HUMAN FIRST
Center on Halsted marks 10 years
Fred Eychaner honored, mayor speaks on immigrants

Businessman and philanthropist Fred Eychaner was honored with the Center on Halsted’s Human First Award.
Photo by Kat Fitzgerald, mysticimagesphotography.com
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HUMAN FIRST
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THE SOUL TRUTH
The Goodman Gala featured Billy Porter (left), who has the new CD Billy Porter Presents: The Soul of Richard Rodgers.

HUMAN FIRST
Center on Halsted marks 10 years
Fred Eychaner honored, mayor speaks on immigrants

POPCORN LIFE
Popcornopolis (above), the Lume Cube and Chicago's Baton Show Lounge are among Five Worth Finding.

ODDS AND BENZ
The 2017 Mercedes-Benz GLC43 AMG deserves a long look.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ
Find out the latest about Jessie Smollett, Mary Lambert and The Bachelorette.

DAILY BREAKING NEWS

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On I Am Not Your Negro

“People invent categories in order to feel safe. White people invented black people to give white people identity...Straight cats invented faggots so they could sleep with them without becoming faggots themselves.” — James Baldwin & Nikki Giovanni, A Dialogue (1973)

To understand what is missing from Raoul Peck’s documentary I Am Not Your Negro, and how James Baldwin has been received and, too often, misconceived on the American literary landscape and in our cultural imagination, one must talk about men and sex, about faggots and shame.

This essay is about my great appreciation for the Black gay American writer named James Arthur Baldwin, his journey from America to France, his testimony, his brilliance, and his swashbuckling bravery which spellbound a nation, and which demanded and continues to demand that we face the truth about who we were, who we are.

Hundreds of pages written about him would still only scratch the surface, and I know whatever I’ve written here will be incomplete. But I want to contribute to the conversation that has been revived about his life and work at this time, to share my perceptions on my extraordinary Black gay brother—and testify to what I see when I look out my window, (what James called “the view from here”), on American men, masculinity, sexuality and race.

This essay is also about my appreciation for, and great reservations about I Am Not Your Negro, which I admire, but which I also find at times disappointing and exasperating; and which I believe must be examined for its participation in the same macho hypocrisy and homosexual denial that Baldwin spent much of his life trying to deconstruct.

When one considers Baldwin’s work, it is remarkable that a Black writer from Harlem, nominated for the National Book Award, followed up his first novel with a second one about a “straight” white American man in Paris who falls in love with an Italian man, who is gay and once married himself, a novel called Giovanni’s Room, published in 1956.

Baldwin’s American publishers rejected it, told him to burn the book, but he refused and published it in England. I am struck by the amount of courage it must have taken, the self-knowledge and confidence that James must have had to insist on this, to trust his vision. That he could not be shamed or bullied into not publishing Giovanni’s Room is essential to the Baldwin legend and legacy.

“They told me ‘you can’t afford to alienate the audience.’” Baldwin told Quincy Troupe in his final 1987 interview. “I told them fuck you.” What it tells us is that just as he had to write Go Tell It On The Mountain about his experience as a Black boy growing up in Harlem and the Black church, Giovanni’s Room was a story he had to tell also, about his experience as a gay man. There was no compromise. If you’ve read him, then you know that there were a few things in the world that frightened James Baldwin, but a conversation on race and sexuality wasn’t one of the them. He understood, as exemplified by the opening quotation, the relationship between the “nigger” and the “faggot,” cultural creations, societal demons; and who better to understand it than the man who wakes up one morning to find that he is both.

James was fearless in this aspect, perhaps even more so towards the end of his life, understanding what silence does to the spiritual body. His final novel, Just Above My Head, appreciates the connection between lying about homosexuality and lying about family sexual abuse and rape, how they rend the fabric of the biological family, the church family, of society. James Baldwin, our elder brother, looking after his flock and “raising us,” demanded that we be better because he loved us, he loved us.

What made him so brave was not necessarily his orientation or how he named it, but his refusal to ignore the sexual question and his understanding that examining it was integral to the healing of racism in America. What James appreciated, perhaps above all, and from a very young age, was the importance of family. And he knew that anything that tears apart the family will eventually bring down the house. For the white homosexual activist who wants to end sexual inequality, the conversation has to include race. For the Black revolutionary who wants an end to racism, fear of homosexuality has to be faced. True liberation cannot be achieved until homophobia, racism and sexism are challenged and eradicated from our community.

This is part of the triumph of I Am Not Your Negro and part of its disgrace; while it deconstructs the American sexual fear, for example, that refused to acknowledge Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte as sex symbols, the film also refuses to deal with the sexuality of his subject, or that Baldwin is indeed a “sexual” icon of a different kind. The man who spent his life demanding we tell the truth to each other and to ourselves deserves, at least in his own movie, to have the truth told about him.

Which is why this essay exists: I’m tired, frankly, of hearing people I respect saying that it doesn’t matter who James Baldwin slept with, that wasn’t the point. And in their insistence that Baldwin’s “gayness” is only a matter of his sexual experiences, meaning something to be footnoted, kept in the dark and private, they refuse to acknowledge that a Black American gay aesthetic exists, that James’s homosexuality is also to be found in the inflections, the mannerisms, the approach, the humor, the sarcasm, the sass, the theatricality, the heroism. And it’s just not to be found in the “gay” books, either: The Fire Next Time was written by the same queer man who gave us Giovanni’s Room.

Max S. Gordon is a writer and performer. His work has appeared at The New Civil Rights Movement, openDemocracy, Democratic Underground, Truthout, Z Magazine and Gay Times. His published essays include “Bill Cosby, Himself: Fame, Narcissism and Sexual Violence”; “The Cult of Whiteness: On Donald Trump, #OscarsSoWhite and the end of America”; and “Be Glad That You are Free: On Nina, Miles Ahead, Lemonade, Lauryn Hill and Prince.”
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Gay teacher fired after students out him; pol candidate comments

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Democratic congressional candidate Marie Newman, who will be challenging incumbent U.S. Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-Chicago) in the 2018 elections, on May 19, expressed outrage over the firing of a gay Catholic high school teacher.

DNAinfo, on May 18, first reported on Matt Tedeschi, a Chicagoan who was fired from St. Ignatius College Prep after students found his online dating profile and outed him.

“It’s outrageous today that people in our society are still being bullied and outed over their sexual orientation and even worse, that our LGBTQ brothers and sisters don’t have protection in the workforce to prevent them from being fired for their sexual orientation or gender identity,” said Newman in a statement. “One of my children was severely bullied, and it has led me to a life of activism and standing up against those who would threaten and intimidate others in our society.”

Tedeschi had taught religious studies at St. Ignatius since 2013. But in early 2016, a student found his profile on the dating site OkCupid and distributed screen-captures to other students. The profile said that Tedeschi was interested in men but did not give his name or place of employment. He was subjected to homophobic taunts from students thereafter; he was let go in early 2017.

Newman said that the episode serves as a reminder that the LGBTQ community badly needs comprehensive anti-discrimination protections at the federal level.

“Unlike Dan Lipinski, in Congress, I will proudly co-sponsor H.R. 2282, the Equality Act, which will provide consistent non-discrimination policies for LGBTQ people, as it relates to their employment, housing and education, among others,” she said. “Teachers deserve the utmost respect and appreciation from our elected leaders and I’ll work every day to make sure their dignity is protected in the workplace.”

