

WINDY CITY TIMES

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ON WITH THE SHOWS

WCT unveils its spring theater/dance preview.

Photo of Julian Larach, Johnathan Nieves and Jaslene Gonzalez in Sycamore by Dean La Prairie

15-23

COMEDY/ TRAGEDY

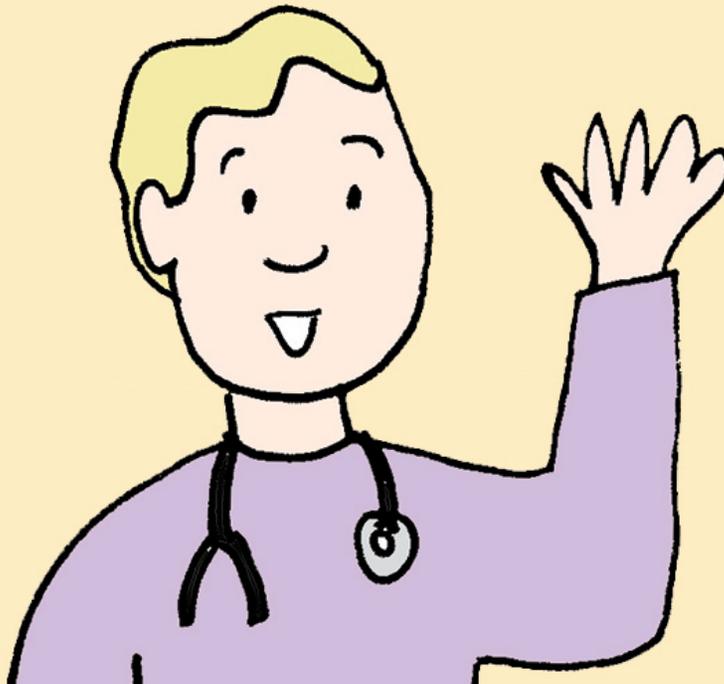
AIDS care nurse's life is rendered in comic-book form

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

For most people who have spent even a short stretch as a patient in a hospital ward, the nurse is the most important person in their lives. Doctors and residents often spend a few perfunctory emotionally distant minutes, usually in the early morning, and family and friends come and go until, in many hospitals, they are barred completely in the evening hours.

The nurse isn't just an avenue to medication, a wash or help in the middle of the night when the IV machine inevitably shocks one out of sleep with a shrieking alarm. They are a desperately needed reminder of one's humanity in an isolated and antiseptic world, filled only with the omnipresent hissing and electronic language of its machinery barely drowned by the banal drone of daytime television.

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Rendering of MK Czerwiec from Taking Turns: Stories from HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371. Image courtesy of Czerwiec



ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT

Center on Halsted program relaunches.

Photo by Peter Johnson

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KIKI

Movie about kiki scene screened in Chicago.

Photo from IFC Films

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Women protest Trump agenda.

Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

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OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Howard Brown Health's Cori Blum helps fight opioid abuse.

Photo from HBH

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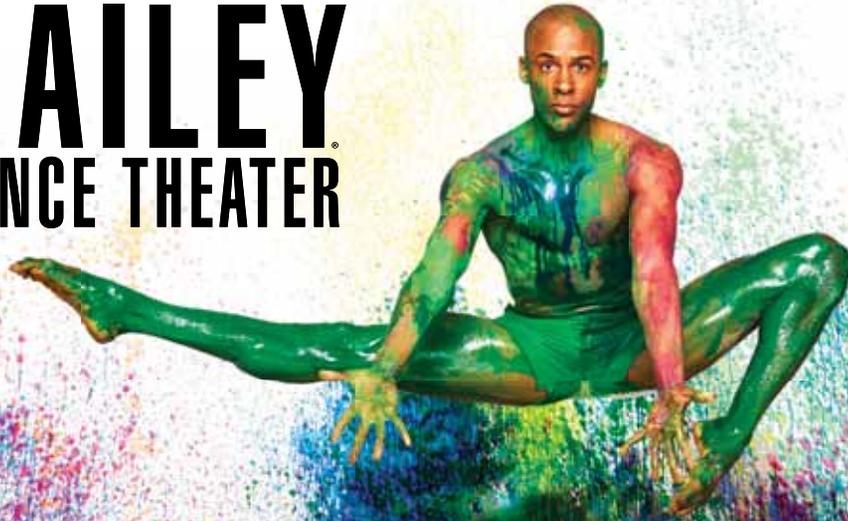


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UNDER COVER

Cordaro Dont'e Santiago (left) discusses his book, *I Will Never Be #1 In His Life: The Story of Dating Downlow Men: Volume 1*.
Photo by Bronson Pettitt

MARSHALL PLAN



YouTube star Caleb Marshall talks about fitness, his boyfriend and Britney Spears.
PR photo

APE MILE

WCT reviews the movie blockbuster Kong: Skull Island.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Laverne Cox, Richard Simmons and Justin Hartley.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

HUMAN
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Schneider co-sponsors federal LGBT-housing bill

BY MATT SIMONETTE

U.S. Rep. Brad Schneider (D-Illinois) is the first co-sponsor on a bipartisan bill, introduced March 10, that expands federal housing protections to the LGBT community.

The Fair and Equal Housing Act of 2017, also known as H.R. 1447, was sponsored by U.S. Rep. Scott Taylor (R-Virginia) and expands protections from Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act, which mandates non-discrimination for housing on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status or disability, to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Only 22 states, Illinois among them, have such protections in place.

Schneider told Windy City Times that, even in an especially tumultuous federal political climate, "You've got both sides of the political aisle looking to make a difference. ... I think we're hoping that, by building some broader bipartisan support, we push this forward. What's happening on the national scene is consuming so much of the news, we may be able to find people who want to have a positive impact at home."

In a March 10 statement, Taylor, who is a real-estate broker, said of the bill, "Nobody should face discrimination when it comes to something as important as where they choose to live. Bad credit, poor references, and a lack of respect for property should be the criteria for judging with whom you should and shouldn't do business. This bill protects equal access to housing opportunities for all Americans, and I urge my colleagues to support it."

Schneider was also among 10 Democratic members of Illinois' congressional delegation who, in early March, signed a letter to Gov. Bruce Rauner



U.S. Rep. Brad Schneider.
Official head shot

urging him to support continued protections for transgender school students in the state, following the Trump Administration's revocation of trans-affirming federal Title IX guidelines. Schneider said that, as of March 12, Rauner had not offered a response.

also phoned into Jewish Community Centers in New York, Wisconsin and Florida.

LGBT ally Cepek suffers brain injury

A GoFundMe page has been set up for John Cepek, an LGBT ally (through the group PFLAG, formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) who suffered a brain injury Feb. 27 while traveling in Croatia with his wife Char, according to a University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) item.

John, who retired in 2004 after 32 years at UIC, is a board member of the university's non-students group.

Also on Feb. 27, in a separate incident, Char broke her wrist.

The GoFundMe site is at <https://www.gofundme.com/john-cepek-emergency-medical-care>.

The UIC item is at <https://news.uic.edu/help-retired-staff-member-injured-abroad>.

Jewish school gets bomb threat

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago police, on the morning of March 7, responded to a bomb threat placed against a Jewish day school in the 5900 block of Sheridan Road, according to reports.

Chicago Jewish Day School was promptly evacuated after school officials received the threat. Students were allowed back in the building at about 10:50 a.m., after CPD completed their search.

The school is located in Emanuel Congregation, which from 2004-2016 was also the home of Congregation Or Chadash, a mainly-LGBT synagogue. Or Chadash merged into Temple Sholom in Lake View in 2016 and now holds services there.

The Edgewater bomb threat was one of several that took place at Jewish facilities across the nation late March 6 and early March 7, according to Reuters. Threats were reportedly

GUEST COLUMN

BY CHARLOTTE HELTAI



Trump's America

I've been asked to say a few words about what Trump's America looks like for queer, trans, non-binary, and gender-non conforming people.

The short answer, from where I stand, is that it looks really scary—and a lot of people are in far more precarious positions than I am.

But I, as a socialist, as a queer, gender non-conforming woman, and as the proud sister of a brave trans man, am afraid. I am afraid because Donald Trump does things like rescind Obama's executive order which had given trans students, like my brother, the right to use the bathroom they wished to, and I am afraid because I know the real, human cost of policies like that one being issued from the White House.

No less than seven trans women of color have been murdered, in this country, in the last two months alone: one of them right here in Chicago. Her name was Tiara Richmond. She was just 24.

So, more than afraid, I am angry. I am angry at Trump and the people who support him, because they do everything they can to embolden the ugly forces of bigotry which already exist in our society. A society in which trans people are fully twice as likely to be unemployed as non-trans people, and a society in which the life expectancy of Black trans women is just 35 years.

Those statistics remind us that we cannot allow our anger to begin and end with Donald Trump. We must also be angry because after eight years under Obama, trans and queer and gender-non-conforming people are still not legally protected in their work places and thousands of queer and trans folks are still homeless and hungry.

We must be clear about the fact that Trump is a hideous symptom, and the escalation, but not the cause of a society in which a myriad of bigotries, including queer and trans-phobias, are both pervasive and institutionalized, and purposefully so. It is the entire political establishment—constituted by both Republicans and Democrats—that is complicit in upholding that oppressive and exploitative status quo. Republicans and Democrats alike have failed queer people, they have failed working people, they have failed women, and they have failed all marginalized communities. I do not believe that hope for the oppressed can be based within that political establishment.

The Democrats expect that bathroom bills and marriage equality are enough to win the

allegiance of queer people, but in isolating those issues they ask us to forget the thing that we know: all issues are queer issues, because there are queer people of every color, faith, and nation on this earth, and because all people—not only queer people—are adversely impacted by things like rigid gender norms and heterosexism.

So when the Democrats ask us to put our "radical" demands aside in order to campaign for them and the lesser evil they promise us, we must remember what that lesser evil really looks like for oppressed people. Barack Obama's lesser evil looked like thousands of unarmed Black people shot down by cops, it looked like millions of xenophobic deportations, it looked like a generation of young people in crippling debt, it looked like pipelines poisoning our water and orphans in Iraq, and Syria, and Palestine. The Democratic Party and their lesser evil-ism surely cannot be our hope, but that does not mean there is no hope.

There is hope; it is right here. In this room [at the International Women's Day event at the Chicago Teacher's Union] is our hope! Our hope is in the millions of people who have marched over the last two months, for women's rights, for immigrants' rights, and in solidarity with Muslims and refugees.

Our hope is in the people who have been part of the Black Lives Matter movement and the heroic struggle at Standing Rock and in the CTU teachers who fight to stop schools in Black and brown neighborhoods from closing. Our hope is in the thousands of people who took to the streets of Chicago just last week to fight for trans* liberation.

It is us, we, the workers and the marginalized, who have the power and the motivation to fight for and win more than just a lesser evil, we can win a better world: if we are organized, if we are unapologetic and independent in our aims, and if we are united in our commitment to stand in solidarity with all oppressed people—whatever they look like, wherever they come from, whoever they pray to, and whoever they love.

On this International Women's Day, and on every other day, we must remember that none of us are free until we all are free, and that opening the borders and ending the wars and closing the prisons and education and health-care and reproductive justice and a living wage for all—those are women's issues, those are queer issues, those are everybody's issues!

Charlotte Heltai is a graduate student at the University of Chicago and a member of the International Socialist Organization, as well as of UofC Resists (a coalition of students, staff, faculty and neighbors based at the University of Chicago and committed to fighting Trump's agenda and the bigotry his election has emboldened). This is the written speech the Heltai delivered at the International Women's Day Rally March 8, 2017 at the CTU headquarters—it was cut in various places due to time restraints.



Women's march and rally at Trump International Hotel & Tower and in the Loop on March 12. Above: Lashawn Yvonne Littrice. Photos by Gretchen Rachel Hammond. See more photos online.



Women's Day march defies Trump agenda

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

It wouldn't be Chicago if the only parade on St. Patrick's Day weekend was left to revelers decked out in green hats.

At least 300 people braved a bitterly cold afternoon to commemorate International Women's Day with a March 12 rally and demonstration "for Equality, Justice & Power" through downtown Chicago in a passionate expression of defiance against the Trump administration's policies and solidarity with each of the many groups under

attack.

Representatives from the Black, immigrant, LGBT and Muslim communities of all ages, races, genders and gender identities took part in the event organized by ANSWER Chicago, Black Lives Matter (BLM) Women of Faith and the Chicago Student's Union that began under the shadow of Trump Tower before taking a message of unity with organizations such as Fightfor15, BLM, NoDAPL and TransUpFront into the sunlight and cheering onlookers along South Michigan Avenue.

"We called for this march because we feel it is

absolutely imperative that we stay in the streets to build this new women's movement that will help lead to the defeat of the Trump agenda of racism, sexism, bigotry and war," march co-organizer and ANSWER Chicago member Candice Choo-Kang declared. "We will continue to take over the streets of this country and make it ungovernable until we vanquish Trump and win equality for all."

"We will stand in unity with one another," BLM Women of Faith member Lashawn Yvonne Littrice echoed. "We will not take any of the bigotry being dished out by the Trump agenda. We will not stand for our communities being taken over by such a racist person who thinks that he can say or do anything without any accountability. We cannot continue to sit silently while this administration takes over lives, bodies, access to affordable healthcare. We are here to say, 'No more!'"

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COMEDY/TRAGEDY from cover

The focal point of a patient's need to express pain or fear, or to obtain solace, the nurse becomes akin to a friend who is missed when, after eight or 12 hours, the diligent care they provide becomes the responsibility of another.

Chicago-based nurse and cartoonist MK Czerwiec's book *Taking Turns: Stories from HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371* takes the reader on a journey from the point of view of a nurse who worked in the HIV/AIDS care unit at what was then Illinois Masonic hospital in Chicago's Lake View neighborhood from 1994 until the unit's closure at the turn of the century.

In an interview with *AGNI* magazine online, U.S. poet Marie Howe discussed the manner in which her work as a writer changed after her brother John succumbed to HIV/AIDS.

"I wanted, after that, to make an art that was transparent, that was accessible to people who don't usually read poetry, to my brothers and sisters—wonderful, intelligent, smart people who want to read poetry if they know what to read," she said. "Regular people. And I wanted it to be the kind of talk that people talk in sick rooms, where it is very direct and very understated."

The accessibility Howe describes is infused into every page of *Taking Turns*.

A story is told, in beautifully rendered

comic-strip form, that begins in 1993 with a discouraged Czerwiec, who has followed in her mother's footsteps of nursing after degrees in English and philosophy resulted in a miserable job chained to a photocopier.

Yet, only three years into nursing school at Rush University, Czerwiec tells her instructor she is ready to quit after a patient elicits haunting memories of her father, who suffered a stroke when Czerwiec was only 17 and slowly deteriorated over the next seven years before suddenly passing away during her first semester in nursing school.

The instructor suggests that Czerwiec work with AIDS patients on the 7th floor of Rush.

"At that moment," Czerwiec writes, "despite being 13 years into the AIDS pandemic, despite over 270,000 deaths from AIDS in the U.S., nearly 7,000 of them in Chicago, I knew very little about AIDS that hadn't been on TV or in the newspapers."

"My instructor was right," she adds. "I would learn from AIDS what I needed to know to be a good nurse."

The emotional honesty of the comic book is quintessential to the visceral experience of *Taking Turns*—funny, terrifying and heartbreaking.

As much as it informs the reader about the devastation of HIV/AIDS, the book allows the reader to see the disease through the eyes of

a person who is literally on the front lines. Its intimacy opens those heavy ward doors into every corner of Unit 371, which became Czerwiec's world, from a journal of her dreams to the last moments of a patient's life surrounded by family and friends who tell him that it is okay to let go.

In discussing the creation of the book with *Windy City Times*, Czerwiec related a history rich with irony.

"My mom had been a general medical nurse in Chicago during World War II and she had these tremendous stories because, like all other professions during that time, nurses took on a lot more roles," Czerwiec said.

Initially, she resisted her mother's inspiration. "I really wanted to have a place in the arts," Czerwiec recalled. "I loved literature and philosophy. I thought I was going to be a writer, but I realized, after graduation, that I wasn't going to get a job as a writer. My mother had gone back to nursing school in her late 60s. I was so proud of her for doing that. So, we went to nursing school at the same time. We would study together and help each other with our papers. It was fun."

Yet, Czerwiec's initial days in Unit 371 turned fun into a trial by fire—experiences she privately journaled.

"At first, it was really overwhelming," she said. "Because the learning curve was so steep. There

was so much responsibility, so much to learn. I felt like I was constantly screwing things up. In an inpatient unit, we were just scrambling to get people over these opportunistic infections but we knew they would be back and that we would probably see them decline until they passed away."

Raw emotion was piled onto the rigorous precision of the job. As an out lesbian, Czerwiec was a part of the community she was serving.

"There was so much loss," she added. "It becomes so personal. You just keep showing up and doing the best you can. There was caregiving fatigue. I would try to clear my head with my writing and then, at some point, I started painting these very simple images on boards and I would make memorials to people who I had cared for who had died. It wasn't until towards the end of the inpatient unit's life that I stumbled into making comics as a really helpful way to help me process care experiences."

To Czerwiec, her patients became "part of the family."

"We were people taking care of our own community so there was all this boundary crossing," she said. "Connected care was the kind of environment the unit wanted to foster. But there's a cost to that connection when your patients are passing away."

But what happens when that loss encompasses an entire unit?

Taking Turns vividly illustrates the aftermath of a night in 1999 when "just before a colleague and I [Czerwiec] were instructed to close the unit after transferring out our one patient."

"There wasn't the need for an inpatient dedicated unit because our patients were getting better after new drugs came out, started being used in combination and started working," Czerwiec explained. "It was right about that time that Advocate took over Masonic so, in that transition, they decided to admit AIDS patients to the oncology unit."

