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WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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CHRISTINE IRVINE
AFFECTED BY
LOYOLA'S BAN
ON SAME-SEX
WEDDINGS

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LGBTS PART OF
IMMIGRATION
FORUM IN
HISTORIC FIRST

PAGE 4



CHICAGO FIRE'S
LAUREN GERMAN
REFLECTS ON
HER LESBIAN
CHARACTER

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Gay marriage begins early in Cook County



Many same-sex couples showed up at Cook County Clerk David Orr's office Fri., Feb. 21, to apply for their marriage licenses. Above are Matthew McGrane and David Maier, together 7.5 years. Below, Orr (right) poses with Alison Gross (left) and partner of 23 years Annie Avery and kids Grace, Lily (front). Photos by Hal Baim. See photos of many more couples and even a ceremony, starting on page 8.



BY MATT SIMONETTE

Forty-six LGBT couples rushed to Cook County Clerk David Orr's office Feb. 21 to get the first marriage licenses after a federal judge ruled earlier that day that same-sex couples would not have to wait until June 1 to be married.

Judge Sharon Coleman's ruling said the state's ban on gay marriages is unconstitutional, and that marriages for gay couples can begin immediately. Same-sex couples who had already been legally married in other states would have those marriages recognized immediately, the clerk's office said.

The ruling applies only in Cook County, where the initial lawsuits were filed. Residents of other Illinois counties would have to travel there to get their license and be married.

The county clerk's office was kept open an extra two hours Feb. 21 and was prepared for the ruling. Shortly before 1 p.m., the first same-sex couple of the day had obtained their license. Chicagoans Charles Gurion and David Wilk heard about the ruling on the news and decided to go get the license.

"I only just heard about this and hour and a half ago, and convinced him an hour ago," Gurion said.

Sara and Carolyn Kujawa were the first female couple to obtain their license, which was also the result of a spontaneous decision; Sara learned of the ruling as she waited for Carolyn in their bank's parking lot. They had a civil union already but were excited about the ruling.

Holding their 15-month-old son, Ronan, Sara said, "We're a family, and we shouldn't have to call it something different."

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Couple Charlie Gurion (left) and David Wilk were the first to apply for a marriage license. Photo by Matt Simonette.



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Images on cover (left, from top): Photo of Jason Collins by Ross Forman; photo of Christine Irvine by Derrick Clifton; photo of panelists Michael Jarecki and Keren Zwick by Carrie Maxwell; photo of Lauren German by Gretchen Rachel Blickensderfer

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COOK'S COUNTY
County Barbeque offers tasty items such as BLT sliders and mac 'n' cheese (left).
Photo by Andrew Davis



Fort Lauderdale, Fla.'s, tourism bureau brought some warmth to The Windy City.
Photo by Andrew Davis

Gay researcher Steve Cisneros-Garcia is conducting research on same-sex couples.
Photo from Cisneros-Garcia

IGGY POP
Singer Iggy Azalea talked about Macklemore, Dolly Parton and her fans (called "Azeleans").

FRANCO-AMERICAN
James Franco was at the Northwestern University School of Law to wax poetic.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT
Find out the latest about Kylie Minogue, Sir Ian McKellen and Benedict Cumberbatch.

plus **DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

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From left: Michael Jarecki, Keren Zwick, Roberto Romero-Perez and Lambda Legal's Luis Roman. Photo by Carrie Maxwell

LGBT rights among topics discussed at immigration summit

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Keeping families together, safe and strong was the theme of the fourth annual Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) immigration integration summit at Benito Juarez High School Feb. 22.

Approximately 300 people attended the opening plenary and rally ahead of various workshops on LGBT rights, health care, tax issues, temporary visitors drivers licenses, citizenship, fighting deportations, labor organizing and immigration reform among others.

Featured speakers at the rally included ICIRR CEO Lawrence Benito, co-chairs Laura Garza of SEIU Local 1 and Jose Luis Gutierrez of the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Sen. Dick Durbin, U.S. Reps. Jan Schakowsky and Luis Gutierrez, SEIU Local 1 President Tom Balanoff and "Fast for Families" founder and labor leader Eliseo Medina. Vincente Del Real of the West Suburban Action Project, 10-year-old Liz Marquez and Maria Pesqueira of Mujeres Latinas en Accion provided testimonies.

Other dignitaries in attendance included Illinois state Sens. Greg Harris, Sam Yingling and Elizabeth "Lisa" Hernandez.

For the first time, the ICIRR summit featured a workshop focusing on the needs of the LGBT immigrant community. About 15 people attended the workshop featuring Michael Jarecki, United States immigration and nationality law attorney and secretary of the Chicago chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association; Keren Zwick, managing attorney for Heartland Alliance's National Immigrant Justice Center's LGBT Immigrant Rights Initiative and Adult Detention Project and a member of LGBT Committee of the Chicago chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association; and Roberto Romero-Perez, principal at the Perrom Law Office, LLC and LGBT committee chair of the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois.

Marriage between same-sex binational couples, asylum, court proceedings, immigration detention and alternatives to immigration reform were the topics discussed.

Jarecki gave background information about the current status of immigration policy and explained how that affects the LGBT community in a post-DOMA ruling world. He noted there are about 12 million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States.

Until June of last year, same-sex binational

couples were discriminated against when it came to any family-based immigration process that allows spouses of U.S. citizens or green-card holders getting benefits, said Jarecki. The Supreme Court ruling last June that found section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional, Jarecki explained, provided more than 1,000 federal benefits to same-sex married couples, including immigration access for same-sex binational married couples.

Jarecki noted that, in response to the Supreme Court DOMA ruling, the Obama administration has come out with guidelines that state that no matter where a same-sex binational couple currently resides, as long as they got married where same-sex marriage is legal they will be afforded the same protections under current immigration laws.

The DOMA ruling did not solve all of the problems for same-sex binational couples, Jarecki explained, because under current immigration law undocumented people who are married to U.S. citizens have to return to their home country and then prove they need to return to the States due to extreme hardship. He added that for LGBT individuals who might have fled anti-gay countries, returning to those countries would put their lives in jeopardy.

"The burden of proof is on the applicant to the U.S. government that they are married in good faith and they aren't doing it just as friends or to help someone get their green card and that is true for every couple," said Jarecki. "At the same time, there is a lot of education that is needed for the agency that handles green card applications because not all LGBT people might be out to their family or employers and/or they might not have the commingling of their lives that heterosexual binational couples have such as their living space and/or finances which raises red flags during the application process."

Zwick spoke about the Uniting America Families Act (UAFSA), which did not make it into the immigration bill that the Senate recently passed. Many people in the LGBT community were upset that the UAFSA (the LGBT portion of the immigration bill) was not included, Zwick noted, and walked away from the immigration issue. He added there are many reasons why the LGBT community should still care about immigration policy because there are still provisions in the Senate bill that will help LGBT undocumented immigrants.

Romero-Perez spoke about the asylum process, noting that asylum can be granted for LGBT people who have been victims of persecu-

tion in their home country and that there is a one-year deadline for those seeking asylum, although there are some exceptions to that rule.

Zwick said another factor involved with the asylum process involves getting help from legal experts who are familiar with and friendly to the LGBT community, while Roberto-Perez emphasized spreading the word within communities. Zwick noted that fewer than 30 percent of asylum seekers win their cases each year.

Another avenue for all undocumented immigrants is through the courts, said Jarecki: "If you've found yourself in immigration court and you've been here for a very long time in an undocumented status ... you can claim to an immigration judge that you have a qualifying relative including same-sex spouses and that by being sent back it would cause hardship to the person's family here in the U.S. This is called cancellation of removal." This is very hard because the undocumented immigrant has to prove that s/he has been here for 10 years; however, if s/he wins, that person is granted a green card right away.

Zwick explained that there are other remedies already in effect, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which is for

the DREAMers (those involved with the DREAM Act), and U visas for victims of violent crimes/domestic violence. Jarecki noted that there is also the option of prosecutorial discretion to stop deportations if the undocumented person falls under numerous priority categories and this depends on the judge who hears their case and/or where the person lives.

Immigration detention is also an issue, especially for LGBT people who make up a disproportionately large number of detainees, said Zwick.

If immigration reform does not happen there are some alternatives that can be used, Zwick noted. One of these involves states choosing to ignore current immigration policies and stop the detention and deportation process, said Zwick. Romero-Perez explained that law-enforcement officials across the country have assigned a low priority to detention of undocumented immigrants as a way around the law.

Zwick's opinion is that Illinois has the best model on a state level for immigration reform, especially regarding the LGBT community. That, he added, is vital to vote for pro-immigration reform candidates.

See www.icirr.org for more information.

Ugandan president signs anti-gay law

On Feb. 24, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signed into law a bill that criminalizes homosexuality, CNN reported.

Last month, Museveni said he wouldn't sign the bill, describing gay people as "sick" individuals who needed help, not imprisonment. Then he changed his mind this month and said he'd sign it because scientists had determined that there's no gene for homosexuality and that it's merely abnormal behavior. He then said he would seek advice from U.S. scientists before he made any decision.

Although same-sex acts are illegal in Uganda, the measure toughens penalties for certain acts, adding the possibility of life imprisonment.

LGBT-rights groups immediately condemned Museveni's action. "This law is so vague that it is could even lead to prison time for health workers who provide care to someone thought to be gay," said Thomas Ndayiragije, senior program officer in the IGLHRC (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) Africa Program, in a statement. "Ordinary Ugandans who believe in equality, humanity, and rights, could end up in jail."

In a separate press release, American Jewish World Service President Ruth Messinger said, "By signing this draconian bill into law, President Museveni has demonstrated his disregard for the fundamental human rights of Ugandan citizens and has sanctioned hate and discrimination toward LGBT Ugandans."

Gay-rights activist won't be returned to Uganda

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Dr. Paul Nsubuga Semugoma, a Ugandan physician and gay-rights activist living in South Africa, will not be deported back to Uganda.

Semugoma was released in the late afternoon of Feb. 20, according to a Facebook posting by Coalition of African Lesbians, an activist group arguing for his release.

"Paul is finally free and united with [his partner] Brian. Let justice prevail!" said the posting.

Semugoma, who has lived in South Africa for about three years, was detained by authorities after traveling to Zimbabwe and faced with the probability of return to Uganda. There he would have been subject to that country's strict anti-gay laws, which

are likely to worsen since President Yoweri Museveni plans on signing legislation tightening restrictions even further.

Semugoma was a vocal critic of Uganda's treatment of its gay citizens. After his release, he will be issued a work permit and will be able to apply for political asylum in South Africa, according to the CAL posting.

City Press, a Johannesburg newspaper, reported Feb. 19 that six activist groups had taken up Semugoma's cause.

Marcus Low of the Treatment Action Campaign told City Press that Semugoma "would definitely be in danger if he returned to Uganda now because of the current climate and because he is openly gay and openly critical of the homophobic law."

U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., also showed support for Semugoma on Feb. 19. "No one should be persecuted because of their work to improve the lives of others. Deporting Dr. Semugoma would make the South African government an accomplice to Uganda's unjust persecution," said a spokesperson for Kirk.

U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., said Feb. 20, "I have grave concerns for the civil rights and safety of anyone forced to live under the archaic, anti-LGBT laws pervasive in Uganda, Nigeria and other countries pursuing similar agendas around the world. The criminalization of citizens based on sexual orientation is completely unacceptable, and the United States has a moral responsibility to stand up against this type of reprehensible oppression."

Russia enacts adoption ban

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has signed a decree banning foreign same-sex couples—as well as single people from countries where same-sex marriages are legal—from adopting Russian children, according to CNN.com.

Although there was no official ban until now, foreigners' attempts to adopt Russian children before the decree generally would be unsuccessful if a prospective adoptive parent was thought to be gay, international adoption agencies based in Russia have said. The move comes about a year after Russian lawmakers passed a bill banning adoptions to the United States.

"The passage and implementation of these draconian laws are putting LGBT Russians and their allies in the cross-hairs of a caustic political climate," said Ty Cobb, director of HRC's Global Engagement Program, in a statement.

Loyola bans same-sex wedding ceremonies in new policy

BY DERRICK CLIFTON

Loyola University Chicago changed its guidelines for wedding ceremonies on campus, adopting an official policy ahead of Illinois' equal-marriage law on June 1. The new policy, enacted last December, only allows Catholic weddings in the university's Madonna della Strada Chapel. All other civil or religious weddings, including same-sex unions, are banned from campus facilities.

The decision also comes after a Loyola student launched a Change.org petition last September, urging university administrators to al-

Before Loyola enacted its official policy last December, the university's standard practice welcomed ceremonies "legally recognized" in Illinois. But despite legal recognition of same-sex civil unions in Illinois, those ceremonies were still forbidden at Loyola venues.

Irvine said the distinction never made sense to her.

"I think they were struggling for a way to justify excluding same-sex couples from having their ceremonies on campus. And that was the best they could come up with," she said. "The discriminatory decision they made wasn't a policy at that point, it was just something they were choosing to do as an institution."

University officials have not made a formal announcement about the new policy, but they share it on a case-by-case basis, according to a Loyola spokeswoman.

"It's the congruency with our Jesuit and Catholic tradition that caused us to implement this official policy as a result of the forthcoming Religious Freedom and Marriage

Fairness Act," said Maeve Kiley, Loyola's director of communication. "Our policy reflects our desire to reserve and use our facilities and campuses for rituals and ceremonies that are congruent with our obligations and values as a Jesuit, Catholic institution. That is why we are limiting weddings to Catholic ceremonies in our Catholic chapel."