DNAinfo’s story is at http://dnainfo.com/fo/2pQQchy.

Chicago Equality Rally on June 11

The Chicago LGBTQ community and allies will be gathering Sunday, June 11, at 11 a.m. at Andersonville Midsommarfest in solidarity with the Equality March for Unity and Pride in Washington, D.C.

Speakers and musical performances will promote visibility, unity and pride.

The rally will be held at the intersection of Clark Street and Balmoral Avenue—an intersection that is home to Midsommarfest’s Pride Stage and is anchored by local, gay-owned businesses.

The event is being hosted in partnership with the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce, Windy City Times and Andersonville merchants, and with the support of 40th Ward Ald. Patrick O’Connor and 48th Ward Ald. Harry Osterman.

A full schedule of speakers, musical programming, and partner organizations will be publicized in the near future.

In addition, Andersonville Midsommarfest will give $1 from each individual gate donation on June 11 to three Illinois-based organizations: Center on Halsted, Equality Illinois and Ava’s Change4Youth.

Chicago Equality Rally attendees are encouraged to RSVP via the public Facebook event at “Chicago Equality Rally at Andersonville.” More information about the rally will continue to be updated on the public Facebook event and at Andersonville.org/equalityrally as it becomes available.

‘Queer Prom’
May 26

The 12th Annual Queer Prom will take place Friday, May 26, at 6:30 p.m. at the National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th St.

There will be food, music (by DJ OCD) and information booths.

Tickets are $20-$30 each; visit “Queer Prom 2017” on Facebook.
LGBTQ veterans to dedicate Halsted monument, celebrate 25 years on Memorial Day

The Chicago Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) will hold public events throughout the Memorial Day weekend. Notably, on Monday, May 29, at 1 p.m. the Chicago chapter of AVER will dedicate a new granite monument to the military service of LGBTs on the corner of Halsted and Addison followed by the celebration of the chapter’s 25th anniversary on the third floor of the Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St. from 2 to 6 p.m.

Congressman Mike Quigley, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Commissioner of Human Relations Mona Noriega, the Director of Chicago’s Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs Victor Lagroon, Alderman Tom Tunney, Victor Salvo, and Modesto Valle are among those attending. Chicago Gay Men’s Chorus and Windy City Performing Arts will perform.

AVER is a non-profit, chapter-based association of active, reserve and veteran servicemembers dedicated to full and equal rights and treatment for all present and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Also on Saturday, May 27, veterans will march in the City of Chicago’s Memorial Day Parade. Line-up will be at 11 a.m. near Wacker & LaSalle, along the Chicago River. Look for the AVER banner.

On Sunday, May 28 at 11 a.m. AVER will hold a Memorial Day Service at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL, near Joliet, at the site of the Monument to GLBT veterans dedicated there two years ago.

Also on Sunday May 28 at 2 p.m. in Evergreen Hill Memorial Park in Steger, IL, the chapter will hold its annual Remembrance Ceremony for sailor Allen Schindler, who was beaten to death by fellow sailors in October 1992.

All events open to the public. Further information available from Jim Darby at (773) 752-0058 or jamesdarby@aol.com.

9/11 friar to be honored June 10

Father Mychal Judge—an openly gay Franciscan friar who was one of the first responders who showed up to the twin towers once disaster struck on Sept. 11, 2001—will be among those honored at this year’s Irish-American Hall of Fame Awards Gala on Saturday, June 10, 6:30-10 p.m., at The Erin Room at the Irish American Heritage Center, 4626 N. Knox St.

Other inductees will include actors Martin Sheen and Bill Murray, hotelier John Fitzpatrick, actor/soldier Audie Murphy, sports legend Maureen “Little Mo” Connolly. American Conference for Irish Studies co-founder Lawrence J. McCaffrey, and astronauts Scott and Mark Kelly. (Mark is the husband of former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords.) Judge, Murphy and Connolly are being honored posthumously.

Tickets start at $175 each; visit http://irishamerican.org/event/irish-american-hall-of-fame-2017-awards-gala/.

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Dignity/Chicago marks 45 years with dinner, awards ceremony

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

DignityUSA Executive Director Marianne Duddy-Burke was the keynote speaker at Dignity/Chicago’s (the advocacy organization for LGBTQI Catholics and their allies) 45th anniversary celebration May 20 at Francesca’s on Taylor.

Ramon Rodriguez, president of Dignity/Chicago’s board of directors, spoke about what it must have felt like to be one of the founders of Dignity.

“Just a few years earlier, we would have felt the hope and excitement brought by Vatican II, but also a measure of disappointment that its reforms didn’t go far enough,” said Rodriguez. “On the civil-rights front, we would have just experienced the thrill of Stonewall and the initial cries for freedom, equality and dignity. And yet, it is also important to remember that in those days, LGBT people were routinely arrested, discriminated and violently attacked.”

Rodriguez noted that it was under this backdrop that DignityUSA, and a few years later the Chicago chapter emerged. He spoke about some of Dignity/Chicago’s past events including hosting two, and soon to be three biennial DignityUSA national conferences and co-founding Call to Action in 1978 along with other progressive Catholic groups.

“Dignity/Chicago has no doubt a storied past, but we are only as good as how we tackle the current and future needs of our community,” said Rodriguez. “Catholic institutions continue to unjustly terminate LGBT workers and women are still being shut out from ministerial life. Children of LGBT families are still being ostracized or placed in unhealthy, untenable situations and church teaching on a host of issues is still far behind the times. At the same time, young Catholics of every sexual orientation and gender identity are being turned off by a church leadership that is out of touch with their needs and reality. Our work is far from done.”

Rodriguez also acknowledged the presences of long-time Dignity/Chicago members Ald. James Cappleman and his husband, Richard Thale, as well as former national officers Jim Pilarski and Ken Mayka.

Also in attendance was Dignity/Chicago member Matt Tedeschi. Tedeschi was recently fired from his religious studies teaching job at St. Ignatius College Prep after students found his online dating profile, outed him to others at the school and harassed him both at school and online.

The theme of Duddy-Burke’s speech was Dignity at the Crossroads.

“One way that Dignity, as both local communities and as a national movement, has been graced with longevity achieved by few LGBTQI organizations is that we have always paid attention to the movement of the Spirit, and adapted our ministry and advocacy to changing circumstances,” said Duddy-Burke. “This is certainly a time like no other, and I believe we are being called to change in unprecedented ways.

Duddy-Burke explained that they established rituals to affirm their lives and relationships and launched many LGBTQI organizations from political groups to bowling leagues. She noted that they blessed relationships years before they were legal in the eyes of the law as well as cared for those with depression, addictions, HIV/AIDS and cancers. Duddy-Burke said they have also advocated for ordinances, legislation, policies and practices that advanced equality and inclusion since the group’s inception.

“Now there’s a new, destabilizing reality,” said Duddy-Burke. “Last June, the deadliest mass shooting in our nation’s history was carried out at Pulse, a nightclub that primarily served the LGBTQI Latino community. The murder rate of transgender people, especially trans women of color, continues to climb, with a record 22 trans folks killed in 2016 and 10 murdered already so far this year. Our country has a president who seems to see trading away human rights as just a cost of doing business. He’s willing to appease those who helped him ascend to our highest office by enacting policies that divide families, leave the ill and the poor vulnerable, and justify themselves through bigotry.”