"We had become a strong community," she added. "I felt guilty because we were supposed to be super-happy but, on the other hand, this community of volunteers and caregivers that was so important to me was gone. It was like when a war ends and everyone goes home. You want the war to be over but there's still a sense of loss."

After the unit closed, Czerwiec was in a state of mourning and at a loss as to what to do next.

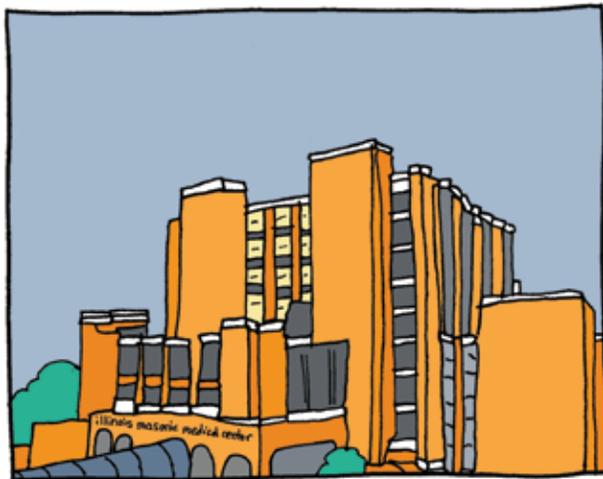
She returned to her creation of comic strips. It was there that she "discovered the voice I had wanted all the way back when I was going to be a writer."

In order to ensure she represented the "stories that help us heal" and the patients she served with absolute authenticity in her work, Czerwiec returned to school.

In 2009, she received her master's degree in medical humanities and bioethics from Northwestern University.

"A movement was starting up called graphic medicine," Czerwiec explained. "People were working at the intersection of comics and healthcare."

In less than a decade, that movement has grown from a website founded by physician, comic artist and writer Ian Sullivan into what



A page from cartoonist MK Czerwiec's book *Taking Turns: Stories from HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371*. Image courtesy of Czerwiec

Night Ministry group seeks to empower homeless youth

BY MOLLY SPRAYREGEN

Last February, Candace Musick—youth development manager for The Night Ministry, which offers services to the homeless in Chicago—held a focus group at the Home Run Inn pizza restaurant in Lake View.

The group, composed of homeless and formerly homeless Chicago youth, had come together to brainstorm the best way to create a unified youth leadership team that integrated young people from all of the Night Ministry's youth programs and worked to elevate youth voices.

The result: Youth 4 Truth, a 10-week leadership program during which the 16 young people selected to participate build professional development skills, offer ideas on improving the Night Ministry's services, raise awareness about youth homelessness and, most importantly to those involved according to Musick, do what they can to "leave a legacy" for the next generation of homeless young people that come to Chicago looking for community and support.

While the young people who participate in Youth 4 Truth are compensated, Musick emphasized her surprise that money has not been a priority for many of them. "They want to give back," said Musick, "They know what it's like, they're

still in it, they know what they've experienced before they got to the Night Ministry and they want to be able to make the path easier and better for the young people that come after them, not only within the agency but also within the city of Chicago."

Young people between the ages of 14 and 25 who utilize any of the Night Ministry's youth services are eligible to apply for a 10-week Youth 4 Truth cohort. Because the Night Ministry provides care for both those who are currently homeless as well as aftercare for those who have found housing, Musick said Youth 4 Truth is a fantastic way to bring together a variety of perspectives.

The inaugural Youth 4 Truth cohort decided to focus their 10 weeks on creating a resource guide for homeless youth that are new to Chicago. The city has become a type of hub for homeless mid-western young people, particularly those who identify as LGBTQ+. Musick explained that when many of the Youth 4 Truth members arrived in the city, they didn't know where to go or what sort of spaces were safe. So the group set out to create the resource guide they wished they could have been handed upon their arrival in the city.

Subsequent Youth 4 Truth cohorts have continued this work on the resource guide and have also devoted themselves to other tasks. In a re-



Youth 4 Truth meeting.

Photo from The Night Ministry

cent meeting, Youth 4 Truth member Broderick Hill worked with staff members on creating new consequence structures for The Crib, one of the Night Ministry's overnight shelters. Determined to make The Crib feel as safe as possible for everyone, he worked diligently to create a clear, precisely worded list of rules and what will happen if they're broken.

Hill has really enjoyed his time in Youth 4 Truth. He loves that he gets to help people around his age who can relate to him. "Spreading information to people in my age group is vi-

tal," he says. He loves the opportunity to be a resource for them.

"[The young people] are super excited about leadership and advocacy and they take their roles really seriously," explained Musick. "They call themselves youth leaders in the space and they like to take charge in their different house meetings or different group settings and like to help staff get things done."

Musick has loved watching the young people involved in Youth 4 Truth grow in confidence and

Turn to page 12

COMEDY/TRAGEDY from page 6

the 2017 Graphic Medicine Conference calls a "community of academics, healthcareers, authors, artists and fans of comics and medicine."

"It has long been known that comics are 'not just for kids,'" Sullivan writes. "Over the past decade this underrated medium has begun to receive recognition and acclaim from literary critics, academics, and broadsheet reviewers. Often drawing on direct experience, the author builds a world into which the reader is drawn. Amongst the growing number of autobiographical works, titles dealing directly with the patient experience of illness or caring for others with an illness are to be found."

Czerwiec found a calling which she describes as "finally bringing the creative and the clinical experience together."

"Graphic medicine became my job," she said. "It is such a thrill and incredibly satisfying to be teaching, lecturing and, at the same time, working on my book. The thing that makes comics work is the marriage between a minimal amount of text and an image. It feels like it comes really easily to me. I think everyone has the ability to draw. We just don't always access it."

It is an ability Czerwiec encourages from the Northwestern students who attend the drawing medicine seminar she created.

"They are so instinctually creative," she said. "Their drawings reveal their concerns, fear, worries, moments of joy and humiliation. They

process a lot about the clinical encounter just by drawing it."

In creating Taking Turns, Czerwiec said she felt a need to "go back, carefully look at and process" her experiences on Unit 371.

"I felt like there was a period where we weren't talking about [the AIDS crisis], how difficult it was and how many people were lost," she added. "I wanted people to talk about it and reflect on it. In the context of healthcare, I want people to think about what is exportable from the kind of care that was provided in this very unique place. What can we export from that in terms of how we provide care and how we teach young people to provide care today?"

It is therefore only fitting that the discussions and the stories Taking Turns will inevitably reap begin with a single quote from Howe.

"The unendurable happens. You know, people we love and can't live without are going to die. We're going to die ... it's unendurable Art holds that knowledge. All art holds the knowledge that we're both living and dying at the same time. Art can hold it."

Taking Turns will be released by Pennsylvania State University Press on March 15. A book launch featuring Czerwiec will be hosted by Art AIDS America at the DePaul Art Museum on March 30, 6:30 p.m., 935 W. Fullerton Ave.

For more details, visit ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org/event/taking-turns-stories-hiv-aids-unit-371.

For more details on MK Czerwiec, visit ComicNurse.com.

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Center relaunches therapy group for LGBT violence survivors

BY ANGELIQUE SMITH

The Anti-Violence Project (AVP) at the Center on Halsted “empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV-affected communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education, and supports survivors through counseling and advocacy,” the Center states.

Windy City Times spoke with Rachel L. Tillman, a licensed clinical professional counselor who runs the AVP, about her work.

Windy City Times: How did the Center’s Anti-Violence Project (AVP) come about?

Rachel Tillman: The Center was one of the founding members [in 1995] of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs [NCAVP], a reporting entity and coalition of 57 members who get together to influence policy on local and national levels. At that time, there wasn’t an entity that focused specifically on violence that targets LGBTQ communities.

There was, and still is, a sense that things are underreported. They also wanted to have a little bit more control in how things are reported—instead of grouping men and women together while not even considering sexual orientation. We connect people with resources, from housing to employment, and we offer individual, couples and group therapy. We currently have two groups for survivors of trauma, one of which is the domestic violence/intimate partner violence (DV/

IPV) group that I run. We also have a violence resource line.

WCT: How does the program receive funding?

RT: AVP is not primarily grant-funded; we rely on the Center and also get funding through the [federal] Violence Against Women Act [VAWA] and the [Illinois] attorney general’s office.

WCT: How, politically, could that drastically change funding for your program [since VAWA is federal]?

RT: Yeah. That’s, in part, why it’s very important that we are a coalition, as opposed to one-off entities. I was just on a call yesterday and we were talking about, “What do we do with the new attorney general and with [the threat to] Violence Against Women Act funding?” Our current funding is through the Illinois attorney general’s office, not the federal level.

WCT: Are the volunteers that you work with, in general, Center on Halsted volunteers?

RT: I supervise, recruit and train volunteers, so it’s a bit more of a vetting process. It’s a three-month minimum commitment because there’s a lot of training on how to handle calls. You’re dealing with people, oftentimes who are confused, distressed and might not even know they’re distressed. People who want to help can also donate, writing “Anti-Violence Project” in the memo line [of a check].

WCT: Are there any statistics that you can give me concerning LGBTQ DV/IPV that you think people would be surprised to hear?



Rachel L. Tillman.

Photo by Kelly Allison Photography

RT: Sixty-eight percent of our callers identify as men. The Center has a reputation for being a gay male organization and that might be why men, in particular, know that we’re safe to call. But it is a bit alarming that our stats are a bit reversed, gender-wise.

The problem with that stat is not just the general shock value, but the fact that there is only one DV shelter for men in the whole city and there are at least 22 for women. I can’t even count how many males try to go through the court system to get an order of protection, and it’s denied because it’s perceived that when men are violent, it’s mutual. It’s an often-neglected area in the field of DV.

WCT: What has been the community reaction to the group?

RT: We have gotten a lot of calls from people who are looking for an LGBT-specific group. There are entities that are very LGBTQ-friendly, but they’re not exclusive. We are the only group, to my knowledge, that says, if you identify as straight, we’re going to refer you out, just because we want this to feel like a safe group for people who identify as LGBTQ. I want to be very clear, I mean L-G-B-T-Q, so if people identify as bisexual and are in an opposite-sex DV relationship, they are welcome, too. What is often the case is that there’s a bi female partnered with a straight male and, oftentimes, her sexuality is used against her in a domestic-violence way.

WCT: What typically happens in a session?

RT: We have a loose curriculum I developed, in collaboration with other materials. We do a mindfulness exercise to get people a little bit more connected to their bodies and aware. Then we have a topical discussion. Oftentimes, we do individual reflection followed by group sharing. The group lasts about 90 minutes and we try to keep it small in size.

WCT: What does Center on Halsted do to ensure the safety and anonymity of group members?

RT: We’re bound by HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] law. In order to ensure physical safety, all of the clients have to have a key card to get access to our therapy groups. We also limit people in the group to those who do not identify as offenders. We maintain safety as to not retraumatize.

WCT: What do you think is the main stigma attached to IPV in the LGBTQ community?

RT: Externally, the way people outside of the

community—from law enforcement to service providers—minimize, neglect and retraumatize. The other prong is internal, the internal silence in the sense that the community is small. Who can I talk to about this when this person just led an awesome speech at, for example, Dyke March, and nobody is going to believe what she does at home? And then you want me to call the Center where I might know somebody on staff? Where do you go to for support within your own community? That’s probably what we see very often.

WCT: How does intersectionality come into play when recommending resources, care and support?

RT: It’s absolutely crucial and it’s best practice. From ethnicity to immigration status—it all comes into play. It’s scary because right now we’re dealing with an influx of people who are more afraid to talk about domestic violence because they’re undocumented and have deportation fears because of the current political climate. Intersectionality impacts everything we do.

More about the Anti-Violence Project:

—LGBTQ Violence Resource Line | 9-5 M-F | 773.871.CARE (2273)

—Group time: Thursdays, 5:30-7 p.m. Reserve a spot by emailing avp@centeronhalsted.org or calling 773-472-6469, ext. 438.

—Contact Rachel Tillman (rtillman@centeronhalsted.org) to volunteer

Calls to action

Rachel Tillman, LCPC, followed up with WCT with these calls to action in terms of DV/IPV:

1. Volunteer: Center on Halsted’s Anti-Violence Project; RVA (Rape Victims’ Advocates); The Network: National.
2. Give: Center on Halsted; other AVPs in states with limited protections (AVP.org).
3. Learn: A crucial dynamic in DV is power and control, not bruises and black eyes.
4. Be: A safe person, not shocked or disbelieving anything when someone in the community starts talking about their relationships: If two in five lesbian women and two out of three bisexual women have experienced violence by an intimate partner, then you’ve met a survivor or are one.
5. Ask and Notice relationships: Domestic violence in men is often neglected, unnoticed, or treated as mutual fighting, yet one in three bisexual men have experienced intimate partner violence.
6. Kickstart: Seventy-one percent of DV survivors reported being denied emergency shelter due to gender identity. We need more shelters accepting of all gender identities, gender non-binary, etc.
7. (Safely) Report: Transgender domestic violence is underreported and often the survivor is criminalized (or deported).
8. Call: The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is up for re-authorization next year—let’s ensure that provisions that protect sexual orientation and gender identity remain. Call the U.S. Department of Justice. If you live in a historically red state, contact your state’s U.S. representative to voice your support for reauthorization.
9. Show up: The support at airports was amazing—let’s also show up at courthouses and ensure that survivors are not arrested—a violation of VAWA.



Anti-Violence Project banner.

Photo courtesy of Peter Johnson

'Indivisible' event calls for action on state, federal levels

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

Even though it was the second strategy meeting to combat the Trump agenda held in Evanston in as many weeks, an audience packed into the gymnasium of the Fleetwood-Jourdain Center March 6.

Much like the Feb. 27 Equality Illinois event which filled the Unitarian Church of Evanston, this session hosted by the Chicago-based grassroots organization Indivisible included a panel of state and national political, advocacy and activist leaders including 9th District Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), 5th District Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL), Sen. Heather Steans, 14th District State Rep. Kelly Cassidy and Sen. Daniel Biss.

They were followed by representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Illinois, the Sister District Project, Chicago Women Take Action and the Women's March on Chicago.

Each fielded a deluge of questions from people eager to find an effective way not only in confronting Trump and a GOP-controlled Congress but in ending a statewide budget stalemate which has crippled vital services and advocacy organizations across Illinois.

Quigley briefly discussed the House Intelligence Committee on which he sits with the goal of investigating Russian interference in the General Election.

"There has to be public pressure from across the country," he said. "We're the most underfunded committee on The Hill. That has to change. [FBI Director] Comey briefed us last week and it was underwhelming. We have to have subpoena power, public meetings as well as private ones. In the final analysis, we need to know exactly what the facts were on the degree of Russian involve-

ment and if there was collusion."

"I think that this whole story of Trump and Russia and the rigging of our election is unraveling for the Trump administration," Schakowsky added. "The media is pulling every single thread. The American people, Republicans and Democrats, want to know what does Russia have on Donald Trump that he is willing it seems to sell out or NATO allies? This might be his undoing."

On a state level, Steans said "it is possible Illinois is more dysfunctional than Washington D.C."

"We used to always be able to get things done in Springfield by reaching across the aisle," she added. "That really changed with [Governor Bruce] Rauner coming in and this outrageous budget impasse. We're the only state in the country that has ever gone 20 months without a budget. It is immoral. We have been bending over backwards working with Republicans to get a deal and Rauner decidedly killed it last week."

"We have heard a great deal about how all of this is [House Speaker Mike] Madigan's fault," Cassidy noted. "I've been critical of the Speaker but the bottom line is that I am proud owner of at least three vetoes of bills that I have negotiated with this administration. I know first-hand the moving goal-posts method that this governor adopts. He doesn't want to make a deal. The bottom line is we are in a situation with a leader [Rauner] who doesn't want this to end."

While Biss concluded the evening with a call-to-action and political combat both on a state and national level, he told Windy City Times that he is presently examining the possibilities of a run to replace Rauner as governor in 2018.

For more information on Indivisible Chicago, visit: indivisiblechicago.com.



AVER LGBTQ military monument.
Photo courtesy of AVER

LGBTQ veterans plan Halsted St. monument

The Chicago Chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) is inviting donations in support of a new monument to honor the service of LGBTQ military members and veterans. The stone monument is to stand at the northwest corner of Halsted and Addison Streets and is to be dedicated in a ceremony on Memorial Day 2017.

On Saturday, March 18, from 3 to 5 p.m. Sidetrack will open its doors for a fundraiser in support of the project. The event will include two drinks each, food, 50/50 and Silent Auction. The suggested donation is \$20.

The Chicago Chapter of AVER built and dedicated the first LGBT Veterans Memorial Monu-

ment in a national cemetery in 2015. It now stands at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL.

Donations will go directly to the creation of this monument, which is to cost around \$20,000. Half of the amount has been raised so far and final payment is due at the end of April 2017. Contributions to this 501c(3) organization are tax-deductible.

AVER is a national non-profit, chapter-based association, primarily LGBT, of active, reserve, and veteran service members and allies, dedicated to full and equal rights and equitable treatment for all present and former members of the United States Armed Forces.

Donations can be sent to AVER-Chicago, P.O. Box 29317, Chicago, IL 60629 or www.gofundme.com/lgbtq-veterans-halsted-st-monument. Questions can be sent to Tim Zylstra at timothy.zylstra@yahoo.com.



State Sen. Heather Steans (left) and state Rep. Kelly Cassidy at the Indivisible meeting.
Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

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Cecelia Horan talks about new judicial role

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Cecelia Horan, who was appointed in January to be an at-large Cook County Circuit Court judge, said she had been trying to “put the pieces in place” for a long time before she found out that she’d been appointed to her new post.



Cecelia Horan.

Photo from Horan

Horan, who is lesbian, was appointed by Justice Mary Jane Theis and the Illinois Supreme Court to fill the position held by Judge Russell W. Hartigan, who retired.

