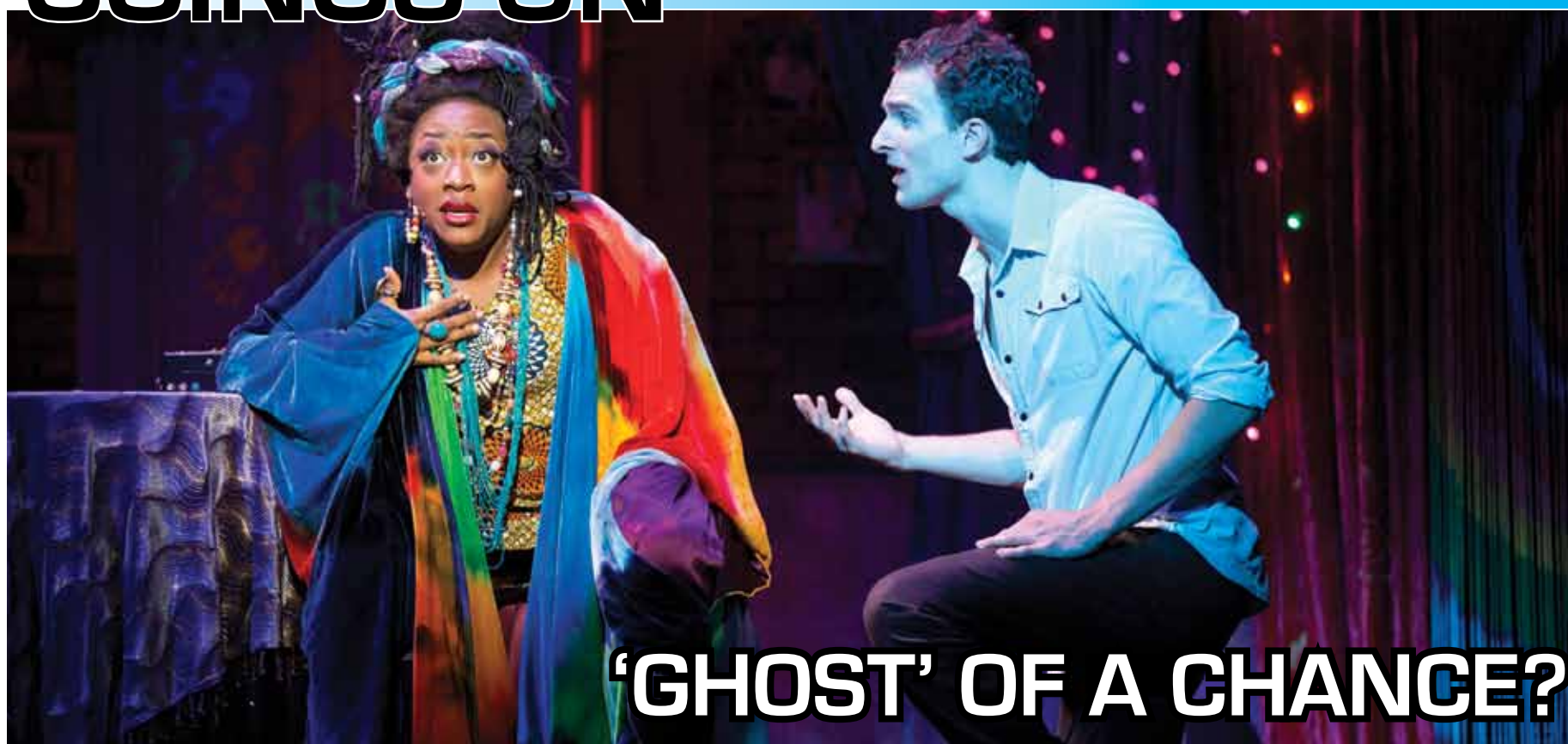
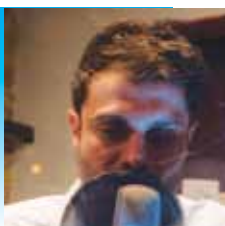


Photo from Broadway in Chicago

'GHOST' OF A CHANCE?

Ghost: The Musical is in Chicago—but is the spirited production worth seeing? See page 12.

THEATER

'Pool' party.
Page 12Photo from Pontypool
by Tom McGrath

DISH

Get cracklin.
Page 19Photo of Cicchetti's pork cracklins
by Andrew Davis

MOVIES

School daze.
Page 16Still from
the movie G.B.F.

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Acting and being
'OUT LOUD'

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

One creative outlet for actors disappointed with the roles they're typically offered is to try their hand at play writing. That way, those actors can create much more meaningful and juicy characters to play themselves.

That's was the initial impetus for Olivia Dawson and Ray Proctor, the creative writing team behind OUT LOUD. This semi-autobiographical play about the friendship between two African-American actors, one overtly religious and one openly gay, has its world premiere starting this week at Chicago's eta Creative Arts Foundation.

Dawson and Proctor became close friends while they were at the University of Wisconsin-Madison when she was working on a masters of fine arts in acting and he was getting a doctorate in Shakespeare studies. After graduating and heading to Chicago to get back into the acting scene, Dawson and Proctor found themselves disappointed by what roles were being offered to them.

"It was difficult finding work, so we decided that writing a play for us was a viable option," said Proctor about the creation of OUT LOUD, calling it an examination of love and friendship. "It's about these two Black people who have advanced degrees, who are actors and performers who are struggling to find out what it means to work in Chicago in a world where so many roles for Black actors and plays for Black actors are sometimes not the best-written stuff."

In OUT LOUD, the characters of Eva and Benny get to express their frustration at only being offered roles as servants or the funny gay friend. But they also learn how to be friends when they

expose their vulnerable sides to each other once circumstances prod the two to become roommates.

"Our hope was always that we would get to do the original performances," Proctor said, noting that he and Dawson received plenty of great feedback when they produced and appeared in readings of OUT LOUD in multiple cities. "But that's not the way it worked out."

This past August, Proctor left Chicago to begin a teaching job at Albany State University in Georgia. And instead of performing in OUT LOUD, Dawson is now serving as the play's director.

Taking on the role of Benny is out actor Watson Swift, acknowledging with a laugh that, "there's a certain trick to being an actor, who is performing in a show that was written by a director, that is also semi-autobiographical."

Since Swift is essentially playing a role modeled on and created for Proctor, he's made the effort to speak with him for the sake of research.

"But once it becomes the play, you have to create it on your own to bring the character to life, though the insights are always helpful," Swift said.

Swift easily identifies with his character's views and frustrations, since he, too, is a Black actor who happens to be gay. Yet Swift says he was careful not to play the role as a stereotypical gay man or a caricature.

"It was important for me to bring as much authenticity to the role as possible," Swift said. "These are real people with real problems and you want that to shine."

Swift really enjoys the first scene of the play as OUT LOUD provides a rundown and send-up of stereotypical roles thrust upon Black actors,



Can We Really Say That OUT LOUD? Photo from eta

ranging from the God-praising gospel singer to the streetwise urban thug.

"Not that there's a market for that, but you don't want that to be only kind of stuff that you get cast in," Swift said.

As a performer, Swift has pursued his own method of finding juicy roles by auditioning for classical plays so directors will think twice about colorblind casting and focus on his acting abilities. Swift has also trained extensively with The Second City Training Center and the Annoyance Theatre, creating and developing characters and situations that are not necessarily race-specific.

"I tend to gravitate more toward those roles because I find them more challenging," Swift said, adding that with improvisation you're already generating a lot of your own content and characterizations. "It makes me feel better as an actor when I can go for those roles as opposed to something that would more stereotypical."

Although Proctor hasn't had as much involvement as Dawson in staging the world premiere of OUT LOUD, he has made plans to be in attendance for opening night in Chicago. Proctor also hopes that OUT LOUD will transcend any race

labels that some people might try to attach to it.

"Does this mean that white people won't be coming to see this just because it's a 'Black play?' Those are some of the things we talk about in OUT LOUD," Proctor said, adding that his characters ask whether or not they will be seen beyond caricatures like "the gay best friend" or "the angry Black woman." "Our goal when we wrote this was the complexity of the characters and fleshing them out as fully realized people with fully realized desires and objectives."

eta Creative Arts Foundation's world premiere of Olivia Dawson and Ray Proctor's OUT LOUD plays through Sunday, March 9, at eta Square, 7558 S. South Chicago Ave. There is an 8 p.m. preview on Thursday, Jan. 16, and an official press opening at 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 17. Regular performances are 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 3 and 7 p.m. Sundays. General admission is \$30 with discounts available for students, seniors and groups. Call 773-752-3955 or visit www.etacreativearts.org.



The Children's Hour. Photo courtesy of David Zak

THEATER REVIEW

The Children's Hour

Playwright: Lillian Hellman
At: Pride Films and Plays at the Flatiron Building, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Tickets: 800-838-3006;
www.brownpapertickets.com; \$25-\$30
Runs through: Feb. 9

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

These two women, Karen and Martha, run a boarding school for girls. Both have devoted themselves to their careers, delaying plans for marriage or family, although Martha is the sole support of her elderly aunt and Karen is affianced to a doctor respectful of the sororal bond shared by the long-time friends. Then one day, one of the school's pupils (after reading a forbidden copy of *Mlle. de Maupin*) claims to have witnessed her teachers engaging in lesbian behavior. As the ensuing scandal and ruin intensifies, Karen continues to deny the charges, but advises her would-be husband to reconsider their marital prospects, while Martha confesses to Sapphic impulses and commits suicide in despair.

There are many ways to interpret Lillian Hellman's 1934 shocker: Karen and Martha could be viewed as innocent hets (or closeted gays, at least) brought down by a vindictive lie, with an increasingly confused Martha coming to adopt the guilt projected upon her. They could be portrayed as victims of anti-gay prejudice—that is, as actual lovers, too naive to anticipate the persecution their affections will inspire. You could even (in a *big* stretch of the imagination) see the play as a thriller, with all the adult women, fearful of their *own* dark secrets being exposed, turning on one another in their efforts to distance themselves from retribution.

Audiences in 2014, however, are likely to be less concerned with the sexual question, and so Pride Films and Plays director Derek Bertelsen refuses to impose any one subtext on the proceedings, instead allowing us to draw our own conclusions. There is no denying that the adolescent accuser is a brat spoiled to the point of borderline sociopathy, or that her dotting grandmother is overhasty in sounding the alarm. Every time someone—usually the doctor, who knows the value of quiet time during crisis—suggests that everyone wait to first see

what develops, we hope in vain for the fates to stay their swift and destructive journey to the unhappy inevitable resolution.

Bertelson has instructed his ensemble of actors to retain the mystery surrounding the events that Hellman describes. Even during the scene changes, marked by the children reaffirming their silent oath of secrecy, we are reminded that injustice leading to tragedy is a group crime, much as costume designer Chrystle Morman reminds us that white gloves and cuddly cardigans are not always accurate indicators of “feminine” personalities, but a teenage WASP in hair-ribbon bows will proclaim a bully every time.