In terms of the future of Dignity in this current political climate, Duddy-Burke gave three examples of a way forward: continue to exist, worship, pray and be a community in an inclusive way; find new allies like those in the progressive movement are doing; and continue to articulate and model a vision of Church that is just, inclusive and affirming.

Lambda Legal was recognized for its work in securing equality under the law for LGBTQI people and everyone living with HIV.

The Spirit of Dignity (in recognition of outstanding contributions to the chapter) awardees were Rev. Barbara Zeman (who also gave the blessing at the event) and Rev. Mary Ramsden. Zeman and Ramsden are ordained women priests and preside over many Dignity/Chicago masses.

A celebration Mass took place the following day at Dignity/Chicago’s host church, Broadway United Methodist Church. Members do not meet in any Catholic space because they oppose the Roman Catholic Church’s teachings on LGBTQI people and women’s ordination. See Dignity-chicago.org/ for more information.

Fund to support women of color, trans people

Groundswell Fund—self-advertised as “the largest funder of the U.S. reproductive justice (RJ) movement”—announced the launch of a new national “Liberation Fund” to support grassroots organizing efforts that women of color and transgender people of color will lead across social-justice sectors.

Advisor Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, said in a press release, “The Liberation Fund will make it easier for donors and funders to identify and resource some of the most effective and innovative organizing at the grassroots.”

The fund is accepting donations; visit https://groundswellfund.org/donate/.
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Center on Halsted, museum host ‘Boystown’ event

BY MOLLY SPRAYREGEN

On May 18, the Chicago History Museum held an event at the Center on Halsted (“The Center”) that both explored the development of Boystown and debated the positive and negative ramifications of the changes the neighborhood has undergone throughout the gay rights movement.

This particular event, the first ever held outside the museum, featured speaker Jason Orne, author of Boystown: Sex and Community in Chicago and an assistant sociology professor at Drexel University. Orne’s presentation, titled “The Consequences of Heritage Commodification in Boystown,” explored the social and economic tensions that have arisen in Boystown as a result of an increasing ability for LGBTQ people to live, work and play outside of what he calls “gayborhoods.”

Orne explained, however, that LGBTQ young people’s decisions to live elsewhere has required Boystown businesses to partake in what he calls “heritage commodification,” making Boystown a destination for LGBTQ and straight people alike who are interested in experiencing a taste of gay culture. Boystown is no longer necessarily a place people desire for daily life and identity, but rather a fun place to explore for a day or night out.

Orne did acknowledge one blatantly negative consequence of gentrification in Boystown: the feeling by many new inhabitants that queer youth of color are out of place and not welcome. Although few have lived in Boystown, queer youth of color have always traveled to the neighborhood to spend time in a safe, accepting environment—yet now it is they who are seen as outsiders.

In a conversation preceding this event, Valle explained that the way homeless queer youth in the neighborhood have recently been treated was an issue he hoped would be prioritized during the talk. He said he is appalled when he hears people saying that these youth do not belong in Boystown when they have been coming to the neighborhood for 30 years to, as Valle said, “celebrate who they are.” This is their neighborhood, Valle emphasized.

Following Orne’s presentation was a panel discussion, moderated by queer femme activist, photographer and historian Andie Meadows. The panel was made up of a diverse range of voices: Art Johnston, co-owner of Boystown nightspot Sidetrack; Pat Cummings, a lesbian photographer who currently lives in the Town Hall apartments and also lived in Boystown as a young woman; Lucy Stoole, a drag performer who calls herself “Chicago’s Black, Bearded Beauty;” and Orne.

The panel discussed issues such as their feelings about the word “queer,” the changes they have seen in the neighborhood over the past few decades and the various forms of activism in which one can partake. Another important discussion throughout the evening centered on whether Boystown is truly an inclusive space or if it is mostly a haven for gay white males.

One large issue the panel debated was the effects of the exchange the LGBTQ community has had to make: becoming more mainstream in order to gain legal rights. They also discussed the current necessity of LGBTQ neighborhoods—a point with which Johnston strongly said was needed. The reason LGBTQ people are gaining important rights like healthcare, he said, are because the community is perceived as a powerful minority, and a neighborhood to call our own is vital to maintaining that power.
Financing of Pennycuff apartments nears completion

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The developer of an LGBT-friendly affordable housing project in Logan Square is nearing completion of financing, and a final plan should be ready to present to city officials by the end of summer, according to local officials.

The John Pennycuff Memorial Apartments at Castillo Plaza were first announced in May 2016 and will be located at the site of Congress Pizzeria, 2033 N. Milwaukee Ave. The project is the second of its kind in the city, after the Town Hall apartments in Lake View, and is named after activist Robert Castillo and his late husband, John Pennycuff.

Developer CSA Partners “is still in the process of finalizing the financing of the project with the city and the Chicago Housing Authority,” said Raymond Valadez, chief of staff to Ald. Proco Joe Moreno (1st Ward).

“Once it is finalized, within the next month, the developer will be seeking to present the project to the Chicago Plan Commission, the City Council Zoning Committee and the full City Council before the end of the summer,” Valadez added.

“Afterward, the developer will apply for building permits and hope to have them by the end of this year or the beginning of 2018.”

The project will be financed through the use of TIF funds from the existing Milwaukee-Fullerton TIF district, as well as Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) funds, tax credits and private funding. The City Council approved borrowing of $16 million for the apartments last December.

TPAN moving, will partner with Howard Brown

This month, Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) will move its offices to the Edgewater neighborhood, opening a co-located medical clinic that Howard Brown Health operates.

The move returns TPAN to its former storefront location, 5537 N. Broadway.

The new location will feature renovated offices and meeting spaces as well as a drop-in center—The Tea Room—for TPAN’s expanding youth clientele. “We are creating a safe space for youth to visit, and to get to know our staff and the many services specifically provided for younger individuals,” said TPAN Director of Client Services Julie Supple in a press release. TPAN runs two federally funded programs for youth that address mental health and substance use.

In June, Howard Brown Health will begin seeing clients in a four-room clinic located at TPAN. TPAN is closed May 22-24 for the move, reopening on Thursday, May 25. Also, TPAN will hold a ribbon-cutting and open house on Monday, June 19, at 5-7:30 p.m. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, among others, will speak and help commemorate this new chapter in TPAN’s history.

See TPAN.com.

Pro-LGBT Christian group to hold Chicago conference in October

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The Lenexa, Kansas-based Reformation Project, which describes itself as “a Bible-based, Christian grassroots organization that works to promote inclusion of LGBT people by reforming church teaching on sexual orientation and gender identity,” will hold its annual conference in Chicago on Oct. 26-28.

The Reformation Project’s goal, according to its website, is “a global church that fully affirms LGBT people.”

The conference will take place at Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, 126 E. Chestnut St., and will include discussions by scholars and theologians, keynote addresses and breakout sessions and worship services.

According to promoters, the conference will offer “an intersectional approach to LGBTQ inclusion, centering the voices of marginalized people within the LGBTQ Christian community and working to ensure our advocacy is for everyone in our community, including people of color, women, and transgender people.”