Loyola's religious affiliation and mission affords the university exemptions granted under the equal-marriage law, which states that religious organizations are not required to provide their facilities for wedding ceremonies and receptions. The law also protects religious organizations from legal penalties for refusing to solemnize a marriage or rent religious facilities for receptions, should the type of ceremony contradict religious beliefs. Loyola still

allows members of the public, including same-sex couples, to rent their venues for wedding receptions and other events.

However, the law's definition of "religious facilities" states that educational facilities are not exempt. With Loyola's standing as both a religious organization and an educational institution, there could be room for interpretation based on how the law is worded. But the wedding and reception venues offered by the university aren't necessarily used for educational purposes.

Kiley said that no current wedding ceremony reservations will be impacted by the new policy. On average, 20 ceremonies were hosted each year at university facilities other than the Madonna della Strada Chapel. Members of the public, including same-sex couples, can still

rent Loyola venues for wedding receptions.

As for Irvine's wedding, she and her fiancée already made other plans for their June ceremony and reception. After Loyola rejected their request, the couple chose Firehouse Chicago at 1545 W. Rosemont Ave.

Irvine said she's disheartened that Loyola officials didn't extend the previous guideline to allow same-sex marriages, which will be legally recognized come June.

"[Loyola] claims to be a progressive institution having a commitment to social justice and I expected that they'd have no problem with it," Irvine said, adding that she feels community members were ready for a shift. "It's just disappointing that they had a good opportunity to show leadership and I honestly feel they failed the LGBT community."



Christine Irvine.
Photo by Derrick Clifton

low same-sex ceremonies on campus. Christine Irvine, a Loyola junior studying visual communication, started the petition after officials denied her request to use university facilities for her upcoming wedding. Irvine said there were no problems until officials learned she would marry a woman. To date, the petition has more than 2,900 signatures.

In her first interview about Loyola's new policy, Irvine told Windy City Times that the decision doesn't seem bad to anyone who may not know how it came about. She believes the university made the decision to specifically forbid same-sex ceremonies on campus.

"It's really disheartening," Irvine said. "It's a sign of the non-acceptance and non-tolerance of the LGBT students on campus ... a sign of disrespect of our love compared to our peers."

James West Clinic looks to break 'crisis care' cycle

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Congressman Mike Quigley was among those joining officials from Heartland Alliance and Haymarket Center Feb. 19 to dedicate a new health-care clinic on the West Side that is mainly dedicated to serving homeless individuals.

The James West Clinic, 22 N. Sangamon Ave., is a joint effort between Heartland Health Outreach and Haymarket Center that offers primary care, and many other medical services, for underserved populations. The clinic officially opened in December.

Dr. Dan Lustig, clinical vice-president of Haymarket Center, said that about 80 percent of his organization's clients have a chronic medical condition. Haymarket sees about 20,000 clients a year and has concentrated largely on substance use and mental health disorders. The new clinic allows many of those clients to have a new "medical home" for their comprehensive health services.

"This is a huge opportunity for the state," Lustig said. "It's something very unique for a population that tends to be ignored."

The facility will also offer services that can assist clients in finding other necessities such as stable housing.

"Once someone can get on Medicaid, their health can improve," said Dr. Stephanie Luther, chief medical officer of the clinic. "Once they get housing, it can be turned around. I've had to start weaning one of my

patients off diabetes medication, after they were placed in housing."

Luther said that there were some initial hurdles for the program during the Affordable Care Act's sign-up period, and when new policies kicked in.

"These are folks who have gone without insurance for decades," she said. "The [Affordable Care Act] launch was not a smooth transition, and then add in these folks who have had very hard lives, who have to jump through many hoops."

But Dr. Karen Batia, executive director of Heartland Health Outreach, said she was confident most of the problems will be solved. She estimated that the facility cost about \$500,000 to start, and predicted that expanded Medicaid funds from the ACA will bring in significant new revenue streams.

"We can easily see about 40-50 people a day," added Luther. "We hope we can break the cycle of 'crisis care.'"

Quigley said that the Clinic was exemplified what is possible when a government decides it cares about more than national defense or reducing services.

"We can do better than that," Quigley said. "This is a compassionate country that cares about each other. But unfortunately you don't see it. There's campaigns going on now, and you don't see people saying today what LBJ said 50 years ago about the war on poverty."

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From left: Lorenzo Thione, Joel Bosch, Waverly Deutsch and Vivienne Ming. Photo by Tracy Baim

Organization for LGBT entrepreneurs hosts initial Chicago event

BY TRACY BAIM

StartOut, a 5-year-old nationwide non-profit organization for LGBT entrepreneurs, hosted its first party in Chicago Feb. 20 at the downtown headquarters of Groupon. More than 100 people networked and heard a wide-ranging discussion from a panel of four professionals.

Chris Sinton, chair of StartOut's board, was in town for the event and the group's annual meeting. He explained that they are looking to network entrepreneurs for professional support, but also as a way to give back to the community. They are looking at ways to create social activism within the LGBT entrepreneurial community.

Panelists included one of StartOut's founders, Lorenzo Thione, who lives in New York. He has founded several companies and is also producing a Broadway play. One of his companies is Artify It, a disruptive venture capital-funded startup "allowing affordable, unlimited access

to a catalog of original, curated contemporary art that each subscriber can check out, keep, and swap out at any time."

The moderator for the panel was Chicagoan Waverly Deutsch, clinical professor of entrepreneurship at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. She teaches a course on entrepreneurial execution and was awarded the 2004 USASBE Innovative Teaching Pedagogy for the YourCo simulation game, "which allows students to develop and run a mock business through all phases of operation."

California-based Vivienne Ming, chief scientist at Gild and co-founder and CEO of Socos, spoke about the discrimination she faced after coming out as transgender in the workplace. She took that negative and turned it into a positive by starting her own companies. Ming, named one of 10 Women to Watch in Tech in 2013 by Inc. Magazine, is a theoretical neuroscientist, technologist and entrepreneur.

Ming intrigued the crowd by wearing a

Google Glass device during the discussion. She has developed a "predictive model of diabetes to better manage blood glucose levels" for the Glass, in part because she has a child with diabetes, so the device keeps her alerted to his glucose levels. She sits on the board of Our Family Coalition supporting LGBT families and speaks on issues of LGBT inclusion and gender in technology.

The final panelist was a relative newcomer to Chicago, Joel Bosch, COO of eCD Market and an investor in Vino Volo. Bosch joined eCD Market to lead its product development, operations, and customer service. He has a lengthy career in the banking and consulting industries, and he also is working on a new company that helps generate revenues for non-profits. He sits on the board of Test Positive Aware Network in Chicago.

StartOut's website says it was created "with a view towards promoting equality and combating discrimination in the business world through economic empowerment. StartOut will help end discrimination against LGBT persons in the business community by helping foster a new generation of business founders and CEOs, and thereby breaking through the barriers that currently inhibit the corporate success of many in America's LGBT community. By helping create the next generation of LGBT entrepreneurs we empower a new community of leaders in the business world who will in turn have both

the economic resources and the personal access to support and strengthen the entire LGBT community."

For information on StartOut, which will have more Chicago events soon, see <http://startout.org>.

More photos from the event are online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

PASSAGES

Stephen R. Kiosk

Former Maryland resident Stephen R. Kiosk (Ksioszk) passed away recently at the age of 51, according to The Chicago Tribune.

Kiosk was the loving brother of: John (Lorna) Ksioszk, Christine Marrufo, Arlene Santiago and twin Michael (Mary) Ksioszk; cherished uncle of many, including Sarah, Samuel, Nicholas; great-uncle of Lydia; and loving friend and partner of Peter Lane.

Memorial Mass is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Saturday March 1, at St. Peter Church, 557 Lake St., Antioch, Ill. Interment will be private. Arrangements by Strang Funeral Home of Antioch; 847-395-4000 or www.strangfh.com.

'Death of the American Trial' to mark Darrow's death March 13

On the 76th anniversary of famed attorney Clarence Darrow's death, this year's annual Darrow commemoration on Thursday, March 13, looks at the "The Death of the American Trial" with professor Robert P. Burns, author of a 2009 book by the same title.

A special unique aspect of this year's event will be several dozen Darrow-related items from the collection of the late actor Leslie Nielsen, courtesy of his widow, Barbaree Earl. Nielsen was a fan but also played the attorney in theatrical productions.

The program starts at 10 a.m. just east of the Clarence Darrow Bridge in Jackson Park (the bridge is under construction) for the traditional wreath-tossing and brief speeches to commemorate Darrow; the symposium begins at 10:45 a.m. in the Museum of Science and Industry's The Columbian Room. Beverages and rolls will be served.

Darrow, who died March 13, 1938, is remembered for his crusading role as "attorney for the damned" in such controversial cases as the Scopes Monkey Trial, the Leopold and Loeb murder case, and the pardoning of the Haymarket anarchists.

See www.DarrowBridge.org.

HBHC seeks applicants for advisory board

Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) is seeking new applicants for its Community Advisory Board (CAB), an organization that provides feedback on HBHC's community health programs.

The board will meet once a month, and CAB will have between seven and 15 members.

In order to be eligible, CAB applicants must have received services from HBHC within the last two years. HBHC has also outlined the membership requirements for potential CAB members, which include:

- Attend at least 9 of the 12 CAB meetings each year
- Read information sent to the CAB to prepare for meetings
- Provide thoughtful feedback at meetings
- Promote HBHC in the community
- Make suggestions about what you think the community needs
- Participate in CAB photo on HBHC website, annual report and other materials

To apply, visit howardbrown.org/application and download the application form. The form can be submitted in person at any HBHC location, or emailed to Andie Baker at CAB@howardbrown.org.

Applications are due by March 9; final decisions will be made by March 24.

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The happy couples ...

A special photo album of just some of the same-sex couples who showed up at the Cook County clerk's office on the first day that Cook County issued same-sex marriage licenses. All photos by Hal Baim except where otherwise indicated.



Above, left to right: Laurie Meli and Marissa, 8.5 years together, from Champaign Feb. 21, the first day licenses were issued after a court order in Cook County. Theresa and Mercedes Santos-Volpe, married that day with their children present (Jadon and Ava, plus a baby not pictured). Photo by Tracy Baim. Mike Kierpiec and Donn Mielke, 34 years. Photos by Hal Baim unless noted.



Sean Donovan and Alfonzo Diaz, 9 years. Jarvine Colbert and Kush Kwesi, 8 years. Photo by Dr. Lou Bohr. Tim Frye and Rich Pfeiffer, 43 years. Photo by Tracy Baim. Adriana Collazo and Elizabeth Wieland, 6 years. Mary Cameni and Sue Sporer, 29 years. Miguel Angel Garcia Quirarte and Roger Houts, 1.5 years.



Mona Noriega and Evette Cardona, 19 years. Tammy and Joanne Kucinskas, 17 years. Jeff Woods and Tom Wray. David Orr with Carolyn and Sara Kujawa, and their son, Ronan. Photo by Matt Simonette. Laura Noah and Sharmili Majmudar got a waiver to have their ceremony the same day as licenses were issued. With officiant Jeff Ginsburg. Photo courtesy Majmudar



Nat and Cynthia Shannon-Hutchison. Ryan Copi and Steven Kriz. Rebecca West and Jessica Robinson, 6 years. Chloe Koren and Jenna Whitehouse. Emily Rutledge and Lynn Black, 22 years.

TO SEE VIDEOS INTERVIEWS WITH SOME OF THE COUPLES: [YouTube /user/WindyCityTimes](https://www.youtube.com/user/WindyCityTimes)



The staff of Orr's office celebrate after a very busy day.



Ginger Francis, Emily Burns, Clerk David Orr, Jennifer Fortner with Melissa Herrick, Paul Domrowski with Joe Serrio (back), all three couples had just received licenses.

MARRIAGES from cover

Some couples drove from the far suburbs of Chicago—north, west and south—and one couple, Laura Meli and Marissa Meli, drove all the way from Champaign, where they are in law school. They have been together more than eight years, and Laura’s mom was with them to get their license.

Another couple to be married that afternoon was Theresa and Mercedes Santos-Volpe, who were plaintiffs in lawsuits that ultimately led to the Feb. 21 ruling.

“These two have been suing me for years,” joked Orr, whose office has not defended itself against suits filed on behalf of same-sex couples wishing to marry.

Judge James Snyder issued an order that allowed Theresa and Mercedes to be married immediately, without the requisite 24-hour waiting period. Orr performed the ceremony as the press watched.

“When we met one another, we didn’t have the words for it, but we knew we wanted to be married,” said Theresa. “When you meet somebody and you know they’re truly your soulmate, you think, ‘That’s the person I want to spend the rest of my life with.’”

Christopher Clark of Lambda Legal said Theresa and Mercedes helped “set us on the path of marriage equality.”

Chicagoans Jeff Woods and Tom Wray came in after work after hearing the news. They’d had a civil-union ceremony last year during IML (International Mr. Leather).

“In some ways, it’s just a formality—but it’s a formality we welcome,” Woods said.

By late afternoon, county clerk officials were reminding couples in civil unions that if they chose to marry before June 1, they would not be able to have their marriage licenses date backdated to the day of their civil union.

“We’ve got so many anniversaries, it didn’t matter to us,” Woods said. “There’s no legal reason for us to need it backdated.”