“I felt lucky and blessed that Justice Theis and the Illinois Supreme Court decided that I was worthy of the position,” Horan said, also praising her new colleagues for the welcome she’s received in her early days on the job. “They’ve been totally gracious on giving advice, on everything from being a new judge to running for election, which I’ll have to do in 2018. I couldn’t be happier and feel more fortunate.”

She grew up on Chicago’s North Side and was with the firm Hinshaw & Culbertson LLC for 20 years, specializing mainly in transportation-related personal injury litigation as well as product liability and insurance coverage matters. Horan also had been co-chair of the firm’s Chicago Office Mentoring Committee.

She is currently also going into her second year as president of the Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago (LAGBAC).

“It’s a really fantastic organization, whose members are law students and legal professionals,” she said. “We’re a non-partisan organization and we do a number of things, [such as] provide

social and networking opportunities and a mentoring program that’s fantastic. We recently had a networking series called ‘Meet the Bench’ where we took law students to meet judges at the three state-court levels.”

According to Horan, “It’s critically important that [the judiciary] be representative of the community that we serve. It’s important for diverse people of all stripes to be on the bench, because, as I see in courtrooms every day, there are diverse litigants. We want the judiciary to be accessible. We want the people to feel like they are part of the process. It’s important for them to see that there are Black judges, Asian judges and LGBT judges.”

Bar association board has Kellogg lawyer

The National LGBT Bar Association and Foundation has appointed 11 new board members.

Among the new board members is Norma Barnes-Euresti, who is vice-president and chief counsel at Kellogg Company. She formerly served as an administrative law judge for the Illinois Human Rights Commission, and also served as an attorney for the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago.

Barnes-Euresti is a fellow of the American Bar Association, and is the executive sponsor for PRide & Allies.

Social worker to be honored as leader

Sarah Buino is being honored as the 2017 Emerging Leader awardee by the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL).

She is one of three social workers being honored by this chapter.

Buino (MSW, Loyola University Chicago; LCSW; CADC; CDWF) is founder of Head/Heart Therapy, Inc. She is a licensed clinical social worker, certified addictions counselor, Certified Daring Way facilitator and adjunct faculty member at Loyola University.

Her latest endeavor in clinical social work leadership is a project she has been collaborating on with Robert Hilliker, LCSW, of Houston. Together, they will be opening a new location of The Lovett Center in Chicago.

An award ceremony will be held later this fall to honor this year’s statewide winners.



Event co-organizer Gearah Goldstein. Below: Retired schoolteacher Roger Fraser talks to the school board.

Photo by Tim Carroll Photography

Community supports suburban trans students

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Members of the organization Progress for D15 & D211, on March 8, gathered at Walter R. Sundling, Jr., High School in suburban Palatine to support transgender students and District 15 school board members who have likewise supported transgender rights.

In late 2015, a transgender girl in suburban High School District 211 sued for the right to change in an isolated part of the girls’ locker room. The Department of Education, then under the auspices of the Obama Administration, weighed in in the student’s favor, and threatened to cut federal funds for the school for violating Title IX policies. The district cut a deal with the government and the student was allowed the access she wished.

According to a Progress for D15 & D211 press release, the March 8 rally came in response to stepped-up actions from another local organization, Parents for Privacy (P4P), which objects to the trans student’s arrangement with District 211 and its accompanying policy change. A group of families also sued that district and

the federal government with the help of the anti-LGBT legal group Alliance for Defending Freedom.

Progress for D15 & D211 said that P4P members and their supporters have been disrupting District 211 meetings regularly in order to speak out against the policy and that it did not want to see such disruptions occur at District 15 meetings.

“Our community is one of diversity, tolerance, and inclusion,” said the press release. “This vocal minority does not represent us. We will show our numbers and our support for students and the school board who is dedicated to protecting their human rights.”

During the meeting, one speaker, Linda Kapko, challenged board members to change their clothes there, in order to make a point about privacy. She also said that allowing a trans woman to change in the girls’ locker room was granting to her special rights.

Retired Palatine school teacher Roger Fraser, however, complimented the board on positive changes he’d seen during his 28-year tenure in District 15, and the years since his retirement. He especially praised policies perpetuating diversity and acceptance of all students, regardless of factors such as race, creed, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Note: Tim Carroll contributed to reporting of this story.



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AIDS United affirms research on viral loads

BY MATT SIMONETTE

AIDS United Public Policy Committee, on March 7, affirmed conclusive evidence proving that people living with HIV who have achieved a sustained, undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to sexual partners. The committee is a national coalition of community-based HIV/AIDS organizations.

"This is a landmark development in the response to HIV and too many people are not hearing this message and receiving its full benefit," said AIDS United President and CEO Jesse Milan Jr., in a statement. "This development puts each one of us living with HIV at the forefront of stopping new infections, and gives everyone strong, clear and direct language to stop the stigma and move all communities faster towards ending the epidemic."

The declaration underscores the organization's programmatic, policy and advocacy work to expand access to antiretroviral medications to all people living with HIV, the statement added.

AIDS United will also call upon service providers and advocates to widely promote knowledge about undetectable viral loads, as well as suggest federal Department of Health and Human Services officials review the issue and publish revised guidelines. They will also work towards reform of HIV-transmission criminalization laws, most of which were formulated years ago.

"We won't end this epidemic until all people understand this advancement and support access to antiretroviral care and other supportive services for people living with HIV. The science is clear and now we must put science to work," said Milan.

Nominations sought for 30 Under 30 Awards

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

The ceremony will take place Wed, June 21. Like last year, the event will take place at Polo Cafe and Catering, 3322 S. Morgan St. There will be a 5:30 p.m. reception, with the program being 6-7:30 p.m.

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

The deadline to nominate individuals is Friday, April 14.

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

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

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

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

This year's sponsors include AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Center on Halsted, and Howard Brown Health.

Honorees will be notified in May.

Comptroller to honor trans woman of color

On Friday, March 24, at 10:30 a.m. in the James R. Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph St., African-American transgender activist LaSaia Wade will be among those Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza will recognize for Women's History Month.

In a letter to Wade, Mendoza wrote, in part, "As we honor the trailblazers of the past whose impact through grassroots efforts and struggles created opportunities and triumphs of historic proportions, we also must applaud today's visionaries for their ongoing efforts. Their commitment to achieving both personal and professional success is deserving of our recognition and support."

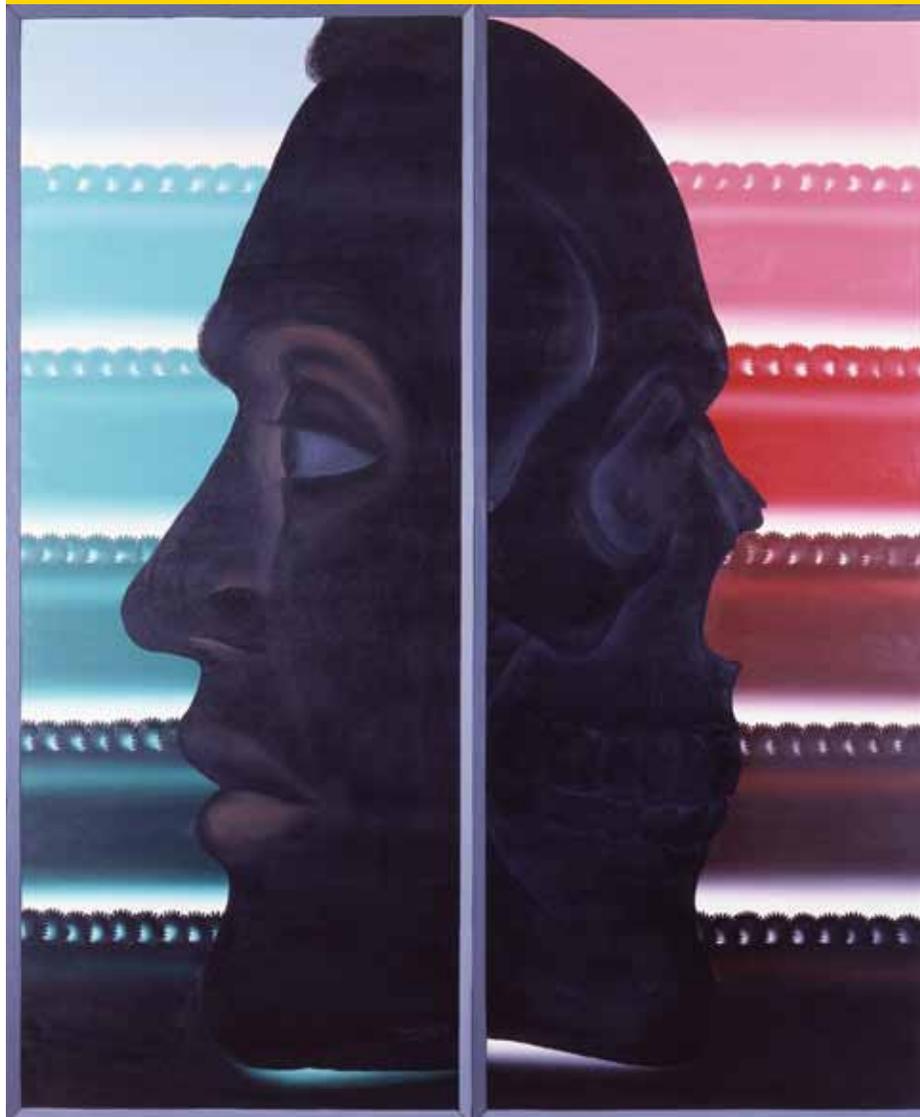
'HIV & Aging' panel March 22

The Care Plan Presents: HIV & Aging Panel—part of the Art AIDS America Chicago series—will take place Wed., March 22, 6-8 p.m., at the Alphawood Gallery, 2401 N. Halsted St.

Jackie Boyd—a longtime aging specialist and LGBTQI advocate and Founder of The Care Plan—will lead this discussion, which will address a generational shift in HIV/AIDS culture.

See ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org/event/art-aids-america-chicago-care-plan-present-panel-hiv-aids-aging/.

ART AIDS AMERICA Chicago



Roger Brown. *Illusion*, 1985. Courtesy of the Roger Brown Estate Painting Collection, School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Photo: James Connolly.

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Chicago's opioid epidemic

Local agencies work to stop a growing problem

BY DAVID THILL

High-profile opioid-related deaths in recent years, including the singer Prince, actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, and Glee's Cory Monteith have focused widespread attention on an epidemic affecting cities across the nation, including Chicago.

The Cook County Medical Examiner's office found that in 2015, Cook County had 609 opioid-related overdose deaths, 403 of which were in Chicago. Though heroin is often blamed, over-prescribing of opioids by physicians—particularly pain relievers such as methadone, oxycodone (including Oxycontin), and hydrocodone (including Vicodin)—is contributing significantly to addiction and overdose deaths.

Additionally, prescription opioids often act as a gateway to heroin, the presence of which has recently become apparent to many in the Windy City.

"Heroin Highway"

The Night Ministry has long been known for its youth housing programs (including the predominantly LGBT homeless youth shelter, the Crib) and its health outreach bus. In 2016, the organization launched its Street Medicine team to reach, by foot, those pockets of the city that the nearly 40-foot-long bus cannot.

Heroin is commonly injected via intravenous (IV) needle, a resource that clients have not requested of the outreach bus. (Many organizations distribute clean needles in efforts to quell the spread of infectious diseases transmitted through unclean needles.) But when the Street Medicine team began its work, it was a "whole new world," said David Wywialowski, director of outreach and health ministry at The Night Ministry.

"We're seeing an ... enormous increase in IV drug users, from what we saw just one year ago," said Jeff Ayoub, an outreach professional on the Street Medicine team. He has seen a rise in particular of young people from Chicago suburbs who are now homeless and using heroin. That number, he said, keeps growing.

On the day alone that Windy City Times spoke with him, Ayoub estimated seeing about a dozen IV drug users in their 20s, some as young as 22. He figured the average IV user served by the Street Medicine team is in their mid-20s to mid-30s.

In recent years, the Eisenhower Expressway has been nicknamed the "Heroin Highway," a reference to the easy path for the drug to travel from the city to the Western suburbs. "It is indeed a myth that the problem of drug abuse, specifically heroin abuse, is that of the poor inner cities," said a 2012 News Chicago article.

Having seen the effects of the opioid epidemic firsthand, The Night Ministry is now one of several agencies throughout the city working to mitigate the problem.

The antidote

Partnering with Chicago Recovery Alliance, a West Side harm reduction outreach program, the Street Medicine team started passing out supplies to individuals in need. Aside from clean syringes, alcohol wipes, and gauze, the outreach team also passes out vials of naloxone: the medication, injected into the outer thigh, that acts as an antidote against opioid overdose. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, naloxone could save the life of someone who has overdosed.

In a survey conducted at the end of 2016, the Street Medicine team documented 121 people whose lives had been saved by naloxone. The medication plays a part in treatment programs throughout the city.

Howard Brown Health offers a range of services for patients experiencing addiction, said Cori Blum, M.D., site medical director of Howard Brown Health Sheridan and Broadway Youth Center. These services range from harm reduction practices such as distribution of clean needles, to physical and behavioral health treatment, to distribution of and counseling in the use of naloxone for patients.

Dan Bigg, director of Chicago Recovery Alliance, said that his agency treats a wide range



Cori Blum, M.D.

Photo courtesy of Howard Brown Health

of individuals. In October, the City of Chicago granted the organization \$250,000 to distribute the antidote in the communities hardest hit by the epidemic, such as those on the West Side. Bigg noted that this was the first time in 20 years Chicago Recovery Alliance received government funding.

Chicago Recovery Alliance has several sites throughout the city—listed on its website, Any-PositiveChange.org—where anyone can go to receive training in the proper use of naloxone in order to be prepared to respond if they witness an overdose.

The FDA also provides precautions for patients to follow should their doctors prescribe an opioid.

EI announces legislative agenda

Equality Illinois (EI) announced its 2017 legislative agenda—a package of bills the organization aims "to advance the civil rights protections of LGBTQ Illinoisans in the criminal-justice system, improve representation on public boards and commissions and assist transgender Illinoisans," according to a press release.

The organization added that Equality Illinois Director of Public Policy Mike Ziri has been working in the state capitol with legislative partners and allied organizations to get the following bills passed:

—SB 1761: This legislation, which state Sen. Daniel Biss (D-Evanston) and Rep. Litesa Wallace (D-Rockford) are sponsoring, would curtail use of a panic defense in murder cases.

—SB 889 and HB 2431 seek to establish non-discrimination protections in jury service in Illinois on the bases of several classifications, including gender identity and sexual orientation. State Sen. Toi Hutchinson (D-Olympia Fields) and Rep. Emanuel Chris Welch (D-Hillside) are sponsoring this proposal.

—SB 1670 is designed to encourage the development of LGBTQ Illinoisans for public service. State Sen. Scott Bennett (D-Champaign) is sponsoring this bill.

—HB 1785 would modernize the standard for a person to change the gender marker on their birth certificate. State Rep. Greg Harris (D-Chi-

cago) is the bill's sponsor.

Also, EI's agenda includes participation in the Responsible Budget Coalition campaign to secure a fair state budget supported by reasonable revenue sources. The organization is also working against two anti-LGBTQ measures—SB 64, a religious-freedom legislation; HB 664, which would force transgender students to use separate restrooms and locker rooms from their peers in schools.

Read more about the legislative priorities at EqualityIllinois.org/2017-legis/.

Pro-LGBT groups, families meet with DeVos

Families and a trio of pro-LGBT organizations met with Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos on Feb. 8 in Washington, D.C.

According to a press release from GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard, "I joined my colleagues from NCTE [National Center for Transgender Equality] and Equality Michigan and a delegation of families in meeting with Secretary DeVos to relay the concerns and fears of hundreds of thousands of students, educators and parents who have been affected by the alarming actions of the Trump administration.

"We highlighted the pervasive violence and discrimination that the majority of transgender students face across the country, including be-

MINISTRY from page 7

begin taking more initiative in their individual Night Ministry programs, but the effect has gone beyond the Night Ministry, itself. Youth 4 Truth has partnered with One Northside, whose youth organizer, Anna Mangahas, teaches professional development skills to the group. This partnership has encouraged many youth leaders to get more involved in advocacy. Some now attend One Northside meetings on their own. Two Youth 4 Truth members are even on the youth leadership board for the National Network for Youth. These two leaders get the opportunity to travel around the country to advocate for homeless youth, and they also participate in bimonthly conference calls.

Youth 4 Truth has continued to grow in scope, and Music's main wish is that it continues doing so. She wants youth involved in as many aspects of the Night Ministry as possible, and she also hopes to plan a trip to Washington, D.C., to give Youth 4 Truth members an opportunity to meet with political leaders. (They already take trips to Springfield.) All of her hopes center around making the young people feel more empowered.

"I think the possibilities are endless," she said. "They're just so creative and energized and motivated and amazing."

*Note: Molly Sprayregen is planning to begin volunteering with the Night Ministry soon.



Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

Photo from official website

ing prevented from using their correct name and pronouns and appropriate school facilities.

"Above all, we ensured that DeVos heard—directly from us—that we will not budge or compromise when it comes to the full support and protection that all of our children, including LGBTQ youth, deserve from this administration, from the Department of Education and from its Office for Civil Rights."

In early February, it took Vice President Mike Pence to break a U.S. Senate tie to confirm DeVos as secretary.



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in the LIFE

Blaise Moran

TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN
PHOTOS FROM MORAN

- **Age**
"Over 50"
- **Relationship status**
"Married for two years, together for just over three years."
- **Hobbies**
Antique shopping
- **Favorite Chicago restaurant**
Tango Sur
- **Job title**
Sales representative for a major liquor distributor
- **Favorite movie**
Lawrence of Arabia
- **Favorite book**
Nicholas and Alexandra
- **Little-known fact**
"I visited [more than] 30 countries in my childhood."