CRITICS' PICKS

The Little Prince, Lookingglass Theatre, through Feb. 23. There's lots of theatrical spectacle to marvel at in Rick Cummings and John Scoulliar's creative adaptation of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's beloved children's book about an otherworldly child who meets a stranded aviator. SCM

Port Authority, Writers Theatre, through Feb. 16. 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

Inglorious Bitches, Bare Knuckle Productions at the Ravenswood Studios, through Jan. 25. Badass broads, blood and bullets enhance a gender-blind screen-to-stage adaptation of Quentin Tarantino's action-flick that, almost literally, kicks off the new year. MSB

Old Jews Telling Jokes, Royal George, through March 30. The gags may be as old as the human foibles they address, but they shine like new when delivered by the show's five raconteurs, now occasionally assisted by celebrity guests telling their favorite you-know-whats. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Pontypool

Playwright: Tony Burgess
At: Strawdog Theatre at Hugen Hall, 3929 N. Broadway
Tickets: 866-811-4111;
www.strawdog.org; \$15
Runs through: Feb. 2

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

First you take *War of the Worlds*—both the H.G. Wells (extraterrestrial invasion) and Orson Welles (radio broadcasts) accounts—and combine it with Samuel Delany's *Babel-17* (language used as a weapon) for your premise. Then you develop it along the cinematic lines of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (parasitic infections) and George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (cannibalism and mass delusions). The result is likely to be Tony Burgess' deliberately retro, cold war paranoia-fueled allegory—but with a distinctive modern twist.

The plot is rooted in vintage bomb-shelter dynamics: shock-jock Grant Mazzy now spews his “take no prisoners” oratory (in between farm reports and lost-cat alerts) over the rural air of Pontypool, Illinois, to the chagrin of his fellow staffers, station manager Sydney Briar, tech assistant Laurel Ann Drummond and traffic reporter Ken Loney. On this cold February day, however, ominous dispatches are being relayed to the basement offices: citizens attacking one

another and devouring the bodies of their victims, then retreating to chant words chosen less for expression of personal convictions than as vehicles of aural affirmation. After the bioinvasion has penetrated the information centers, we learn—too late—that the contagion is spread by verbal vectors.

When the mere act of speaking is to invite destruction, how are we to warn each other of the danger? Unlike the film version of Burgess' apocalyptic fable, this stage adaptation by the author provides us no tidy answer, but neither does Strawdog's remount of their 2012 production end in mute resignation as before. Instead, our hero—whose entire life is invested in his powers of speech—resolves to fight, for as long as he is able, the illness that he knows will eventually defeat him. As for the rest of us—well, the script hints at vulnerabilities in the enemy agents, introducing the possibility of deterrents.

The Strawdog loft's Hugen Hall rec-room decor in no way detracts from the claustrophobic ambience necessary to maintain the appropriate level of suspense, even as the play hurtles along for a tightly packed 60 minutes. Under Anderson Lawfer's direction, the cast—led by Jamie Vann as the blustering Mazzy—likewise waste not a second in actorly dithering, but remain wholly focused on their story, whether fleeing showers of blood onstage or whispering into a field-phone from a hideout in a grain silo. Whatever unthinkable disaster may lie at the source of *your* nightmares, prepare to leave the theater thinking seriously about an emergency plan.

THEATER REVIEW

Ghost: The Musical

Playwright: Bruce Joel Rubin
At: Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St.
Tickets: 800-775-2000;
www.BroadwayInChicago.com; \$27-\$95
Runs through: Jan. 19

BY JERRY NUNN

Ghost: The Musical begins with a cityscape projected on LED screens at the lip of the stage. This sets the tone of the production, with special effects at the forefront instead of a human story about love.

A musical has to have strong catchy songs to make it memorable, and this is where the show can't seem to rise from the grave. How can music and lyric composer Dave Stewart of *The Eurythmics* not have saved the day with catchier show tunes when he set out to pen this piece? “Here Right Now” is the song highlighted at the beginning and ending of the show, and just doesn't cut the mustard or stick in the brain.

The two main characters sing how they will have years together only to have Sam, one of them, killed in a mugging right afterward. The story then follows his ghost, who haunts Molly and tries to solve a mystery like a dead *Scooby-Doo* complete with hijinks from a psychic named Oda Mae Brown.

Katie Postotnik, who plays the important role of Molly, falls flat vocally at times. Before you can say, “Molly, you are in danger, girl,” she attempts long solos such as “With You” that are a little pitchy, at best. Maybe Katie and Molly were just having a bad night, as well as the director Matthew Warchus, who had the magic touch with Matilda previously.

Based on the 1990 movie *Ghost*, audiences will be looking for several key things from this show. “Is ‘Unchained Melody’ included?” Yes, it is and will please most when it's used. “Is one of the most romantic pottery scenes on film there?” Yes, but it spins out of control. “Is Oda Mae as funny as the Oscar winner herself in the *Whoopi Goldberg* role?” No, but she has her moments.

Some hopes will be dashed for nostalgic fans of the movie version starring Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore. Creators must have known the emotional attachment that crowds



Ghost: The Musical.

have for the cinematic version and what they were up against.

The subway scene shows some marvelous feats, both technically and visually. It does keep the story moving along and Brandon Curry, as the subway ghost, creates some scares.

Why did another *Whoopi Goldberg* movie piece, *Sister Act: The Musical*, work better? It knew how to tell a joke, even improving on the original in some ways, and it felt fresh.

This production lies somewhere between the *101 Dalmations Musical* and *Flashdance: The Musical* but doesn't come close to touching the truly romantic musical adaptation of *Once*. When audiences are comparing and choosing their movie musicals (such as *The Addams Family* and *Big Fish*), this one fades away fairly quick in memory. *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert: The Musical* showed how much fun can be had with a movie adaptation and didn't take itself so seriously. Remember *Xanadu the Musical*? A tongue-in-cheek approach would have at least had the camp factor here—or just in throw a *Cry-Baby* tantrum if nothing else works.

Rumor has it that *Ghost: The Musical* has played better on Broadway and had hotter men in London but this is the non equity tour being reviewed and it is off to a rocky start.

There is some eye candy, a psychic Supreme medley and some flashy lights. However, overall, the stage show is a bit transparent and can't be resuscitated, cashing in on the movie's loyal following instead and not rising above it.

Ghost: The Musical is scared to go for any strong direction and that can kill a relationship faster than you can say, “Ditto.”



Through the Leaves. Photo by Scott Dray

THEATER REVIEW

Through the Leaves

Playwright: F.X. Kroetz;

Translation: Roger Downey

At: The Side Project, 1439 W. Jarvis Ave.

Tickets: 773-340-0140 or

www.thesideproject.net; \$15-\$20

Runs through: Feb. 1

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Don't be surprised if you do a double take walking up to The Side Project to see Through The Leaves. At first glance, it looks like the Rogers Park storefront theater has been displaced by a fully functioning butcher shop.

But in actuality, the butcher shop is just part of the set for Through the Leaves by designer Carolyn Voss. A good portion of this 1976 working-class drama by German playwright F.X. Kroetz takes place in and around the environs of a butcher shop, so kitting out the theater space as a realistic shop makes sense.

Yet it's also a bold and unpredictable decision by director Andy Hager, since the Jarvis Avenue streetscape is in full view to the audience and to any passerby as the play is in progress. The wintry view certainly fits with the first few scenes of the play as it follows the ups and downs of a frequently uncomfortable and unbalanced relationship between two middle-aged Germans in 1975.

But sticklers for authenticity will no doubt grumble as later scenes take place in daytime or summer. The modern vehicles and possibility for people outside to scan anachronistic smart phones as they walk by is also another uncontrollable factor that can take you out of the period look of the show.

Yet, once you get down to the social and gender politics explored in the play, the contrast between the current view outside and the 1970s drama onstage can be symbolic and thought provoking. Especially if you consider how much Western societies have changed (or haven't) when it comes to views on gender roles and male/female relationship power dynamics.

Through the Leaves is told from the viewpoint of a middle-aged butcher shop owner named Martha (Laurie Larson). She may be financially secure and satisfied with her work, but romance has long passed her by. That is, until Martha starts journaling about her relationship with the brusque factory worker Otto (H.B. Ward), who verbally puts Martha down and mooches off of her.

It's clear that much of Otto's sexist behavior is driven by rigid societal views and resentment, so he feels at liberty to use and verbally abuse Martha. That Martha reluctantly puts up with so much of Otto's negativity without standing up to him is often disturbing.

Swallowing such blatant misogyny makes Through The Leaves tough to watch, though more incisive performances by Larson and Ward might have made the show more palpable. Based upon the show's final preview, Larson and Ward

hadn't fully plumbed the depths of their characters' frequently unhappy existences. So Though The Leaves didn't leave a dramatic sucker-punch to the gut that it could have.

SPOTLIGHT



The 25th Annual Rhinoceros Theatre Festival marks a quarter century of being Chicago's longest-running multi-arts fringe festival. This year's edition features works by ensembles like Boy Girl Boy Girl, The Side Project and more, plus an extra final week of works to highlight Curious Theatre Branch's co-artistic director Jenny Magnus' new book "Observations of an Orchestrated Catastrophe." The festival begins Friday, Jan. 17, and continues through Monday, Feb. 24, at the Prop Thtr, 3502 N. Elston Ave. Performance times vary, but show dates are Thursdays through Mondays. Admission is \$15 or pay what you can at the door; \$12 in advance. Call 773-492-1287 or visit www.rhinofest.com for more information.

The works of Jenny Mangus are prominently featured in Curious Theatre Branch's 25th Annual Rhinoceros Theatre Festival. Photo by Tamara Staples

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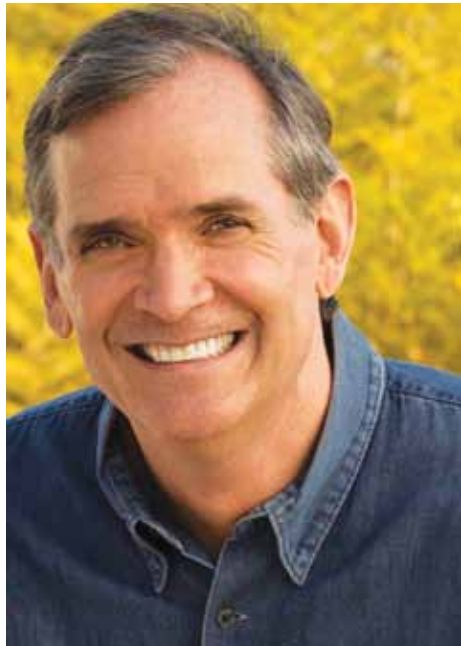
BOOKS

HIV/AIDS activist Sean Strub talks 'Body Counts'

BY FRANK PIZZOLI

Sean Strub has lived at the crossroads of the LGBT Movement and the AIDS Epidemic most of his life. One easily finds his influence in many seminal events of the two overlapping spheres. From the first serious financial solicitation by the Human Rights Campaign—he talked Tennessee Williams into signing the organization's letter to donors—to the founding of POZ magazine, his hand has moved the levers of change.

In his *Body Counts: a Memoir of Politics, Sex, AIDS, and Survival* (Scribner, out Jan. 14), Strub



Sean Strub. Photo by Greg Gorman

tells all, not as juicy tales at the expense of the players but as honest vignettes of human frailty and success, of human comedies and haunting dramas. In an email about his book, he wrote, "honesty is what I hope this book will spark a discussion about..."

In all, this is not your father's history of turbulent years when gay men dropped like flies from AIDS. No revisions but also no regrets.

For a glimpse of Strub's perspectives today, see <http://vimeo.com/75181260> and Strub's blog, www.seanstrub.com/blog.

Strub talked with Windy City Times about writing a memoir of his life, especially the AIDS years in New York City, a period not yet well covered.

Windy City Times: Your memoir opens—both prologue and first chapter—on a note of fear. Yet fear never takes a front seat throughout the whole manuscript. How did you, your friends and colleagues, summon the strength to fight back?

Sean Strub: The most profound moment of fear shedding was when I came out of the closet. Even with everything that has happened in my life, before or since, that was pivotal and afterward, nothing ever was quite so frightening.