The ruling was issued by Judge Sharon Coleman, who previously ruled that couples wherein partners were facing terminal illness could marry prior to the originally planned June start date.

Camilla Taylor of Lambda Legal, one of the lawyers who argued the case, said, “Now, there will be no more delays. The court has decided on the side of equality and liberty.”

Ed Yohnka of ACLU Illinois, added, “We’re thrilled the judge has recognized the harm that was done by this delay. It’s going to be a happy day, and a happy week ahead.”

Both Taylor and Yohnka said they were hopeful the ruling would be applied in other counties as well.

Orr also said he hoped the other 101 county clerks would also honor this ruling, whether run by Democrats or Republicans.

“If were a lawyer advising other county clerks, I would tell them that this delay is inappropriate,” Taylor said.

“We’ve had a federal judge rule that the ban is unconstitutional,” added Yohnka.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel released a statement Feb. 21 praising the ruling.

“Today a federal judge affirmed that love does not discriminate and that all gays and lesbians in Cook County should have the right to marry,” Emanuel said. “Chicago welcomes all couples to get married here to celebrate their love and to have the bonds of their family acknowledged under law. I look forward to the day where every American enjoys the same freedom to marry, and when our country can provide equal rights to every man or woman—gay or straight.”

Gov. Pat Quinn also stated on Feb. 21, “Many couples in Illinois have waited long enough for marriage equality, and today’s ruling means thousands of Illinois couples no longer have to wait. Our law is a victory for equal rights in America, and shows that citizens and lawmakers can come together on issues of fairness and human rights.”

Information about obtaining a marriage license can be found at cookcountyclerk.com.

—Also contributing: Tracy Baim



Scenes from a wedding

After obtaining their marriage license (above), couple Joe Serio (left) and Paul Dombrowski were wed the following day, Feb. 22, in a ceremony performed by Rev. Laura McLeod. Above photo by Hal Baim; ceremony photos by Tracy Katz Muhl and Roger Anderson.



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Get Covered Illinois works on ACA health-care sign-ups

GetCoveredIllinois.gov—the official online marketplace where Illinois residents, families and small business owners can get connected to health coverage options—reached 1 million unique visitors by mid-February, according to press releases.

“The steadily building traffic we are seeing on GetCoveredIllinois.gov shows that people in Illinois are taking action to get covered, and we are building momentum into the home-stretch,” Jennifer Koehler, executive director for Get Covered Illinois said. “One million people have visited the site to get information about the affordable health coverage options that are available to people across Illinois.”

Since the website launched on Oct. 1, 2013, more than 439,000 visitors have used the screening tool on the site that directs visitors to either Healthcare.gov or ABE (Abe.Illinois.gov)—the State of Illinois’ online application system where consumers can apply directly for Medicaid, nutrition and income assistance.

The Spanish-language version of the site, which launched Oct. 22, 2013, has received more than 19,000 visits and has had nearly 5,000 visitors participate in the screening tool.

As of Jan. 31, 88,602 Illinois residents have selected a private health insurance plan through the federal website. In addition, more than 168,000 Illinois residents have enrolled in Medicaid under the ACA, bringing the total that have gained access to health coverage in the state to more than 256,000.

Digital promotions, including search advertising and social media, are a key component of Get Covered Illinois’ marketing campaign. Since December, Get Covered Illinois’ Facebook followers have tripled to more than 5,000. Recently, Get Covered Illinois announced a partnership with Onion Labs, the creative services division of The Onion. The partnership calls for The Onion to run ads on its website targeted to young adults between the ages of 21 and 34.

As the March 31 enrollment deadline approaches, Get Covered Illinois is ramping up enrollment efforts to engage the uninsured across the state through a mix of traditional and non-traditional sources. Over the next six weeks, Get Covered Illinois will be reaching out to residents of all ages across the state through digital, radio and TV advertisements, and promotions both online and at in-person events. Uninsured residents must enroll in a health insurance policy by March 15 to be covered on April 1.

Get Covered Illinois is urging health-care consumers to take advantage of the assistance that is being offered via the web, over the phone and in person through hundreds of community partners across the state:

—Visit its website at GetCoveredIllinois.gov (which includes a Spanish-language version);

—Call the Get Covered Illinois Help Desk at 866-311-1119. Operators are available each day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.;

—Meet in person with a specially trained “Navigator” who can help you understand your options and help you even enroll at one of the hundreds of partner sites across the state. There are more than 1,500 Navigators throughout the state that can be located by visiting the website and entering your zip code or through the Help Desk.

Get Covered Illinois also launched #GCISuccess, a series of testimonial videos designed to make “health coverage personal.” The video series features the stories of real Illinois residents who have enrolled for health coverage with the help of Get Covered Illinois, and the stories of certified navigators across Illinois. Featured in the #GCISuccess series is the enrollment story of Carlos Gaytan, chef and owner of the Michelin star-rated Chicago restaurant, Mexique, and fourth runner up in the latest season of ‘Top Chef,’ Bravo’s Emmy award-winning reality cooking competition show.

Get Covered Illinois has also partnered with CVS/pharmacy’s Project Health program to provide education and enrollment information about health coverage.

Interested persons can follow Get Covered Illinois on Facebook: [facebook.com/coveredillinois](https://www.facebook.com/coveredillinois) and Twitter: @CoveredIllinois (#GetCoveredIllinois).



Police investigate fight at Lakeview restaurant

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago Police Department is investigating an altercation that took place the early morning of Feb. 15 in the 3300 block of North Halsted Street.

Jeremiah Thomas, 33, of Chicago, was taken to Thorek Memorial Hospital with a small laceration to the head after the incident, which occurred at Nookies Tree Restaurant, 3334 N. Halsted St., at about 3:50 a.m. According to police, Thomas was hit with a condiment bottle. He said he also had a broken lip and a black eye.

Thomas was at the restaurant with friends after having been out on Halsted Street that night, and got into an argument with three patrons at another table. Thomas, who had been drinking, said he remembers little of the actual altercation. After the fight, the assailants quickly fled from the restaurant to their car, witnesses told police.

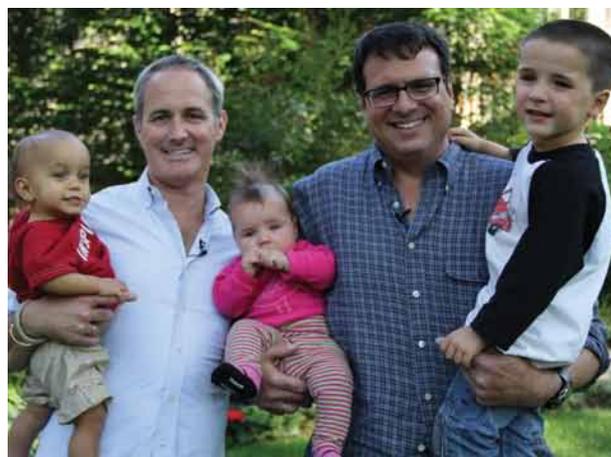
Peller is interim CEO of AFC

In the wake of David Munar stepping down as CEO of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Vice President of Policy John Peller will serve as AFC’s interim president/CEO as the board conducts a national search for a permanent leader.

Munar joined the AFC staff in 1991. During his AFC career, he served as policy director, vice president for policy and communication, senior vice president and, most recently, as president/CEO. He will lead Howard Brown Health Center this spring.

Peller joined AFC in 2005 as government relations director. Following a six-year tenure advancing AIDS-related policy in Springfield, he became AFC’s vice president of policy.

NEXT WEEK: WCT’s PRIMARY ELECTION GUIDE



Lambda Legal

making the case for equality

lambdalegal.org/ilmarriagefaq

GAY *in the* **LIFE**
Jose Luis Trinidad-Alcaraz
 TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN



Jose Luis Trinidad-Alcaraz has worked at Van Buren Gentlemen's Salon since its opening on Dec. 1, 2011, and said he's "lucky" to be part of the team at such a classy men's salon.

"I'm very proud of the excellent reviews that my clients have given me," he said.

In 2005, Trinidad-Alcaraz opened his own barber shop in Los Angeles.

He was hired at Van Buren Gentleman's Salon on the spot after a phone interview.

Trinidad-Alcaraz works six days a week—12-7 p.m., during the week, and then five hours on Saturdays.

"Each day at work for me is exciting and there are several best parts of my job," he said. "One is getting to know my clients and forming a very special bond with them. Another is completely transforming the look of a client, receiving their complete trust and seeing the smile on their face when I finish my job. I also love interacting with my co-workers."

Trinidad-Alcaraz said it was very difficult to leave Mexico for the United States. "To arrive in a new country where I did not know anybody except my father and a couple of my brothers, and to have to learn a new language, [that] was very difficult."

He was instantly hooked on Chicago.

"Nothing can beat summertime here when the whole city comes alive in such an amazing way. The city fits me and I fit the city," Trinidad-Alcaraz said.



Age 55	Green thumb "I love gardening—it's a lot of fun to grow vegetables, herbs, and all sorts of plants and flowers. Gardening can be kind of therapeutic because it helps me to relieve stress."
Neighborhood Pilsen	Favorite TV shows Shark Tank, Modern Family, Trophy Wife and Super Fun Night
Relationship status "My spouse, Christopher, and I have a civil-union certificate [and] are anxious to convert it to a marriage license." They met in 1988.	Little-known fact "I love to see the reaction of some of my clients when we are having a conversation while I cut and style their hair. I tell them that, besides being a licensed barber in Illinois and California, I have a degree in ornamental horticulture."
Job title Barber at Van Buren Gentlemen's Salon, 235 W. Van Buren St.	
Background Born in Mexico, lived in Los Angeles for 35 years, and has called Chicago home since the summer of 2011.	
Favorite movie The Color Purple	



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SAT., MAR. 1, 2014, 11AM-1PM
LOURDES TORRES
Making Familia from Scratch: Towards a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago

Lourdes Torres is Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at DePaul University. Since the scholarship that exists on lesbian organizing in the Midwest neglects to engage with the history of Latina lesbian organizing, this project constitutes an effort to name Latina lesbians as agents of change and active subjects of a multiracial history of grassroots organizing. Torres writes: "I explore the history of two organizations in Chicago—Amigas Latinas and LLENA. I discuss the efforts of the organizations to create Latina lesbian visibility in both the 'Latino' and 'lesbian' social and political cultures of Chicago, and their successful and unsuccessful efforts to negotiate divergent national and ethnic histories, class and linguistic differences, and the diverse political stances of their membership."

Lavender University is a 9-month lecture series featuring top academic and activist LGBTQs working on a wide range of research and interests. It is sponsored by Windy City Times and Center on Halsted.

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Anne Balay
Steel Closets: Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Steelworkers

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VIEWPOINT

WINDY CITY
TIMES

VOL. 29, No. 22, Feb. 26, 2014

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Community Marketing, Inc.

KEVIN
BOYER

Marriage equality: Protecting our friends

On Nov. 5, 2013, the Illinois House voted, by a narrow margin, to create marriage equality in our state. The vote came after months of lobbying by tens of thousands of our supporters, a huge ad campaign, and the largest LGBT-rights event in Springfield, Ill., ever: the March on Springfield for Marriage Equality. Last week, Lambda Legal and the ACLU of Illinois added a court victory to our legislative win, and marriage equality is now reality in Cook County—three and a half months early.

The Nov. 5 vote was tough for some legislators. For some, their vote ran contrary to their religious upbringing. In other districts, loud and vocal opposition came from a minority of constituents. In others, wealthy constituents threatened to finance more extreme candidates. In the end, 61 representatives—58 Democrats and three Republicans—voted in favor of equality, one more than we needed.

Last year, we told our friends that if they

voted for equality, we would have their backs.

Next month, some of our supporters face tough primary campaigns. Illinois primary elections have historically low turnout—in 2010 just 23 percent of the Illinois registered voters cast a primary ballot. Low voter turnout puts candidates at risk and a few of our supporters are in danger, some because of their vote for equality.

We owe it to them—and to millions of LGBT people across the USA who will count on confident "yes" votes by our allies for years to come—to make sure that nobody in Illinois loses his or her seat because they voted in favor of marriage equality.

Volunteers from the Human Rights Campaign, Illinois Unites for Marriage, the March on Springfield for Marriage Equality and other coalition groups created the Protect Our Friends Project. In the spirit of the grassroots work that won us marriage equality, our campaign has a simple objective: calling constituents in select districts to identify supporters for Get Out The Vote campaigns.

This work is simple, effective, and—surprisingly—not often financially or logistically possible during primaries for in-state Assembly offices. We will work on several candidates at once, have a direct impact on candidate success, and send a very clear message: We Have Your Back.

The Protect Our Friends Project is already underway. Partial funding has already been raised and volunteers are already beginning to staff the phone banks. Equality Illinois has agreed to host the project in their downtown Chicago

offices and the Equality Illinois PAC is the fiscal agent. Candidates will be EI-endorsed, are Democrats and Republicans, male and female, include African-American and Latino supporters, and all voted "yes" on SB10.

To stabilize the marriage equality victory in Illinois, and send a clear message to the rest of the country watching us, we need your help:

Donate ... today.

We have a short window—just two weeks—to raise the rest of the Project's money. EI established a dedicated PayPal link to let us segregate Project funds. Donations of \$100, \$250, \$500 or more are needed right away (campaign contributions are not tax deductible). The link is www.EqIPAC.org/protectourfriends.html.