Blaise Moran takes a deep, personal look at the Bible in his new, self-published book, titled *The Unethical Bible*.

He spent six years writing, filling 818 pages with more than 300,000 words. The average book, by comparison, is about 50,000 words. It was released around Dec. 22, which is the winter solstice and, as he noted, is "a key date in many pagan religions."

"The Unethical Bible is an irreverent summarization of the King James Bible from a non-believer's standpoint that includes a running commentary on its stories' ethical worth," he said. "The viewpoints I state often vary greatly from those preached from a pulpit. It is also the world's first-ever complete statistical survey of the Bible's ethics, when judged by 21st-century standards."

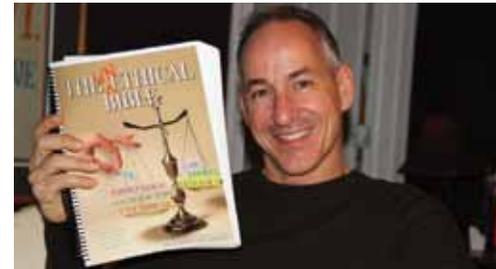
"If you want to know who did what to whom, this book tracks all the inter-human edicts and actions of the Bible and gives statistics for how good or bad it really is, insofar as how humans should treat each other," said Moran, who started writing the book in November 2010 and finished in November 2016.

"In order to see clearly who says to do what to whom, all of the loving, generous, fair and good, evil, unethical, ridiculous and mythical, and contradictory and hypocritical edicts, actions, statements, and beliefs of the Bible's characters are color-coded, so that, at a glance, anyone can simply flip through the book and see how frequently and where each type of thing occurs. Each color code has various subcategories, with 27 in all. I totaled up each one, took a grand

total, and determined what colors and individual categories have the predominant percentages for the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Bible in its entirety."

Moran said there was a two-fold reason for the book: "I wanted to know how often the Bible instructed people to love other people, and what was the Bible's most frequent message insofar as it would affect people physically or emotionally now or later in their lives."

Moran said *The Unethical Bible* could be used



Jesus [Christ] was not only most likely gay, but also clinically insane," Moran said.

"Those who worship a god or follow a religion should know what it is they're admiring," Moran said. "Do Christians realize they're worshipping a god who murders children in the Bible? Do you fully understand that human sacrifice (a pagan ritual) is a key part of it? I doubt it. There are hundreds of good and fair rules in it, but this book's point is to find out what percentage of them are admirable, and what percentage aren't.

Totals for each color-code		
All evil	1,704,976	96.8%
All Ridiculous	26,762	1.5%
All generosity	26,209	1.5%
All unethical	2,034	0.1%
Fairness	401	0.02%
Contradiction	273	0.02%
Love people	37	0.002%
Grand totals	1,760,692	

by atheists to counter untrue or unreasonable claims of the religious, by agnostics to help decide if they should believe in God or not, by theists who want to find the benevolent passages in it, and by scholars who want to hear a truly different perspective of the Bible's stories. All of them could learn what it's actual ethical worth is by today's moral standards.

Moran's favorite part of the book is the conclusion, "where I sum up my thoughts on religions and gods in general," he said. The most controversial aspect was, "My hypothesis that

"The book does paint the Bible in an overall negative light, but this is the fault of the overwhelmingly evil and unethical actions and edicts of its characters. If they were nice people who advocated love and generosity most often, then the condescending tone I've taken would not have been adopted."

For more information about *The unethical Bible*, including ordering, go to the book's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/The-UnEthical-Bible-914052322061517/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel.

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Boston LGBTQ youth theater group first to receive highest honor from White House

Receiving the award is a historic moment not only for True Colors, but also for the White House in recognizing and honoring the artistic talents of America's LGBTQ youth, especially youth of color.

The next night (following *Moonlight's* win for Best Picture at the Oscars, a first for a Black LGBTQ film), True Colors Out Youth Theater—the country's longest running LGBTQ youth theater company—celebrated a first, too, with a 2016 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award presented last November at the White House by First Lady Michelle Obama.

The National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award is the highest award in the country for youth development programs, and receiving the award is a historic moment not only for True Colors, but also for the White House in recognizing and honoring the artistic talents of America's LGBTQ youth, especially youth of color.

As one of the 12 awardees—chosen from a pool of more than 251 nominations and 50 finalists—True Colors became the first LGBTQ organization to receive the award.

Evelyn Francis, 40, director of programming at The Theater Offensive, the organization behind

True Colors, and troupe member Traeshayona "Trae" Weekes, 18, accepted the award from the first lady. Weekes shared what it was like to travel to the White House to receive the award.

"I never left Boston until True Colors. ... Accepting this award from the First Lady of the United States at the White House was an unforgettable experience, and I'm so proud to be part of the first ever LGBTQ organization to receive this honor," Weekes told *The Advocate*.

True Colors celebrated receiving the award at the historic Hibernian Hall in Roxbury, and the evening was an extravaganza showcasing local LGBTQ artists and performers, like rapper Oompa, poet Black Venus and the fabulous Fly Girls-Neon Calypso, Yune Neptune and Candace, to name a few. Generations of True Colors participants proudly returned for the evening to celebrate not only the coveted honor, but also the man who made it all happen.

"This moment means the world to me because it's the coming together of all the generations of True Colors Out Youth Theater. This is crazy! There are people who were in True Colors in the beginning who have children old enough to be in True Colors now," Abe Rybeck, a self-proclaimed "queer hillbilly" from West Virginia who was wearing his signature incandescent chandelier-like earrings, shared with me.

True Colors Out Youth Theater is the creative genius of Rybeck, 56, renowned executive artistic director of The Theater of the Offensive. The youth troupe has been in existence since 1994, and is the oldest out and allied youth theater in the world. The ages range from 14-22, where 75 percent are youth of color and 40 percent are either gender-nonconforming or transgender coming from Greater Boston's urban enclaves.

True Colors serves as a community sounding board and home base in forming and nurturing Greater

Boston's diverse LGBTQ youth artistic talent pool. The troupe receives theater training, leadership development and performance opportunities across greater Boston and beyond. And with the training the troupe challenges heterosexist cultural and familial norms by creating educational and social opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue within their communities by touring schools, churches, youth groups and social agencies.

For 23 years, True Colors has taught troupe members how to create art work from their authentic unapologetic lives. Learning that their lives are a work in progress as they grow and evolve, troupe members have shared that Rybeck has taught them how to put their stories in their bodies, and keep them there.

Troupe members learning the art and discipline of putting pen to paper then orally telling and finally acting out their stories before an audience is not only awe-inspiring to listeners—but it is also awe-inspiring to watch these young actors proudly evolve and embodying their unique narratives.

The work at True Color builds confidence, and acceptance of self and others. The power derived from sharing their stories and publicly holding them up as models of activism empowers the troupe and informs communities struggling with LGBTQ acceptance.

However, with this Trump presidency, LGBTQ communities across the country are worried if the country will become less accepting. For example, just last month, the Trump administration rolled back protections for transgender students revoking federal guidelines that allowed use of public school restrooms matching their gender identity.

When I asked how will True Colors respond to a Trump presidency rolling back LGBTQ rights, Rybeck laughed, stating, "My young folks will not tolerate it!"

Letters to the editor:

Journey to forgiveness

In the early morning hours of March 24, 2004, my brother Kevin Clewer was stabbed to death, by a still-unknown individual. This isn't about that day or any specific day since. This is about the subsequent journey, hope and a letter between me and that unknown person.

You may recall, my family was very vocal and visible those early years after Kevin's death. We openly sought justice. We had a single mission: to find you. We were confident you were a mad and hateful person. Honestly, we hated you at times. I hated you at times. Time has passed (almost 13 years) and, with time, comes change. Time can settle people and time can make us more in tune with ourselves.

Over the past several months I have given great thought to my mistakes, judgments, and even that occasional past swell of hatred towards you. I have softened dramatically. Admittedly, this vulnerability scared me initially, but I know it was and is essential to my freedom. This transition is driven by experiences and my desire to reconcile them—i.e.

my brother's death, my parent's deaths, witnessing others' loss of respect toward people who are different, and the loss of love and kindness in our nation over these past few months. I bet we share similar experiences.

Over my 50-plus years, I have seen the discord caused by impulsive decisions, including my own. Changing requires an admission of mistakes. To deal with the harm caused by these actions, we are traditionally taught or told to move on; to forgive and forget. Forgive. Forget. Easier said than done.

For me, it seemed easier to forgive someone I love vs. someone I didn't. Thus, my journey to you. I've learned neither is easier than the other. Forgiving hurts; however, I now know the process ultimately brings freedom. I've also finally realized forgiveness isn't conditional and that I had not truly forgiven some—including myself. Additionally, love is also not conditional and I haven't loved well either. Somewhere deep in me I'd kept a record of mistakes and missteps and used them to judge and in some cases, condemn those I love; including you.

I was late in realizing the power of love. For years, I struggled thinking I wasn't worthy of receiving or sharing real love. Maybe you have felt

the same way? Kevin's death fueled this struggle. It wasn't until recently I realized the value of openly loving others and this better spiritually fulfills me.

The power of love and forgiveness is essential because forgetting is never truly possible. Memories of good and not so good times are always present. I believe it is the power from both love and forgiveness that will help cement what is and was important.

I am hopeful we can forgive each other to achieve our own freedom, as the last thing we have been is free. In my pursuit of freedom, I've finally realized that love is the key to true forgiveness; unconditional love. This letter comes to say that, as a brother, I love you—and, as one who made the mistake of killing my biological brother, I forgive you.

Where we go from here is unknown. If this letter finds its way to you, it's really now up to you. For me, writing you and sharing these thoughts has lifted a weight from me. I am hopeful you will reach out to me as your true freedom will come when we can lift that weight from you.

*Peace and love,
Ron Clewer*

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The Wiz is part of Windy City Times' spring theater preview.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

SPRING THEATER PREVIEW

New shows: Be around when they happen!

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Year after year, half of all the shows produced in Chicago theaters are world or regional premieres. In other cities—even New York—audiences often are reluctant to see plays or playwrights unknown to them, but Chicago audiences embrace discovery and are eager to be astonished by new talent onstage or behind-the-scenes. Spring will offer 50-75 unknowns to local theatergoers. Here are 12 that look good on paper—just a small fraction of the total. They are listed by production dates, beginning with the first preview performance.

Sycamore, Raven Theatre Company (Edgewater), now through April 13. Midwest suburban teens Celia and Henry are more-or-less normal siblings except when they fall in love with the same boy, such as John, their new neighbor and fellow high schooler. It's a love triangle with at least one side that's pink. That's the premise of this world premiere "dramedy" by Sarah Sander, directed by rising star Devon de Mayo in her Raven Theatre debut. Tickets: <http://www.raven-theatre.com/sycamore>

Silent Sky, First Folio Theatre (Oakbrook), March 29-April 30. A Midwest premiere by Lauren Gunderson, recent winner of several major national writing awards. The play's focus—appropriate for Women's History Month—is Henrietta Swan Leavitt, a little-known "computer lady" at the Harvard University observatory in the 1920s. She assisted astronomers with calculations, but was not herself allowed to access the telescope. Even so, Leavitt made ground-breaking discoveries that led the way for Dr. Edwin Hubble and all later astronomers. Melanie Keller directs. Tickets: firstfolio.org



America's Next Top Model winner Jaslene Gonzalez is among those starring in Sycamore.
PR photo

Linda Vista, Steppenwolf Theatre (Lincoln Park/Old Town), March 30-May 21. It's a world premiere by Tracy Letts, author of *Killer Joe*, *August: Osage County* (Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award) and *Superior Donuts* (now a CBS sitcom) among other vibrant and varied works. Nuff said. Linda Vista explores middle-age male angst through a divorced, washed-up 50-year-old who starts over. Tickets: Steppenwolf.org/tickets

King of the Yees, Goodman Theatre (The Loop), March 31-April 30. It's a Chicago double-header for playwright Lauren Yee. Her play *Hook-*

man (a darkly-comic take on the urban legend of the hook-handed serial killer) is slated for Steep Theatre (see below), but first Goodman Theatre offers this Yee world premiere, a family comedy—perhaps autobiographical—about a San Francisco Chinese-American family with a daughter named Lauren. Tickets: GoodmanTheatre.org

Scapegoat, New Colony Theater at The Den (Bucktown), April 5-May 7. Most of us already think Members of Congress worship Mammon, so it's an easy stretch to believe that some may be Satanists as well. Or is that Breitbart fake news? This world premiere by Conor McNamara concerns a powerful Senator, in line for the Supreme Court, who's accused of worshipping the Devil, a charge which threatens his family's political dynasty. Hey, it's just a play. We all know that our National Evil is in the White House. Tickets: The-NewColony.org

Into the Beautiful North, 16th Street Theater (Berwyn), April 13-May 20. Like Lauren Yee, wonderful Latina writer Karen Zacarias also has two overlapping Chicago productions. Her comedy about Spanish-language telenovelas, *Destiny of Desire*, is at the Goodman Theatre through April 16, just overlapping this world premiere, co-directed by Ann Filmer and Miguel Nunez. Into the Beautiful North is adapted from Luis Alberto Urrea's novel inspired by *The Magnificent Seven*, as women from a small Mexican village cross the border seeking seven good men to protect them from narco-traffickers. Tickets: 16thstreettheater.org

Forty-Two Stories, City Lit Theater Company (Edgewater), April 14-May 28. This world premiere "high-rise condo comedy" from versatile Douglas Post concerns a Lake Shore Drive condo tower where everyone has issues, tenants and staff alike. The doorman is a full-time University of Chicago student and an unknown employee steals women's underwear from apartments and ... well, you get the idea. Scott Westerman is the director. Watch out when you step into that elevator shaft. Tickets: citylit.org

Hookman, Steep Theatre (Andersonville), April 15-May 27. It's Lauren Yee's (see *King of the Yees*,

above) lethally slashing dark comedy inspired by the urban legend. Following a terrible accident, Lexi begins to see Hookman everywhere. Tickets for Hookman: steeptheatre.com

Paradise Blue, TimeLine Theatre (Lincoln Park), April 26-July 23. Like August Wilson's Pittsburgh-focused *Century Cycle*, playwright Dominique Morisseau's plays center on Detroit as it once was. This Midwest premiere is set in 1949 and concerns a legendary jazz club and the pressures (and promises, perhaps) of urban renewal. Ron OJ Parson directs a play described as "jazz-infused." Tickets: TimelineTheatre.com

Relativity, Northlight Theatre (Skokie), May 11-June 18. Living legend Mike Nussbaum plays Albert Einstein in this world premiere by Mark St. Germain (*Freud's Last Session*). 'Nuff said. While interviewing an aged Einstein, a reporter asks about physics and mathematics and Einstein's mysterious daughter born in 1902, and never heard of again after 1903. The child's existence wasn't known until the mid-1980s. Masterful Nussbaum must play younger to pull off Einstein: Nussbaum is in his 90s and Einstein died at 76. Northlight artistic director BJ Jones will stage the play. Tickets: Northlight.org

T., American Theater Company (North Center), May 18-June 25. Earlier this season we had a pop-rock opera about Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan, footnotes in the history of championship figure skating. Now we have a world premiere play about the price of glory, gold medals and rivalry. Perhaps author Dan Aibel and director Margot Bordelon—who has many Chicago credits—have a new salchow on the 1994 Harding/Kerrigan kerfuffle. Tickets: ATCWeb.org

Bright Half Life, About Face Theatre at Theater Wit (Boys Town), May 26-July 1. Tanya Barfield won a 2016 Lambda Literary Award for this examination of a modern lesbian relationship—is it different than other contemporary relationships?—concerned with career, family, home-making and building a life. About Face artistic associate Keira Fromm directs. Ledo. Tickets: AboutFaceTheatre.com

WHAT IS GENVOYA®?

GENVOYA is a 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years and older and weigh at least 77 lbs. It can either be used in people who are starting HIV-1 treatment and have never taken HIV-1 medicines before, or people who are replacing their current HIV-1 medicines and whose healthcare provider determines they meet certain requirements. These include having an undetectable viral load (less than 50 copies/mL) for 6 months or more on their current HIV-1 treatment. GENVOYA combines 4 medicines into 1 pill taken once a day with food. GENVOYA is a complete HIV-1 treatment and should not be used with other HIV-1 medicines.

GENVOYA does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS. To control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses, you must keep taking GENVOYA. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to reduce the risk of passing HIV-1 to others. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about GENVOYA?

GENVOYA may cause serious side effects:

- **Build-up of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large and fatty. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turning yellow (jaundice); dark “tea-colored” urine; light-colored bowel movements (stools); loss of appetite; nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness in the right side of your stomach area.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking GENVOYA for a long time. In some cases, lactic acidosis and serious liver problems have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** GENVOYA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV and stop taking GENVOYA, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking GENVOYA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

Who should not take GENVOYA?

Do not take GENVOYA if you take:

- **Certain prescription medicines for other conditions.**

It is important to ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with GENVOYA. Do not start a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider.

- **The herbal supplement** St. John’s wort.
- **Any other medicines to treat HIV-1 infection.**

What are the other possible side effects of GENVOYA?

Serious side effects of GENVOYA may also include:

- **Changes in body fat,** which can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.
- **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking GENVOYA.
- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. If you develop new or worse kidney problems, they may tell you to stop taking GENVOYA.

The most common side effect of GENVOYA is nausea. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don’t go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking GENVOYA?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how GENVOYA works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Ask your healthcare provider if it is safe to take GENVOYA with all of your other medicines.
- **If you take antacids.** Take antacids at least 2 hours before or after you take GENVOYA.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if GENVOYA can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking GENVOYA.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about GENVOYA including Important Warnings on the following page.

Ask your healthcare provider if GENVOYA is right for you, and visit GENVOYA.com to learn more.