For information, visit ReformationProject.org/chicago.
‘Freedom to Marry’ shows Evan Wolfson as marriage architect

BY SARAH TOCE

Widely considered the “architect of same-sex marriage,” Evan Wolfson and his colleagues led a decades-long battle to win equal rights for LGBT people, culminating in a nationwide marriage equality victory at the U.S. Supreme Court. The National Law Journal, in 2000, named Wolfson one of “the 100 most influential lawyers in America,” and Newsweek/The Daily Beast referred to him as “the godfather of gay marriage” at the time.

In 2012, Wolfson received the Barnard Medal of Distinction alongside then-President Barack Obama.

The Freedom to Marry, a film by Eddie Rosenstein, is a tale of one of the most successful civil-rights movements in modern time. Wolfson was clear that the film’s message reaches far beyond the scope of marriage equality.

“The film does a brilliant job of capturing not only how we were able to change hearts and minds and then the law and win the freedom to marry,” he said, “but then can also be applied to other causes and movements in even other countries in the work ahead.”

In reference to “the work ahead,” Wolfson emphasized that it didn’t particularly mean only LGBT rights. The lessons learned from winning marriage equality nationwide can be applied to “other causes, other movements and other countries.”

“It’s important to take into account that a divided country (some might even argue a divided world) needs a lift from time to time.

“We all have many goals and many things we want in the world—including getting our country back on track,” Wolfson said. “What makes me proudest about this film, and what I think the filmmaker did so well, was to capture not just stories of how we won the freedom to marry, but the lessons from that achievement that applies to other work still ahead.”

The players in The Freedom to Marry include Wolfson; Mary Bonauto, civil-rights attorney from Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders; Bonauto’s clients, April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse; and Freedom to Marry National Campaign Director Marc Solomon.

“This film is now being shown by immigration groups, environmental groups, gun-control groups and in other countries precisely because it’s not just about the United States winning marriage,” Wolfson said. “This film is literally being used as a tool and an inspiration by other movements in other countries.”

Screenings for A Freedom to Marry are currently scheduled in Boston, Concord, Woodstock, Pittsburgh, and Tel Aviv. The award-winning documentary was previously shown in San Francisco, Houston, Atlanta, Austin, Tampa, New York, Honolulu, Portland, Salt Lake City, and Dallas, among others. Interested parties wishing to schedule a screening may do so via https://freedomtomarrymovie.com/host-a-screening.

“We are not going backward,” Wolfson said. “Our country is disastrously on the wrong track and there are many values in the communities that I’m sure most of us share that are under attack. This includes the inclusion and freedoms and rights of LGBT people. With all of that, it’s important not to feel bad and make it worse. We are not going backward. Our country is in an enormously different and better place for gay and transgender people now than it was before. That momentum didn’t vanish because Trump got into office.”

In fact, a new Gallup poll dated May 15 reported that support for the freedom to marry is at an all-time high, even among Republicans.

“We’ve continued to build on what we achieved because it’s the gift that keeps on giving.”

Wolfson resides in New York City where he has been named a Distinguished Visitor from Practice at Georgetown Law Center where he teaches law and social change. Wolfson also serves as Senior Counsel at Dentons, the world’s largest law firm, with 125-plus offices in over 50 countries.


Evan Wolfson.
PR image

Wolfson’s desire to change hearts and minds sprouted approximately than 34 years ago, in 1983, when he penned his third-year paper at Harvard Law on the subject of marriage equality. At the time, the bold concept was entirely taboo for the mainstream. After the AIDS crisis began to ravage the LGBT community, Wolfson revved up his efforts to fight for equal protections. He initiated the fights that would propel marriage equality to the forefront of legislative minds and then, in 2003, he founded the national organization Freedom to Marry, which spearheaded the movement’s strategy.

GLAAD: 20 percent of millennials identify as LGBTQ

GLAAD unveiled its third annual Accelerating Acceptance report, a survey conducted on GLAAD’s behalf by Harris Poll that shows that young people are significantly more likely to openly identify as LGBTQ than generations before them.

One of the primary results is that 20 percent of the respondents identify as LGBTQ.

The survey—fielded online Nov. 2-4, 2016, among 2,037 U.S. adults aged 18 and older—also shows growing levels of young people who are more likely to identify outside of traditional binaries such as “gay/straight” and “man/woman.”

Also, non-LGBTQ millennials are also significantly less likely to know someone who identifies as “gay” or “lesbian” than generations before them, indicating that their LGBTQ peers largely describe themselves in words outside more traditional binaries.


Suburban progressives to host equality march

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The progressive group Southwest Suburban Activists will hold the Equality March for Unity and Pride on Sunday, June 11, at Breidert Green in Frankfort, Illinois.

Southwest Suburban Activists is a group committed to fostering more progressive and diverse political candidates in Frankfort, a community that has historically been quite conservative, said Emily Beigel, who founded the group. Since its inception in January, the group has had postcard parties, a women’s march on International Women’s Day and a vigil in remembrance of Syrian refugees.

“In an urban area like Chicago these kinds of events are expected, but in Frankfort, it is truly revolutionary,” Beigel added. She further noted that, “Hosting the Equality March was a natural extension of our activism, our supporting of all people, and our desire to push the envelope in our area.”

For further information on the June 11 march and other South Suburban Activist events, see SouthwestSuburbanActivists.com.
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Center on Halsted gala marks 10th anniversary

BY MATT SIMONETTE

According to Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Center on Halsted is the “beating heart for the gay and lesbian community of the City of Chicago.”

Emanuel spoke May 20 at the Center’s 10th anniversary Human First gala, held for the second year at the Geraghty on the Near Southwest Side, and reminisced about the organization’s impact on the city’s LGBT community, as well as the progress that community has made in the past 10 years.

The community, he said, exemplified “the changing of a culture and a set of values . . . I want to thank the gay and lesbian community for reminding us what our values are.”

Emanuel fired up the crowd when he spoke about Chicago’s status as a “welcoming city” for immigrants and refugees, urging the crowd not to let President Donald Trump’s rhetoric and actions “spread the fear.”

He added, “When they come to Chicago, we have one thing to say to them: ‘Welcome home.’”

Former President Barack Obama sent a letter, read by Emanuel, that paid tribute to the evening’s award winner, philanthropist and activist Fred Eychaner, as well as the Center’s legacy. Obama also sent a videotaped testimonial.

“With each passing year, the Center becomes an integral part of the community, providing essential support and programming for thousands of LGBT Chicagoans,” Obama said in the letter. “Whether working to build safe spaces, improve mental health and well-being or offering education and training for LGBT youth, your efforts are helping reach for a more inclusive future, one in which all people, no matter who they are, feel valued, no matter who they love.”

Obama called Eychaner a “critical” part of the efforts of both the Center and the larger community.

“Over the years, Fred has empowered countless organizations to create change in their communities, whether they are striving to eradicate HIV/AIDS or making arts accessible to everyone.”

Accepting his award, Eychaner, who generally eschews the public spotlight, spoke of his past activism but also called on the audience to do more to defeat right-wing efforts to hinder progress that the community has made in recent years.

“We as a community face our biggest threat since the early days of AIDS,” he said. “... The wingnuts are on a relentless march to roll back the rights of LGBTs.”

Eychaner added, “We know who’s running this country and we know what we have to do about it.”

He especially focused on the passage of Trump’s Affordable Health Care Act in the U.S. House of Representatives and pointed to the dangers inherent in the legislation, noting, “Each and every one of us will end up with a ‘pre-existing condition.’”