Volunteer

We need phone bank volunteers. Go to EqualityIllinois.org, click "Volunteer" and select phone banking. Put "Protect Our Friends Project" in one of the fields.

The fight for marriage equality didn't end with the vote Nov. 5. Let's show our friends that we appreciate their vote, and let the rest of the country know that in Illinois we Protect Our Friends.

Kevin Boyer is the co-chair of the March on Springfield for Marriage Equality.

DANA
RUDOLPH

MOMBIAN

'Jacob's New Dress' adds to growing genre

A new picture book by Sarah and Ian Hoffman, *Jacob's New Dress* (Albert Whitman, 2014), is a welcome addition to the small but growing number of books for and about young gender nonconforming and transgender children.

The authors, a wife and husband who have a gender nonconforming child themselves, tell the story of a young boy who first wants to wear a dress and be a princess during dress-up time in school. He later wants to wear a dress to school as his regular outfit. Despite the teasing of one classmate, he finds support in his parents, teacher, and a friend. Energetic illustrations by Chris Case enliven the warmly told tale.

The book invites comparisons to Marcus Ewert's *10,000 Dresses* (2009) and Cheryl Kilodavis' *My Princess Boy* (2010), which also show children who are viewed as boys but want to wear dresses. Each book takes a somewhat different approach, however.

In *10,000 Dresses*, a child named Bailey dreams of having beautiful, magical dresses. "Boys don't wear dresses," Bailey's mother, father, and brother respond. Ultimately, Bailey finds comfort in a new friend who shares the same fashion love. Despite the happy outcome, the negativity of the family bothers me, even if it unfortunately reflects some real families. Parents reading the book with their children should be prepared to discuss why Bailey's family might have responded as they did. (Ewert told me in an interview in 2009 that he

envisioned Bailey's parents eventually coming around—so that's one angle for conversation.)

In *Jacob's New Dress*, however, Jacob's parents (and teacher) are much more supportive of his desire to wear dresses, perhaps reflecting a growing awareness and acceptance of gender nonconforming children even in the few short years since *10,000 Dresses*. The one classmate who teases Jacob seems realistic, alas—but so do the many more who support him.

Another difference between the books is that Bailey is clearly transgender, stating, "I don't feel like a boy." Jacob expresses no such sentiment. Jacob's mom even tells him, "There are all sorts of ways to be a boy"—a reassuring statement if he indeed identifies as one, but leaving no space for the possibility that he doesn't. That's less a criticism than a heads-up so that families can seek out either or both books as feels right for them.

My *Princess Boy* is more similar to *Jacob's New Dress* in that the child in question is a gender nonconforming boy, not a transgender girl. My *Princess Boy*, however, is more of an extended poem by a parent about her/his child, a series of scenes from the child's life with little plot (and oddly faceless drawings). *Jacob's New Dress* and *10,000 Dresses*, in contrast, are told from the child's perspective and have a more traditional story arc, with suspense building over whether Jacob and Bailey will indeed find ways to dress as they wish. As a gentle poem of love about a gender nonconforming child, *My Princess Boy* has merit, but may not engage children in the way the other books do.

Two other related recent picture books are the colorful, fantastical tales by S. Bear Bergman. *Backwards Day* (2012) tells of the planet Tenalp, where a child named Andrea waits eagerly every year for the day when girls turn into boys and vice versa. One year, however, Andrea doesn't change—until the next day, when she, now he, doesn't change back. His parents take him to consult with the Backwardologists, who help the family understand what's happening.

The *Adventures of Tulip*, *Birthday Wish Fairy* (2012) follows the eponymous character who

grants wishes to all the nine-year-olds in North America. When Tulip encounters a child named David who wishes to live as Daniela, a request he's never had before, he asks the Wish Fairy Captain for advice.

Both stories are told with humor and whimsy as well as understanding and compassion. Tulip seems to me a little wordy for the picture-book age range, while at the same time, nine-year-olds are mostly beyond picture books, but that may depend on the particular child reading it.

A simpler and slightly older picture book about gender nonconformity is Andrea U'ren's *Pugdog* (2001), about a dog whose owner thinks he is male—only to find out from the vet that *Pugdog* is biologically female. The owner then tries to "feminize" *Pugdog* with a grooming makeover and ribbons in lieu of a spiked collar—but *Pugdog* reverts to romping and mud-rolling and the owner realizes his mistake. The book is now unfortunately out of print, but available in limited quantity through online booksellers. Some local libraries may also have it.

Even older is Munro Leaf's 1936 classic *The Story of Ferdinand*, which tells of a peace-loving, flower-sniffing bull. The gender message is much more subtle—it is a story about non-violence as much as gender—but it proves that children's books showing gender nonconformity have a longer history than we might think.

We still need more such books, showing gender nonconforming and transgender children across the spectrum as they encounter the challenges and delights of today's world and explore the many ways of expressing gender that go beyond just wearing a dress (or not). Even cisgender kids who mostly conform to one gender will likely benefit from knowing that the bounds of gender are not as restrictive as might appear. *Jacob's New Dress* seems the most positive, engaging, and straightforward of the recent lot—but each book, like each child, adds its own perspective to the whole.

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

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Michael Brosilow

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

A man tells his male partner he's fallen in love with a woman in the theatrical production *Cock*. See page 14.

THEATER

From 'Russia' with love.

Page 14

Photo from *Russian Transport*
by Michael Brosilow

DISH

King of the grill.

Page 18

Photo of roasted duck flatbread
at Devon Seafood Grill
by Andrew Davis

SPORTS

Nets gain.

Page 17

Photo of Jason Collins
by Ross Forman

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Sondheim times two

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Out director Gary Griffin finds it a bit odd when people ask if he's feeling overwhelmed at directing two works co-created by out composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim back-to-back for Chicago Shakespeare Theater.

"To me, it feels very great because I'm still home at my home theater," said Griffin, who is Chicago Shakespeare Theater's associate artistic director and happy to have an extended work stay in his hometown concentrating on the 1959 Broadway musical *Gypsy* and the 2008 off-Broadway musical *Road Show*. Being in one spot, rather than immediately jetting off to other theaters for his next project, has meant that Griffin has had the luxury of more time for both shows in rehearsals and some interesting context overlaps.

"One thing I realized when I looked at both pieces is how much they have in common. These shows are about the American character, about very colorful show business-type worlds and how people hear notions of the American dream and how they pursue those," said Griffin, adding that both shows also feature mothers who shower their love and attention on one of their kids while neglecting the other. "These shows are very much about families, so it's a fascinating thing to put them together to see how they speak to each other."

When *Windy City Times* spoke with Griffin, *Gypsy* had recently opened to rave reviews, particularly for its Canadian star Louise Pitre (*Mamma Mia!*) as the indomitable stage mother Madame Rose. Griffin had already shifted focus from Sondheim's earlier work co-created with playwright Arthur Laurents and composer Jule Styne to *Road Show*, Sondheim's most recent (and the one with perhaps the lengthiest and most troubled gestation) with playwright John

Weidman based upon the real-life ambitious and scheming brothers Addison and Wilson Mizner, whose fame and notoriety were at their height in the early 20th century.

Now if *Road Show* sounds slightly familiar to long-time Chicago theatergoers, it's because it is the final version of Sondheim and Weidman's earlier show, *Bounce*, which opened at the Goodman Theatre in 2003 before journeying to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Despite having Harold Prince—Sondheim's most significant directorial collaborator from the 1970s on shows like *Sweeney Todd*, *Company*, *Follies* and *A Little Night Music*—aboard, *Bounce* never made it to Broadway.

Sondheim and Weidman went back to work on the piece, eventually finalizing *Bounce* as *Road Show*, which played off-Broadway at New York's Public Theater in a production by director John Doyle that also journeyed to London's Menier Chocolate Factory. Though *Road Show* hasn't found rapturous acclaim and massive success thus far, Griffin feels that audiences and critics just need time to catch up to the piece.

"We don't see the problem. This all seems to work very well," Griffin said, commenting on some of the responses from his actors in the *Road Show* rehearsal room. "I think that's a reflection of where the piece is now. If you look at a lot of Sondheim shows, it has taken time for them to be embraced more fully. Take five years after [Sondheim and George Furth's] *Merrily We Roll Along* came out, people were still calling it this massive failure. Well over time, what is moving and exciting about that show has evolved."

Notably for LGBT audiences, *Road Show* features the first Sondheim love duet between two men. The song "The Best Thing That Ever Has Happened" sung in *Bounce* for Wilson Mizner and his wife has been shifted to Addison



From left: Gary Griffin, Stephen Sondheim and Barbara Gaines. Photo by Michael Litchfield

Mizner and his younger lover, Hollis Bessemer, in *Road Show*.

For Griffin, staging *Road Show* and *Gypsy* so close together in two contrasting-sized theater has been a joy. He's enjoyed the blend of intimacy and grandeur of exploring *Gypsy* in Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard Theatre, and now the immediacy of *Road Show* in the building's Upstairs Theater studio space (where Griffin has previously staged award-winning production of Sondheim musicals like *Pacific Overtures* and *Sunday in the Park with George*).

And musical-theater fanatics should be on the lookout, since Griffin said that Sondheim and Weidman are slated to come and see both shows at Chicago Shakespeare Theater at some point during their overlapping runs.

"We're planning their arrival early in the preview process for *Road Show*, so they can see it and offer feedback and be involved in the process," Griffin said, adding that he isn't too nervous about a Sondheim visit because "he's wonderful and supportive."

Once Griffin finishes up with *Road Show*, one upcoming project is directing Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* for the Stratford Festival in Canada. Also on the horizon is an eagerly

anticipated Broadway production of the Jason Robert Brown musical adaptation of the film *Honeymoon* in Vegas, which received glowing reviews when it played regionally at New Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse last year.

"We'll see what happens in New York," Griffin said about *Honeymoon* in Vegas. "We'll go in when the right theater is ready."

Gypsy continues through Sunday, March 23, in the Courtyard Theater space of Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Performances times are 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, 3 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays (also 6:30 p.m. March 1) with 1 p.m. matinees Wednesdays. Tickets are \$58-\$88. Road Show runs from Thursday, March 13, through Sunday, May 4, in the Upstairs Theater space of Chicago Shakespeare Theater.

Performance times vary, but are largely 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, 3 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays (with extra 6:30 p.m. shows select Sundays with 1 p.m. matinees select Wednesdays). Tickets are \$40-\$68. All performances at Navy Pier, 800 E. Grand Ave. Call 312-595-5600 or visit www.chicagoshakes.com.



From left: Eleni Pappageorge, Christopher Sheard, Jake Szczepaniak and Larry Neumann Jr. in *Cock*. Photo by Michael Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

Cock

Playwright: Michael Bartlett

At: Profiles Theatre at the Main Stage, 4139 N. Broadway

Tickets: 773-549-1815;

www.profiles theatre.org; \$20-\$40

Runs through: April 6

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The moment we see Katie Bell-Springmann's scenic design, with its arena seating, referee's bell and woodchip-coated floor, we guess that the play's title refers to a cockfight. Then, when the first characters to enter are a pair of squabbling gay males who circle each other like wrestlers—or fighting roosters—we detect a pun there, too. Actually, Michael Bartlett's premise, though it adds new dimensions to the phrase "thinking with your dick," is founded on a hypothesis he believes to be so shockingly complex that it must be dressed up in high-concept spectacle.

After seven years together, twentysomething John announces to his corporate-exec lover (whom the playwright only identifies as "M") that he's fallen in love with somebody else, and that the new object of his affections is a woman—specifically, a divorced teacher named "W" whom he befriended en route to their respective jobs, one thing leading to the Other Thing. M responds in typically British fashion by proposing a dinner party at which John will announce which way he intends to swing. Ah, but John can't make up his mind, the sheer finality of a decision only contributing to his ambivalence. M's gruff old F (for father) joining

the fray doesn't help, either.

More than a half-century ago, Kinsey declared sexual orientation to be a continuum, but our society still prefers binary divisions. M's preternaturally accepting dad argues that men who claim to love other men should shun heterosexual attractions and instead embrace their hard-won freedom, to which John protests that the senior citizen's generation of peace and love, more than anyone, should understand that "it's not *what* you sleep with, but *who*!"

This is obviously a topic for lengthier discussion than can be afforded by the 75 minutes of Profiles Theatre's production. Fortunately, Darrell W. Cox has drilled his four actors to olympic-level physical and verbal agility, so that even when the dialogue flies at blizzard density, there's never a misstep or mumble. This is important, since major sex scenes are rendered exclusively in spoken-word discourse, keeping with the absence of realistic props. The cast is uniformly excellent, but look for this to be a breakout play for Jake Szczepaniak, whose M projects a manic excitability bordering on hysteria, his voice shooting up into falsetto range under duress in a manner eliciting our sympathy even as it explains John's fancy straying toward more placid company.

CRITICS' PICKS

Chicago's Golden Soul, Black Ensemble Theater, through March 29. Walter Jackson may have sung "Welcome Home" as a sweetheart song in 1965, but the refrain takes on a whole new meaning in 2014 alongside returning war veterans. MSB

The Playboy of the Western World, Raven Theatre, through April 6. A "playboy" in 1907 was a con artist, not a lothario, but the girls still love a bad boy, especially when played by the charming and athletic Sam Hubbard in this lively production of J.M. Synge's venerable Irish classic. MSB

Rose and the Rime, The House Theatre of Chicago at Chopin Theatre, through March 23. Want the best fairy tales? Go to The House. You won't see the final twist coming in this tale of a town beset by endless winter (not Chicago). The meta-theatrical means charm rather than distract and there's a great witch! JA

Sons of the Prophet, American Theater Company, through March 9. A lot of tragic things happen in Stephen Karam's Pulitzer finalist drama about two gay brothers who lose their father. But thankfully there are also lots of laughs (both awkward and poignant) to make this finely cast sad tale a very enjoyable one, too. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Russian Transport

Playwright: Erika Sheffer

At: Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 1650 N. Halsted St.