**GENVOYA does not
cure HIV-1 or AIDS.**

SHOW YOUR **POWER**

Take care of what matters most—you. GENVOYA is a **1-pill, once-a-day complete HIV-1 treatment** for people who are either new to treatment or people whose healthcare provider determines they can replace their current HIV-1 medicines with GENVOYA.

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200mg/tenofovir alafenamide 10mg tablets

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elvitegravir 150mg/cobicistat 150mg/emtricitabine
200mg/tenofovir alafenamide 10mg tablets

(jen-VOY-uh)

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT GENVOYA

GENVOYA® may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Build-up of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems**, which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark “tea-colored” urine; light-colored bowel movements (stools); loss of appetite; nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness in the right side of your stomach area.
- **Worsening of Hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** GENVOYA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking GENVOYA. Do not stop taking GENVOYA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking GENVOYA for a long time.

ABOUT GENVOYA

- GENVOYA is a prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older and weigh at least 77 lbs who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before. GENVOYA can also be used to replace current HIV-1 medicines for some people who have an undetectable viral load (less than 50 copies/mL of virus in their blood), and have been on the same HIV-1 medicines for at least 6 months and have never failed HIV-1 treatment, and whose healthcare provider determines that they meet certain other requirements.
- **GENVOYA does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

Do NOT take GENVOYA if you:

- Take a medicine that contains: alfuzosin (Uroxatral®), carbamazepine (Carbatrol®, Epitol®, Equetro®, Tegretol®, Tegretol-XR®, Teril®), cisapride (Propulsid®, Propulsid Quicksolv®), dihydroergotamine (D.H.E. 45®, Migranal®), ergotamine (Cafergot®, Migergot®, Ergostat®, Medihaler Ergotamine®, Wigraine®, Wigrettes®), lovastatin (Advicor®, Altoprev®, Mevacor®), lurasidone (Latuda®), methylethylergonovine (Ergostrate®, Methergine®), midazolam (when taken by mouth), phenobarbital (Luminal®), phenytoin (Dilantin®, Phenytek®), pimozone (Orap®), rifampin (Rifadin®, Rifamate®, Rifater®, Rimactane®), sildenafil when used for lung problems (Revatio®), simvastatin (Simcor®, Vytorin®, Zocor®), or triazolam (Halcion®).
- Take the herbal supplement St. John's wort.
- Take any other HIV-1 medicines at the same time.

IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about GENVOYA and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF GENVOYA

GENVOYA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the “Most Important Information About GENVOYA” section.
- Changes in body fat.
- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.

The most common side effect of GENVOYA is nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of GENVOYA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking GENVOYA.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with GENVOYA.

BEFORE TAKING GENVOYA

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical condition.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with GENVOYA.

HOW TO TAKE GENVOYA

- GENVOYA is a complete one pill, once a day HIV-1 medicine.
- Take GENVOYA with food.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about GENVOYA. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- Go to GENVOYA.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit GENVOYA.com for program information.



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THEATER REVIEW

Hedwig and the Angry Inch

Playwright: John Cameron Mitchell
 At: Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St.
 Tickets: 800-775-200;
 BroadwayInChicago.com; \$38-\$108
 Runs through: March 19

BY JERRY NUNN

Many of the gay community in Chicago came out in support for opening night on March 8 for Hedwig and the Angry Inch. The fictional rock musical is helmed by East German singer Hedwig Robinson/Hansel Schmidt. The band and her private parts are both called The Angry Inch after a botched gender-change surgery.

The show first opened off-Broadway in 1998

Euan Morton in Hedwig and the Angry Inch.
 Photo by Joan Marcus



THEATER REVIEW

24 Words: The Equal Rights Musical

Playwright: Book and lyrics by Charles Kouri, music by Gary Bragg, additional songs by Dean Schlabowske
 At: LingoStudio Productions at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.
 (March 22 show at Steppenwolf 1700)
 Tickets: \$25
 Runs through: March 22

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

In an interview, Charles Kouri, book writer and lyricist for this history lesson framed in a musical revue, expressed concern over the number of

young people who approach gender issues as if the Equal Rights Amendment introduced to Congress in 1972 hadn't failed to pass into law.

Nowadays, its truths seem self-evident—"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex"—but these 24 words (cited in the show's title) have been the source of bitter controversy for centuries.

The premise for this LingoStudio production is a campaign meeting in support of the legislation under scrutiny. The agenda begins with Second City-style sketches tracing a chronology of Women's crusades for full citizenship, from 1775, where their part in ensuring our nation's independence is not enough to earn them a place in its constitution, to 1868, when emancipation guarantees freedom regardless of race, color or previous condition of servitude—but only to

and has traveled to cities in many small venues, building a cult fan base over the years. The show has starred many celebrities, including Neil Patrick Harris, Darren Criss and Tye Diggs. On this current tour, Euan Morton (Taboo) plays the title role and, at times, still resembles Boy George.

The trick is to make this intimate show translate in such a massive space as the Oriental Theatre. Thanks to some clever jokes and projected visuals, it usually does.

Morton got to improv in what is basically a conversation with the audience with songs in between. His accent was a bit hard to understand at times, but smoothed out later in the evening.

Morton had his own take on the unforgettable character. There were adult jokes inserted about green cards, sucking blow off a MacBook Pro, and the gender-neutral bathroom of The Violet Hour in Wicker Park. Some of the humor will not be for everyone, but that is part of the unpredictable fun of the live performance.

men. More recent advances in female empowerment are also cited, in all their ambiguities—e.g., Mary Kay cosmetics, which encouraged women to run their own business franchises, but reinforced sexist stereotypes with its how-to-get-a-man advertising. ("But I don't LIKE boys!" protests a reluctant customer.)

Didacticism soon gives way to a more diverse view of the quest for equality, mostly expressed in songs by Gary Bragg, Dean Schlabowske and the aforementioned Kouri: An Asian girl wistfully laments the compromises her culture demands of her on "See-Through Me." while a cross-dressing gay male recounts the Village bar scene leading up to Stonewall in "Goddessland." The Vietnam War is referenced in a wife entreating her draftee husband, "Come Home to Me." "I Won't Be Your Honey (But I'll Be Your Bumblebee)" invokes country ballads, while "Smoke Break Tango" pres-

After the show, Morton mentioned that the audience member he picked out did not appreciate having his reading glasses licked.

It is when Morton sang that he truly connected with the crowd. For example, for "Wicked Little Town," Morton's voice hit all the right notes. He seems tailor-made for this project and strips down to show vulnerability by the end.

The once-small role of Yitzhak (Hedwig's husband) has been beefed up (even resulting in a Tony win). Hannah Corneau did a nice job with it, and had a Whitney Houston moment toward the end of the show. The young backing band was also stellar.

The audience was treated to some unforgettable moments that even more of the community should not miss seeing live. With possible changes and a different audience each night for Morton to play with, go more than once—and don't miss an inch.

ents us with a bevy of secretaries silently vowing revenge on their oppressors.

The event currently spanning an hour and 40 minutes is still in need of some editing—chiefly of material contributing little more than reiteration of injustices and declarations of unity—to make the most of power anthems like the impassioned "Back To Even" and the call-and-response finale "Sister" ("Say it Loud! We Are Equal!"). That said, the 10-member ensemble's enthusiasm and versatility—many doubling on orchestral instruments augmenting Jeffrey Poindexter's piano—are enough to render this rally in celebration of progress (and the battles still ahead) as proactively stirring as the "Love-Rock" op-eds of an earlier generation.

THEATER REVIEW

The Source

Playwright: Gabriel McKinley
 At: Route 66 Theatre Company at The Den, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave.
 Tickets: \$25-\$30
 Runs through: April 2

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

They are both journalists.

Vernon Jenkins is a newspaper correspondent and Oona Del Negro is a documentary filmmaker. He is armed with a laptop and all the latest apps, she packs old-school analog photography equipment. We are never told the location of this "large foreign city" where they have arrived, though their wardrobe hints at a warm climate. Neither of them knew that they would be sharing a single hotel room (boasting fridge, coffee-maker and minibar) registered under married-couple aliases, where they wait for an informant claiming to possess government

secrets of interest to U.S. security. Vernon is there to learn what these are, and Oona, to interview the purveyor thereof.

Playgoers dazzled by the spookspeak jargon and ripped-from-the-headlines references (Wikileaks!) may look to such superficial classroom-classics as No Exit or Waiting For Godot for a lens through which to view a scenario characterized by a low-level terror as nebulous as it is demoralizing. More sophisticated theatergoers may detect in Gabriel McKinley's drama-of-paranoia a dynamic resembling that of The Dumbwaiter, Harold Pinter's thriller tracing the psychological disintegration of two bored hit-men on a stakeout beset by cryptic dispatches taking on ominous portent.

To be sure, our roving reporters are hardly prisoners—Vernon may have stashed his satellite phone in the freezer upon arrival, but there's still the in-house switchboard, room service brings them meals and clean towels, their quarry sends occasional messages, sometimes accompanied by playful gifts. Oona even has hard-copy transcripts and letters signed by their

elusive prey. Both are free to leave the room and walk outside. Their reluctance to do so is initially based in their eagerness to be first at scooping a career-making story, but soon blossoms into full-blown mistrust of one another's motives—especially after evidence surfaces of unseen observers closing in on their refuge.

The panoptical dystopia literary genre dates back to George Orwell, making it easy in 2017 for director Jason Grace to tap into a familiar identification with his play's rats-in-a-cage premise.

Within the environment assembled by Route 66's meticulous technical team—a luxurious cell so starkly chic that the slightest ambient noise in the Den's intimate studio takes on significance—Cody Proctor and Kristina Valada-Viars tease their roles out with an unhurried deliberation heightening our anticipation of something, *anything*, to alleviate the paralytic dread born of covert surveillance in our web-happy age.

CRITICS' PICKS

Bootycandy, Windy City Playhouse, through April 15. Author/director Robert O'Hara effectively disguises a serious, satirical play—about sex, Black culture and race relations, among other things—with lots of laughs, exaggerated acting and comic strip style. It works, but it ain't for prudes or the faint-of-heart. Sissies, yes! JA

High Fidelity, Refuge Theatre Project, extended through March 25. Audiences just can't get enough of this rock-and-roll musical romcom set in "the last real record store on earth." MSB

Off the Paddy-Wagon: A Drinking Game Performance, Corn Productions at the Cornservatory, through March 18 and Flanagan's Wake, Chicago Theater Works, through April 29. 'Tis the season to be celebrating Ireland's two most famous national products—strong drink and hearty laughter. MSB

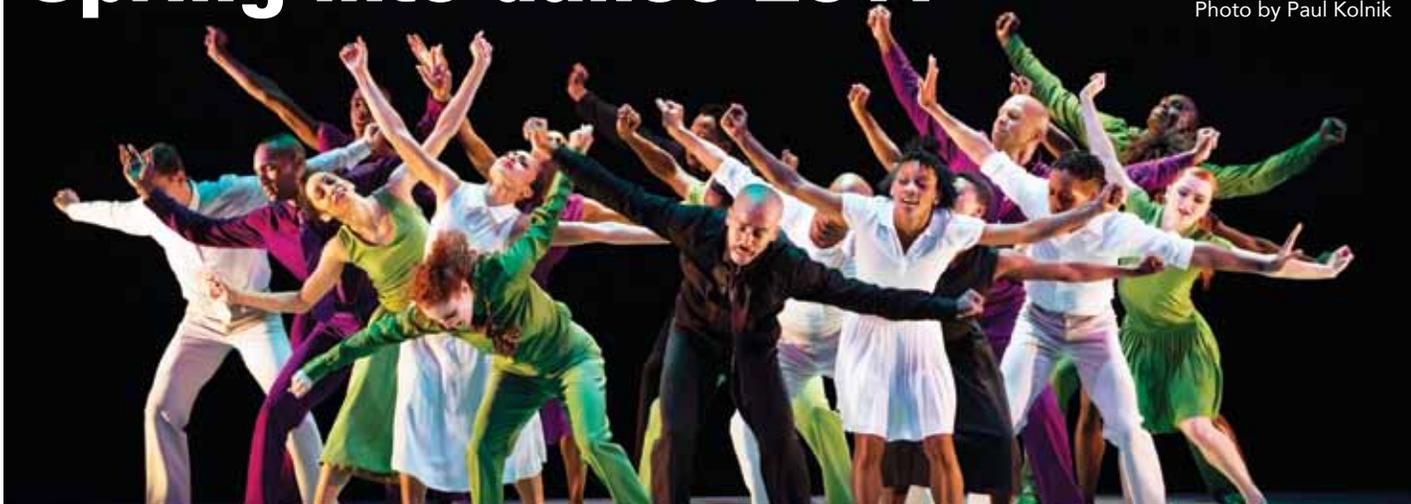
Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Paramount Theatre, Aurora, through March 19. Director Jim Corti delivers a gloriously grandiose staging of Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's macabre musical masterpiece. The staging would feel right at home in any opera house. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

SPRING DANCE PREVIEW

Spring into dance 2017

Alvin Ailey American
Dance Theater in Hope
Boykin's *r-Evolution*,
Dream.
Photo by Paul Kolnick



BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

This spring is a creatively fertile time for the Chicago dance scene. Discover many premiere pieces by local or visiting companies, or take in revivals of well-established works at the major theaters regularly hosting dance.

—Millennium Park's **Harris Theater for Music and Dance** continues its reputation for being a major house for modern dance by hosting world-renowned local dance companies and presenting visiting troupes:

Hubbard Street Dance Chicago's Spring Series features revivals of Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato's *Jardí Tancat* plus a Bach-inspired duet from *Multiplicity*. Also on the bill are Lucas Crandall's full-company work *Imprint* from 2016, set to piano and cello music by Brahms. (Four performances from Thursday, March 16, through Sunday, March 19; HubbardStreetDance.com)

Giordano Dance Chicago's Spring Series features Liz Imperio's world premiere of *Lost in the World*, plus the restaging of Frank Chaves' *Grusin Suite*. (7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 31 and April 1; GiordanoDance.org)

Visceral Dance Chicago's Spring Concert features a world premiere by artistic director Nick Pupillo, plus *Minor Threat* by guest choreographer Mark Godden. (7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 8; VisceralDance.com)

Jessica Lang Dance is back with a newly choreographed piece called *The Wanderer* set to Franz Schubert's operatic song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*. (7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 3; JessicaLangDance.com)

Ballet Chicago Studio Company's 20th-anniversary concert features George Balanchine's *Serenade* plus other works by Daniel Duell and resident choreographer Ted Seymour. (2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 6; BalletChicago.org)

Philadelphia-based **Rennie Harris Puremovement Street Dance Theater** showcases hip-hop dance in the show *RHAW*. (2 p.m. Saturday, May 13; RHAW.com)

The Harris Theater is at 205 E. Randolph St. Visit HarrisTheaterChicago.org.

—**The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University** plays host once again to three major dance companies that are famed world-wide.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns for its 47th annual Chicago visit with many local premieres (including Hope Boykin's *r-Evolution*, *Dream*) plus the timeless *Revelations* by the company's late namesake founder and choreographer. (Six performances from Wednesday, March 22, through Sunday, March 26; AlvinAiley.org)

The Joffrey Ballet's *Global Visionaries* repertory program features a world premiere by Swedish choreographer Alexander Ekman, plus revivals of Yuri Possokhov's *The Miraculous Mandarin* (set to music of Bela Bartok) and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Mammatus*. (Ten performances from Wednesday, April 26, through Sunday, May 7; Joffrey.org)

The Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg, Russia, returns with a revival of *Red Giselle*. (Three performances from Friday-Sunday, May 19-21; EifmanBallet.com)

The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University is at 50 E. Congress Parkway. Visit AuditoriumTheatre.org.

—**The Dance Center of Columbia College** continues its diverse programming by hosting visiting companies and local dance events.

The Chicago debut of the New York-based **Liz Gerring Dance Company** features the namesake's evening-length work *Horizon*, which explores physical surprises in a media-saturated world. (7:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, April 6-8; LizGerringDance.org)

The B-Series mini-festival is all about the culture of hip-hop and street dance. Free performances are Friday-Saturday, April 14-15.

The Dance Center of Columbia College is at 1306 S. Michigan Ave. Visit Colum.edu/DanceCenter.

—With its multiple floors of dance studios and a mainstage theater, **The Ruth Page Center for the Arts** continues to be a mecca for dance.

Lin Shook Perceptual Motion Inc. brings together different dancers ranging in age from 23 to 83 for *Shook* and guest choreographer Harvard

Vallance's intergenerational piece *Inside, Dancing Out*. (7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 8; PerceptualMotionDance.com)

Jin-Wen Yu Dance is based out of Madison, Wisconsin, and it returns for two repertory shows featuring the namesake choreographer's work at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 14, and 2:30 p.m. Saturday, April 15.

Hedwig Dances' two-weekend run of the repertory concert *Of Time and Tide*. The repertory features Jan Bartoszek's *Four Strong Winds* in each show, while Kate Corby's *Harbor* is paired the first weekend and Victor Alexander's *Parting Shadows* is seen at the concluding two shows. (Four shows from Friday, April 21, through Saturday, April 29; HedwigDances.com.)

The Ruth Page Center for the Arts is at 1016 N. Dearborn St. Visit RuthPage.org.

—Amid comedy shows and concerts, the **Athenaeum Theatre** also rents its 984-seat Main Stage for a number of dance shows.