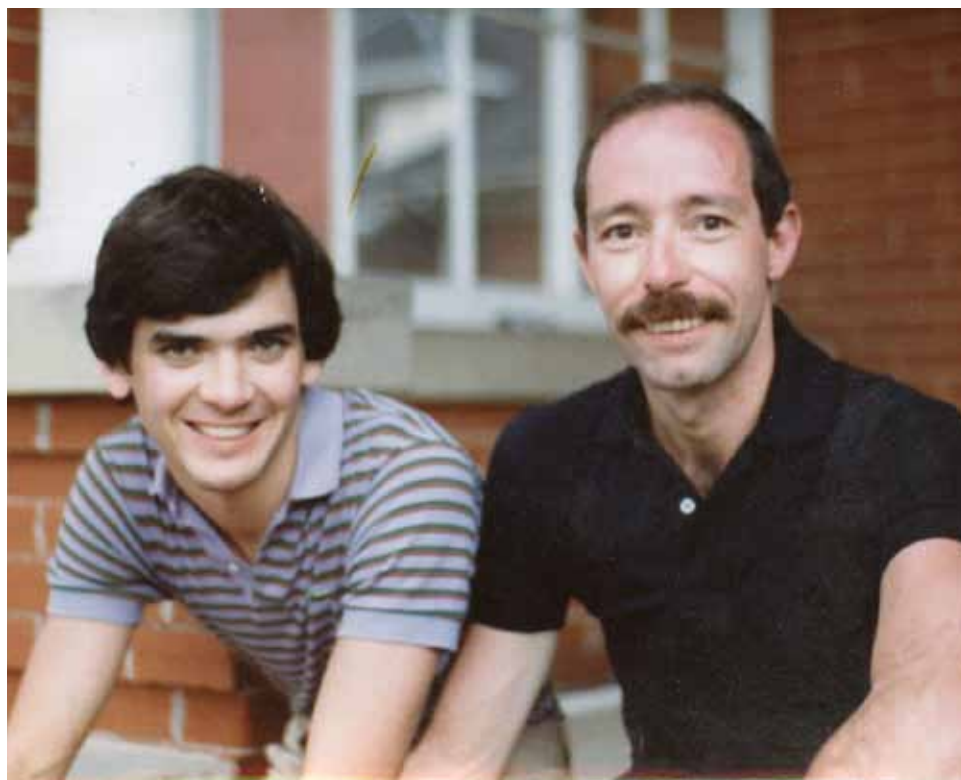
Even the fear of death was not all controlling and pervasive in nearly my every thought as was fear of exposure as a gay man before I came out. Resilience in the face of fear of AIDS itself, or death, or the suffering and deaths of friends, came from the community we built with each other. We fought back by becoming close, sharing the pain and working in concert to combat it.

WCT: In piecing together this history, especially the New York City AIDS history not yet well documented, do any memories strike you as different upon reflection?

SS: In the early '80s I didn't understand how the gay and lesbian movement's leadership in New York was primarily responding to the epidemic through a political prism, as opposed to what little was known about the science.

The earliest efforts often involved disassociating AIDS from gay male hypersexuality, bathhouses, backrooms, etc., that so greatly expanded in the post-Stonewall years. We tried to convince each other that it "was just a coincidence" that the epidemic "hit gay men first" when that was obviously not true. We were engaging in behaviors that weakened the immune systems of many of us, making us vulnerable to infection and disease, and rapidly facilitated its transmission.

This isn't judgment, this is science, but we couldn't separate the two. I think that is also



Sean Strub (left) with activist Vito Russo in 1981. Photo courtesy of Strub

why we were so eager to make AIDS "an equal opportunity disease" to use a phrase common at the time, which resulted in us greatly exaggerating the risk of heterosexual transmission.

Having said the above, it is important to understand the context and the degree to which we were under attack. By the time the epidemic hit, we had lost the gay movement's major legislative accomplishments to date, namely the non-discrimination ordinances in Miami, St. Paul, and elsewhere that were repealed in the late '70s. One of our few contemporary living icons, Harvey Milk, was brutally assassinated in 1978. Milk's killer had just been let off with the lightest sentence in 1979. Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority hit primetime in 1980, playing a key role in electing the reactionary Ronald Reagan. Two weeks after Reagan's election a mentally ill man with an automatic weapon, homophobically ranting, shot up the Ramrod Bar in New York, injuring and killing a number of patrons.

Of course, the politics colored our community leadership's perspective, but in retrospect they paid too little attention to the science or the reality of how our behaviors facilitated transmission. Truth tellers like Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, Michael Callen and Richard Berkowitz were ignored or ridiculed.

WCT: In the next to last chapter, you note longtime friend John Berendt (*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*), guided you from your darker days into a life not centered around AIDS. After the tick-tock of all the experiences in your book, was it difficult to leave behind such stunningly emotional days?

SS: While the late '80s and early '90s were painful and with loss beyond description, and by the mid '90s I came very close to death, for me personally the darkest days were later, after I began to recover. Depression ultimately was more invasive in my life, and more of a threat to survival, than HIV ever was, strange as that may sound. While my Kaposi's sarcoma lesions (KS was a common cancer afflicting gay men prior to combination HIV therapy) cleared up within a couple of years, I gained weight and my CD4 count rose, my life had been turned upside down after having lived it for so many years with a background expectation that I may not survive. Relationships changed dramatically, I was bereft, missing friends and uncertain what to do with my life.

My friendship with John was like a lifeboat thrown my way and it came just in time. John, like all of us, was profoundly affected by the epidemic, but he doesn't have HIV and went through those worst years from the other side of the experience, including having to help his best friend end his own life. But his life wasn't defined by it as mine was and he had interests and friends and an interesting and exciting life

into which he welcomed my participation and friendship, while always respecting what I and so many of us had gone through.

WCT: With such high infection rates in the United States and worldwide among younger gay/bi men, what do you think needs to happen in order for infection rates to subside?

SS: Prevention funding has to be dedicated to the communities most at risk. Prevention messaging must be honest, useful and straightforward, not shame-based. We need to respect the anus as a sex organ with the same respect given the vagina or penis and address the epidemic through a human-rights lens, which means various injustices and inequities must be fought in concert with the virus.

Domestically, our prevention funding is disproportionately spent everywhere except on young gay men who have sex with men. Abstinence-only sex education has replaced even the nominal sex education that was credible in years past, especially in communities of color. Emergency interventions, like post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), are available to healthcare workers who get a needle stick or occupational exposure, but not widely known or available to gay men (or others) when a condom breaks or they do something that they realize put themselves at risk.

And domestically, too, it is difficult to address the epidemic in any community in isolation, apart from the racism, homophobia, poverty, addiction and other structural and legal barriers that facilitate transmission. The rise of criminalization is an enormous driver of stigma and discourages HIV testing, when we know that people with HIV who know it because they got tested are vastly less likely to transmit than those with HIV who don't know they have it because they haven't been tested. We punish the responsible behavior (getting tested) and privilege the irresponsible behavior (not knowing your status) creating precisely the wrong incentives.

WCT: In spite of being drained by your intense AIDS experiences, you have re-entered the fray with Sero Project which focuses on HIV Criminalization. What energized you to jump back into the fight?

SS: I think that the ACT UP-ification of AIDS activism in the early 90s supplanted the earlier empowerment movement which was more radical, as it espoused a do-it-yourself approach as opposed to ACT UP's focus on manipulating the levers of power. We need both and I am convinced that ACT UP, and my participation in ACT UP, saved my life because of how it expedited treatment approval.

However, in the process, "AIDS activism" seemed to become nearly synonymous with treatment activism, of the sort led by Treat-

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NUNN ON ONE: TV

Harry Connick Jr. on 'Idol' and its judges



BY JERRY NUNN

New Orleans native Harry Connick Jr. burst into the public eye singing standards on the When Harry Met Sally soundtrack achieving double platinum status and winning him his first Grammy.

He began acting in films like Memphis Belle, Copycat, Hope Floats and Independence Day. Also, he played Grace Adler's love interest in the TV sitcom Will & Grace for five seasons.

Connick starred on Broadway with On a Clear Day You Can See Forever and a revival of The Pajama Game.

His music career has thrived making the jazz musician a perfect candidate to mentor American Idol on season nine. For season 13, Connick returns as a judge and Windy City Times gave him a call to discuss it.

Windy City Times: Tell our readers about your journey to being a judge.

Harry Connick Jr.: Well, my whole life has been a lot of interaction with people who are a lot better than I am, whether it's in a one-on-one teaching situation, a clinic, mentorship or master class, and as I got older I started to be on the giving end of those things. I would spend a lot of time talking to kids in high school, college, even professional people about how they can improve. I feel very comfortable in that kind of environment.

When American Idol called a few years ago to ask me to be a mentor, it felt like a very natural thing to do. Then they called me back last year to do it again and I had a great time. I really, really enjoyed spending time with those talented young performers. Then they called and asked me if I wanted to be a judge, which is different than being a mentor because you don't really have the intensity of the interaction but you get to share your views with a lot more people and try to help them develop their talent. So, it just felt like a natural thing to do.

Plus I love television, I love being in front of an audience. I love talking about music. There are a lot of things about being on American Idol that I really, really like. So, it feels really good so far.

WCT: How are your relationships with the other judges?

HCJ: Well, first of all, I really love being up there with them. They're extremely bright people, highly successful, have very strong work ethics and very strong convictions about what they do and they're the best in the business at their respective jobs. We're completely different. We're different brains, different personalities, different philosophies.

WCT: What do you bring to the table?

HCJ: I think what I bring to it is I have a lot of experience as a player, as a singer and as a kind of an overall entertainer that's unique to my own life. It's like the movies I've done are different than the ones that Jennifer's done and the concerts I've played are different than Keith's. So, just by virtue of our own experience, I think I can bring something a little bit different.

WCT: Who is the troublemaker at the judging table?

HCJ: We're all kind of troublemakers in a way that we all kind of goof around and are silly sometimes. I do it a lot because I've been like that since I was a kid. I was kind of the class clown. It's really hard to label people, but I guess if you had to pick the person who's the goofiest, it would probably be me. But they all get silly and serious and sentimental. All of us are complex grown people. We all give a little bit of that, but if you had to pick one, it would probably be me.

WCT: That means you are the Nicki Minaj this year?

HCJ: Hell, yes!

WCT: Did Keith Urban or Jennifer Lopez give you any advice about judging?

HCJ: No, there wasn't really any of that because I think they knew that I was really familiar with the show, and seriously you could tell from the first contestant that this was going to be a lot of fun. It's not rocket science. We go up there; it's a very simple concept. They hired us to judge and all of these young performers signed up to be judged and that's it. They sing, we judge and it's pretty easy.

WCT: How is it without Randy Jackson at the judging table?

HCJ: Randy Jackson is great. He's a great musician. He's legendary in this show and he's an icon for the many, many years of great television that he provided to all of us, but it's a new show now. It has different producers, new directors, a new panel and different contestants. It has a new look. It has a new feel, and it's a new day for this great show. Fortunately for all of us, Randy is still a huge part of it as a mentor and I think the kids are going to be very lucky to have him on their side.

WCT: Last year there was a general feeling that the male talent was not up to the par with the women. Now that you are in Hollywood week, how are the guys this time around?

HCJ: There's some crazy guy talent—for real, no joke. There are some guys that are really good, [and] some great young women, too. It's hard to say if it's a 50/50 split. It's impossible to know and we certainly would never try to reach any kind of quota because that would be biased I think, but we just respond to the people that we see, but I guess the feeling is that it's about half and half; maybe two more girls than guys, but I think it's about even.