Tickets: 312-335-1650;

www.steppenwolf.org; \$20-\$78

Runs through: May 11

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Behind every immigration lies secrets. Our nation may promise the tired, poor and homeless a fresh start, but folks rarely abandon the mother country without good reason, and the circumstances leading to their departure often involve decisions they would rather hide from their new neighbors.

The family now comfortably settled in a gaudily decorated (the living-room carpet could be a remnant from a hotel lobby) two-story Brooklyn bungalow fled Soviet Russia 15 years earlier. Papa Misha runs a car service, Mama Diana works at a bakery. Their teenage children, Alex and Mira, attend school and help out at Dad's company. Alex also works at a Verizon store, handing over his wages to Mom, while Mira dreams of adventures beyond her strict parents' purview. This domesticity does not extend to newly arrived Boris, who conducts his business according to old-world rules—a business involving criminal activity so morally reprehensible that no well-meaning slogans regarding "cultural diversity" can render it acceptable.

The value of Erika Sheffer's play is its meticu-

lous dissection of the ease with which ostensibly respectable people justify providing for their own at the expense of others, and the origins of many an American success story in the exploitation of innocents. The suave Boris is skillful at recruiting, offering his nephew and niece first a sympathetic ear, then the prospect of lucrative rewards for minor risks, and finally, threats of violence and/or humiliation (for adolescents, even mild infractions can take on weight when threatened with exposure). We can guess at why Boris hires Alex to drive young female "models" from the airport to a remote location west of the Hudson, but the tone of voice when the boy's employer speaks of "job training" forces us to re-evaluate the entire clan dynamic.

Spending more than two hours contemplating the full spectrum of a topic we are accustomed to confronting only briefly on, say, Law and Order: SVU is not an attractive proposition for audiences, but director Yasen Peyankov has instructed Alan Wilder and Mariann Mayberry to lend Misha and Diana's marital bickering an unexaggerated affection and Tim Hopper to likewise resist action-movie clichés in his portrayal of Boris, reflecting the placid mask that ultimately conceals dark deeds at sufficient distance. Lingering in our memories, however, are Melanie Neilan, playing all the naive little sisters menaced by seductive predators, and Aaron Himmelstein, representing all the loyal elder brothers who must choose between protecting them or embracing their abuse.

OPERA REVIEW

Rusalka

Composer: Antonin Dvorak;

Libretto: Jaroslav Kvapil

At: Lyric Opera of Chicago,

20 N. Wacker Drive

Tickets: 312-332-2244 ext. 5600 or

www.lyricopera.org; \$69-\$299

Runs through: March 16

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Out director Sir David McVicar has outdone himself yet again with the Lyric Opera of Chicago's new production of Dvorak's dark fairy tale *Rusalka*, which is truly ravishing musically and dramatically from start to finish.

McVicar begins this Czech variation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* with a drunken prince harboring a death wish as he dreams up the fairy tale of *Rusalka* in front of an oversize romantic landscape painting. Although McVicar's approach is to keep the Dvorak opera firmly within the late 19th century, he smartly matches *Rusalka*'s fatalistic storyline by also highlighting the crises of its era.

For instance, rapid industrialization is shown to have caused environmental destruction, reflected in set designer John Macfarlane concrete-and-brick dam that has reduced the once-thriving lake to a puddle of a pond. And the collapse of so many European monarchies amid the last florid gasps of Romanticism is foreshadowed in the tatty royal regalia by costume designer Moritz Junge for both the Water Goblin and later the mentally anguished Prince. Rather than getting in the way of the story, McVicar's contextual commentary on *Rusalka* only strengthens it and ratchets up the tragedy.

Not only is the Lyric's *Rusalka* musically exquisite under the guiding baton of Sir Andrew Davis, the lushly romantic Dvorak score is made theatrically compelling by a hard-working cast of singers and dancers who go all out to execute the difficult staging demands of McVicar and out choreographer Andrew George. Many of the singers sing out masterfully while lying prone or executing slithery movements, while the dancers shift with ease from rambunctiously stomping woodland spirits to overly refined 19th-cen-



Eric Owens and Ana Maria Martinez in *Rusalka*. Photo by Todd Rosenberg

tury romantic ballet dancers.

Soprano Ana Maria Martinez is heartbreaking as the title water nymph who gives up everything to become a mortal so she can pursue the love of an unfaithful Prince (a handsome and conflicted Brandon Jovanovich). Bass-baritone Eric Owens conveys the angry anguish of Vodnik the water goblin, while mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Gubanova is beautifully haughty and imperious as the manipulative Foreign Princess.

Some very welcome humor (and a booming mezzo-soprano sound) comes from Jill Grove as the earthy witch Jezibaba (and her trio of hopping raven henchmen are a wonderful touch). Also a lot of fun are the uncle-nephew team of bass-baritone Philip Horst as the Gamekeeper and mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack as the gossipy Kitchen Boy.

Also quite lovely (though dramatically superfluous in Act III) is the trio of wood nymphs sung with such childish abandon by Lauren Snouffer, J'Nai Bridges and Cynthia Hanna.

Rusalka is definitely another jewel in the crown of McVicar's directing triumphs for the Lyric. Buy your tickets now, because word of mouth about this glorious production should make it a sell-out.

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From left: Lee Stark, Eric Lynch and Shane Kenyon in *Buzzer*. Photo by Liz Lauren

THEATER REVIEW

Buzzer

Playwright: Tracey Scott Wilson
At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.
Tickets: 312-443-3800;
www.GoodmanTheatre.org/Buzzer; \$10-\$40
Runs through: March 9

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Buzzer, in its Chicago premiere, has been positioned as a controversial play about race, but I see it differently. I think it's about a caveman marking his territory. He's the improved, intelligent Cro-Magnon caveman staking his claim on Neanderthal turf, but he's part Neanderthal himself and the animal in him overtakes the thinking man, bit by bit.

The context is a hard ghetto neighborhood in Brooklyn, N.Y. Jackson grew up there but used his smarts to get out and carry him through Harvard Law School. Now with a high-paying job, he's moving back as the 'hood verges on gentrification. He buys a large rehabbed apartment in a grand old building and moves in with girlfriend Suzy and his best bud, Don, a recovered substance abuser. Jackson is Black; Suzy and Don are white.

Complications soon arise both inside the apartment and outside. Inside, Suzy and Don have a one-off which is telegraphed from the early minutes of the play. They lie to Jackson to cover their tracks. Outside, Suzy is subjected to aggressive sexual taunts from the locals. Jackson decides to intervene which leads to arguments with Don and Suzy, arguments made more convoluted by the lies. Inevitably and predictably, the entangled passions end in violence both inside and outside. The looming question as the conflict grows is which of the three will wind up dead?

However, *Buzzer* is a comedy, albeit a serious one, and all survive. Indeed, there actually is no resolution to the street action or the relationships although Don is moving out as the play ends, and Suzy has reconfirmed her commitment to Jackson. But, clearly, something has changed. Don's lie damages his long and caring relationship with Jackson, and Jackson himself seems to know the unspoken truth. More than once Don says, "No secrets. Secrets are bad!" and he proves to be correct.

Certainly there are racial connotations here which are rather baldly delineated. Don and Suzy speak plainly of "white privilege" and empowerment, even as Jackson is the upwardly-mobile money-maker. What is not openly discussed are Black-on-Black violence and economic warfare as Jackson—who admits to being a gentrifier—quite literally descends to street level and street tactics in order to deal with the physical problem outside the building and to release the emotional tensions building up inside.

In an anomaly at the Goodman Theatre, lead actors Shane Kenyon (Don) and Erik Lynch (Jackson) are non-Equity (probably not for long). Their detailed and convincing work

demonstrates the formidable depth of Chicago acting talent. Lee Stark (Suzy) equals their fervor and commitment. Under skilled veteran director Jessica Thebus, they drive through the play's several improbabilities to bring out its ample intelligence.

SPOTLIGHT



If you still haven't seen the longest-running American musical in Broadway history, then now's your chance to catch up with the returning tour of the award-winning 1996 revival of *Chicago*. This 1975 vaudevillian-style show co-created by songwriters John Kander and Fred Ebb and director/choreographer Bob Fosse brilliantly celebrates and criticizes our fascination with crime and celebrity. And speaking of celebrities, *Seinfeld* star John O'Hurley returns for this engagement as the slick lawyer Billy Flynn. *Chicago* continues through Sunday, March 2, at the Bank of America Theatre, 18 W. Monroe St. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, Feb. 26 to 28, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, March 1, and 2 and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, March 2. Tickets are \$30-\$95; visit www.brownpaperbox.org for more information. Photo of O'Hurley courtesy of Margie Korshak, Inc.

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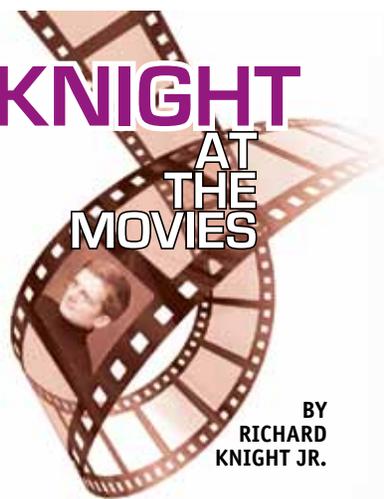
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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES



BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT JR.

The Oscars (aka the gay men's national holiday)

In last year's column ruminating on the gay men's national holiday—otherwise known as the annual Academy Awards—I complained that the show didn't have nearly enough queer content. To me, there weren't enough queer-themed movies being honored, enough gay actors and filmmakers amongst the nominated (were there any?) and certainly the host and his not very funny hijinks weren't queer enough to satisfy my queer-centric way of thinking.

All in all, there just wasn't enough queer content (no matter how many gay fashion de-



Dame Judi Dench and Steve Coogan in *Philomena*.

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signers' couture gowns were on vivid display).

This year promises to be different—well, maybe a little different, at any rate. The first big indicator of that, of course, is the return of the world's most renowned lesbian aka Ellen DeGeneres as host. DeGeneres has taken the Oscar emcee gig before and ably comported herself, which bodes well for the show. Openly gay producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron are to be congratulated for bringing back DeGeneres and nixing the return of Seth McFarlane, whose mean-spirited wisecracks mostly landed with a thud and whose wilted routines (that "song-and-dance" number!) revealed the essence of the man: a former nerd-turned-pow-erbroker with lots of score-settling foremost in his mind.

So, hiring DeGeneres gets my hopes for this year's ceremony off to a good start. And the inclusion of the announced tribute to *The Wizard of Oz*, which is celebrating its 75th year (along with *Gone with the Wind* and a host of other 1939 classics), could not make the hearts of elderly gay men (hello, my fellow Friends of Dorothy), showtune fans of *Wicked* and fellow Oz maniacs any happier. It also might help to erase the memory of the bizarre, mistimed tribute last year to the movie musical *Chicago*, which seemed to be included for two reasons: 1) Zadan and Meron produced it and 2) Zadan and Meron wanted it included.*

Speaking of musicals, and *Wicked* in particular, it also warms my gay little heart that *Frozen*—Disney's latest original animated song-and-dance spectacle—is sure to take the Best Song Oscar (this one deserved) for "Let It Go," sung in the film and performed at the ceremonies by a gay icon in the making: *Wicked*'s own Idina Menzel. "Let It Go," a rousing call to arms for anyone facing personal obstacles if there ever was one (hello, my unfortunate closet-trapped queers), is sure to become a staple of gay cabarets nationwide (if it hasn't already), and its performance at the Oscars is a much-anticipated highlight (unlike the bare-ones performance by Madonna of that leaden, bare-ones ballad from *Evita*—\$5 to anyone who can hum more than two bars of it).

Since I'm thinking about gay piano bars and showtunes, I am also feeling optimistic that Zadan and Meron, who have produced a slew of musicals for TV (along with the Oscar-winning *Chicago*—oh, did I mention that already?)* will be smart enough to capitalize on the Best Documentary nomination for *20 Feet from Stardom*, the glorious film about many of the legendary backup singers for the likes of the legendary Bette Midler, the Rolling Stones, et al. What could be more entertaining than having this line-up perform a medley of previous Oscar song winners? Maybe with Pink (who is also announced as appearing)? Well, one can dream (and produce the show in one's mind, hello, my fellow fantasy Oscar show producers—let's do lattes and omelets soon as we talk it over!).

Back to what is set in stone: a slew of nominations for bona fide, can't disguise the fact

that these movies are flush with queer themes and characters. Okay, okay, there's only one: *Dallas Buyers Club*—but it's really, really gay. This means, naturally, that it focuses on one of the most tremendously difficult periods in the long, incredibly difficult history of *Our People* (in this case, the height of the AIDS scourge, back in the late '80s when the plague was at the height). It also focuses on a guy who was a homophobe until he contracted HIV. But it does have six nominations and has maybe helped open a few eyes to areas of our painful past that the mainstream culture never knows (or cares) much about, it seems.