The healthcare controversy means the LGBT community “is in the fight of our lives again,” Eychaner said, adding that it will take letters to politicians, public protests and cold-calling the public, among other efforts, to defeat the right in this struggle.

“The message is this: We’ve got to do something,” he said. “Writing a check is important, but it’s not enough in itself. ... Like America, our LGBT community is strongest when we’re united.”

Center on Halsted CEO Modesto Tico Valle spoke of both the fortuitous timing of the Center launching just as Obama was enjoying a quick rise in national politics, as well as the unfortunate timing of its opening just as the real-estate market collapse began a protracted economic collapse. He noted however that the Center responded with initiatives that partially answered economic challenges that the community faced. Among the efforts he mentioned were the Silver Fork program that trained young people to work in restaurants and the Town Hall Apartments that responded to the need for affordable housing for LGBT seniors.

He said that about 3.5 million people have walked through the Center’s doors since opening in 2007. Like Eychaner, Valle noted that the community still faces numerous struggles.

“It wasn’t over when the Center opened and it wasn’t over when marriage was won,” he said. Among the issues he called attention to were transgender-, immigrant- and women’s-rights, as well as issues pertaining to youths experiencing homelessness.

“We will continue to fight until all of us are human first,” Valle said.

The Center’s legacy goes back to the early 1970s, when Gay Horizons was founded, altered called Horizons Community Services. In 2007, Horizons became the Center on Halsted.

Besides Emanuel, other elected and appointed officials in attendance included former Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, state Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago); state Sen. (and 2018 gubernatorial candidate) Daniel Biss (D-Chicago); former state Sen. Carol Ronen; U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Chicago); Alds. Raymond Lopez (15th), Deb Mell (33rd), and Tom Tunney (44th); Lake Forest Ald. Prue Beidler (1st); Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Debra Shore; and Chicago Commission on Human Relations Commissioner Mona Noriega. Democratic gubernatorial candidate J.B. Pritzker was also there.

Center on Halsted officials estimated that more than 800 guests attended.
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More Center on Halsted gala attendees.
Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)
Sarah Buino changes the tune of therapy

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Using her head and heart, Sarah Buino, LCSW, CADC, CDWF brings her own colorful touch to the therapy field.

As a child growing up in southern Ohio, Buino wanted to be a Broadway star. Singing was her first passion and she considered her school’s theater department and show choir life. Over the years, she has moved away from musicals and onto rock ‘n’ roll, currently performing in a wedding band.

Buino, who identifies as bisexual, said she came to Chicago in 2002 for a boy, a Prince concert and a craving for a livelier city. That relationship did not last, but Buino ended up meeting and eventually marrying another man who coincidentally lived around the corner in 2005.

Looking back, Buino said she probably always wanted to be a therapist. It was when she was working as a business manager at Northwestern University’s concert hall, her own therapist informed her on how she could pursue a career in therapy. She went on to earn a master’s degree from Loyola University in Chicago and decided to specialize in shame and substance abuse because of her own family history.

“I feel like there’s nothing like working with people who desperately want to be the best version of themselves and people who struggle with addiction, who are in recovery, they are the most inspiring, loving, caring, exciting, authentic people I’ve ever met,” said Buino.

Buino went on to become a therapist at Presence Behavioral Health’s Addicted Professionals Program, an adjunct faculty member at Loyola University’s School of Social Work, and a Certified Daring Way facilitator. She also applies her singing skills to therapy interventions at Positive Daring Way facilitator. She also applies her musical skills to therapy interventions at Positive Transformation Center.

“We help them identify their emotions with music, talk about their recovery and use theme songs for it and it gets real great feedback,” said Buino of the interventions. “Music really does reach people in a way that nothing else can.”

Buino said she founded Head/Heart Therapy, Inc. at a time of need. Head/Heart Therapy is a group therapy practice that specializes in treating adults and adolescents struggling with shame, addiction and mood/anxiety disorders, among other difficulties. It is trauma informed and LGBTQ-affirmative. The private practice, she explained, tries to incorporate physical, mental, spiritual, emotional health and each therapist has a unique talent or skill that they bring to therapy, including therapeutic yoga, tai chi and hypnotherapy, among others. Buino also does reiki (energy healing).

“I wanted to name it Head/Heart Therapy because I think the essence of becoming the best version of yourself is connecting what you think and what you feel,” said Buino, president of Head/Heart Therapy.

A few years ago, Buino trained with Dr. Brené Brown’s team and still practices what she learned, which is the concept of authenticity.

“I find that whatever it is that I can connect with people on, when I sit across from people, I want them to know ‘yeah, me too,’” said Buino of being authentic with her clients.

Buino’s most recent project in clinical social-work leadership will be her collaboration with Robert Hilliker, LCSW, LCDC of Houston, Texas. Together, they will be opening The Lovett Center in Chicago. The Lovett Center is a co-working space for therapists and private practice, as well as intensive outpatient (IOP) for group therapy.

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

“There’s still so much stigma attached to mental illness and especially addiction, and so I’d really love to be able to really help people understand what empathy and compassion really is because if we had more empathy and compassion, we wouldn’t have stigma,” said Buino about her hopes for the therapy field. “We wouldn’t need to judge and fear, and stigma is the way it is because everyone who doesn’t understand it is just afraid and they just don’t know. A lot of people think an addict is a bum on the street asking for money, but my clients are doctors and nurses and teachers and really successful people who just ended up making a really bad choice at some point.”

For more information about Sarah Buino and Head/Heart Therapy, visit http://headheart-therapy.com.

Activist reflects on Berwyn’s LGBT transformation

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Activist Ted Korbos said “he could never have dreamed” that, 22 years after the formation of Berwyn United Gay and Lesbian Organization (BUNGALO), that the city of Berwyn would have this many openly LGBT public officials about to take office.

“I was very proud and very happy,” said Korbos, who said that the election of lesbian Marge Paul as a city council member in 2009 represented a turning point of sorts.

“Marge is a great politician,” Korbos further explained. “She’s very outgoing and very smart about bringing people in.”

Paul won the municipal primary election in February for Berwyn’s city clerk post; she was unopposed in the general election April 4. She was replaced on the city council by Jeanine Reardon, who is a close political ally. Reardon, along with another ally elected to the council, Jose Ramirez, is also openly gay. Another LGBT person entering the council is Scott Lennon, who ran on a slate affiliated with Berwyn’s mayor, who was opposed by the Berwyn United political slate, which Paul, Reardon and Ramirez belonged to.

Brian Brock, who is also gay, also won a post as a Berwyn Park District commissioner, while Julia McAleer-Forte was among those who won a spot on the Berwyn South District 100 School Board.

“Marge is the person who has drawn in and involved a lot of the next generation of gays in Berwyn into politics and into Berwyn as a community,” Korbos said.

That much success for LGBT candidates was unimaginable in late 1994, when the Berwyn city council bowed down to pressure from conservative ministers and removed sexual orientation as a protected class from the city’s proposed human rights ordinance, Korbos recalled. At a meeting, a local minister said that such an inclusion was unnecessary, since no gays or lesbians lived in Berwyn.

“That statement flabbergasted those of us from the LGBT community, that someone who lived in Berwyn would believe that no gay person lived in a city of 50,000 people,” Korbos said. “That was the impetus for starting BUNGALO.”

The group adopted the slogan, “We, too, are Berwyn.”