Ballet 5:8 commemorates its fifth anniversary with *Scarlet*, a world-premiere ballet-film piece inspired by Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Set to music by American classical composer Charles Ives, *Scarlet* features cho-

reography by Juliana Slager and projections by filmmaker Preston Miller. (Two shows Saturday-Sunday, March 18-19; Ballet58.org)

Chicago Tap Theatre returns with the concert *Liaison* featuring a mix of tap dance and live music. Also on the bill are guest artists from Tap Olé from Barcelona, Spain, and *Tapage* from Toulouse, France. (7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 25; ChicagoTapTheatre.com)

Nomi Dance Company's 10-year anniversary season finale called *Ten Yeared* features a new piece by Giordano Dance Chicago guest choreographer Joshua Blake Carter, plus the returns of repertory pieces by artistic director Laura Kariotis and dancer Amanda Hickey. (8 p.m. Saturday, May 20; NomiLamadDance.com)

The Athenaeum Theatre is at 2936 N. Southport Ave. Visit AthenaeumTheatre.org.

Also of note:

—**Chicago Repertory Ballet** is another local company celebrating its fifth anniversary, this time at the Biograph Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave. Repertory performances featuring choreographer Wade SchAAF's one-act *The Four Seasons*. (Four shows from Friday, March 24, to Sunday, March 26; ChicagoRepertoryBallet.com)

—**The Chicago Human Rhythm Project** celebrates the global diversity of percussive dance all over Chicago with touring performances of *Stomping Grounds* at the Chicago Cultural Center (6 p.m. Monday, April 3), the National Museum of Mexican Art (7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 8), the DuSable Museum of African-American History (7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 15) and the Irish American Heritage Center (7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 29). Visit ChicagoTap.org for more details.

—As for ongoing works, The Museum of Contemporary Art's major exhibit **Common Time**, dedicated to the influential late gay modern choreographer Merce Cunningham, continues through Sunday, April 30, at 220 E. Chicago Ave. Live performances of *Tesseract*, a multimedia collaboration featuring former Cunningham dancers Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener and filmmaker Charles Atlas working with 3-D video can be seen from Thursday to Saturday, March 23 to 25. Visit MCACChicago.org.

—**Chicago Danztheatre's** *Consumed*, which Sara Maslanka directs, continues through Saturday, March 25, at Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 1650 W. Foster Ave. Visit DanzTheatre.org.

'Our Christian Nation' March 25-April 29

Our Christian Nation—a satirical two-act play written by Emmy-winning writer/Second City instructor Joe Janes, with Andrea J. Diamond directing—will run at The Conservatory, 4210 N. Lincoln Ave., on Fridays and Saturdays on March 25-April 29.

The production tackles several subjects, including the founding fathers, religion and homosexuality. All shows are BYOB.

Tickets are \$20 each; visit Eventbrite.com or purchase them at the door.

'Forging from Fire' March 23-26

Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) will perform *Forging from Fire* at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave., on March 23-26.

Forging from Fire tells of the various journeys that individual ensemble members have taken to build lasting relationships as well as how circumstances, behaviors and choices can create compromising situations.

This is the first stop of a series that will stop in such cities as Los Angeles and Newark, Delaware.

Tickets are \$17-\$22 each; see WeSayYEPP.com.

THEATER REVIEW

Skin for Skin

Playwright: Paul Pasulka

At: Agency Theater Collective

at Rivendell Theatre, 5779 N. Ridge Ave.

Tickets: 773-680-4596;

WeAreTheAgency.org; \$28

Runs through: April 2

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

This world premiere is a disturbing play, and partly effective because of that, but it isn't a good play.

The plot and characters are thin and it's one-sided in the extreme. *Skin for Skin* is set in Baghdad during the presidency of George W. Bush. There, a U.S. trucking contractor working for the military is imprisoned as a suspected al-Qaeda operative. He's denied habeas corpus rights and Geneva Convention war-captive protections. "He's not a prisoner of war, he's a terrorist," says his nasty captor, Col. Lewis (Tony St. Clair). You see, Mr. Ayyub (Steve Silver) came to the USA as a boy and is an American citizen, but he was born in Iraq, had Persian grandparents and is devoutly Islamic.

A psychologist (Shariba Rivers) coerced into interrogating Ayyub finds him safe, sane, sober and not withholding information, which Lewis does not want to hear. Instead, he subjects Ayyub to "enhanced interrogation" including waterboarding. Ayyub calls Lewis "nothing but an ignorant and vicious attack dog for your masters," which is precisely how playwright Paul Pasulka paints the ruthless and manipulative officer. Perhaps Pasulka has based *Skin for Skin* on true incidents and research; still it's difficult to believe that a senior American officer in the second Iraq War would be ignorant of the Koran and willfully insist that Ayyub's birth language is "Iraqi" rather than Arabic.

Pasulka makes the conflict between Ayyub and Lewis literally one of good versus evil. Ayyub is holy, just and long-suffering while Lewis is soulless, self-justifying and impatient; a man who exercises "omnipotence without omniscience" as Ayyub calls him out, power without perception. The one-sided injustice is infuriating and gut-wrenching, but it's arrived at far too cheaply

The cast of *Skin for Skin*.

Photo by Bill Richert

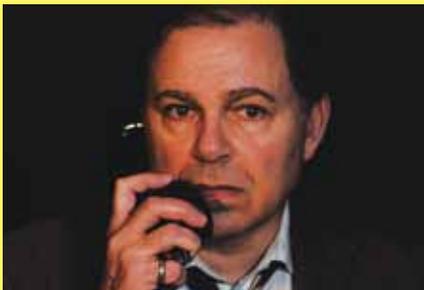
and quickly. Two shadowy and incomplete characters, businessman Abdul Walli (Sunny Anam) and U.S. Army Lt. Milo (Robert Hardaway), appear in three early scenes setting up Ayyub for reasons that aren't apparent, motivated by corruption or jealousy. The absence of clear reasons "why" is a major weakness.

Pasulka also creates two enlisted characters who are Ayyub's guards and torturers, Sgt. Lindsey (Hannah Tarr) and Pvt. Michaels (David Goodloe). Pasulka has sketched them as thoughtless know-nothings interested only in marijuana, alcohol and sex, although Michaels develops a conscience by the end. It's an undeveloped detail that doesn't impact the story, as one really doesn't get to know any of the characters except Ayyub. They all represent positions rather than people in this chilling, perhaps-too-true but schematic work.

Under director Michael Menendian, St. Clair is imposing, smart and threatening as Lewis while Silver calmly and convincingly expresses Ayyub's bewilderment, anger and self-effacement. The supporting players are energetic in two-dimensional roles. The swift play runs 90 minutes.

SPOTLIGHT

A Hollywood comedy writer in the 1950s faces a crisis of conscience when he's asked to name names before Sen. Joe McCarthy's House Committee on Un-American Activities in **A Jewish Joke**. The comic drama, by Marni Freedman and writer/actor Phil Johnson, was first seen locally at Victory Gardens Theater and now appropriately returns in another time of heightened anti-Semitism and xenophobia. ShPIeL—Performing Identity's production of *A Jewish Joke* plays 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 16; 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 18; and 2 and 7 p.m. on Sunday, March 19, at the Skokie Theatre, 7924



Lincoln Ave., Skokie. Tickets are \$28; \$23 for students; visit SkokieTheatre.com or AJewishJoke.com for more information.

Caption: Phil Johnson in *A Jewish Joke*, at the Skokie Theatre. Photo by Rin Ehlers Sheldon

How do you define yourself? How do others define you? In *More Than a Letter* we will reflect on self-identity and self-expression through the artistry of LGBTQ composers and musicians, celebrating difference, finding common ground and embracing the beauty of authenticity.

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SPRING THEATER PREVIEW

Classics, revivals offer breath of fresh air

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

It might not all be jam and sunshine yet, but after the ominous rumblings of 2016, anything not heralding apocalypse is enough to lift the spirit. Classic plays serve to remind us of hard times that we survived, so restore your morale at some of these:

Born Yesterday, Remy Bumpo Theatre at the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. A corrupt business mogul is undone when his floozy mistress chooses brain—her own, that is—over brawn in Garson Kanin's classic comedy. (March 27-April 30; remybumpo.org)

The Woman in Black, WildClaw Theatre Company at the Den, 1329 N. Milwaukee Ave. This neogothic thriller, based on Susan Hill's 1983 novel, is the next-longest-running play in London history (March 21-April 23; wildclawtheatre.com)

Harvey, Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave. The gibes at psychoanalysis may be dated, but the charms of a tall-white-and-furry companion are ageless. (May 11-June 11; courttheatre.org)

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland Ave. Bertolt Brecht's analogy of criminal-class roaring-twenties Chicago and Weimar Republic Berlin is directed by European Clown instructor Victor Quezada-Perez. (March 16-April 22; trapdoortheatre.com.)

The Night Season, Strawdog Theatre at the Factory, 1623 W. Howard St. The Irish seaside village of Sligo is invaded by a film crew for a biopic about William Butler Yeats, disrupting the lives of the townies. (May 11-June 24; strawdog.org)



Robert Koon in *The Woman in Black*.
Photo by Clark Bender

Seminar, Spartan Theatre Company at the Frontier, 1106 W. Thorndale Ave. Theresa Rebeck takes a look at Lit Biz power-games, New York City-style. (May 12-June 9; spartantheatre.org)

Circle Mirror Transformation, Redtwist Theatre, 1044 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. A community center acting class decides to try some improvisational exercises—what could go wrong? (April 14-May 28; redtwist.org)

Musicals

The Most Happy Fella, Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre at the No Exit Café, 6970 N. Glenwood Ave. A May-December match in the Napa Valley vineyards engenders deception (think *Cyrano de Bergerac*), but somehow it all ends happily. (through May 7; theo-u.com)

The Wiz, Kokandy Productions at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. The yellow brick road may still lead out of Kansas, but the music is rooted in African-American pop. (through April 16; kokandyproductions.com)

Marry Me A Little, Porchlight Music Theatre at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Only a few composers can boast a juke box musical assembled entirely from their own songs, and Stephen Sondheim is one of them. (April 14-May 21; porchlightmusictheatre.org)

Ragtime, Griffin Theatre Company at The Den, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave. E.L. Doctorow's micro-cosmic historical novel is a natural for this romantic musical adaptation by Terrence McNally, Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. (May 27-July 16; griffintheatre.com)

Parade, Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Court in Glencoe. Alfred Uhry and Jason Robert Brown document another dark chapter—this one centering on a Jewish lynching—in our nation's history. (May 24-June 9; writerstheatre.org)

Rent, Broadway in Chicago at the Ford Oriental, 24 W. Randolph St. It's the 20th anniversary of the cult musical that made squalor, drugs and dying young as romantic as a Puccini opera. (May 16-21; broadwayinchicago.com)

Chicago, Drury Lane Theatre, 100 Drury Lane in Oak Brook. Murder and corruption in Chicago during the roaring twenties makes for cozy entertainment in 2017. (March 30-June 11; drurylaneoakbrook.com)

Jesus Christ Superstar, Paramount Theatre, 23 E. Galena Blvd. in Aurora. Andrew Lloyd Webber's irreverent rock-infused account of the gospels premiered in 1970 and spawned its own evangelical movement. (April 19-May 28; paramountaurora.com)

Little Miss Sunshine, Chicago Theatre Workshop at the Edge, 5154 N. Broadway. The title says it all, and it's by James Lapine and William Finn. (May 11-June 4; chicagotheatreworkshop.org)



Nicole Michelle Haskins (center) with the cast of *The Wiz*.
Photo by Michael Brosilow

LGBT

The Kid Thing, Nothing Without A Company at Berger Park, 6205 N. Sheridan Rd. Two lesbian couples and an eager sperm donor contemplate imminent parenthood in Sarah Gubbin's symposial play. (through April 15; nothingwithoutacompany.org)

Picnic, American Theater Company, 1909 W. Byron St. Author William Inge was a closeted gay writing of small towns populated by small minds, and ATC's gender-neutral casting ensures that we never lose sight of it. (March 17-April 23; atcweb.org)

Not About Nightingales, Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark St. This early Tennessee Williams drama recounting the heroism of prisoners striking against a sadistic warden (is there any other kind?) includes all the elements we expect from the genre. (April 19-June 17; raven theatre.com)

March 21 marks the spring equinox, when the days get ever longer and everything gets brighter—or so we've been told, and only in our own hemisphere, when the ozone layer permits—but multiculturalism doesn't preclude seizing our own day. Why not seize it at a play?



Molly Hernandez and William Roberts in *The Most Happy Fella*.
Photo by Adam Veness

TimeLine names newest collective

TimeLine Theatre Company has announced the playwrights who will be in residence during 2017 and 2018 with its Playwrights Collective, the company's new-play incubator.

Four playwrights have been named to the Playwrights Collective: Tyla Abercrombie, Will Allan, Maureen Gallagher and Calamity West.

These four playwrights are the second group to be in residence as part of TimeLine's Playwrights Collective. The inaugural collective—which included Alice Austin, John Conroy, Emily Dendinger, Frances Limoncelli, Susan McLaughlin Karp and Brett Neveu—convened 2013 to 2016.

'Hamilton' cast, others hosting ACLU benefit

Members of the cast of *Hamilton* and other artists are hosting "RiseUP," a night of music and entertainment on Monday, April 3, 7-8:30 p.m., at Moonlight Studios, 1446 W. Kinzie St.

Proceeds will go to support the work of the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois. The ACLU is the largest and oldest civil-liberties organization in Illinois.

The concert will feature headlining artists from the cast of *Hamilton*, including Ari Afsar, Wayne Brady, Miguel Cervantes and others. Rafael Casal and Samora Pinderhughes will also perform at the event.

Visit TheNumberProject.co/riseup.

SPRING CONCERT PREVIEW

A few LGBTQ concerts to watch out for

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Many local and visiting LGBTQ performers and their allies raise their voices and share their musical skills this spring. Here are a few concerts to check out. All locations in Chicago unless otherwise noted.

Windy City Performing Arts is the umbrella organization for the ensembles of the Windy City Gay Chorus (Chicago's oldest gay choral group) and the Windy City Treble Quire. After tackling Orff's cantata *Carmina Burana* last year, the organization is now returning to the major classical choral work that is Fauré's *Requiem*. Also in the pipeline for June is a Pride concert titled *Pulse*. (Fauré's *Requiem* is at 5 and 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 18, at First United Methodist Church, 77 W. Washington St.; visit WindyCitySings.org.)

The Concert for America was devised as a fundraiser for organizations like the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Sierra Club, the NAACP, the National Immigration Law Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center in the wake of recent political shifts in America. Sirius XM Broadway host Seth Rudetsky and his husband, Broadway producer James Wesley, were the founders of the Concert for America, and they feature a mix of Broadway, TV and film performers.

The Concert for America comes to Chicago for the first time with stars like two-time Tony Award-winner Chita Rivera, pop star Melissa Man-

chester, two-time Emmy Award-winner Sharon Gless, cast members from *Hamilton* in Chicago and more. (8 p.m. Monday, March 20, at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Parkway; AuditoriumTheatre.org)

Seth Rudetsky is also involved as the music director and accompanist for a joint concert featuring six-time Tony winner **Audra McDonald** and her husband, Tony nominee **Will Swenson**, at Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St. (6:30 p.m. Monday, May 22; Steppenwolf.org)

The Chicago Sinfonietta's upcoming concerts of *More Than a Letter* are billed as "A Celebration of LGBTQ Artists and Classical Music." Guest conductor Michael Morgan leads performances of works by composers Bernstein, Higdon, Barber and more. Guest artists include pianist Sara Davis Buechner and the choruses *Allegrezza Singers* and *Musicality*. (8 p.m. Saturday, March 25, at North Central College's Wenz Concert Hall, 171 E. Chicago Ave., Naperville; then at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 27, at Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave.; chicagosinfonietta.org)

The Allegrezza Singers perform their own choral concerts titled *Turn the World Around* at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 7, at Union Church, 137 S. Garfield St., Hinsdale, and at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 12 at Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 1650 W. Foster Ave. Visit AllegrezzaSingers.com.

In the touring concert **BTown*, the **Chicago Gay Men's Chorus** explores all kinds of boy bands ranging from barbershop quartets to modern pop



Windy City Performing Arts.

Photo courtesy of the organization

groups like **NSYNC* and *One Direction*. **The London Gay Men's Chorus** is also slated to perform with the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 25, at a venue to be determined. (**BTown* shows are at 8 p.m. on Friday, May 19, at Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph St.; 8 p.m. Saturday, May 20 at North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie; and 3 p.m. Sunday, May 21, at Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th St.; CGMC.

org)

Artemis Singers, Chicago's lesbian feminist chorus, has a Pride Concert and Dance planned for Saturday, June 17, at First Unitarian Church, 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave. For more information, visit ArtemisSingers.org.

Note: The author of this piece currently sings with the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus and has previously performed with the Windy City Gay Chorus.



Chita Rivera.

Photo by Laura Marie Duncan

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NUNN ON ONE: THEATER

Mona Mansour sets sights on 'Unseen'

BY JERRY NUNN

There's a new show at The Gift Theatre that everyone should see called *Unseen*. The play follows a photographer in Istanbul who deals with trauma thanks to drugs and her girlfriend, with powerful performances from Brittany Burch and Ashley Agbay in the production.

The playwright, Mona Mansour, has a broad background from which to draw. She composed *The Vagrant* trilogy that eventually went to the Public Theater. Her work titled *The Way West* premiered last year at the Labyrinth Theater in New York with a prior run at Steppenwolf. Her short play *Dressing* was commissioned by the New Black Festival along with many others in various parts of the country.

Mansour called from New York after *Unseen's* big debut at The Gift Theatre.

Windy City Times: Hi, Mona. Did you study playwriting originally?

Mona Mansour: I studied acting in college. I wound up in Texas doing a BFA at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. It was a strange but good experience. Texas was a whole new world. I did some more acting but leaned more into writing. What jumpstarted it was that I more interested in comedy.

I studied with the Groundlings in LA and with the Sunday Company there. I did a lot of fast writing on my feet. That is what got me started.

I wrote a solo play, then a two woman play. I decided I didn't want to act anymore and that was huge relief. I could focus on playwriting for other people.

WCT: Have you written many shows with LGBT themes?