WCT: How does adding guitars impact things?

HCJ: I think it's a great thing because it's very telling. When people pick up the guitar and they're not good players, it shows immediately that A) they should put the guitar down and B) a lot of the decisions that they make as singers are not dissimilar to what they're doing on the guitar. In other words, if you're playing some chords that make no sense, that person can't hear. When they sing, it's obvious why they're making the choices they're making.

You also have to remember like there's this weird "ignorance is bliss" kind of attitude. These people are coming up there playing guitar in front of Keith Urban. That takes some guts and maybe they don't realize what they're doing and maybe their family and friends have told them that they're really good and you should go on American Idol, but eventually they're going to have a realization that "uh-oh maybe I'm not quite as good as I thought," and then there may be some people that pick it up and you're like, "Oh, this person sounds great with a guitar and that's the kind of artist they are." I think it's all around a good thing because it's very telling.

WCT: As a mentor you mentioned last season that contestants understand the meaning



Harry Connick Jr.

of the lyrics in order to give their performance more depth. Is this something you are looking for as a judge?

HCJ: Yes, that's huge. Unless they're singing a tune that's really a groove-based tune like a lot of those disco tunes that I grew up listening to, it's really not about the lyrics. The lyrics are just kind of there to have you sing something. It's really about a dance tune. Sometimes they sing tunes that the lyrics really aren't that important and I really don't care, but if they're going to sing a lyric, then you have to really start picking it apart.

Sometimes, they'll listen to you when you say understand the words but then they'll over sing it or maybe it's kind of one dimensional. There are a lot of little roads you can go down for improvement, but absolutely. These are singers. You need to know how to sing a song. You need to know what you're singing about, and interestingly to me, that is not that important to a lot of singers. They just sing but they're not connected to the lyrics. That's profound to me and interesting to talk about. I'm glad we have a chance to do it on this great show.

WCT: Hopefully, you will be back on Broadway soon.

HCJ: It's one of my favorite things in the world to do.

WCT: Did you see American Idol winner Carrie Underwood's performance in the Sound of Music?

HCJ: I didn't. I was on a movie set, but I'm a big Carrie Underwood fan, so I'm sure she did a great job, but I haven't seen it yet.

WCT: When are you coming back to Chicago? We love performing here.

HCJ: Chicago is one of my favorite places to play at. I seem to connect with people there. I love playing anywhere, but some cities you just kind of have a special feeling for and I've had some nights at the Chicago Theater that I'll never forget.

American Idol's season 13 debuts Jan. 15 on Fox.

Chicago drag performer invites 'Duck Dynasty' star

BY ROSS FORMAN

Chicago drag queen Trannika Rex has invited Phil Robertson—the star of the TV show Duck Dynasty who has been embroiled in a public debate on free speech after uttering anti-gay remarks in an interview with GQ Magazine—to one of her shows.

And, of course, the drag queen does it with a splash of sass.

"Despite your recent comments in GQ about gay people and our anuses, as well as your comments about how Black people were happiest in the Jim Crow South, I still think you're great. An inspiration even," Rex wrote in her letter to Robertson. "I'd like to personally extend an invitation to you to attend my drag show [on Jan. 20] and hell, I'll even

pay for your flight to Chicago. It seems that you're very educated in gay culture so I'd like you to come see our interpretation of your culture in all of its beauty. Do you know a place to buy reasonably priced pink camouflage by the yard?"

Rex will host "Trannika's Most Wanted: Tuck Dynasty" on Jan. 20 at Scarlet Bar in Lakeview.

"This month's theme is a tribute to your glorious television show and my biggest drag inspiration, Duck Dynasty," Trannika Rex said in the letter, which was sent to Robertson and personnel at A&E, which airs Duck Dynasty.

Trannika Rex said on Jan. 12 that she had not yet received a reply from Robertson, his personnel or the TV network.

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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT JR.

G.B.F.; The Happy Sad; Truth

For a person who loves queer cinema, the chance to get to program an LGBT film festival—as I did with Reeling last fall—was like manna from heaven. What a pleasure it was watching the gamut of queer movies from around the world and bringing them here for their Chicago debuts.

In the coming months several of these films will be available beyond festival circuit, including three of my favorites: Darren Stein's **G.B.F.**, Rodney Evans' **The Happy Sad** and Rob Moretti's **Truth**. All three are available for download (G.B.F. and The Happy Sad via iTunes and Truth from Vimeo). In addition, G.B.F. is getting a theatrical run beginning this Friday, Jan. 17, at Facets Cinematheque, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave.

Stein made his name with the hilarious teen comedy *Jawbreaker* and the horror campfest *All About Evil*, but with **G.B.F.** (which stands for "gay best friend" for the two people who weren't quite sure), he's made his most mainstream, audience-friendly film. Don't let the film's completely wrongheaded R-rating throw you off. **G.B.F.** is a delightful comedic confection that is sweet without being cloying, and sexy with nary a shirt being removed.

The script, by first-timer George Northy, was workshopped through the Outfest script program. Lesbian actress and producer Guinevere Turner sent the piece on to Stein, who fell in love with it. Working with a crack casting director, the lineup includes a batch of rising film actors and some gay-friendly veterans (e.g., Megan Mullally, SNL's Horatio Sanz, Jonathan Silverman, Rebecca Gayheart and Natasha Lyonne as parents and teachers of this gaggle of beautiful brat packers). The movie is a cross between beloved teen comedies *Clueless* and *Mean Girls*, and mixes in elements of *Camp* and *TV's Glee*.

The three most popular girls in high school, each fronting her own clique, duke it out to acquire fashion's newest must-have accessory: a gay best friend. They strike gold when the adorable and shy Tanner (Michael J. Willett) unexpectedly becomes the school's first openly gay student. From that point, nothing will stop these modern-day Heathers from trying to make him their new trophy. Naturally Tanner has his own G.B.F.—the droll, endearing (and also pretty cute) Brent (Broadway vet Paul Iacono).

Brent is nursing his own secret crush on Tanner, who suddenly sees the size of his wardrobe increase along with his sense of self-importance, and who suddenly hasn't got time for Brent. Brent's mom (Mullally), discovering the crush and that her son is gay in the process, is like the poster child for PFLAG, bringing out an array of gay-themed movies (including *Brokeback Mountain*) that she wants to "share" with her horrified teen son. (The scene Mullally and Iacono improvised is one of the film's highlights).

As the most popular girls do their best to woo Tanner into becoming their special prom date (the social event of the year, of course), Tanner is starting to have guilt about leaving both Brent and his gal pal, Sophie (Molly Tarlov), be-

hind. Everything builds to the big dance (natch) that is also under threat from a rabid anti-gay clan led by McKenzie (Evanna Lynch, Harry Potter's Luna).

Stein delivers another comic send-up of high school clique culture that delighted LGBT-festival audiences all through 2013. (The opening night crowd at the Music Box loved it.) With its enthusiastic, vibrant young cast and hot, candy-colored look (the visuals really set the tone), **G.B.F.** easily earns its crowd-pleaser status. Facets Cinematheque has of late been booking a lot more LGBT movie fare—filling a hole that has been sorely lacking consistently for a while—and I urge fans to head there to see the movie and support queer cinema in Chicago. <http://www.facets.org/pages/cinematheque/films/jan2014/gbf.php>

Onto The Happy Sad: It took out director Rodney Evans (see our interview in this issue) a long time to find a follow-up to his wonderful 2004 debut *Brother to Brother* (which also provided Anthony Mackie with his breakthrough role). But Evans is back with the compelling relationship drama that explores the politics and protocols of open relationships. Marcus (stage actor Leroy McClain) and Aaron (Chicago Fire's Charlie Barnett), a gay Black couple in Brooklyn, are entering the sixth year of their relationship. But Aaron is feeling stifled and he cautiously brings up the idea to Marcus of opening the relationship to other sexual partners. To his surprise, a bemused Marcus agrees. Concurrently, a straight white couple—Annie (Sorel Carradine) and Stan (Cameron Scoggins, the talented actor and musician)—are also both feeling constrained by the typical boundaries of monogamy and they, too, decide to open things up.

The foursome begins to explore new freedoms with some very surprising results that find Stan trysting with Marcus, Annie finding herself drawn to her newly out lesbian friend, and Aaron suddenly feeling unsure what he has started. Of course, when deeper emotions begin to enter the picture, all hell breaks loose.

As he did in *Brother to Brother* (which in addition to focusing on the queer aspects of the Harlem Renaissance also focused on a gay interracial relationship), Evans, working with a script by Ken Urban adapted from his play, explores some really interesting territory. The performances of the four leads drive the occasional hard-to-believe plot switches, with McClain and Barnett a rare (and refreshing) example of a gay Black couple onscreen (and both are sexy as hell). Scoggins' character is a musician (which is meshed into the proceedings) and his songs add a wonderful emotional charge to this sexy, insightful, and thought provoking movie. www.rodneyevansfilm.com/

Finally, for something completely different check out *Truth*, an over-the-top, old-fashioned suspenseful, psychological thriller from writer-director Rob Moretti (who also stars).

After a chance encounter over the Internet, Caleb (Sean Paul Lockhart, *Milk*, *Judas Kiss*, *Chillerama*) meets and falls head over heels for Jeremy (Moretti), and a hot and heavy affair commences. But soon the line between love and lies blurs as Jeremy blissfully (or stupidly—and you'll have fun deciding which) ignores the warning signs his sexy, uninhibited lover emits (and, boy, does he ignore 'em).

Struggling to keep his traumatized past a secret, stemming from the abuses of his mentally ill mother, Caleb slowly gives in to the dark side. A sudden turn of events escalates an already dangerous situation. Lockhart, who came to notoriety as gay porn star Brent Corrigan, is making a name for himself as an actor and turns in a very likeable performance here (and, to be honest, still ain't too hard on the eyes) and Moretti holds his own next to pretty boy Lockhart. As an unabashed, scenery-chewing melodrama, *Truth* is more than a bit of a guilty pleasure—one of those movies you either go with all the way (which I certainly did) or not at all. I recommend you give this nifty, sexy little thriller a go. <http://truth-the-movie.com/>



Paul Iacono and Megan Mullally in **G.B.F.**

'Dallas Buyers' wins, Allen controversy at Golden Globes

The 71st Annual Golden Globes will primarily be known for an even distribution of prizes, co-hosts Tina Fey and Amy Poehler's hilarity, and a controversy involving Cecil B. DeMille Award recipient Woody Allen.

In the film category, *12 Years a Slave* and *American Hustle* took home the top prizes at the Globes Jan. 12, winning best motion picture drama, and best comedy or musical motion picture, respectively.

The AIDS drama *Dallas Buyers Club* won two acting honors for motion pictures: Jared Leto's supporting actor prize and Matthew McConaughey's win for best actor in a drama. Leonardo DiCaprio won best actor in a musical or comedy film for his performance in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, while Cate Blanchett (*Blue Jasmine*) and Amy Adams (*American Hustle*) won for best actress in a drama (motion picture) and best actress (comedy or musical), respectively. Jennifer Lawrence (*Hustle*) won for best supporting actress.

Among the winners in the area of television were Poehler, who won her first Globe for Best Actress in a TV Series (comedy) for her show *Parks and Recreation*; and, in an upset, Fox's *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* edging *Girls*, *Parks and Recreation*, *Modern Family* and *The Big Bang Theory*. In addition, Michael Douglas won Best Performance by an Actor in a Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for the *Liberace* drama *Behind the Candelabra*; "*Candelabra*" also won for Best TV Miniseries or Movie.