“Our goal was to have gays and lesbians become involved in Berwyn as a community,” Korbos said. “It was not necessarily political.”

BUNGALO was a means by which LGBT folks in town met, networked and socialized. The group held lectures, marched together in the Chicago Pride Parade and staffed a table at Halsted Street Market Days, among myriad activities. But Korbos noted that the group did get “pushback” on some occasions.

“There was a gay-baiting flyer in the 6th Ward aldermanic race in 1997, implying that one of the candidates for that office was gay,” he said. “There were also gay-baiting mailings and flyers in the 2000 and 2001 elections.”

He noted that the last several elections were comparatively free of anti-LGBT rhetoric, adding, “In the elections of the last decade, a person’s sexual orientation is a non-issue and all candidates running for office in Berwyn, gay and straight, are supportive on gay civil rights issues. … While BUNGALO laid the foundation and was the start of it all, it was people like Marge Paul, Scott Lennon and Jose Ramirez who took things to the next level over the last decade.”

Korbos said, that though Berwyn is largely still welcoming for its LGBT residents and visitors, there are still some problems.

“About six months ago, a man was being harassed by his neighbor,” he noted. “We also got an email that a woman’s lesbian daughter, a teenager, was being bullied. It’s welcoming, but it is like any other city. It’s much better than it was 20 years ago.”

Korbos is proud of what the city’s LGBT community accomplished during the primary and general elections. He also praised South Berwyn School District 100’s “forward-thinking policy” on transgender students.

“I am proud not only of the gays and lesbians who are involved in politics, but other gays and lesbians in Berwyn who are involved in other aspects of Berwyn, like the parks, the schools, the library, the business community and [who are] involved in other civic organizations,” he said.
A photographer found his profile and asked if he'd be interested in doing some modeling; after determining it wasn't a scam, he leapt at the chance. Now, four years later, Monroe Stevens has participated in approximately 15 photo shoots and continues to build his brand. The offer from the photographer didn't take Stevens completely by surprise. Modeling had been something Stevens had considered in the past. He says people used to comment on his cheekbones and tell him he should pursue modeling.

Currently, he models for brands that sell underwear, swimwear and the like, and as his career blossoms, he hopes to partake in more photo shoots that involve telling a story rather than merely placing bodies on display. He wants his shoots to have messages, and one big message in particular. “My overall would be love, pretty much,” he said. Of special importance to him, he explained to Windy City Times, is HIV/AIDS awareness because of the prevalence of the disease in both the Black and gay communities.

Modeling, however, is not Stevens’ only gig. He’s also a full-time student studying business accounting; he chose to pursue accounting because of its practicality. Stevens is also interested in graphic design and animation. He’s a sketch artist who especially loves sketching anime. He began sketching Looney Tunes characters before beginning to create his own. “I need to get back into it because it makes me happy,” he says, “That was my first love.” Stevens is also interested in learning to paint.

While he has a diverse range of art-based interests, Stevens believes modeling is a great way to bring them all together. He says he has tons of ideas for the shoots he does and wants to help create the messages they send as well as draw the costumes and different concepts to incorporate.

Stevens emphasized that being a model doesn’t necessarily mean having a ton of body confidence. He said, “When you become a model, that’s when you become very insecure.”

As if Stevens isn’t busy enough, fitness is also a staple of his routine. He began lifting at 13 years old and has loved it ever since. His typical workout takes two hours, and his favorite time to be at the gym is late at night when he can have it all to himself. He can generally be found there around 11 p.m. “I can’t imagine my life without fitness, because it’d be pretty boring,” he said.

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**Monroe Stevens**

**Text by Molly Sprayregen**

**Photos from Stevens (except where noted)**

- **Age**: 30
- **Orientation**: Gay
- **Job title**: Model/student
- **Favorite singer**: Brandy
- **Favorite type of exercise**: Bench press
- **Favorite book**: No Excuses: Power of Self Discipline, by Brian Tracy
- **Favorite movie**: Get Out
- **Favorite food**: Sushi
- **Fun fact**: I look athletic, but I’m not an athlete

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Cambridge mayor's call to action

The city of Cambridge, Massachusetts—this writer's hometown—is a stormy hotbed of politics and social issues, and no person has weathered its vicissitudes better than Mayor E. Denise Simmons.

On May 11, Simmons held a town hall meeting she dubbed “A Citizen’s Assembly” on race, gender, class and culture.

“I recognize the division and increasing polarization in the country that reverberates in Cambridge, too. We cannot divorce ourselves from what’s happening in the country,” Simmons told the audience.

Cambridge, proudly dubbed “The People’s Republic of Cambridge,” is ranked as one of the most liberal cities in the United States. And with two of the country’s premier institutions of higher learning—Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology—that draw students and scholars from around the world, Cambridge’s showcase of diversity and multiculturalism rivals that of the United Nations.

However, when you scratch below Cambridge’s surface, there is also a liberal racism that is as intolerant as Southern racism. Just like Southern racism that keeps Blacks in their place, liberal racism does, too. For example, Cambridge’s liberal ruling class maintains its racial boundaries not by designated “colored” water fountains, toilets or restaurants, but rather by its zip codes; major street intersections known as squares, like the renowned Harvard Square; and residential border areas that are designated numbers, like Area 4 (now known as the Port), which was a predominantly Black poor and working-class enclave now gentrified by the biotechnology and pharmaceutical boom.

Simmons reminded the audience when renowned Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, in 2009, was mistakenly taken as unknown Black man breaking and entering into someone’s home that happened to be his. It was a story that went viral internationally, leaving a pox on the city.

Segregation in this city is not only along race but class lines as well. Poor working-class whites and white immigrants do not experience the fullness their white skin privilege would abundantly afford them if they too were part of Cambridge’s professional and/or moneyminded class.

Since her tenure as mayor, Simmons has made her chamber an open space, leading a series of conversations looking at how the city treats its citizenry. And, as a lifelong Cantabrigian and the city’s first openly African-American lesbian mayor, Simmons has a deep commitment in diversity and in improving the quality of life for all Cambridge residents.

“Cambridge is a resource-rich city. I want a city where everyone is respected, have access to equal opportunities, equal advantage, equal treatment in employment, schools, municipal services and our police department, regardless of their class, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or zip code,” Simmons told the crowd.

With education viewed as a passport to opportunity and success and with the imperative to strengthen Cambridge public schools, Simmons opened the town hall meeting with remarks from Kamaria Gooding. Gooding is a sixth-generation Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, in 2009, was mistakenly taken as unknown Black man breaking and entering into someone’s home that happened to be his. It was a story that went viral internationally, leaving a pox on the city. Segregation in this city is not only along race but class lines as well. Poor working-class whites and white immigrants do not experience the fullness their white skin privilege would abundantly afford them if they too were part of Cambridge’s professional and/or moneyminded class.

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With education viewed as a passport to opportunity and success and with the imperative to strengthen Cambridge public schools, Simmons opened the town hall meeting with remarks from Kamaria Gooding. Gooding is a sixth-generation African-American Cantabrigian and a 17-year-old graduating senior from Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) who will be attending Spelman College in the fall.

CRLS is noted as a bastion of liberalism, tolerance and multiculturalism; however, many in the audience were shocked, as I was, to hear Gooding’s plea asking to reform the school’s curriculum toward a more racially just pedagogy. Gooding articulated the demoralizing and deleterious effects of valuing whiteness and teaching an exclusively all-white Eurocentric curriculum, especially in English and history classes.