MM: No. I define myself as a gay woman. Everyone has their own story but for me it was late blooming in my 20s and figuring it out. I am also half Arab and Lebanese. For some reason, that is the identity that has informed more of my writing.

An early play I had written was called *Girl Scouts of America*. That was a coming-of-age story about girls liking each other.

I don't feel I deliberately did it that way, but just other stuff was more interesting to me. This play is really combining the two parts of me, being Middle Eastern and a gay woman.

WCT: What was the story based on?

MM: I had been working on a story about a Russian journalist for a few years. I was struck with the idea of how does that person not have nightmares every night. I was commissioned to write this play but they said I could write what I wanted to. I met with a mom at a mosque, then a woman who ran an Islamic school for girls. I realized I should keep doing what I do, open people up to these different narratives about the Middle Eastern community.



Mona Mansour.

PR photo by Joseph Moran

It came together to tell the story of this experience. It is not a picture perfect relationship but I do think they love each other.

WCT: I'm sure it resonates for people with addiction problems.

MM: Being an addict or alcoholic is not uncommon and partly tied to work. They are medicating themselves. The mother in the show may have gone to Al-Anon meetings.

When I was working on the play years ago there were so many images that came across Twitter of really horrific things. I didn't know how anyone got through it without self medicating. How do we do this? I think the play asks that question without answering it, except for the end where there is a little bit of light. I think that is profound to just be with another human.

The play goes into deep things like seeing and not seeing. I don't have some perfect answer. For Mia, the main character, her answer is to keep moving. She cuts the edge with whatever substance and keeps moving.

WCT: What do you think she will do after the play ends?

MM: I think she will look up some AA meetings and go. She will work on sitting still and not go-

done differently?

MM: There are always rewrites in your head when you are a playwright. I wasn't able to be in Chicago for much of the rehearsal process. I was able to receive them doing the work. Normally I am entrenched and in every moment. In some ways this was easier with not as much stress.

One of the things I said to director, Maureen Payne-Hahner, is I didn't want faux Middle East—like a bad set designer's idea would be.

It felt very real. The way they used the panels and images was perfect.

WCT: It was very intimate in the space. What do you think of actress Brittany Burch?

MM: At the beginning of the play, she is embodying a drug hangover and PTSD. That is not easy. To be honest I can't do it. I was an actor and couldn't do that part. She does it really beautifully.

She almost has to have embedded in her psyche those moments where the trauma comes out.

WCT: Why did you use hopping back and forth through time in *Unseen*?

MM: One of the things I wanted was the scene between the two women. That felt important because you don't see Mia at her best in the play. I wanted to show them when they first started together. I wanted to create a sexy pair of women. Derya is a hot woman and loves her, but is sick of her shit.

Derya comes from this part of society but if Mia would get it together then Derya would ask her to marry her. Mia is the problem and comes from the United States, which is the opposite of what people would think normally.

WCT: What are you working on next?

MM: I have a few commissions from different theaters. I have a trilogy of plays about a Palestinian scholar.

In my personal life, my girlfriend wants to go to Morocco and Spain so we are trying to figure that out.

I'm trying to do that balance of life and work!

See *Unseen* at The Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee Ave., now through April 9; visit TheGiftTheatre.org.

'Gender Breakdown' through March 19

Gender Breakdown—Collaboration Theatre Company's first world premiere of 2017, that's a response to the lack of gender equity on and offstage—will take place through March 19.

According to the Dramatist's Guild, only 14 percent of plays produced in regional theaters were by U.S. white women in 2015. Only 3.4 percent were written by U.S. women of color.

Dani Bryant is the creator and Erica Vannoni is the director.

Gender Breakdown will be presented in The Vault at Collaboration Studios in the Flat Iron Arts Building, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave. Single tickets to performances are \$20-\$30 (\$10-\$15 for students, educators and industry); visit Collaboration.org or call 312-226-9633.

ing crazy. Whether you are an addict or not, it is a very human issue, especially now.

WCT: Is the drug mentioned in the show a real drug?

MM: It is a real drug. I came across this documentary about burundanga. I wanted something that was not just a drink, but something that would mess her up. I believe the doc is in Colombia. It is a very volatile substance. Someone may take it and take money out of an ATM, for example, with no recollection.

It brings up things like memory or taking away trauma with a drug and the ethics of doing that.

I have not heard of it being the United States but it could have been.

WCT: How do you feel this premiere could be

CULTURE CLUB

Frontrunners start 'Couch to 10K' program

Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago—a running and walking club for Chicago's LGBT community and friends (Frontrunners)—is starting a unique training and social program for spring: The Frontrunners Couch-to-10K Program.

Frontrunners will provide free coaching and training for the people who sign up for an annual membership in the club (\$20). The program will culminate in participation in Proud to Run on June 24.

A kickoff/membership event will take place Friday, April 7, 5-7 p.m. The program will run April 8-June 24. Visit FRFWChicago.org.

Kandyan dance events in March

Mandala Arts will present visiting Sri Lankan dance artist and scholar Sudesh Mantillake for a performance at the University of Chicago's Fulton Recital Hall, 5845 S. Ellis Ave., on Thursday, March 16, at 7 p.m. and Kandyan dance workshop at Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E. 60th St., on Saturday, March 18, at 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Mantillake is a dancer, choreographer, researcher and an educator who is trained in Kandyan dance of Sri Lanka and Kathak dance of India.

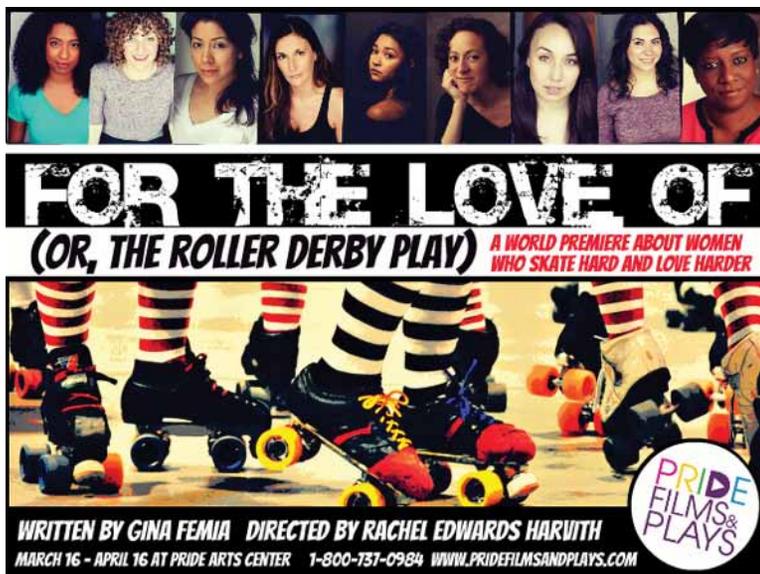
Admission is \$10-\$15; visit "Kandyan Dance: The Expression of Sri Lanka" on Eventbrite.com.

'Carmen' thru March 25

Lyric Opera of Chicago will run the story of a deadly love triangle in Bizet's Carmen.

Carmen runs through Saturday, March 25, at Lyric's Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Dr.

Tickets start at \$34 and are available at LyricOpera.org/Carmen or at 312-827-5600.



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'Kiki' showcased at HRW Chicago film-series event

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

The kiki dance/ball scene was highlighted at the Human Rights Watch (HRW) Chicago 2017 Film Series (in partnership with Black Cinema House) with a screening of the documentary and a panel discussion March 10 at the Stony Island Arts Bank.

The film follows seven people from the kiki scene—Twiggy Pucci Garçon, Gia Marie Love, Chi Chi Mizrahi, Divo Pink Lady, Kenneth Soler-Rios, Izana Lee Vidal and Christopher Waldorf—from 2012 through 2016.

The kiki scene is an LGBTQ youth artistic activist subculture that performs at Kiki ballroom competitions in a variety of U.S. cities. This film focuses on the ballroom community of New York City and the "houses" that make up said community. The people featured in the film are shown preparing and performing in various ballroom competitions as well as talking about the road blocks they have faced as LGBTQ people of color (POC).

Swedish filmmaker Sara Jordeno directed Kiki. Garçon and Jordeno also served as co-writers on film.

Black Cinema House Director Jackie Najuma Stewart welcomed the approximately 100 people in attendance, while HRW Chicago & Midwest Director Jackie Kaplan-Perkins spoke about the work HRW does around the world.

Following the screening, Garçon, Human Rights Watch Interim Advocacy Director Tico Almeida, community organizer/transgender activist Monica James and academic/activist/performer Julian K. Glover participated in a panel discussion that Out Magazine Editor-at-Large Zach Stafford moderated.

Stafford asked Garçon about his role as a co-writer of the film. Garçon explained that it was all about creating a narrative and noted that, at first, they did not plan on doing a feature-length documentary, but it just happened organically.

As for why LGBTQ POC have gravitated toward the ballroom scene for decades (going back to the days of the now-defunct Rockland Palace in Harlem), James said it is a way of expressing oneself in a safe and affirming place. Glover noted that it was a reaction to transgender bodies being policed while Garçon explained that it has always been a part of Black people's pedagogy to express things with their bodies and has evolved over time.

The discussion also touched on current events and the next steps for the LGBTQ community, post-marriage equality.

James noted and named the seven transgender people who have been killed in 2017 as of this publication. She explained that LGBTQ POC need to be at the center of the movement for equality because too often they are pushed aside by white gay and lesbian people.

Glover said people need to support transgender organizations led by transgender people, especially those focused on POC.

In terms of the barriers transgender POC face, Almeida spoke about the work HRW does as a research organization to track what's happening to LGBTQ people in general and the sub-groups within that umbrella. He also noted the follow up to HRW's Hatred in the Hallways report that tracked the violence and discrimination that's happening to LGBTQ students in the U.S.

Stafford asked about lifting people up via storytelling. Garçon said storytelling is used as a way to heal as well as a way for folks to see themselves in whatever medium they are consuming. Glover noted that it's about the strategic and intentional sharing of resources.

James explained that it's great to tell stories but it's also a trigger at times because the person has to be vulnerable when they share their lives with others. She said it is important that those who tell their stories are taken care of after the fact.

A Q&A session and reception closed out the event.

See <http://www.kikimovie.com/> and <https://www.hrw.org/> for more information.



From left: Jackie Kaplan-Perkins, Zach Stafford, Julian K. Glover, Monica James, Tico Almeida, Twiggy Pucci Garçon and Jackie Najuma Stewart.
Photo by Carrie Maxwell

Art AIDS hosts Karen Finley event

As part of the Art AIDS America Chicago series, Alphawood Gallery, 2401 N. Halsted St., hosted "The Anti-Workshop: Call to Action with Karen Finley" on March 12.

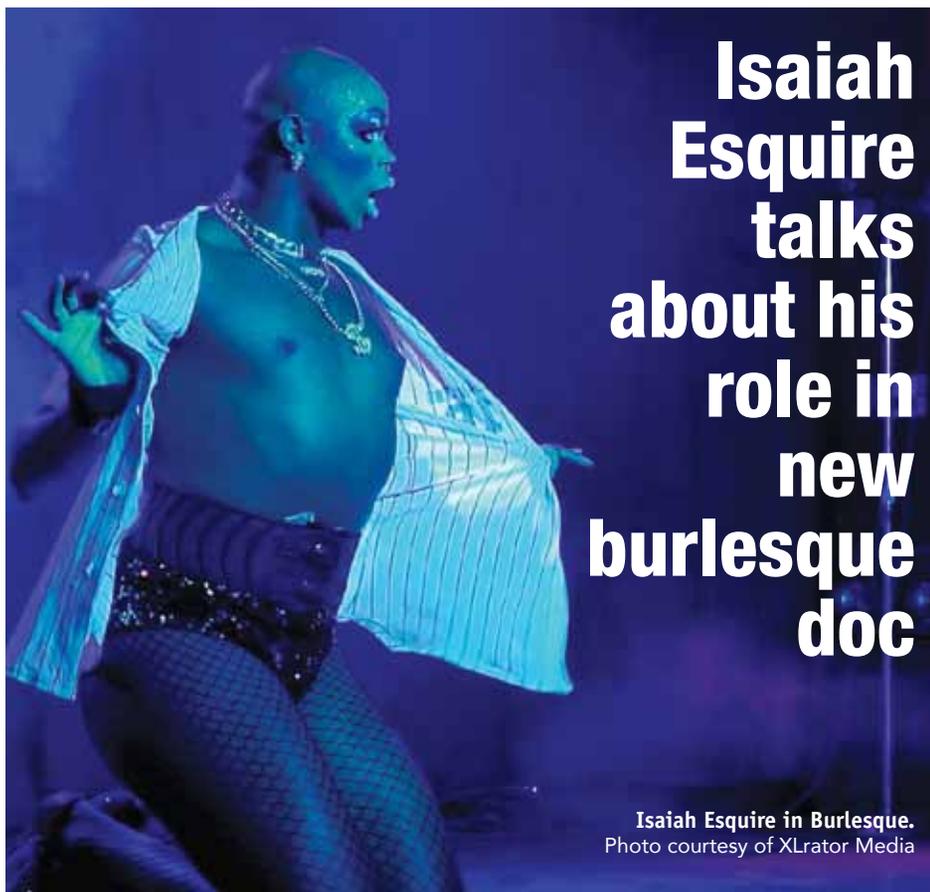
The event featured local artists forming collections that ACT UP/Gran Fury and other community-based activist groups inspired. Following the presentations, there was a conversation involving Finley, whose work is included in Art AIDS America.

For more about the exhibit and its events, see ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org.

Photos by Owen Keehnen



Above: Artists at the event. Left: Karen Finley.
Photos by Owen Keehnen



Isaiah Esquire talks about his role in new burlesque doc

Isaiah Esquire in *Burlesque*.
Photo courtesy of XLrator Media

BY MOLLY SPRAYREGEN

Isaiah Esquire, an award-winning international burlesque dancer, discusses the empowering nature of burlesque and the significance of the new documentary in which he appears, *Burlesque: Heart of the Glitter Tribe*.

Windy City Times: You said in the film that burlesque celebrates the body in a way nothing else really does. How so?

Isaiah Esquire: Besides the many different body types that are doing burlesque and being celebrated for that—being big and round, being very very thin, being really athletic with tons of muscle, having stretch marks and blemishes and moles and wrinkles and all those things, someone is going to look at you and think that you are perfect as you are and just want to clap and cheer with you—burlesque celebrates the body in many different ways like nothing else to me.

When you can spend 10 minutes just taking off your glove to expose your forearm or your hand—and that's what people are just waiting for—you can expose the beauty to these parts of the body that don't get as much attention.

WCT: Describe the relationship with the audience and how that differs from other kinds of performance.

IE: It's kind of like when you see someone doing anything for the first time and just want to surround them in a lot of love and support and encouragement. They are all there knowing that someone is going to expose that part of themselves, literally, emotionally, artistically, that someone is going to express themselves and you want to be your best self and encourage them to do so, so it's a much more engaged, active audi-

ence than most shows.

It's not about sitting back and receiving what someone is giving you on stage. It's about actively doing that for them and letting them know how much you support that.

WCT: What are the misconceptions about burlesque that you wish people understood?

IE: That it's all about sex and that the people in it are all rejects and unintelligent, weak, promiscuous people. I have spent a lot of time fighting that, and I know way more women that have been fighting that battle forever.

I know so many intelligent, strong, powerful, fearless women who do burlesque as an outlet or this way of reclaiming their bodies and celebrating that women can be a force to be reckoned with in the business world and also be a special being and that's ok, and the women should be holding that power of their body and how they are perceived and the work they are allowed to do, and I wish that more people understood that.

I have a friend who is a survivor of rape, and her way of being able to reclaim her body and feel sexy and powerful and strong again was burlesque. It provided something to her that nothing else has because she is able to own her body and be visible when she wants to by her own rules and regulations.

WCT: Why is this movie so important?

IE: I think this film is important just like any true burlesque film is in just being able to show the work of a lot of women that have been fighting the good fight in a different kind of feminism. I think it's really powerful, it's important. I think it's time for Americans especially to get a little less uptight about the human body. We all

Turn to page 30

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Getting lucky at Sidetrack, Sat., March 11.

Photos by Jed Dulanias

AIDS/LifeCycle Team CÜR St. Patty's Day fundraiser

It's your lucky day: Guys in Spandex for St. Patty's Day!

Team CÜR (Chicago Urban Riders) are riding 545 miles down the coast of California in June to fight HIV and AIDS with AIDS/LifeCycle. Join them in the fight on **Thursday, March 16**, at their our annual Bear Den fundraiser at **Big Chicks**, 5024 N. Sheridan Rd. The events starts at 9 p.m.

\$10 suggested donation at the door gets you a house shot at the bar. There will be raffle drawings throughout the night with many great prizes.

So come out and support these awesome guys making a difference in our community. If you can't make the event, go to the Team CÜR page, pick your favorite rider and make a donation: <http://www.tofighthiv.org/goto/teamcur2017>



Amanda Lepore shows off her 'Lucky Charms'



There's gold at the end of this rainbow and her name is **Amanda Lepore**. The legendary trans icon is back for Lucky Charms 2, **Thursday, March 16**, at 10 p.m. at **Berlin**, 954 W. Belmont Ave.

DJs Spice Boy (Teen Witch Fan Club) and LA Spacer (TRQPITECA) keep the beat going in the booth. The event is hosted by Bon Bon, Virtual Brat, Imp Queen, Not Twins (Abhijeet & J4Pay), and more.

Buy advanced tickets at <http://1833.fm/?add-to-cart=19723>

Photos by Amanda Lepore (right, pictured with DJ Greg Haus at Berlin) by Kirk Williamson

Illinois Leather contests at Leather Archives

The Illinois Leather Alliance takes over Chicago this weekend for a host of leather contests, bringing in kinksters from all over the Midwest and beyond. These contests include the Illinois Leather Sir/Leather boy contest, the Illinois Ms. Leather Pride contest, the Illinois Puppy/Trainer contest, the Illinois Bootblack contest and the Illinois Master/slave contest.