Fey and Poehler—who co-hosted together for the second time in a three-year slate—continued their comic zing. Fey described *Gravity* as a movie about how "George Clooney would rather float into space and die than spend another minute with a woman close to his own age."

Diane Keaton accepted the DeMille award on behalf of Allen, who is known for avoiding awards shows. (Her speech included singing a Girl Scouts song.) However, *The New York Daily News* reported that Ronan Farrow, Allen's 26-year-old son with Mia Farrow, generated controversy by tweeting, "Missed the Woody Allen tribute—did they put the part where a woman publicly confirmed he molested her at age 7 before or after *Annie Hall*?" Ronan was

referring to his adopted sister Dylan, who has publicly alleged the famed director sexually abused her as a child.

The show drew the largest Globes audience in a decade, according to *Deadline.com*.

See www.GoldenGlobes.com for the full list of winners.

Lily Tomlin marries longtime partner

Iconic actress/comedienne Lily Tomlin married writer Jane Wagner, her partner of 42 years, in a private ceremony in Los Angeles on New Year's Eve, according to *People* magazine.

"They're very happy," said the spokesperson, Jennifer Allen.



Lily Tomlin.

Wagner, 78, was born and raised in Morristown, Tenn.; Tomlin, 74, is from Detroit. They reportedly met when Tomlin was looking for a collaborator to help her develop the character of the wicked child Edith Ann.

Veteran columnist Liz Smith first reported the marriage, stating, "[M]y longtime friends, Lily Tomlin and her love, the writer Jane Wagner, got married on the eve of 2014. ... My wish is that their happiness will be as great as their combined talents."

Talking with *Windy City Times* in 2011, Tomlin said she felt the media purposely did not mention Wagner in interviews and profiles.

MOVIES

Gay director Rodney Evans on his 'Happy Sad' tale

BY RICHARD KNIGHT JR.

As awards season arrives, several of the top contenders are from African-American directors—including Steve McQueen's unvarnished triumph *12 Years a Slave*, Lee Daniels' *The Butler*, and Ryan Coogler's powerful debut *Fruitvale Station*.

Last year also saw the return of another tremendously talented African-American director—the openly gay Rodney Evans, who returned to cinemas nine years after his critically lauded debut, *Brother to Brother*, in 2004. Evans' movie, *The Happy Sad*, hasn't gotten the attention of these other high profile releases but in its exploration of modern-day relationship and gender boundaries, it's very refreshing from a voice



Rodney Evans.

that has long been missed. It's now available for download on iTunes, Amazon Instant, and other download sites and a DVD release will follow shortly.

Vibrant and unabashedly sexy, *The Happy Sad* is based on a play by Ken Urban, who worked closely with Evans in adapting the work for the screen. The film is a chamber quartet focusing on two couples in Brooklyn—Marcus and Aaron, a Black gay couple, and Stan and Annie, a white straight couple—whose lives intersect when both decide to open their relationships sexually. The material explores, in very interesting ways, what can happen when both traditional relationship boundaries and gender lines—Marcus and Stan hook up repeatedly and Annie is drawn to her newly out girlfriend—are blurred. Evans, who lives in Brooklyn, was in Chicago last fall when *The Happy Sad* had its Chicago premiere to a very receptive audience during the Reeling LGBT Film Festival. Windy City Times recently caught up with Evans to discuss the film and what's next for the writer-director.

Windy City Times: One of the reasons I loved *Brother to Brother* so much is that it explored so many things you don't normally see in films—things like interracial gay relationships and the importance of the Harlem Renaissance—and that's the experience that I had with *The Happy Sad* as well. That's why it's good you're back! From the very first shot of seeing a Black, gay couple in love on a park bench—I mean, when do you see that in a film?

Rodney Evans: I know, it's still exceedingly rare. It's good to hear that people want to see more from me, I'm trying to pick up the pace a little bit. Hopefully there won't be a nine year gap before the next one (laughs).

WCT: Hopefully! I love that the piece blurs all these boundaries—gender, monogamy, race—it questions all these things. In partic-

ular, the idea that you don't need to declare yourself sexually. The movie says, "You don't need to do that."

RE: It's interesting to gauge different reactions to that. Part of what was really interesting to me about it was the idea of turning those assumptions on their heads. You have Annie, who is this experimental, progressive, liberal woman who is so disconcerted by the idea of her boyfriend bottoming [laughing] that you see the shock register on her face. I'm interested in when those boundaries get thrown for a loop and what are the things that are still shocking or provocative for people that consider themselves to be liberal and progressive and experimental?

WCT: That theme actually seems to harken back to aspects of *Brother to Brother*—the idea of breaking down boundaries. Were you conscious of that link while working on *The Happy Sad*?

RE: I do see parallels in terms of the experimentation and in terms of some of the more radical trailblazers of the Harlem Renaissance depicted in *Brother to Brother* like Richard Bruce Nugent who was a huge risk taker and his whole M.O. was about embracing risk and being a provocateur. He had all these stories about sleeping with straight Italian gangsters for example.

WCT: Another thing that maybe links the two films is the frustration with the status quo which I'm going to guess is something that certainly any independent filmmaker probably feels. Certainly as a gay, Black filmmaker, that probably resonates with you.

RE: Oh, yeah—absolutely. My interest in the outsider and people that are interested in transgressing and questioning mainstream "norms"—I think that interest goes hand in hand with my sense of myself as an independent filmmaker and someone who goes against the grain and someone who wants to embrace risk in terms of the stories that I'm bringing to the screen and in terms of having different experiences portrayed that are still extremely rare. Those two things definitely go hand in hand.

WCT: And there are still such pejoratives about making a gay movie by the mainstream—whether you declare it as being gay-themed or not. It's like the kiss of death in trying to get mainstream funding and audiences. What's got to be frustrating is that even if you get the movie made—through crowd funding sites, or friends, or charging up your credit cards or whatever—you still have to go out there and try to sell the movie—it's a whole other kettle of fish.

RE: It is another whole kettle of fish. I feel comfortable at this point wearing the hat of the producer, the distributor, the marketer, the person who is really spearheading the distributor of the film. I think that's a sign of the times. For a filmmaker it's what you have to do to survive and to sustain a career. The days of going to Sundance and hoping for a bidding war among distributors; those days don't really exist anymore and most of those companies don't really exist. It's just part of the skill set that a filmmaker has to have.

WCT: It's what musicians have had to deal with forever. And talking about music—that was hugely important to *Brother to Brother* and is also a big part of *The Happy Sad* (one of the characters is a songwriter in a band that appears in the film). I found those aspects of the film very Altmanesque.

RE: Thank you—I'll take that!

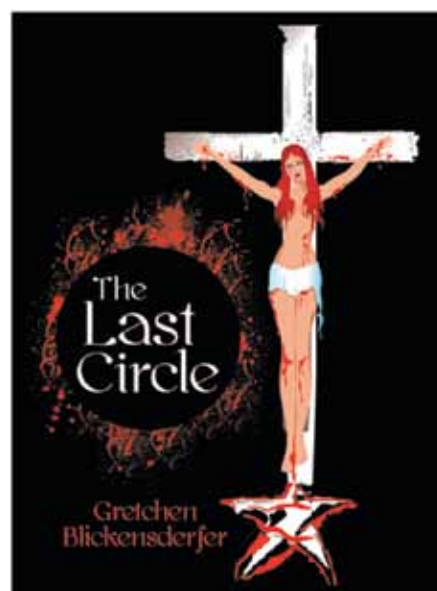
WCT: And you're now hard at work on getting *Daydream*—your film about Billy Strayhorn, the gay jazz icon—made. Can't wait for that...

RE: I'm pushin' and hopefully we'll meet up again in a few years. Thank you to Chicago for supporting *The Happy Sad*.

<http://www.rodneyevansfilm.com/>



The Happy Sad.



Trans author's book employs right-wing hate speech

Transgender author Gretchen Blickensderfer has written *The Last Circle*, a book that has radical, right-wing, Christian conservatives taking over America in what a press release calls a "chilling and brutal account."

In creating her characters, Blickensderfer researched far-right websites such as the American Family Association, and drew the policies detailed in *The Last Circle* directly from sources such as the Texas Republican Party platform of 2010, adding, "I wanted to keep it as real as possible."

The release also stated, "With the push for marriage equality, Blickensderfer believes that the hate speech from the right has become increasingly more vitriolic and divisive, as seen recently from *Duck Dynasty* star Phil Robertson."

The Last Circle is now available at bookstores and online outlets everywhere. For more information, go to www.thelastcircle-book.com.

Blickensderfer is a writer for Windy City Times.

Welbon film nominated for NAACP Image Award

The New Black—a documentary that follows African-American advocates on both sides of the 2012 campaign for Maryland's Question 6, a referendum launched by opponents of the state's same-sex marriage bill—has been

nominated for an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Documentary (Theatrical), according to the L.A. Times.

Chicagoan Yvonne Welbon, a lesbian, is one of the film's producers; Yoruba Richen was another producer, as well as the writer and director. (A closer look at the film, with quotes from Welbon and Richen, is at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/The-New-Black-Film-looks-at-marriage-issue-in-Black-community/44819.html>.)

The awards will air Feb. 22.

Body-painting performance Jan. 16

A body-painting performance will take place Thursday, Jan. 16, at 6-9 p.m., at Robin B Gallery, 1123 W. Armitage Ave.

The event will feature artist Orlando Bar-salho. There will also be a demonstration from artist Amy Van Winkle, and a wine-tasting.

See "Body Painting Live Performance" on Facebook.



Body-painting model. Photo by David Vance

THE Q LIST

Shea Coulee's drag revolution will be televised

BY NICO LANG

According to drag performer Shea Coulee, drag is "so much more than what people think it is."

I met Coulee at Coffee Chicago to discuss the art of female impersonation and why it's been a calling for so many. "Drag means the freedom of self-expression," Coulee said. "As a gay man, I get to explore my femininity and make money without being shamed for it." Coulee explained that he's been drawn to women and divas from a young age, particularly performers like Diana Ross, Grace Jones and Paula Kelly. "I think Black women are so fierce and so fiercely real," Coulee explained. "There's a power that a Black woman exudes that I'm always trying to express."

It was Jones, in particular, who mesmerized Coulee at a young age. "I remember the first time I saw Grace Jones," Shea Coulee recalled. "It was in James Bond. I remember seeing her and being so shocked by her presence. She had such a masculinity about her, this tall, feminine Amazon woman. She was otherworldly. I wasn't looking at her as a woman or a man. I was looking at her as a being." Watching Jones made it more possible for Coulee to be himself, and everything that meant for a queer youth. "For her, to step out and embrace the way she is was an inspiration," Coulee said. "Would you rather live an authentic life or a safe one? You only have this one life."

What made Jones interesting to Coulee was the complexity of her gendered identity and the way she was able to embody so many things at once. "Masculinity is built on strength and how much you can conquer," said Coulee. "Femininity has layers, and character wise that's more fun to explore." Although most of Shea Coulee's influences are older, he believes that the performers who are most fun to impersonate are

singers like Beyonce, who absolutely love being women and embrace the strength in femininity. They embrace it. "Divas are more vampy about their femininity," Coulee explained, "and in drag, you have to vamp it up."

But as a performer, Coulee is more than his influences. Developing the character of Shea Coulee has been about "going beyond the images," taking "influences from this person, that person, that photograph or that piece of art." Coulee graduated from Columbia College in 2011 and got into drag almost by accident. He was asked to perform at a burlesque show called Jeezy's Joint as a dancer but mistakenly got an email about doing a solo act. Coulee agreed to still do it, but only if he could perform in drag. According to Coulee, the audience feedback was incredible. "I'd never gotten such a response from people as when I started doing Shea Coulee," he said. "I had never felt so loved before."