What's better is that both nominees, Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto, are still looking like they'll be in the winner's circle for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor, respectively (although Leo DiCaprio and company, *The Wolf of Wall Street* boys, are making a very pushy last-minute attempt to sneak up the inside lane as we go into the final stretch). As for *The Wolf of Wall Street*, has anyone else mentioned that Jonah Hill—yup, nominated again—plays a closeted gay man in the film? Will he mention it in his speech should he beat all the oddsmakers and take Oscar gold (over Leto)?

You can bet that Sean Mahon—who played the real-life character Michael/Anthony, the long lost gay son of Judi Dench in *Philomena*—would have had he have gotten the Oscar nod (and isn't that have been a bittersweet moment to contemplate?). Or there was Dench herself, for that matter (although I don't think Dench has much of a chance in a race that has Cate Blanchett in *Blue Jasmine* as the leading contender—although the contest has become very tight in light of what's going on with *Blue Jasmine* director Woody Allen).

Speaking of actors—look at all the openly queer actors amongst the nominees this year! Okay, okay, I can not only dream about producing the show, but I can also populate the nominees with openly queer thespians as well. (In my fantasy Oscar show, both ex-lovers Zachary Quinto and Jonathan Groff are nominated and each shows up with their new plus-ones. They then have to present an award together while the new significant others kvetch in the men's room about their famous boyfriends, who are onstage presenting an award together for the sake of publicity.)

Until then, I shall leave the Academy (whose Board of Governors is no doubt eagerly reading this) with a few more uninformed suggestions. The first and foremost—always—would be the inclusion of a lot more movie clips. I mean tons. This is, after all, an awards show dedicated to movies—a medium which has 100 years of stuff from which to pull highlights. (The Oscar show itself—as evidenced in TCM's new documentary, *And the Oscar Goes To*, from queer directors Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman—has plenty of material, too).

Second, since you've made a precedent this

Turn to page 20

Jason Collins: Breaking barriers with the Brooklyn Nets

BY ROSS FORMAN

History was made Feb. 23 when Jason Collins—a seven-foot, 35-year-old NBA veteran—walked onto the court at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. He sported Brooklyn Nets uniform No. 46, playing about 11 minutes in what was his 714th career regular-season NBA game.

It was his first, though, as an openly gay NBA player—and Collins is now the first active gay athlete in one of the big four male team sports in North America.

Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier on April 15, 1947, sporting jersey No. 42 for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Collins broke the gay barrier when he signed a 10-day contract with the Nets on Feb. 23.

Collins grabbed two rebounds, had one steal, committed five personal fouls and did not score—at least in the box score—in Brooklyn's 108-102 win over the host Lakers.

"For the past 13 years, I have been saying that the first time an athlete is courageous enough to compete as an openly gay man, that I would find a way to be at that game, cheering him on as his number-one fan. Today, my dream has come true," Billy Bean, a gay former major league baseball player who came out after retiring, wrote on Facebook. And yes, Bean was cheering for Collins and the Nets at the Staples Center.

"For the first time in my life, I will NOT be rooting for the Los Angeles Lakers. Tonight, I am a Brooklyn Nets fan, and my favorite player is my good friend, and hero to so many young athletes around the world, JASON COLLINS.

"It's a great day for all athletes and every sports fan.

"For every one of us who played in silence, afraid, hating on ourselves ... you are shining a light on a dark times, unfinished business, and bad memories. Healing. I am so proud to know you!!"

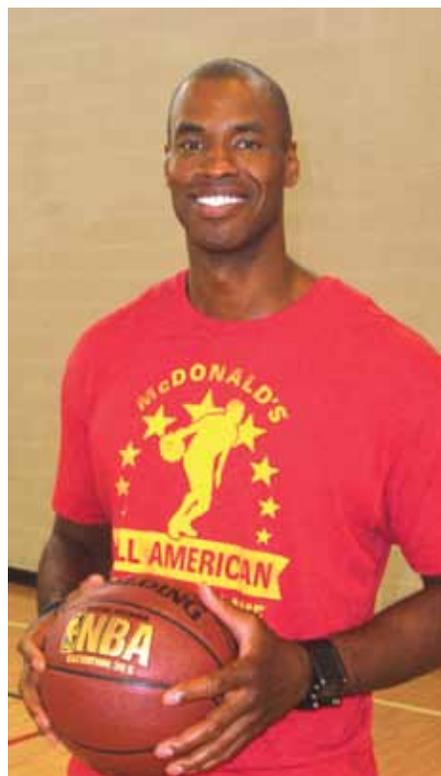
Collins, a Stanford University graduate, made his debut in the NBA in 2001 after being that year's 18th overall pick in the annual NBA Draft. He played his first seven seasons for the New Jersey Nets, then spent time playing for the Memphis Grizzlies, Minnesota Timberwolves, Atlanta Hawks, Boston Celtics and Washington Wizards.

His career spanned 713 regular-season NBA games before joining Brooklyn, and he averaged 3.6 points per game. Collins also has played in 95 playoff games, most recently in 2012 with Atlanta.

Collins revealed he is gay last April and was the cover story of the May 6, 2013, issue of Sports Illustrated. Collins was among the first class of inductees last August into the Chicago-based National Gay and Lesbian Sports Hall of Fame.

"It's great to see a team turn to talent when they needed help. Jason Collins never wasn't good enough to play in the NBA, and this opportunity brings that home," said transgender sportswriter Christina Kahrl of Chicago.

Brian Kupersmit, president of the predominantly gay Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA), said he was "very excited" to hear the news of Collins' signing with the Nets. "This is Jason's moment and the entire coun-



Jason Collins. Photo by Ross Forman

try, gay and straight, will be watching. Some doubted this day would ever come, but Jason's hard work and determination finally paid off. I am looking forward to seeing him play not just for the length of this contract, but for years to come."

"I love that basketball gets to be the first of the big four [male team sports] to have an openly gay player," said Anthony Nicodemo, a gay high school basketball coach in New York who confirmed he has courtside seats for the Nets next home game, which is March 3 against the Chicago Bulls. "Jason has proven to be an awesome role model and no one deserves this opportunity more than him.

"I've attended a ton of big-time hoops game, but to be at Jason's first [home] game as a Net will be awesome. Much more personal than a normal game."

Wade Davis, the executive director of the You Can Play Project and himself a former professional football player, said Collins' signing is "historic in the world of sports and for our country."

"Jason will continue to inspire all people, not just the LGBT community," Davis said. "And it's fitting that Brooklyn, a city famous for its diversity and transformative sports figures would be the place where another barrier is shattered."

Brooklyn general manager Billy King said in a statement that, "The decision to sign Jason was a basketball decision. We needed to increase our depth inside, and with his experience and size, we felt he was the right choice for a 10-day contract."

Fallon Fox, the first openly transgender mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter and a Chicago-area resident, said Collins' signing is "comforting to me; However, it is not surprising."

"Who wouldn't want that guy on the court? Oh, that's right, I almost forgot. There are a handful of haters out there who don't really matter in the grand scheme of things when it comes to the public's perception of gay male professional athletes.

"I'm calling it right now. It looks like both Jason Collins and Michael Sam of the NFL will likely get the chance to have their cake and eat it too. They will be the first of their kind. Openly gay, openly accepted, and openly awesome in their positions within our nation's most viewed sports. It makes me happy and proud to be alive and LGBT at this moment, knowing that some of our heroes will reach this status."

Collins' twin brother, former NBA player Jarron, took to Twitter Feb. 23 and wrote: "Hope

Turn to page 22

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Devon Seafood Grill; Delightful Pastries

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Devon Seafood Grill (39 E. Chicago Ave.; www.devonseafood.com) is one of those restaurants with a certain upscale feel but, thankfully, a laid-back personality.

Devon has a spacious bar area when you walk into the place. However, a roomy dining room awaits downstairs—complete with semi-private areas off to the side, which my friend and I decided to use.

Besides those smaller rooms, Devon has one other rare property: a menu that constantly changes. While the changes may happen so quickly the restaurant occasionally can't keep up (I had at least one item on my menu that wasn't on my friend's, and the lobster spa-

Everything else was a hit, and that included the lobster mac 'n' cheese, which is probably one of the best versions I've tried in Chicago. The sushi (tempura shrimp and spicy tuna) were savory, and the grilled salmon panzanella tastefully balances a juicy salmon with spinach, goat cheese, balsamic onions, tomatoes, basil oil and balsamic vinaigrette.

By the way, definitely make room for dessert: The carrot cake is undeniably sinful while the cookie box (filled with lemon-ricotta, chocolate and other cookie flavors) is cute and tasty.

The 1710 N. Wells St. location of Delightful Pastries (www.delightfulpastries.com) recently held a media event showcasing some new



Try the roasted duck flatbread at Devon Seafood Grill (above) or the carrot cake pancakes at Delightful Pastries (left). Photos by Andrew Davis

ghetti I had eyed online wasn't on the printed menu), the alterations have a way of keeping things fresh—especially in terms of the quality of the seafood.

Things started promisingly with my drink: a Caribbean Hard Lemonade that was incredibly refreshing and tasty. Despite the bitter cold outside, the drink immediately made me think of summer.

My friend and I then ordered the roasted duck flatbread and the crab cakes, which had been renowned near and far. Our engaging server, David, also sang its praises—even after I warned him that, being from the Chesapeake Bay area, I'm a bit of a crab-cake snob. Unfortunately, I do have to say that these items were hit-and-miss, with the cakes being the miss. My guest and I both agreed that the cakes (which had remoulade and mango tartar sauce) were solid, although they were missing something—namely, more crab meat; however, we also concurred that the flatbread was incredible.

breakfast options—and, based on what the restaurant has to offer, people should run (not walk) to try these items.

Chef Robert Hawryszczuk, reflecting his time in Poland and South Africa, has whipped up several tasty (and reasonably priced) items such as Bacon Yum (two eggs scrambled with ham, two strips of bacon and a slice of extra thick cut Gypsy bacon) and British Mob Movie (pan-fried potato, tomato braised beans with mixed vegetables, sunny-side-up eggs, extra-thick-cut bacon and blood sausage). Those with a sweet tooth will undoubtedly gravitate toward the sumptuous carrot-cake pancakes.

Delightful Pastries is also at 5927 W. Lawrence Ave. and 131 N. Clinton St. (Chicago French Market), providing at least two other places where people can try these tasty additions. Note: The eatery is also accepting orders for the Paczki day (March 4)—even offering alcohol-filled versions of the desserts.

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'Chicago Fire' cast discusses LGBT issues on and off the show

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL BLICKENSERFER

The cast and producers of locally shot Chicago Fire and Chicago PD joined Executive Producer Dick Wolf at the Chicago Museum of Broadcast Communications Feb. 19 for a panel discussion in front of a sold-out audience of enthusiastic fans.

Now in its second season on NBC, Chicago Fire includes an openly lesbian paramedic played by Lauren German. Earlier this month, German's co-star Monica Raymund publicly came out as bisexual during a series of tweets.

Before the event, German told Windy City Times that portraying the character of Leslie Shay was no challenge. "It's been great," she laughed. "I think love is just love. I was lucky to be raised with open-minded parents and friends and there's no stigma or walls up for me."

German hoped that, down the road, her character would take advantage of marriage equality in Illinois: "I think that's progressive and would be applauded!"

Executive Producer Danielle Gelber explained that German's role came about when the show's co-creators, Michael Brandt and Derek Haas, immersed themselves in a real firehouse. "They met a woman who was gay and who was an EMT," she said. "They got inspired by her. They thought she was just so matter-of-fact, so cool and so completely devoted to the job, and what a great opportunity it was to tell a very grounded, real story about someone who 'oh, by the way, she's gay.' It's not like a huge headline. She's not being hit on by her male cohorts trying to turn her straight or any of that nonsense, it's just very accepted."

Wolf agreed. "I just thought she should be part of the mix and reflects what goes on in Chicago," he said.

Gelber said that the Chicago Fire audience has responded well to the character. "People love her really solid friendship with [Gabriela] Dawson, her work partner. They are keyed into their genuine relationship."

Raymund—who portrays Dawson—said she had no comment about coming out. "Everything I've tweeted is my comment," she said. "I have a very supportive cast and family."

However she hopes lesbian characters like Shay will continue to be realistically depicted on television. "Any demographic needs to be represented fully and accurately on any show," she said. "Having Shay represent the LGBT community on our show is fantastic. [Lauren] is doing an amazing job and is supportive of the community too."

She added that being in Illinois when marriage equality passed was exciting. "It's so good to be in a state when you get to see the law turn over and be a part of that celebration."

"I'm really proud of my generation. I think they are the most progressive, open-minded and tolerant. They are opening doors and teaching past generations how to live in peace."

Raymund said that she thinks equality nationwide is part of the evolutionary process. "Eventually we'll get there. Not as quickly as I would like, but I have faith in my generation and the generations to come."

The actress also had a message to those who maintain that having openly gay characters on television amounts to promotion of an unacceptable lifestyle. "I say, 'Fuck them,'" she said. "Who cares what they think? All we can do is focus on what we believe is true and what we believe is right and if they want to be miserable, intolerant and uneducated, that's not really our problem."