The weekend kicks off with a meet-and-greet, **Friday, March 17**, at **Touche**, 6412 N. Clark St. On **Saturday, March 18**, come back to Touche from noon until 3 for contestant interviews. Catch the contests themselves at **Leather Archives & Museum**, 6418 N. Greenview Ave., 7-9:30 p.m., and then it's back to Touche for the Victory Party until 1 a.m.

All events are free to attend.

the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Kal'ish Vegan

BY ANDREW DAVIS

I remember going to a vegan restaurant (that shall remain unnamed) a few years ago—and it seemed that I had cardboard for an appetizer, entree and dessert.

How times have changed.

Uptown's **Kal'ish Vegan** (1313 W. Wilson Ave.; KalishVegan.com), a fast-casual establishment, has shown the strides made regarding the cui-



The K burger (left) and avocado mash-up (right) at Kal'ish Vegan.

Photo by Brandon Pettitt

sine. I wasn't sure what to expect upon entering Kal'ish—but was more than satisfied when I left.

As anyone who's tried vegan fare knows, finding the right taste and even textures can be tricky endeavors. However, co-owners Andy and Gina Kalish (the names being a nice coincidence with "kale-ish") have done a nice job finding the right meat-like protein substitutes for popular



dishes. (Unfortunately, I went there before the Mexican dishes were unveiled—but I can't wait to return to try the "fish tacos" that actually employ hearts of palm.)

The K and G burgers are the basics here (with the latter being a gluten- and nut-free garden patty), but there are additional items like the Bad Adz Burger (K Burger and bacon, cheese,

beet-root mayo, etc.) and the Woodland Burger (K or G Burger with griddle mushroom, onion and provolone, sounding like the earthiest sandwich ever).

My dining companion and I certainly liked the K Burger—but the sandwich known as the Avocado Mash-Up was my absolute favorite item there. It's a delightful mix of avocado mash, leafy greens, radish, red onion, peppadew relish and house ricotta. The clucker crisps (vegan takes on chicken nuggets and sandwiches) were also pretty tasty, even if my palate pushed me to the plain ones instead of the buffalo-style items.

Kal'ish also offers dessert items (such as a memorable apple pop tart) as well as all-day breakfast items. The spot also has Sunday brunch, with offerings such as chorizo quesadillas and French toast.

It's almost enough to make me consider relinquishing meat—almost.

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.



BILLY Masters

I thought awards season was over. And yet, there are still a couple ceremonies to talk about—like the iHeartRadio Awards. I can hear you rolling your eyes, but suspend your disbelief until I share this almost touching story. When **Justin Timberlake** received an award for “Can’t Stop the Feeling”, he said, “If you are Black or you are brown or you are gay or you are a lesbian or you are trans or maybe you’re just a sissy singing boy from Tennessee. Anyone who has treated you unkindly, it’s only because they are afraid or they have been taught to be afraid of how important you are. Because being different means you make a difference. So, fuck ‘em.” I’m not sure about all that Kumbaya crap, but I have no problem getting behind Justin—especially when he’s saying “Fuck ‘em!”

I ask your indulgence in this next story because, to be honest, I have no idea what I’m talking about. I had abandoned American Idol long before it limped to its final days on the tube. But I vaguely remember **La’Porsha**. What can I say? I have a penchant for big Black women with apostrophes in their names.

I went back in the archives of BillyMasters.com, and read some quotes she made when the so-called “bathroom bill” passed in her native Mississippi. On the topic of homosexuality, she said, “I am one of the people who doesn’t really agree with that lifestyle. I wasn’t brought up that way, it wasn’t how I was raised. But I do have a lot of friends and a lot of people that I love dearly who are gay and homosexual and they’re such sweet, nice people.” So I find it all the more mind-boggling that now, a scant year later, she’s made what I find a startling statement: “I chose to be heterosexual after being homosexual for 2 years.” Huh? Turns out this revelation is in support of another one of her beliefs: “You’re wrong to think it’s not a choice for some ... because it was for me.” She has also said, “I chose a belief system that felt TRUE to my spirit.” She calls it a choice. Others might call it denial.

Something that is definitely a choice is whether or not to be a whore. I don’t say that in a disparaging way. After all, everybody loves a whore. If they didn’t, it would be hard to earn the title. This story is an update on the whore of 2016 (and several previous decades): Logo’s Prince Charming, **Robert Sepulveda Jr.** Brace yourself—he’s single. I know—who couldn’t see that coming? “Eric is a super, super sweet guy, but we’re not together and I’m completely, completely single,” he said. Sounds like an escort ad to me. But, wait—he’s not done, saying, “I have lots of production companies that are interested in doing shows with me, so I’m going to focus on that and my pocketbook.” What a shocking shift in priorities—holding out for cash. But, riddle me this: Who are these numerous production companies looking to hire an aging gay hooker? ‘Cause I’m willing to put out ... for a price.

I love **Seth Rudetsky** and his partner, **James Wesley**. They’re the guys behind the charity sin-



Finding Prince Charming’s Robert Sepulveda Jr. is single—although Billy isn’t surprised.
Photo from Logo

gle “What The World Needs Now” to benefit the victims of the Pulse Nightclub shooting. And they produced the benefit Concert for America: Stand Up, Sing Out, which was counter-programming for the inauguration. The first concert was such a success, they’re taking their show on the road. On March 20, the Concert for America will take place at Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University in Chicago and will star such luminaries as **Chita Rivera**, **Melissa Manchester** and **Ana Gasteyer** (who I saw in Stephen Sondheim’s *Passion* at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater). Proceeds from the concert will benefit the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Sierra Club, NAACP, Southern Poverty Law Center and the National Immigration Law Center. As with the first concert, you can watch it online for free. More details and tickets can be found at ConcertsForAmerica.com.

John Barrowman was brought up in Chicago, and last week he reached a landmark—he turned 50. And he celebrated the event in several ways. First, he chopped off all his hair and revealed his natural silver coloring—which I must say suits him. Then he launched a T-shirt campaign to support transgender rights and posted a photo wearing the shirt (taken pre-coif). “Most of us have the luxury of being who we are and living our truth. We must stand in solidarity with those who are not as lucky. Grab one of these T-shirts and wear it with pride. Let’s show our support for our transgender family,” he said. Proceeds from the campaign will go to the Trans Youth Equality Foundation. As Johnny suggests, you can grab one at Represent.com/barrowman.

As noble and fulfilling as that endeavor is, what he’ll likely remember from turning 50 is the sight of his Arrow co-star, **Stephen Amell**, bringing out his birthday cake wearing only a pair of snug camouflage undies! Since John has frequently expressed his fondness for Amell’s physique, this



was certainly the gift that kept on giving. You can see Barrowman blowing out his candles on BillyMasters.com.

Someone noticeably absent from Barrowman’s birthday bash was **Colton Haynes**. But he had a good reason—he got engaged. Engaged? Didn’t he just meet this guy? Actually, he just went public about his beau—they’ve been together for weeks ... er, months. Colton’s florist/boyfriend got Cher to make a video singing their favorite song, “I’ve Got You Babe,” and then he popped the question complete with fireworks. What could possibly go wrong?

When “straight as an arrow” takes on new meaning, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. You know what I got out of this column? That Eric from Finding Prince Charming is available. So, while I schedule a blow-out, you can check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that only takes a little off the top. If you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Eric asks if I brought my own shampoo bottle. So, until next time, remember: One man’s filth is another man’s bible.



WINDY CITY TIMES

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., March 15

Roxane Gay in Conversation with Britt Julious: Difficult Women Author Roxane Gay will discuss her new story collection, *Difficult Women*, with local writer Britt Julious. The conversation will be followed by an audience Q&A and a book-signing. Ticket includes a copy of the book. Pick up at Women & Children First bookstore. 7:00pm Senn Hall 5900 N Glenwood Ave.; 773-769-9299 <http://www.womenandchildren-first.com>

Thursday, March 16

Genders and Sexualities in Chinese Digital Culture International love stories; Chinese reception and fan rewritings of *The L-Word*; growing up in the SusuNaru fandom; and Mongkok fans of K-Pop. 4:00pm - 7:00pm SAIC Ballroom, 112 S. Michigan Ave. <http://www.saic.edu/highlights/performanceevents/genders-and-sexualities-in-chinese-digital-culture.html>

Dyke March Planning Meeting Community gathering to plan Dyke March 2017. Have an idea where you want to see Dyke March 2017? Want to be part of the plan? 6:30pm Affinity Community


BLOOM MATES
March 18-26

The Chicago Flower & Garden Show will take place at Navy Pier.
 Photo by Andrew Davis

Services 2850 S. Wabash Ave. #108 Chicago <http://www.affinity95.org>

Lucky Charms 2 with legendary trans icon Amanda Lepore DJ's Spice Boy (Teen Witch Fan Club) and LA Spacer (TRQPiTECA). Hosted by Bon Bon, Virtual Brat, Imp Queen, Not Twins (Abhijeet & J4Pay). 10:00pm Berlin Nightclub 954 W Belmont Ave Chicago Tickets:

<http://do312.com/luckycharms2>

Friday, March 17

South Side Swell LGBTQ service providers come to network in a relaxed and fun atmosphere 5:00pm - 8:00pm Jeffrey Pub <https://www.facebook.com/events/1798869957022110/>

BTQ Book Group 3rd Fridays. Please contact organizer to confirm meeting. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago (773) 381-8030 <http://www.gerberhart.org>

Saturday, March 18

Chicago Flower & Garden Show: "Chicago's Blooming!" Presented by Mariano's. Garden build-outs, featuring Chicago L Tracks and Bungalows. Aquascapes. Kids' Activity Garden. Butterfly cage where guests feed the Monarchs. Fashion Show Fleurotica. Through March 26. \$5 - \$17 10:00am Navy Pier <http://chicagoflower.com/>

AVER LGBTQ military monument fundraiser Chicago Chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights, LGBTQ veterans of military service, gathering in support of a new LGBTQ monument for LGBTQ veterans to stand at the NW corner of Halsted and Addison Streets. Food and raffle prizes. 3:00pm - 5:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/253584985093462/>

Spring Concert: Gabriel Faure's "Requi-

em" Windy City Gay Chorus and Windy City Treble Quire. The work offers a unique view of death focusing on eternal rest, consolation versus fear, tranquil solace to the bereaved. \$35 or student and senior \$10. First performance of the evening at 5:00 pm 8:00pm First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple, 77 W. Washington St., Chicago Tickets: <http://wcpafaurer-equiem.bpt.me>

Sunday, March 19

Beverly Wedding Expo South Side couples are invited to attend. Wedding vendors including caterers, bakers, florists, photographers, hair and make-up artists, musicians, invitation designers. Sample more, food and sweets, hear live music and check out the latest wedding trends. \$10 per person or \$15 per couple online, by phone or at door. 11:00am - 4:00pm Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W 111th St, Chicago 773-445-3838 Tickets: <http://beverlyartcenter.org>

Monday, March 20

Concert for America: Stand Up, Sing Out! Two-time Tony winner Chita Rivera, Grammy winner and two-time Academy Award nominee Melissa Manchester, two-time Emmy winner Sharon Gless, SiriusXM's Christine Pedi, blues singer Lynne Jordan, actor Marya Grandy, and cast members from Chicago's Hamilton and more. \$18 8:00pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University 50 E.

Congress Pkwy.; Tickets: <http://www.auditoriumtheatre.org/shows/concert-for-america/>

Wed., March 22

HIV and Aging panel With continued advances in healthcare treatment and therapy, early detection, and preventative tests for seropositive individuals, life expectancy of HIV+ populations has created the possibility of senior years. Art AIDS America exhibit hall. 6:00pm - 8:00pm Alphawood Gallery, 2401 N. Halsted St., Chicago 773-687-7676 <http://the-care-plan.com>

DIFFA's 'Art for Life' benefit The Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS/Chicago (DIFFA/Chicago) has announced a juried art exhibit and auction is the newest extension of DIFFA Chicago, created to benefit those living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. @ArtForLifeChicago and using the hashtag #AFLCHI. \$100. 6:00pm Venue One, 1034 W. Randolph St. <https://www.artforlifechicago.org>

Cancer & the LGBTQIA+ Communities: What's Different? Limited programs address cancer in the LGBTQIA+ communities. Gilda's Club Chicago is offering an educational lecture and the opportunity to voice opinions about what kind of support best suits LGBTQIA cancer needs. Free with RSVP 6:30pm - 7:30pm Gilda's Club Chicago 537 N Wells St, Chicago <http://www.gildasclubchicago.org>

ESQUIRE from page 27

have one. Some just look different, but its just skin, and the focus should be on intention much more than skin shown.

It's one of the few things that everyone shares, so its really important to make that not such a taboo, and I think this film is nice because you're able to get an idea and some insight into the people doing the work versus just seeing what happens on stage. You're able to see how much work actually goes into it for one and how thoughtful and intelligent and evolved the people that are putting it on are.

WCT: What are your dreams for your future?

IE: My dream is to continue performing with my husband. I want to continue performing with him and carving a niche that is uniquely ours and being two very large androgynous male identifying beings in this artistic world and being able to still be gentle and be thoughtful and be kind and still be successful.

Also, I want to inspire as many people as possible to love their bodies. I want to help people that look like me or feel like me to celebrate who they are and for other brown people to finally see someone in a film that looks closer to them.

Burlesque: Heart of the Glitter Tribe is open in select theaters, and is available on VOD/iTunes.

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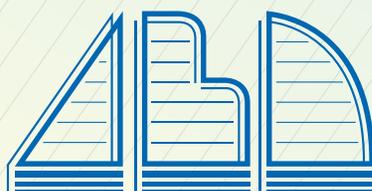
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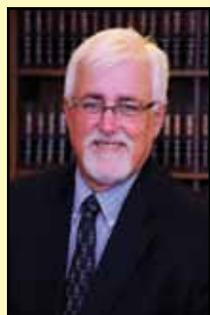
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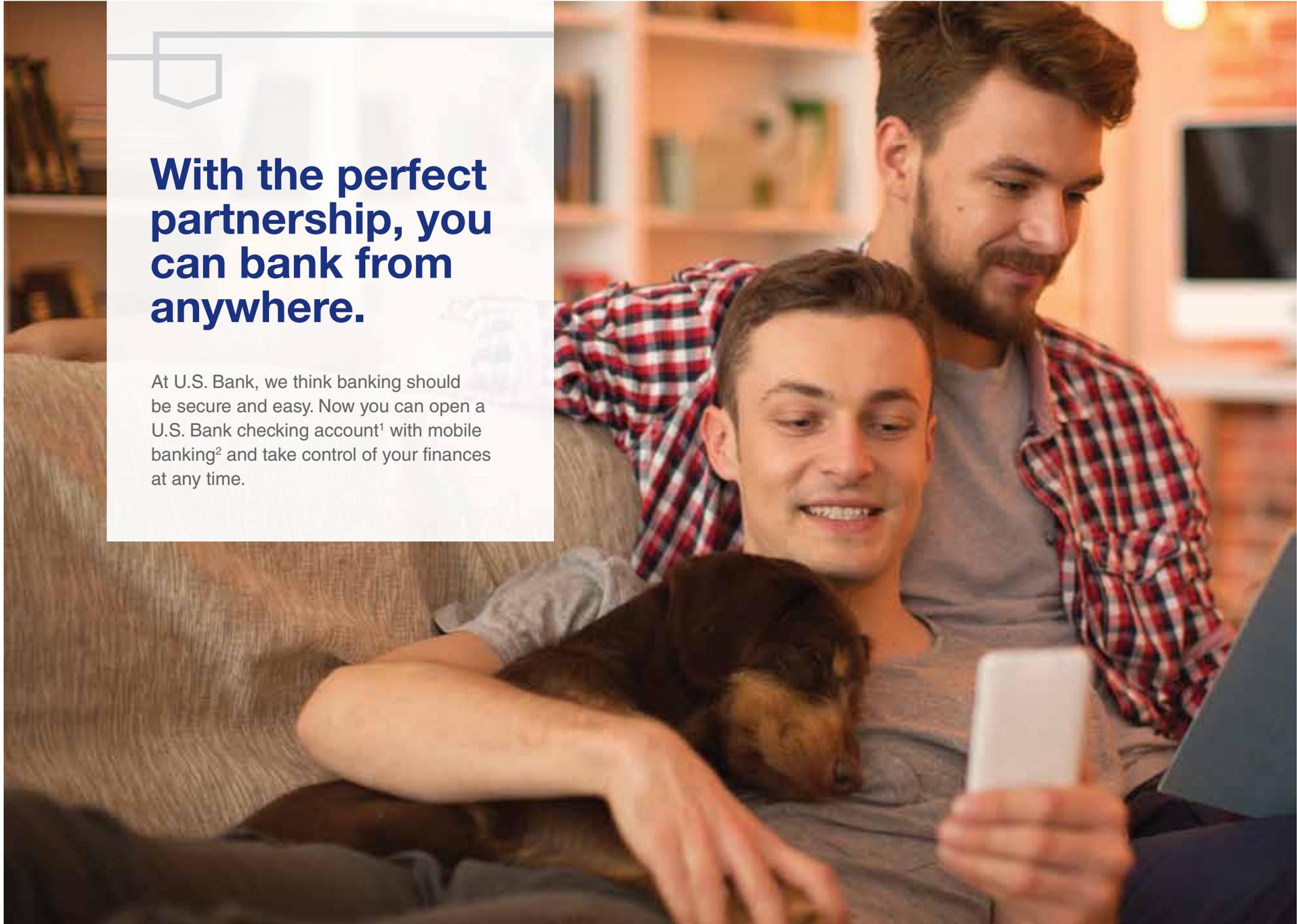


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