His dramatic background from theater school helped him further develop and conceive of Coulee as a character, using her not only to be creative but also political. "I want Shea Coulee to be a subversive statement about how we portray masculinity and femininity," Coulee told me. "We make everything so Black and white. We make everything absolutes. But in drag, there's a sense of fluidity." According to Coulee, embodying this character has helped him exist in the present moment as a performer and pretend like he's living it all for the first time—and that experience has changed him. "Normally in person, I take a very soft approach to people," said Coulee. "I'm very shy. But when I go through the transformation of becoming Shea, there is no hiding. It brings out my fiercest self."

Growing up as the only Black kid in a "lily-white town," drag helped Coulee find his voice and a place in Chicago, where drag is becoming



Shea Coulee. Photo by Kriss Abigail

ubiquitous. "You can't swing a dead cat without hitting a drag queen in this town," Coulee joked. "We are everywhere." As for why he feels the drag movement has so exploded in recent years, Coulee replied, "It gives a community of people a way to express themselves. I also think RuPaul's Drag Race has played a huge part in making drag more commercial, and the relationship with drag in the community is shifting right now. More of the community is banning together to support drag queen as artists, not just a novelty. They're taking the opportunity to get to know us."

Coulee said the LGBT community's drag moment is also important in breaking down many of our

entrenched barriers. "People can definitely feel that there's a race divide," Coulee explained. "As African-American queens of color are concerned, there [are], maybe, like four of us." These performers include Chicago notables like Taj Mahal and Dida Ritz. "It's interesting because with a majority of the shows I do with Trannika Rex at Berlin, culturally diverse cast." For drag artist Kim Chi, a friend of Coulee's, Coulee mentioned that performing K-Pop has been transformative. Coulee said, "She's introducing people to her Korean culture and making them love it. It's what feels authentic to her."

For performers like Kim Chi, Coulee felt that drag can be a way of "representing all the faces in the community who don't always get a stage to stand on." "I think to we can give hope to others who feel like they don't have a voice, so they feel like someone's being heard," Shea Coulee told me. "Having that kind of attitude makes people feel welcome. We're all in this together. Though it feels like we can be very divided, we have to remember that we're all family." Coulee feels that drag can be a liberating force for the LGBT community by giving people a platform on which their identity can be affirmed. "Drag can, in turn, inspire someone to express themselves and share with the world what they want to share with the world," Coulee said. "I want people to enjoy themselves, feel fierce and feel fearless—no apologies."

As far as Coulee's message for the world, that's something he's still figuring out. "I feel like more and more I perform, the more pieces of the puzzle fit together—but I have a lot of pieces left to fill," Coulee admitted. "She's still incomplete."

Coulee is currently performing at Berlin and at the Naughty Little Drag Show, while working as a co-host on the Tony Soto Show. However, Shea Coulee advised followers to stay tuned as the character goes through a process of invention and looks toward the future, developing as a brand and an online media presence. "I envision so much I'm afraid to even say it out loud," Coulee said. "I don't even think you're ready for it yet."

the DISH WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN WINDY CITY TIMES

Cicchetti

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Nestled in Streeterville is **Cicchetti** (671 N. St. Clair St.; <http://cicchetterestaurant.com>), an Italian restaurant that is the first-ever newly constructed Green Seal-certified eatery in Chicago. (Among the environmental-friendly aspects are antibiotic-free meat and daily leftover food donations.)

Those who are familiar with tapas restaurants would be familiar with the items offered here, which include Venetian-inspired small plates. After trying some items, I have to say that Executive Chef Mike Sheerin (who has worked at Lutece, Atlas, Blackbird and Trenchermen) and his team (which includes the ever-smiling general manager, Jason Finn) certainly know what they are doing.

Among the antipasti are oysters, cobia crudo, flatbreads, house-cured sardines—and pork cracklins. Now, I tell you, having grown up in the South, I'm more than familiar with these items. The server described them as "upscale Cheetos," but they're basically upscale pork rinds. The curly cracklins are topped with parmesan and rosemary—and I couldn't stop eating them. My guest and I also tried Nonna's Meatballs—a sweet and tangy concoction with veal, beef and pork items.

We decided to order two pasta dishes: the gnocchi with braised pork shank and a braised short rib ravioli. Although both dishes were quite good, I favored the gnocchi, which is complemented with dill, buttermilk, celery root,



From left: Salt-cured gravlax; chicharones (pork cracklins); and skate wing at Cicchetti. Photos by Tarryn Rosenthal

pear and chestnut crisps. The flavors interacted with each other wonderfully.

Sous/pastry chef Sarah Jordan also knows how to impress, as two dishes demonstrated. The reverse affoato is a mix of espresso ice cream, malted creme anglaise and seasonal doughnuts, while the ricotta cheesecake (which I could've devoured by myself) is, thankfully, not too sweet.

The menu doesn't contain an overwhelming

number of items, and that's a good thing. I'd much rather go to a place with relatively few items that are done well than a restaurant with 10 pages of offerings that are hit-or-miss. I do plan on returning here to try other offerings, such as the Anjou pear salad, the hake filet and saffron risotto.

My only complaint is the signage—or lack thereof. Being in the shadow of Northwestern Memorial Hospital (which would seemingly guar-

antee a substantial patronage), I initially had trouble locating the restaurant. However, I suspect that once the weather warms up, outdoor decor will make Cicchetti (which has a deceptively large indoor space) more conspicuous. It certainly deserves the exposure.

Email me at Andrew@WindyCityMedia-Group.com.

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By the time you get to 'Phoenix' ...

Phoenix Bar & Nightclub celebrated its official grand opening, Sat., Jan. 11, in the Elk Grove Village space formerly occupied by nightspot Hunters. Photos by Jerry Nunn. Look for more Nightspots photos in the next few weeks in this space and in the next issue of Nightspots, on stands Jan. 22, 2014.



CALENDAR

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Wed., Jan. 15

Marriage Forum in Peoria Forum aimed at educating the public about SB10, dispelling myths, and empowering same-sex couples and their families to understand and use all their state and federal marriage rights. 6:00pm, Fondulac Congregational UCC, 100 Illini Dr., East Peoria, IL 61611 <http://www.eqil.org> Tickets: <http://tinyurl.com/peoria-forum>

Open mic and stage Poetry, music, dance and drag... Everyone has five minutes in the spotlight. Sign up begins at 7:30PM and the show starts at 8PM. Get here early, because space is limited. Featuring host Jason Apollo. 7:30pm - 9:30pm Mary's Attic 5400 N Clark St., <http://www.hamburgermarys.com/chicago>

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, Jan. 16

Afghan Good Enough Gender and Counter-insurgency in Afghanistan. Hele Kinsella, assistant professor of political science, University of Wisconsin, Madison. Presented by Gender & Sexuality Studies Northwestern University 5:00pm John Evans Alumni Center, 1800 Sheridan Rd., Evanston <http://northwestern.edu>

Resolutions are meant to be broken An evening of over-the-top sweets and libations, raffles and prizes. Benefits Vital Bridges' 6:00pm - 9:00pm Blackfinn Ameripub, 65 W. Kinzie St., Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/641700482535628/>

3Thursdays: West end of Armitage Food, friendship and fun with neighborhood businesses. Body painting performance by artics Orlando Barsallo, a demo by Encaustic artist Amy Van Winkle and wine tasting by Poison Cup. 6-9 p.m., Robin B Gallery, 1123 W. Armitage Ave.

Friday, Jan. 17

Rocky Horror Picture Show Film with Live Cast WOWMS presents THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW at 27 Live in Chicago - Movie with Live Cast! 8:00pm - 11:45pm 27 Live 1012 Church St Evanston, IL 60201 (855) 927-5483 <http://www.27live.com>

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>

Finding Beauty A one-hour solo cabaret show by Amanda Batchner, who says "this show explores the path through that darkness. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll hear songs that are old favorites and songs that may become new loves. It expresses my journey of seeing and feeling beauty in myself, other people and the world." 8:00pm No Exit Cafe 6970 N Glenwood Ave <http://www.theo-u.org> Tickets: <http://www.theo-u.org>

Saturday, Jan. 18

Alex Garel-Frantzen, author Gangsters and Organized Crime in Jewish Chicago In the early twentieth century, the harsh environment of the Maxwell Street ghetto produced a proliferation of Jewish gangsters involved in everything from labor racketeering to white slavery. 11:00am Edgewater Library, 6000 N. Broadway, Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Volunteers assemble bags for LGBT homeless youth Volunteer will help partners Human Rights Campaign & Broadway Youth Center assemble donated items into care bags for LGBT homeless youth. Info: hrcchiMLK@gmail.com. Needed are unopened travel-sized toiletries including soaps, shampoos, lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, chapstick, and deodorant, new and unused socks, underwear, and bras. Items can be purchased through Amazon wish list below or drop off these items at: AIDS Foundation of Chicago 200 West Jackson, Suite 2200 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Please contact Stephan Dimos at sdimos@live.com in advance. New Hope Recovery Center in Lakeview 2835 N. Sheffield Ave., Suite 304 or 308 Monday - Friday | 7:30 a.m. - 9 p.m. Saturday | 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (Use the buzzer if the building is locked.) 1:00pm - 4:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/1KKGPTX12ZRD2/ref=cm_wl_rlist_go_o?sort=universal-price&itemPerPage=25

Left Front: Radical Art in the "Red Decade, 1929-1940 In the wake of the Great Depression, progressive artists, writ-

ers and intellectuals coalesced to form a "left front" dedicated to making socially conscious art. 2:00pm Block Museum 40 Arts Circle Drive Evanston, IL 60208

Sunday, Jan. 19

Scott Duff hosts LGBT radio talk show LGBT-specific talk show "Out Chicago" on politics, entertainment, celebrity gossip 11:00am - 1:00pm WCPT 820 AM

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>

Lincoln Park Lagooners Beat the Winter Blues Party Fine cheeses and wines, topped off by a dessert table full of goodies. \$20, payable at the door. RSVP on LPL's Facebook page. You must be at least 21 years old to attend LPL events. Afterwards LPL members are invited to the Downtown Bar and Lounge located at 440 N. State St. 2:00pm, <http://www.lplchicago.com>

Celebration of William 'Feathers' Gary's life NEW DATE AND LOCATION Gary tended bar for many years, notably at Bulldog Road, Granville Anvil, and Buddies Restaurant and Bar, which was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2003. 5:00pm Driftwood 1021 W. Montrose Ave.