“It’s white supremacy with no knowledge of Black Americans’ influence in Cambridge, the country and abroad. ... Black subjects are offered as electives,” Gooding told the audience.

Simmons sees her job and employees at City Hall as public servants and as a legislative body working and addressing the concerns of citizens. The town hall meeting successfully aimed to do just that. The audience was divided into seven breakout groups focusing on three questions:

What issues involving race, gender, class and culture would you like the city to address?

What do you feel is the impact of race, gender, class and culture in regards to the quality of services such as employment, housing, public safety and education, to name a few?

In the past decade, where have you seen progress in race, gender, class and culture relations in Cambridge?

The top three concerns from all seven breakout groups were access to quality public education, racial profiling by police and other community members, and affordable housing.

Simmons has been championing these issues since the 1980s as the executive director of the Cambridge Urban Community United and now as a two-term mayor. Simmons’ indefatigable energy and efforts to make Cambridge a model world city were heard in her charge to us all.

“I want to make Cambridge a proactive city and not a reactive city,” she said. “I know we can do better and we must do better. If anybody can get it right, Cambridge can. We have the ability. We just need to have the desire.”

Trump’s fail

Trump’s “Religious Liberty” Fail Shows That He Can Be Stopped

As a real-estate developer, President Donald Trump was no doubt used to saying “Build It!” and, after dispensing with pesky zoning and NIMBY matters, getting others to do so forthwith.

Not so with his Muslim ban and, now, his mixed “religious liberty” executive order to discriminate against LGBTs and women who had abortions and/or used contraceptives.

Months after the religious right’s orgasmic anticipation of Trump’s gift to them, the “thrice-married, porn-loving, pussy-grabbing” creep totally disappointed them. The recent executive order was widely seen as a banal reassertion of current law, and not the wholesale assault on equal employment rights and access to public accommodations that religious bigots lobbied heavily for and wanted.

There are three important lessons for the left to draw from this:

1) Right-wing creeps—including “the most powerful man in the world,” aka U.S. presidents—can be defeated through popular mobilizations.

The social movements of the 1960s exemplified this a generation ago in defeating the most ideologically right-wing president seen in modern times: Richard Nixon. Forcing a wind-down of the U.S. war in Southeast Asia, the enactment of affirmative action and food stamps, the legalization of abortion, and a wave of environmental legislation such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts—time and again, Nixon was forced to do things he didn’t want to.

2) The catastrophic pronouncements of some on the left that a Trump presidency meant the inauguration of fascism, or something close to it, are once again shown to be cartoonish. If Trump truly was der Führer, he would have ordered the bigoted change, and simply rounded up or murdered any who stood in his way.

Fortunately, the fact that we still do have (yes, quite circumscribed) formal democracy means that we can speak out, protest and take more aggressive direct action and live to take action another day. And in this case we can win—all without seriously risking life and limb. In a true fascist state, any individual, including even ruling-class people, who publicly voiced the mildest opposition would have found themselves imprisoned, if not dead.

3) As the Nixon example shows, what is won today is never permanent under capitalism. While we won many things despite Nixon, we lost many of them during subsequent administrations, both Democratic and Republican. So while we have defeated Trump for now, we will have to fight hard against him and his successors to preserve this win, and we won’t ultimately guarantee it until we live in a society that is truly democratically run by everyone—and that values everyone.

Gay Liberation Network
SUMMER THEATER SPECIAL

SUMMER THEATER SPECIAL

Summer theater’s hottest picks

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

For those of you preferring a Windy City “staycation” to a traveling vacation, here’s a selected look at live indoor theater options for the summer. All shows in Chicago unless otherwise noted.

OF LGBTQI interest
—Loud & Proud, MCL Chicago, 3110 N. SheffIELD Ave. Musical acts, comedy sketches and more are part of this LGBTQI variety show co-hosted by Alex Garday and Cat McDonnell. (May 25-June 15; MCLChicago.com)
—Bright Half Life, About Face Theatre at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. An interracial lesbian couple’s relationship is refracted through memories and time shifts in this Chicago premiere of Tanya Barfield’s 2015 off-Broadway drama. (May 26-July 1; AboutFaceTheatre.com)
—Hir, Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St. A transitioning child and a parent with PTSD are part of the mix in this 2015 off-Broadway drama by award-winning out playwright and performance artist Taylor Mac. (June 19-Aug. 20; Steppenwolf.org)
—GAYWATCH. GayCo Productions at The Playground Theatre, 3209 N. Halsted St. Chicago’s oldest LGBTQI sketch comedy troupe returns for a special Pride show filled with lots of improvisational comedy. (June 23 and 24; GayCo.com)

At the Pride Arts Center
The recently rechristened Pride Arts Center will be a hive of activity for its first Pride month. Here are just a few of the shows being mounted at its two stages at 4139 and 4147 N. Broadway St. For tickets and more information, call 800-737-0984 or visit PrideArtsCenter.com.
—Beds is a double bill of the two-character dramas Jerker and Two Boys in Bed on a Cold Winter’s Night. (June 4-16).
—Musical Comedy Whore is a one-man musical, by Skokie native David Pevsner, focuses on his gay partying life mixed amid his diverse acting career on both coasts. (May 31-June 4)
—Find out the winner of the Great Trans* Play Contest Winner at a special two-night reading. (June 9-10).
—SheFest is an evening of performances featuring queer women. (June 12)
—The Nance is Douglas Carter Beane’s 2013 Broadway drama looking at a self-loathing gay actor known for playing effeminate comic characters in burlesque in 1930s New York. (June 29-July 30)
—Cor Theatre is also a visiting troupe at the Pride Arts Center with the Chicago premiere of Jordan Tannahill’s drama Late Company, which focuses on dinner party between the parents of a teenager who committed suicide and the family of one of his tormentors. (June 17-July 16; CorTheatre.org)

LGBTQI singing
—Chicago Gay Men’s Chorus teams with members of the London Gay Men’s Chorus for a collaborative concert at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 25, at Ganz Hall within Roosevelt University, 430 S. Michigan Ave.; CGMC.org.
—Artemis Singers, Chicago’s lesbian feminist chorus since 1980, 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.

World and Chicago premieres
—Her Majesty’s Will, Lifeline Theatre, 6913 N. Glenwood Ave. This world-premiere play by Robert Kauzlaric is based upon David Blixt’s novel that imagines the lives of young William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe amid a plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. (May 26-July 16; LifelineTheatre.com)
—Pass Over, Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St. Waiting for Godot is the inspiration for Antoinette Nwandu’s new drama of young urban men stuck in an unhappy cycle. (June 1-July 9; Steppenwolf.org)
—Native Gardens, Victory Gardens Theater, N. Lincoln Ave. Tempers flare in this Chicago premiere of Karen Zacarías’ drama involving a property line dispute that spirals out of control. (June 2-July 2; VictoryGardens.org)
—Pilgrims, Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee Ave. Humans are out to colonize outer space in Claire Kiechel’s word-premiere sci-fi drama. (June 2-July 30; TheGiftTheatre.org)
—The Bridges of Madison County, Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire. Composer/lyricist Jason Robert Brown (Parade, 13) won a 2014 Tony Award for best score for this musical adaptation of Robert James Waller’s best-selling novel. (June 21-Aug. 13; MarriottTheatre.com)
—Honeymoon in Vegas, Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire. The 1992 film comedy was the inspiration for Jason Robert Brown’s critically acclaimed 2014 Broadway musical adaptation. (Aug. 23-Oct. 15; MarriottTheatre.com)
—Something Rotten!, Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. William Shakespeare is a rock star while his unknown play writing rivals try to produce a musical to topple his popularity in this self-aware 2015 Broadway musical comedy. (July 11-July 23; BroadwayInChicago.com)

WCT reviews Little Miss Sunshine.