Casts of Chicago Fire and Chicago PD at the recent media gathering. Photo by Gretchen Rachel Blickensderfer; more photos online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

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NEW YORK LIFE

Correction

In the Feb. 19 issue of Windy City Times, the article "Groups team to develop safe schools in suburbs" stated that the group profiled was the only one at the time. However, at least one such organization existed at that time. In 1993, Links founded its Pride Youth Program in Northfield. Windy City Times regrets the error

CALENDAR

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nightspots

Wed., Feb. 26

Everyday Ethics in Dementia Chicagoland Methodist Senior Services is the most extensive senior services network on Chicago's north side. For over 115 years, CMSS has faithfully served older adults in Chicago by continuing to develop new programming that meets the changing needs of the population. CMSS' key services include assisted and supportive living, dementia care, rehabilitation services and senior home care. The organization also offers home repair services, subsidized housing and outpatient wellness services to Chicago area seniors. Learn more at www.cmsschicago.org 8:00am - 9:30am 2720 W. Foster Ave., Chicago <http://www.cms-schicago.org/events.aspx>

Affinity Forty Plus Meeting Includes but is not limited to individuals who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender women who are at least 40 years of age. Led by Glynis Morris. Activities defined by participants. Meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month. 7:00pm Affinity Community Services 1424 E. 53rd St. Suite 306 <http://www.affinity95.org>

GenderQueer Chicago GenderQueer Chicago is a grassroots, peer-led group that works to create safe spaces for all of us to talk about, think about, explore, and express gender. They are open to those who wish to talk and think about gender. GenderQueer Chicago meets every Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 9:00PM. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted St., <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Thursday, Feb. 27

Equality Illinois PAC Join in support of pro-marriage legislators facing challenges. Sen. Don Harmon, Rep. Jaime Andrade, Rep. Toni Berrios, Rep. Thaddeus Jones, Rep. Christian Mitchell, Rep. Ron Sandack, Rep. Ed Sullivan, and Rep. Kathleen Willis 5:00pm - 7:00pm Hubbard Inn, 110 W. Hubbard St., Chicago <http://www.eqil.org>

Street Safety/Personal Safety Presentation Sponsored by Alderman Fioretti, 2nd Ward, Alderman Smith, 43rd Ward and your 18th District Community Policing Office. 6:30pm - 7:30pm Moody Church Room 103, 1635 N. LaSalle St.

Friday, Feb. 28

Developing Safe & Supportive Schools for LGBTQ Youth Study LGBTQ issues in a school context. Fee \$0. Photo ID require. Doors 8am. Workshop 8:30am-3pm. Further info: Nancy Mullen, nancy.mullen@youth-outlook.org or dcarr@360youthservices.org. Register by Feb. 21 online. 8:00am - 3:00pm Alcatel-Lucent, 1960 Lucent Lane, Naperville, IL 60563 Tickets: <http://bit.ly/1bBKah5>

Kiss for a DIFFerence Winter Ball Celebrate making a difference in the Chicago community in support of area service agencies that provide direct services, preventative education and outreach to people who are HIV positive, living with AIDS or at risk for infection. Cyon Flare will perform. The event welcomes local design professionals and enthusiasts for a scintillating evening of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, music and dancing. 6:30pm - 9:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.diffchicago.org/home.html>

Black Queer History on CAN-TV Join Affinity's executive director Kim L. Hunt and guest Victor Salvo of the Legacy Project. Also see live streaming online. 6:30pm - 7:30pm CAN-TV 21 (Comcast) <http://www.cantv.org/live/index.html>

Discussion, The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson Discussion leaders: Melba Poole, Literary Exchange, and Cheryl Pattin, Gerber/Hart Library and Archives. Pulitzer Prize winner Isabel Wilkerson drew on more than 10 years of research and interviews with more than 1,200 people to tell the remarkable story of the Great Migration--the mass exodus of Southern blacks to Northern and Western cities from 1915 to 1970. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St <http://www.womenandchildren-first.com>

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: Chroma / Four Corners / Revelations In their Chicago home at the Auditorium Theatre. Contemporary favorites to beloved classics. Programs this year include the Chicago premiere of the company's Chroma, new productions of Pas de Duke and The River set to Duke Ellington's music, and the always awe-inspiring Revelations. \$32 - \$92 7:30pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E Congress Pkwy., 800.982.ARTS (2787) http://www.auditoriumtheatre.org/pages/home/performances-events/performances.php?event_id=455

Saturday, March 1
Lavender University: Lourdes Torres Making Familia from Scratch: Towards a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago. Discusses efforts to name Latina lesbians as agents of change and active subjects of

a multiracial history of grassroots organizing. Lavender University is a nine-month lecture series featuring top academics and activists in the LGBTQ community, working on a wide range of research topics and interests. It is sponsored by Windy City Times and Center on Halsted. 11 am - 1 pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Lavender-University-launches-LGBTQ-programs/43375.html>

Celebrating Fr. Mychal Judge Judge gave his life while ministering to the injured and dying at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2011. Dignity/Chicago hopes to raise the final \$5,000 needed to install a plaque this fall honoring Fr. Judge on the Chicago's Legacy Walk--the only outdoor museum walk in the world dedicated to celebrating LGBT contributions to history and culture. Hosted by Dr. Ibrahim Zabaneh. RSVP at Dignitychicago@gmail.com. Public Parking available at 1212 N Lake Shore Dr. 4:00pm - 6:00pm 1240 N Lake Shore Dr., <http://legacyprojectchicago.org/index.html> or Dignitychicago@gmail.com

CAKE Chicago, LGBTQI Arts Showcase: A night of Comedy and Music Inclusive, eclectic queer event hosted by: Ripley Caine. Featuring Bull Fighter, Anthony Whitaker, JD Glass. \$5. night of show 9:00pm The Red Line Tap 7006 N Glenwood <https://www.facebook.com/events/716875671680117/>

The Tease New extravaganza for Chicago House has two live performances with burlesque and aerial acts, an event created by Keith Elliott and Todd Kiech, the producers of Dance For Life & Chicago Takes Off, Sidetrack-sponsored open bar, available to all attendees and is one of the first events to be held in the new Moonlight Studios space in the West Loop. First show 7:30pm. 10:30pm Moonlight Studios, 1446 W. Kinzie St., http://www.chicagohouse.org/event_the_tease.html

Sunday, March 2

Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago Meeting every Sunday from 10:30 to noon, featuring a speaker on a variety of topics--personal ethics, education, psychology, politics, philosophy, medical care, equal rights, the environment, etc., followed by a coffee hour. Free and open to the public. Also Sunday School, weddings, service projects, book group, film group. 10:30am - 12:00pm Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago 7574 N. Lincoln Ave. Skokie, IL 60077 <http://www.ethicalhuman.org>

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

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'RED' RECKONING

Sunday, March 2

Center on Halsted's annual Oscars event, "On the Red Carpet," will take place at the Park West.

Photo from 2012 event by Kat Fitzgerald

premiere live theater event attacking cancer, its treatment and the way we live. Representatives from Gilda's Club Chicago will be on hand every Sunday 3:00pm Collaboraction - Flat Iron Arts Building 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave. 3rd Floor 312-226-9633 <http://collaboraction.org>

On the Red Carpet Annual Oscar event and fundraiser for Center on Halsted. One of the Center's signature events, On the Red Carpet welcomes over 400 donors, patrons and supporters to gather and enjoy the Academy Awards at a fun and festive event. \$125-\$75-\$40 6:00pm Park West Chicago 322 W Armitage Ave <http://www.centeronhalsted.org> Tickets: <http://community.centeronhalsted.org/OTRC>

Monday, March 3

17th Annual Read Across America Day This event sponsored by the NEA kicks off a week of activities and events across the country that focus on reading. 12:00pm - 10:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Asian & Pacific Islander Coming Out Support Group Share your journey in a safe space. Open to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and queer APIs. Adoptees, and multiracial folks welcome. First Monday of every month. Room 722 6:00pm - 7:30pm Asian Human Services 4753 N. Broadway 7th Floor <http://www.chicago2i.org>

Get to Know Team Chicago Athletics and Culture Community Meeting Team Chicago Athletics and Culture invites the leadership of Chicago's LGBT sports and cultural organizations to come out and meet the

board of directors to learn about Team Chicago, get a preview of uniforms, apparel and accessories available for Gay Games 9, and to hear about plans for leading the Chicago delegation to participate in Gay Games 9, Aug. 9-16 in Cleveland + Akron, Ohio. Contact David Reithoffer, david.reithoffer@gmail.com, 312-399-3662 6:00pm - 8:00pm The Call (Chicago) 1547 W Bryn Mawr <http://www.teamchicago.org>

Tuesday, March 4

Frontrunners/ Frontwalkers Chicago A club for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transexuals and friends who are interested in running and walking together along Chicago's great open lakefront, meeting twice weekly, on Saturdays at 9am and Tuesdays at 6:30pm 6:30pm Totem Pole in Lincoln Park <https://www.facebook.com/groups/52950773133/>

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

Project Vida C.R.U. Game night. Play That's So Say: A Game of LGBT Discovery. Project Vida C.R.U. programs focus on the gay, bi, queer and questioning latino/African-American experience of those 24 and under. 6:30pm - 8:30pm Project Vida, 4045 W. 26th Ave., Chicago 773-916-7278 <http://www.projectvida.org>

Wed., March 5

Affinity Forty Plus Meeting Includes but is not limited to individuals who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender women who are at least 40 years of age. Led by Glynis Morris. Activities defined by participants. Meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month. 7:00pm Affinity Community Services 1424 E. 53rd St. Suite 306 <http://www.affinity95.org>

Cinema Q IV Film Series Free film series celebrates fourth year with 10th anniversary screenings of four LGBT movies. Brother to Brother (2004): Anthony Mackie's breakthrough performance as a confused gay African-American art student who is mentored by a former member of the Harlem Renaissance. 8:00pm Chicago Cultural Center 78 E. Washington St. http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/cinema_q.html

Sinozich retiring from CGMC

Patrick Sinozich is retiring from his position as artistic director of the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus (CGMC) at the end of the year.

In a statement to family, friends and supporters, he stated, in part, "After making great music and great memories for eighteen years, I find it is now time to step off the podium and follow my path to new adventures and challenges.

"I don't know where I'll ever find the wealth of talent and enthusiasm that I've found in CGMC. I don't know if I'll ever encounter a group so willing to try new things, put in extra hours, and push themselves to their limits.

"And through it all, I have been honored to serve in my own small way as your director. Yet while every ship has its captain, it takes a huge crew of singers and support members to take us where we are."

The chorus plans to "quickly" start its search for its next artistic director.

'The New Black' at Facets thru Feb. 27

The documentary The New Black will run at Facets Cinematheque, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave., through Feb. 27.

The New Black digs deeply into the role of African-Americans in the wake of a successful Proposition 8 in California, which opposed marriage equality, leading many to brand African-Americans as hostile or indifferent to gay rights. Focusing on the 2012 legal battle in Maryland (a state in which blacks make up nearly one-third of the electorate), filmmaker Yoruba Richen examines the ways in which race has been used as a wedge issue by tracking activists, families and clergy on both sides of the campaign.

Supporting organizations include Affinity Community Services, E3Radio, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, Pillar of Love Fellowship Church, POWWOW, Inc. and Chicago Psychologists for Social Responsibility/Racial Justice Student Group.

See www.facets.org/cinematheque.

OSCARS from page 16

year and rescinded a nomination (in the song category), why not do the same for the most outrageous of those undeserved wins? I am speaking now of the troika—Oscar's three most egregious errors. Dear Academy, I want you to break into Sally Field's house and take back her Norma Rae Oscar and send it to Bette Midler (the rightful winner for The Rose). Then do the same with Glenda Jackson for A Touch of Class (Barbra is waiting to add that second, well-earned Best Actress Oscar for The Way We Were to the basement trinket store of her Malibu manse). And to the dear heirs of Princess Grace of Monaco: You need to right the Oscar made wrong when the former Grace Kelly sneaked into the winner's circle in place of Judy Garland in A Star Is Born.

My final suggestion would be the return of the honorary career Oscar to the telecast. This is the bestowing of a long-coveted statuette to that luckless movie star who has been unjustly overlooked by Academy voters for one reason or another in the course of said legend's legendary career. This year's honoree,

Angela Lansbury, could not be more worthy of the honor—or more of a friend of the gay community if she headlined a thousand performances of Mame, Gypsy and Sweeney Todd combined. For decades, said legend (last year it was Lauren Bacall) could always be counted on to add at least a moment of dignity, grace and honest-to-God awe by the live assemblage (not to mention the billions watching on TV) to the proceedings. Sometimes these legends were queer as well (though not a one of them was "out"). That, too, helped make the Academy Awards show worth elevating to national holiday status for Our People in the know.

Now if only we could get all of this and an honorary Oscar for Doris Day, I could die declaring the Oscars, at long last, queer enough to suit my fancy.

*Chicago, the Oscar-winning 2003 Best Picture Winner, is out just in time for the Oscars in a new, special feature-laden Blu-ray edition that really is all that—and all that jazz, too. Some non-musical film called Gravity, the multi-nominated Oscar contender starring Sandra Bullock (and the movie I hope takes the gold), is just out as well.

BILLY MASTERS

"The only way this film could be made worse would be to be eaten by a badger while watching it."—This lead from a review in London's The Guardian for A Winter's Tale (released in the UK as A New York Winter's Tale). Perhaps the best line from a review of a film ever! Prior to this, my favorite quote was when Rex Reed described the love scene in Titanic as reminding him of a Chihuahua trying to mount a golden retriever!