Monday, Jan. 20

Fear No Art, the Dinner Party Three celebs and a known chef at a dinner party, filmed live and streaming on The Sun Times' ChicagoSplash.com/DinnerParty. Elysa Alfabo, Richard Roeper, Tributosaurus' Chris Neville, Female Rapper DESSA, famed Chef J. Joho of Everest. Food from Everest, chocolate, Voss Artesian Water from Norway, wine, unscripted conversation, performances. Members of the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras. Host Elysa Alfabo. Doors 6:30 pm. \$40. 7:00pm City Winery Chicago 1200 W Randolph St <http://www.citywinery.com>

Request Concert Request Concert is a one-woman, wordless play about an intensely solitary woman. 7:30pm - 8:30pm The Side Project Theatre 1439 W Jarvis Ave <http://www.thesideproject.net> Tickets: <http://www.thesideproject.net>

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

Wed., Jan. 22

Free chamber music concert Violinist and instructor Almita Vamos and Music Institute President and CEO Mark George on piano. Showcasing faculty and new space, the Music Institute of Chicago

presents free monthly lunchtime concerts. 12:15pm - 1:00pm Music Institute of Chicago Black Box Theater, 1702 Sherman Ave., Evanston <http://musicinst.org>

Mike Smiddy fundraiser Hosted by Heather Steans and Kelly Cassidy with guest Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky. 5:30pm - 7:30pm Private home of Senator Steans & Leo Smith, Tickets: <https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/smiddyjanuary>

Affinity Forty Plus Meeting Affinity Community Services works on behalf of Black LGBTQ communities, queer youth, and allies to identify needs, create safe spaces, develop leaders and bridge communities. 7:00pm Affinity, 1424 E. 53rd St. Suite 306, Chicago <http://www.affinity95.org>

Thursday, Jan. 23

PPIA Roe v. Wade Anniversary Celebration Planned Parenthood Illinois Action will be hosting the annual Roe vs. Wade Celebration on January 23, 2014 at Bottom Lounge, located at 1375 W. Lake in Chicago. PPIA will be honoring Senator Dick Durbin with the Dr. Marvin Rosner Lifetime Achievement Award and State Representative Camille Lilly with the Richard J. Phelan Profile in Courage Award. Special guests include SNL alum Jane Curtin and radio personality Loni Swain. VIP reception will be held from 5:30PM - 6:30PM with the main event beginning at 6:30PM. Tickets can be purchased at www.ppiaction.org. 5:30pm - 9:00pm The Bottom Lounge 1375 W. Lake St www.plannedparenthoodactionillinois.org/action/attendevent_action.php Tickets: www.ppiaction.org/site/Calendar?id=108545&view=Detail

Absolut Wrapture Enjoy signature, sky-high cocktails, delicious hors d'oeuvres and one-of-a-kind works of art from our silent auction while supporting Chicago House. 5 p.m. VIP admission, 6 p.m. General admission. VIP \$160, general \$99, at the door \$120 6:00pm Willis Tower 99th Floor SkyDeck 233 S Wacker Dr http://www.chicagohouse.org/event_absolut_wrapture.html

Asians & Friends Chicago Dining Club RSVP by phone by the Tuesday before (1/21) 7:00pm Tank Noodle, 4953 N. Broadway, Chicago 312-409-1573.

Saturday, Jan. 25

CMSA Annual Membership Social Party First ever women's AND men's annual Members Social Party. Two Free drink tickets for first 250 female and 250 male CMSA members, plus free food from 7pm to 8pm. Free admission for current CMSA members, \$10 for non-members. Half of door cover will benefit Bring The Music Initiative. 50/50 and raffle drawings. Back venue 7:30pm: Devin from American Idol, comedian Miss Terri D'Mor, Katie Todd, Libido Funk Circus, Live DJ'S and more. Front venue 10pm: Karaoke & DJ'S by Sue Heggeland. Meet & Greet with the artists. 7:00pm - 4:00am Joe's Bar 940 W. Weed St <https://www.facebook.com/CMSASocial>



TALK TALK

Sunday, Jan. 19

Scott Duff hosts his weekly LGBTQ radio show "Out Chicago" on WCPT 820 AM.

Photo by Brandon Dahlquist

Through the Leaves Through the Leaves, written by German playwright Franz Xaver (F.X.) Kroetz, tells of the relationship between a rough, emotionally abusive laborer and a lonely middle-aged woman. 7:30pm - 8:30pm The Side Project Theatre 1439 W Jarvis Ave <http://www.thesideproject.net> Tickets: <http://www.thesideproject.net>

Big Bang 11, "Twisted TV" The Chicago Spirit Brigade annual cabaret show, a dive into the wacky world of television with unexpected scenarios that will get you laughing and cheering. BMO Harris Bank is presenting sponsor. Shows at 7pm with one low-price general admission of \$20 per person and 9:45pm with reserved zone seating in multiple price levels. \$25 to \$60. 9:45pm Mayne Stage 1328 W Morse Ave <http://www.chicagospiritbrigade.org> Tickets: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/515298>

Tuesday, Jan. 28

The New Black: Film Screening and Panel Discussion Screening of the documentary "The New Black" by Yoruba Richen hosted by Human Rights Watch. The film explores the notion of same-sex marriage as an issue of civil rights versus religious benefit, and what those categories mean to the African-American church community. 6:00pm - 8:00pm Harold Washington Public Library, 400 S State St., <http://www.hrw.org/events/2013/12/05/new-black-film-screening-and-panel-discussion>

STRUB from page 14

ment Action Group, the ACT UP offshoot. As a consequence, the human rights approach to the epidemic, fighting for confidentiality, against mandatory testing, treatment literacy as opposed to just access to treatment, promoting the empowerment of people with HIV through the creation of People with AIDS associations, combating stigma through the people who were stigmatized, got somewhat lost or derailed.

Empowerment versus treatment advances became greatly exacerbated after protease inhibitors were introduced. It became more widely understood that many, most now nearly all of us were going to live with HIV for years to come, rather than were standing on the precipice of an impending, horrific death.

So instead of seeing us as the walking dead, the criminal justice system and the public health system began to see us increasingly through the prism of our potential to infect others, as viral vectors, defining us as inherently dangerous to society.

But we had lost the infrastructure to combat this, AIDS Inc., wasn't particularly interested in combating it, many of our most effective activists were now on the inside, promoting things

like names reporting and "routinizing" testing, etc., so it felt like we needed to start from scratch.

Criminalization is only the most extreme manifestation of this phenomenon. Ironically, the people who continued with ACT UP after many had left the group when survival became possible have been some of the strongest supporters and participants in this new wave of empowered activism by people with HIV.

WCT: Is how we frame our history important?

SS: There are fewer and fewer people alive who can speak first-hand to what happened in those early days. Enough time has passed from the worst of the dying in the U.S. to enable people to look back with some perspective. We are seeing this happen now, with books and films and oral histories all of which I welcome. But history itself can become a commodity, created and to some degree owned by those who tell it. Someone has to be the memory—particularly of history unlikely to be documented by the mainstream. But I am conscious of the risk of romanticizing activism, of not adequately understanding the degree of self-interest inherent in the activism of so many of us. We must all be willing to look at ourselves critically.

We have been so in touch with the failings

of the Reagan administration, Koch administration, pharmaceutical industry, and Congress, government regulators, but we need to turn just as critical an eye on ourselves, on our own leadership.

We need to understand why we did—for good or bad—what we did. I think that is critical if we are to effectively address the epidemic today, in a better way than we may have in the past. That's what I hope I have contributed to, just a bit, with Body Counts. Now Frank, when are you going to tell YOUR story?

Review

Sean Strub's memoir opens on a note of fear and trembling.

And that's the last time fear takes a front seat in Body Counts: a Memoir of Politics, Sex, AIDS, and Survival. His 401-page hardcover book depicts incredible acts of courage by Strub and his constellation of collaborators.

Against thick walls of institutional homophobia and shrieking AIDS hysteria, they forged battles that shaped seminal moments in AIDS history—a condom over then-Sen. Jesse Helms two-story brick Colonial house in suburban Washington and countless other iconic memories of unbridled activism that inspired others around the world.

With NYC AIDS and gay activism a driving force nationwide, along with San Francisco AIDS and gay activism, Strub's close up portrayals of events and people are an insider's telescope for those alive then and younger readers who want an insider's view.

There is no doubt the book will rightfully take its place. A Librarian quote on Edelweiss (multi-publisher online catalog for librarians), says readers will "love, be enraged by, and in the end, be educated by" his memoir. The reviewer calls Body Count "Honest and raw" underscoring that he "has written today's version of Randy Shilts And the Band Played On." One of Paul Monette's closest friends, actor-activist Judith Light compared Body Counts to Monette's Borrowed Time.

Body Count fills in nicely between Shilts' historical account and Monette's intensely personal elegiac memoir. Strub's book is definitely memoir, but reads like a gripping right-with-them history, especially around the New York City AIDS epidemic, which hasn't yet been well documented. Gloria Steinem said, "Strub gives us ideas, strength and heart in our own journey."

Still at it, he is indefatigable, Strub remains on the cutting edge of activism. His recently founded Sero Project's mission is to bring HIV laws, nationally and in states, up to current science. <http://seroproject.com>

BILLY MASTERS

"And honey, if you don't win the Academy Award, I'm giving you mine!" —Liza Minnelli makes an offer to Matthew McConaughey at a New York luncheon toasting The Dallas Buyers Club. If the Golden Globes are any indication, Liza's Oscar is safe.

First, a public service announcement: A group of scientists have discovered that semen can cure depression. Apparently, the milky liquid contains a chemical that elevates mood, induces affection and causes sleep. See? Perhaps Pamela was depressed. She certainly looked like she needed a nap afterwards. Strangely, the study only cites the benefits for women ingesting semen. What about men? Are these scientists completely excluding the possibility that there are men out there who enjoy the odd shot of semen? Semen—it's not just for women anymore.

Perhaps depression is rampant at the Vatican. That might explain why a member of the pope's Swiss Guard was propositioned for gay sex on numerous occasions. And who propositioned him? Allegedly, his suitors included cardinals, bishops, priests and a dignitary close to John Paul II! In his recollections, this unnamed former guard claims such sexually charged incidents as a late night invitation to the room of a senior official, a complimentary bottle of whiskey and suggestive note (probably in Latin) left in his room by a visiting bishop, a bit of unsolicited fondling from another official, and a priest inviting him to dinner, saying he'd like to have this guard for dessert! My God—I get less action in West Hollywood!

Closer to home, claims have surfaced of a gay witch hunt during the heyday of American Bandstand. Two dancers on the show allege that Dick Clark and the producers were trying to "purge gays from the ranks" of dancers. Yes, I know what you're thinking—there were only two gay dancers??? They're the only two who have come forward—and are still alive! According to Frank Brancaccio and Eddie Kelly, the producers would regularly frequent gay bars in Philadelphia for the sole purpose of seeing if any of the show's dancers were there. Yeah, that's why men working on a teen dance show were in gay bars—for professional purposes, only. The duo claims that if you were caught in such a place, or even "looked gay," you'd be given the axe. You know what this means? John Travolta would never have made it past dress rehearsal!

In some happy news, Lily Tomlin and Jane Wagner got married on New Year's Eve. For those of you who don't know, Wagner has been Tomlin's personal and professional partner for over 40 years (she's also one of the dearest people I've ever met). When Proposition 8 was overturned, Lily said, "We're thinking maybe we'll get married. You don't really need to get married, but marriage is awfully nice." The news was announced by Liz Smith: "My longtime friends, Lily Tomlin and her love, the writer Jane Wagner, got married on the eve of 2014. My wish is that their happiness will be as great as their combined talents." Congrats.

Only a few months after coming out, Maulik Pancholy (from "30 Rock" and "Whitney") is engaged to his longtime partner, Ryan Corvaia. "It only took 9 years, but it's official. Just got engaged at the Taj Mahal".

Since I was in LA for the Golden Globes, I was able to see the fantastic Laura Benanti at the Catalina Bar and Grill in Hollywood. Under the auspices of Chris Isaacson and Upright Cabaret, the show was sold out within days of the announcement. A second show was quickly added—and just as quickly sold out. While Hollywood is buzzing about Benanti's luminous turn as Baroness Schrader in *The Sound of Music: Live*, she's been mighty busy on Broadway. (I've seen her in *Gypsy*, *Nine*, *Into the Woods* and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.) Personally, I find her one of the most versatile and talented actresses around. In fact, I loved every one of her failed television shows—and

that's saying something, because there are so few successful shows I enjoy! Her cabaret show is a perfect mix of Broadway, pop, folk numbers with delightfully engaging stories peppered in along the way. If you she isn't performing near you, I definitely recommend buying her new CD, *In Constant Search of the Right Kind of Attention*. The title was suggested from her former *Go On* co-star, Matthew Perry.