Having surgery is the easy part ... recuperating is a bitch. Rather than keep bitching, I left the snowiest Boston since I was a tyke and headed south to the Billy Masters Beach House in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Ostensibly, I was there to rest, recover, and partake of at least three of four S's—sun, sand, sea and sex. I managed all four, thank you very much.

The highlight of the trip was seeing Sam Harris' latest show, a theatrical endeavor borne from his memoirs, Ham: Slices of a Life. This hybrid literary-musical (or, as he calls it, a "Liter-Usical") is a journey through some of the high and low points in his life—both professionally and personally. Along the way, Harris sings a number of songs with a voice that, if anything, has become richer and fuller with time. It doesn't hurt that he looks better than ever and is in enviable shape physically. Although he's on the other side of 50, he sports a tight, taut physique that would put most people in their 40s (or even 30s) to shame. He's like a singing version of Olga Korbut!

More than a decade ago, I waxed rhapsodically after one of his shows and summed it up by saying, "If I were to ever write a personals ad, it would simply say, 'Wanted: Sam Harris'—period. I can't think of another man who would be more perfect." That still holds true. After spending countless hours with Sam over the years, he never ceases to amaze and inspire me. He now conjures up another emotion—envy. I no longer would be simply happy being with Sam Harris; I wish I were Sam Harris. Admittedly, he's slightly cuter, slightly more talented and slightly older than moi, but that's a payoff I'd be willing to make. Definitely make the trip to see him if he's anywhere in your locale. In the meantime, pick up his memoir, Ham: Slices of a Life.

In one of the most exciting rumors to filter out of Broadway in decades, we hear that Dame Shirley Bassey is being courted to join the rotating cast of After Midnight. The show, which centers on Duke Ellington and the Cotton Club, has had several headliners. When it opened in November, Fantasia Barrino was the resident chanteuse. She was replaced by kd lang. Now, Toni Braxton has joined the cast. As discussions with Dame Shirley continue, Vanessa Williams has been enlisted to take over the role April 1 through May 11. And after that? This could be fortuitous timing—it could lead to Bassey delivering a scene-stealing performance on the Tony Awards.

Many of you have been asking for details regarding the film version of The Normal Heart. Like the multi-award-winning flick Behind the Candelabra, HBO plans to air this movie in May. I'm told that Ryan Murphy's adaptation will be coupled with a documentary about Larry Kramer, which is being finalized as we speak ... er, write. Not only that, but I also hear that HBO has asked Kramer for a sequel! Since many people have been curious about the continuing story of the characters, Larry has taken pen to paper to work on a follow-up. Although he is writing this specifically as a television script, he's also planning to adapt it for the stage.

Quite a few of you have asked who is the nude cover model on the UK gay mag Attitude. That would be sexy Philip Olivier. The stunning 33-year-old soap actor has often posed nude or near nude in the past—including his wildly popular annual erotic calendars. (Like him, they make great stocking stuffers.) Philip can-

didly says, "I keep fit and I keep trim, not only for my health but because it's a very lucrative business. There must be more than ten jobs that I've gotten because of my body." However, he's smart enough to know that his shelf-life as a pin-up will soon come to an end (hence this new sizzling 12-page pictorial). "I'll probably do one last calendar for 2015. It's hard work doing all that training and you've got the new boys coming along." I think Olivier can more than hold his own. In fact, you'll all want to hold his own once you see it on BillyMasters.com.

This leads brilliantly into our "Ask Billy" question. Randy in Key West asks: "What can you tell me about Alex Minsky, that mega-hot,



In many ways, Sam Harris (above) is the ideal man, writes Billy. Photo by Ray Garcia

tattooed daddy of a model? I'm looking for nude photos, but I hear they've been banned."

You and everyone else! When the former Marine lost his right leg in Afghanistan, he also lost hope. He also suffered numerous other injuries, was in a coma for two months, and spent a year and a half in various medical facilities before being honorably discharged—and receiving the Purple Heart. Once he was a civilian, the only things he felt he could do was work on his body and stay healthy. At the gym, he was asked if he'd be interested in modeling. When recounting the story, he tends to make the same semi-homophobic statement: "At first I thought it was just another gay guy hitting on me." He might as well get used to that, as his scantily clad images are earning scores of gay fans.

He's just been named exclusive model for Jack Adams' underwear—a brand I've never heard of before, but I suspect we'll be seeing more of. Oh, as to those nude photos, apparently Alex took some selfies which somehow made their way into our hot little hands. While he's perfectly proportioned in his natural state, he seemingly sprouts another leg when aroused. You can see for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

When I'd give an arm and a leg to be Sam Harris, it's time to end yet another column. While I catch my breath, let me remind you to check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that always has the heat on high. Happily I won't have to get used to the cold weather. Why? Because I'm headed back down to Florida in a matter of days for the Winter Party in South Beach, a benefit for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. I'm sure a number of you will be down there, so be sure to keep an eye open for me. If you've got a question, concern, or a general comment, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Alex does a photo shoot with Paul McCartney's ex-wife! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

'It Gets Better' with Tamale at Guild Complex

Chicago: Guild Literary Complex (the Guild) continues its mission of bringing diverse voices to the fore in its upcoming event, "Applied Words: It Gets Better."

Taking place on Tuesday, March 11, It Gets Better is the first of four comedy-based Applied Words series, and will take place at Schubas Tavern, 3159 N. Southport Ave., at 7:30 p.m.

Addressing themes of history, mythology, gender and high school, It Gets Better is a collaboration with Applied Face Theatre and is being presented in connection to its spring production of Silk Road Rising's Brahman/i: A One-Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show, by Aditi Brennan Kapil. Comedienne Tamale will host and curate the event, which features four prominent Chicago Live-Lit readers: Lily Be, Jill Howe, Greg Ledger and Precious.

The event is free, and open to the public ages 21 and up.

'Hannah Free' screening March 21

The Rainbow Alliance of the Unitarian Church of Evanston (UCE), 1330 Ridge Ave., will present Hannah Free on Friday, March 21, at 7 p.m.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for a dessert and coffee salon. Following the film will be a panel discussion. Admission is a \$10 donation.

Members of the panel are editor/producer Sharon Zurek, actors Taylor Miller and Maureen Gallagher, and producer Tracy Baim.

UCE is a "welcoming congregation" within the Unitarian Universalist Association. As a welcoming congregation, UCE pledges to address the needs of LGBT people at every level of congregational life, and celebrate the lives and loves of all people in the spirit of the first principle of Unitarian Universalism. The Rainbow Alliance carries out the goals of UCE's welcoming congregation.

Tickets go on sale Feb. 25; visit ucevanston.org or call 847-864-1330.

Colombian gay soldier tells story in new book

Steel and Velvet is the true story of a gay man in the Colombian army. The author, Juan Cordoba (a pseudonym), has been granted U.S. asylum and is now living in Chicago. The book, subtitled A Soldier's Story, has been released in English.

Stationed on the border of Egypt and Israel, part of an international peace-keeping mission, Cordoba describes the challenges of being true to himself and coming to terms with his own sexuality—within the confines of an all-male military environment.

The hatred and persecution that followed the publication of this book, when first published in Spanish, led the author to flee his country and seek political asylum in the United States.

See <http://www.amazon.com/Steel-Velvet-Soldiers-Juan-Cordoba/dp/1494264811>.

SPORTS

Sky announces schedule

The Chicago Sky has announced its 2014 regular-season schedule.

Led by fourth-year head coach Pokey Chatman, fourth-year assistant coach Christie Sides and second-year assistant coach Wayne "Tree" Rollins, the Sky enters its ninth WNBA season after a successful 2013 season, where the team finished atop the Eastern Conference with a 24-10 record.

With All-Stars Sylvia Fowles, Swin Cash, Courtney Vandersloot and Epiphanny Prince, along with 2013 WNBA Rookie of the Year Elena Delle Donne, the Sky open the 34-game regular season on Friday, May 16, against Eastern Conference rival the Indiana Fever, led by four-time WNBA Defensive Player of the Year Tamika Catchings. The Sky's 17 regular-season home games will be held at Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Ill.

Visit www.chicagosky.net.

Gay bowling tourney March 7-9 in Chicago

The 2014 Second City Open Chicago (SCOTCH) Bowling Tournament will take place March 7-9 in Chicago.

Registration and bowling will take place at Waveland Bowl, 3700 N. Western Ave. There will be doubles and team events.

There will be other events, such as the opening-night party at The North End, 3733 N. Halsted St., on March 7 at 9-11 p.m.; and the banquet/awards presentation at Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave., on March 9, 6:30-8 p.m.

The entry fee is \$99, plus a nominal processing fee. There will also be a senior handicap division with an entry fee of \$10. (If entries are mailed—to SCOTCH Bowling Tournament, 2328 W. Farwell Ave., #3W, Chicago, Ill., 60645—they must be postmarked by Feb. 28.) The host hotel is the Best Western Plus Hawthorne Terrace, 3434 N. Broadway.

SCOTCH is backed by the non-profit Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA), so donations are also tax write-offs.

The tournament organizers are also looking for sponsors. Levels include silver (\$125), gold (\$250) and platinum (\$500).

See <http://scotch.chicagomsa.org> or email bod3@chicagomsa.org.

CLLAW on March 8

The Chicago League of Lady Arm Wrestlers (CLLAW) will be featured at CLLAW XVIII on Saturday, March 8, at Logan Square Auditorium, 2539 N. Kedzie Ave.

Presented by Sideshow Theatre Company,

CLLAW's 18th bout will feature local lady arm wrestlers decked out in over-the-top outfits, complete with "fast-talking managers, ebullient entourages and shady referees," according to a press release.

The Cell Phones will provide musical entertainment.

Tickets are \$10, with a cash bar available. Doors open at 10 p.m., with the first match beginning at 10:30 p.m. See www.cllaw.org.

FFC Gyms offering 'Everest Challenge'

FFC Gyms will be running The Everest Challenge in all of its nine gym locations around Chicago through March 22, which will allow members and non-members the chance to see if they could cover the distance on a treadmill, stair-mill or bike to the summit of Mt. Everest (29,035 feet) and earn the chance to win great prizes like a sports photography package, spa treatments and a \$250 gift certificate to REI.

The cost is \$49 for FFC members and \$99 for non-members, who will then receive a five-week membership at any FFC during the duration of the program.

Sign up online at <https://ffc.com/everest-challenge> or at the gyms.

Indy museum showing gay-rodeo photographs

"Blake Little: Photographs from the Gay Rodeo" is taking place at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis.

"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.

The exhibition will run through July 13.

See www.eiteljorg.org.

Cubs move game to avoid Pride Parade conflict

The Chicago Cubs game scheduled for Sunday, June 29, against the Washington Nationals at Wrigley Field has been moved to Saturday, June 28, as part of a separate admission, day-night doubleheader. This change was made at the request of Ald. Tom Tunney, and in consideration of neighborhood traffic and congestion in connection with the annual Pride Parade in Chicago on June 29.

The first game of the doubleheader will be played at 12:05 p.m. The second game is scheduled to start at 6:15 p.m. There will be no game Sunday, June 29.

'Get to Know Team Chicago' March 3

Team Chicago Athletics and Culture will hold a community meeting Monday, March 3, 6-8 p.m., at The Call, 1547 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.

Attendees will get to meet the board of directors of Team Chicago and find out more about our plans to lead the Chicago delegation to Gay Games 9 in Cleveland and Akron, Ohio, on Aug. 9-16.

Email david.reithoffer@gmail.com for more information.

CGHA taking 'Polar Plunge' March 2

The Chicago Gay Hockey Association (CGHA) will participate in the Polar Plunge Sunday, March 2, to benefit Special Olympics Chicago.

For more information, visit <http://chicago-gayhockey.org/about/charity-events/>. To make a donation to one or more players, visit <http://www.firstgiving.com/team/251524>.



Jason Collins (right) signs a 10-day contract in front of Brooklyn Nets coach Jason Kidd.

JASON from page 17

everyone is enjoying their Sunday. Today should be a pretty cool day!"

The Nets posted a photo on their Twitter account of head coach Jason Kidd watching Collins sign his contract.

Collins is tied for third in Nets history with 510 games played, and also ranks in the team's top 10 in minutes played, offensive rebounds, and total rebounds.

"I think it is fantastic news. I applaud the Brooklyn Nets for their courage and judging Jason Collins on his ability to help them over the next 10 days and possibly beyond, [not on] whom he chooses to spend his life with and love," said openly gay Nevada State Senator Kelvin Atkinson. "Today is a great day for American sports and I hope this is not the last and I wish him much success."

NBA commissioner Adam Silver, in a statement, said: "Jason told us that his goal was to earn another contract with an NBA team. Today, I want to commend him on achieving his goal. I know everyone in the NBA family is excited for him and proud that our league fosters an inclusive and respectful environment."

Michael Sam, the gay football player who likely will be drafted into the NFL this spring and then make a mark on Sundays in the fall Tweeted after Collins' signing: "Congratulations to my friend @jasoncollins34—excited to see you do work out there #courage #groundbreaking."

Robbie Rogers, the gay professional soccer player, tweeted: "Very excited to watch @jasoncollins34 tonight more importantly I am proud to call him my friend."

K.C. Johnson, the NBA writer for the Chicago Tribune, Tweeted: "Good for Jason Collins. Good for Nets. Good for NBA. Good for society."

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