As to the Golden Globes, the most memorable moments of my evening were cozying up to Kevin Bacon and Rob Lowe. Now, I realized that these would be big "gets"—if this were 1985. But, I was in heaven. OK, perhaps it was ungallant to virtually knock Kyra Sedgwick over to get to Kevin, but this is survival of the fittest. I had a fabulous reunion with the always adorable Nikki Blonsky. As I was attempting to get close to the vivacious Sofia Vergara (who angrily extinguished her boyfriend's cigarette), I was intercepted by someone who looked remarkably like Kim Jong-un. Instead, I spent time dishing with the always-lovely Kathy Hilton while trying to figure out what Mike Tyson and Dame



Billy met up with the busy Laura Benanti. Photo by Jerry Nunn

Helen Mirren were chatting about *a deux*. You can check out the photos on BillyMasters.com.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from George in New Jersey: "I know Stephen Amell [the lead on *Arrow*] is straight and married. But he's also so gay friendly and gorgeous, I can't help but love him. I recently came across the attached photo and I swear I can see his penis. What do you think? Could you investigate? PLEASE?"

I have to confess that I was skeptical—especially since the photo in question is one officially sanctioned by Amell. But it looks like the outline of a rather sizeable appendage. Being an occasional stickler for details, I had the photo analyzed by Filth2Go Forensics and I'm pleased to report that they, too, believe that this is indeed a rare sighting of the Amell Appendage. We'll run the enhanced image on BillyMasters.com.

When we're employing NASA technology for detecting dicks, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Obviously there's something for everybody at www.BillyMasters.com—the site that stimulates your body and mind. If you'd like me to tackle any other part of your body, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Jackie Bisset finishes her acceptance speech. So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

DISCO

Sunday, January 19 (the night before MLK Day)

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'Gay Agenda' at Creating Change confab Jan. 30

The new Chicago LGBT web series *The Gay Agenda* will be making an appearance at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's 26th National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change in Houston, Texas at a live taping Thursday, Jan. 30, at 10 p.m.

The hosts of *The Gay Agenda* (Mary Morten, Jim Bennett, Tony Alvarado-Rivera and Shannon Downey) take on contemporary events—pop culture, politics, and matters of the heart—in a lively discussion from four distinctive points of view.

The *Gay Agenda* recently released its second episode, where the hosts discuss nature vs. nurture as well as GLAAD, and interview comedian and actress Fawzia Mirza (Kam Kardashian). The episode is available for viewing on the show's YouTube channel, *The Gay Agenda Live!*, at <http://bit.ly/1chTgDp>.

'Easy Abby' launches IndieGogo campaign

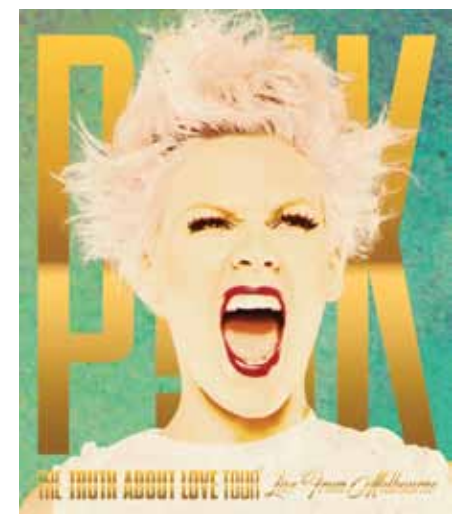
The producing team behind the award-winning lesbian Web series *Easy Abby* has launched an IndieGogo campaign to fund *Easy Abby* the show's second season.

"We are intending to raise close to \$100K for the second season of *Easy Abby* and we are extending our seven-minute web episodes to 22-minute episodes," said writer/director Wendy Jo Carlton (Hannah Free, Jamie & Jessie Are Not Together) and actor/producer Lisa Cordileone (Abby) in a statement. The campaign ends Feb. 9.

The show has won several honors, including an Audience Award for Best Women's Feature and a Golden Kitty Award for Best Lesbian

Web Series, and was an Editor's Pick by the Web Series Channel.

See <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/easy-abby-season-2> and <http://easyabby.com/>.



P!nk tour DVD out Jan. 21

P!nk brings the "The Truth About Love Tour: Live From Melbourne" to fans on DVD, Blu-Ray and digital long form on Tuesday, Jan. 21.

The 110-minute concert was filmed during the Australian leg of the tour, in Melbourne. Pulling from her seven-album repertoire, the show includes some of her biggest hits, such as "Blow Me (One Last Kiss)," "F***in' Perfect," "Try," "Raise Your Glass," "So What" and "Just Give Me A Reason."

See www.pinkspage.com/us/home for more info.

CMSA membership party Jan. 25 at Joe's

BY ROSS FORMAN

The fourth annual CMSA membership party for the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association is expected to draw a record crowd. More than 1,200 attendees will celebrate into the wee hours of the morning.

Dubbed Come Out & Play and scheduled to start at 7 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 25 at Joe's on Weed Street, the CMSA Annual Membership Social Party is all-inclusive this year—the previous three years, it has been a women's event.

Sam Hamilton, one of the founders and committee chair of the event, along with several CMSA board members, wanted to offer the welcome mat to men this year. So the CMSA board asked for men, along with women, to form a committee.

The events' co-chairs are Hamilton and Todd Paulson, and the rest of the committee includes Patricia Robles, Edith Nieves, Jack Neilsen and Robbie Burton.

Neilsen, Hamilton and Burton are each members of the CMSA Hall of Fame.

Nieves, a teacher, had an integral volunteer role in the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago and was a co-chair of the Oct. 22 March on Springfield for Marriage Equality. Robles is a founder of Windy City Animal Foundation and a longtime animal-rights advocate.

Guest speakers at the upcoming party include



Chicago Force player Tricia Charbonneau at last year's party. Image by Significant Photos

Tracy Baim, publisher of Windy City Times. Baim played in CMSA softball leagues during the 1980s and 1990s.

"This [event will be] a really exciting night," said Burton, 45, who lives in Uptown and is a vice president at the Northern Trust Company.

The entire venue at Joe's will be dedicated to CMSA, including the front and back rooms, plus the upstairs bar area, Burton said.

"With the inclusion of men this year, we hope to have an even larger crowd with more integra-

tion and camaraderie among all CMSA members and their guests," said Burton, who plays four CMSA sports: volleyball, basketball, softball and flag football.

There will be free pizza for an hour, starting at 7 p.m., and the first 250 female and the first 250 male CMSA members will receive two free drink tickets.

"Joe's has been great at accommodating our party for the past three years," Burton said. "Joe's provided free staffing for the CMSA party and did not charge us to rent the venue on [a] Saturday, which is their busiest night. Their facilities include a main stage for our entertainers and speakers, over five bars to order from, food to order, and [the facility] can accommodate our 1,200-plus [expected attendees]."

Burton said she considers CMSA "to be a second family for me and have formed some great friendships in my 20 years as a member of CMSA. This is one of those chances where I get to see all of my teammates and opponents, past and present, from different teams and leagues that you don't always get to see except when you are playing that sport together."

Libido Funk Circus, the headliner, performs over-the-top tributes to disco music of the 1970s as well as top hits from the 1980s through the present. Event organizers selected more than 40 songs for the party.

Also scheduled to perform: Devin Velez from American Idol and Terri D'Mor.

There also will be karaoke.

"I know, after a few drinks, I should have been a professional singer ... although my friends don't agree," Burton said. "Don't be surprised to see me belting out a Pet Shop Boys or Madonna song throughout the night."

The Chicago Force women's tackle football team, which won the 2013 national championship and features numerous out lesbians, including Sami Grisafe, Brandy Hatcher and Darcy Leslie, among others, will be selling its 2014 calendar (\$10) at the party.

There also will be a 50/50 raffle to raise funds for several charities, including Felines & Canines, Bring the Music Initiative, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and Centro Romero.

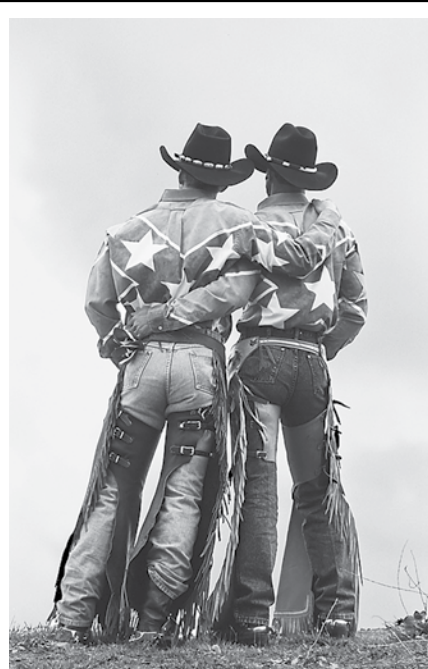
CMSA members get in free all night. Non-members pay \$10, and 50 percent of the admission fee collected will be donated to the Bring The Music Initiative, a non-profit organization.

"This year will be extra special, with the passing of the marriage equality bill [in late 2013]," Hamilton said. "What better way of celebrating than to bring together both the men and women of CMSA? After all, it is about unity among all of us and it is a milestone for the LGBTQ community."

Joe's on Weed Street is located at 940 W. Weed. See <https://www.facebook.com/events/546589128759065/>.



Last year's CMSA membership party. Image by Significant Photos



Rodeo photograph. Image courtesy of Blake Little

Indy museum to show gay-rodeo photographs

On Saturday, Jan. 18, a soft opening of "Blake Little: Photographs from the Gay Rodeo" will take place at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis.

The opening marks the first time this exhibition has been displayed anywhere. "Blake Little" will feature 41 black-and-white images of cowboys and cowgirls from the gay rodeo circuit, taken by Los Angeles-based photographer Little.

There will be an opening-night preview party Friday, Jan. 31, starting at 6 p.m. Admission is \$20 per person for members, and \$30 per person for nonmembers.

During opening day on Feb. 1, the Indianapolis Men's Chorus will perform, and there will be a special featuring Little, curators and gay rodeo participants. The event starts at 12:30 p.m.

The exhibition will run through July 13.

See www.eiteljorg.org.

TPAN kickoff event Jan. 25

On Saturday, Jan. 25, Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) will host an event to kick-off a new season for the Ride for AIDS Chicago (RFAC).

The event will be held at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St., at 4-7 p.m. In attendance will be riders, crew members and the 2014 RFAC Executive Committee.

A discounted rate of \$85 dollars is extended to all returning participants until Jan. 31.

The ride—an annual, two-day, 200-mile, cycling event—will take place July 12-13. See www.rideforaids.org.

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Ray J. Koenig III and Clark Hill PLC

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

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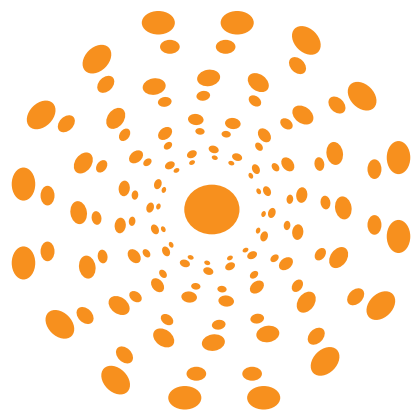
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