‘Miss’ opportunity

Windy City Times reviews Little Miss Sunshine.

Photo by Joel Maisonet

Patrick Smith’s Leatherpedia.

Italian Village.

David Pevsner stars in Musical Comedy Whore.
PR photo

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

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—Chicago Gay Men’s Chorus teams with members of the London Gay Men’s Chorus for a collaborative concert at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 25, at Ganz Hall within Roosevelt University, 430 S. Michigan Ave.; CGMC.org.
—Artemis Singers, Chicago’s lesbian feminist chorus since 1980, 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.
—The ensembles of the Windy City Gay Chorus (Chicago’s oldest gay choral group) and the Windy City Treble Quire mark Pride month with a concert titled “Pulse” at 5 and 8 p.m. Saturday, June 17, at First United Methodist Church, 77 W. Washington St. See WindyCitySings.org.

World and Chicago premieres
—Her Majesty’s Will, Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood Ave. This world-premiere play by Robert Kauzlaric is based upon David Blixt’s novel that imagines the lives of young William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe amid a plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. (May 26-July 16; LifelineTheatre.com)
—Pass Over, Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St. Waiting for Godot is the inspiration for Antoinette Nwandu’s new drama of young urban men stuck in an unhappy cycle. (June 1-July 9; Steppenwolf.org)
—Native Gardens, Victory Gardens Theater, N. Lincoln Ave. Tempers flare in this Chicago premiere of Karen Zacarías’ drama involving a property line dispute that spirals out of control. (June 2-July 2; VictoryGardens.org)
—Pilgrims, Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee Ave. Humans are out to colonize outer space in Claire Kiechel’s world-premiere sci-fi drama. (June 2-July 30; TheGiftTheatre.org)
—The Bridges of Madison County, Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire. Composer/lyricist Jason Robert Brown (Parade, 13) won a 2014 Tony Award for best score for this musical adaptation of Robert James Waller’s best-selling novel. (June 21-Aug. 13; MarriottTheatre.com)
—Honeymoon in Vegas, Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire. The 1992 film comedy was the inspiration for Jason Robert Brown’s critically acclaimed 2014 Broadway musical adaptation. (Aug. 23-Oct. 15; MarriottTheatre.com)
—Something Rotten!, Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. William Shakespeare is a rock star while his unknown play writing rivals try to produce a musical to topple his popularity in this self-aware 2015 Broadway musical comedy. (July 11-July 23; BroadwayInChicago.com)
THEATER REVIEW

Black Pearl: A Tribute to Josephine Baker

Playwright: Daryl Brooks
At: Black Ensemble Theater, 4450 N. Clark St.
Tickets: $55-565
Runs through: June 18

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

An Art Deco motif nowadays considered only fit to be invoked in the rarefied environment of museums is that of a smiling young African girl wearing a bikini-length skirt fashioned of bananas and very little else.

Far from being an anonymous colonialist fantasy, though, this gamine is a portrait of Josephine Baker, whose career serves as a model for female entertainers to this day. Born Freda Josephine McDonald in St. Louis, she grew up to become an internationally celebrated entertainer to this day. Born Freda Josephine McDonald in St. Louis, she grew up to become an internationally celebrated entertainer to this day. She is depicted as she really was: spontaneous. Greg Foster gives us a transcendent moment of the teenaged Olive's liberation.

The play's central figure is Josephine Baker, who, against all odds, rises to become one of the most famous performers of the 20th century. She is portrayed as a woman who defies convention and embraces her own unique identity. The play explores the challenges she faced as a Black woman in a white world, and how she used her platform to advocate for civil rights.

In recent years, plays about working women have evolved from waitresses, hairdressers and museum figures to this day. Born Freda Josephine McDonald in St. Louis, she grew up to become an internationally celebrated entertainer to this day. She is depicted as she really was: spontaneous. Greg Foster gives us a transcendent moment of the teenaged Olive's liberation.

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The play is directed by Maggie Ruffin and features a talented ensemble cast. The performances are captivating, with Sharyon A. Culberson standing out as the iconic Josephine Baker. The musicality of the play is particularly notable, with a score that is both touching and thrilling.

Little Miss Sunshine is a bit of a mixed bag, but both moments are saddled with too much badonkadonks as Olive takes the pageant stage, Sophie Kaegi deftly implores us to shake our nothings with her paramour and consigning her children to the care of her giddy young niece. Further clouding the narrative is the script's teleplay structure—short scenes, small playing areas and multiple locales, making for frequent live-performance scene changes rendered only marginally less cumbersome by designer Harrison Ornelas' furniture on wheels.

The Genesis Theatrials ensemble, under the guidance of director Kaitlin Taylor for this Chicago premiere, features a praiseworthy portrayal of its iconic subject by Debbie Ruzicka (whose real-life science savvy lends credibility to her discussions of the experiments that would eventually destroy their adventurous perpetrator) and game efforts by a trio of supporting players who struggle with nebulous dialects and dialogue sprinkled with ham-handed manifestos. Marie Curie certainly deserves the accolade of her own biodrama, but she also deserves a better one than this.

Objects in the Mirror, Goodman Theatre, through June 4. Immigrants all arrive with secrets, but even after years of refuge promising security and a new start, lives built on lies, however necessary, make for hard decisions. MSB

We're Gonna Die, Haven Theatre at Den Theatre, through June 4. A defiant club-worthy band, a score by Brooklyn playmaker Young Jean Lee and a carnival atmosphere offer raucous anthems for those who refuse to go gentle into that good night. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan
### WNDY CITY TIMES

#### THEATRE SERIES

**15TH SEASON! 2017-18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Information</th>
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| **TREVOR: THE MUSICAL**     | Book and lyrics by Dan Collins  
Music by Julianne Wick Davis  
**Writers Theatre**  
**Thursday August 10**  
**Based on the Academy Award-winning film about a gay 13-year-old boy who is a fan of Diana Ross** |
| **BOY**                     | By Anna Ziegler  
**Timeline Theatre**  
**Friday January 19**  
**Inspired by the real-life story of a boy who claims his true identity after being raised as a girl** |
| **FUN HOME**                | By Phillip Dawkins  
**Raven Theatre**  
**Friday March 30 or Thursday April 12**  
**The writer of Le Switch and The Homosexuals** |
| **THE GENTLEMAN CALLER**    | By Phillip Dawkins  
**Raven Theatre**  
**Friday March 30 or Thursday April 12**  
**The writer of Le Switch and The Homosexuals** |
| **MEMPHIS**                 | Music and lyrics by David Bryan  
Book and lyrics by Joe DiPietro  
**Porchlight Music Theatre @ Ruth Page**  
**Thursday May 3**  
**The Tony Award-winning, “Explosive” and “Irresistible” musical** |
| **CHOIR BOY**               | By Tarell Alvin McCraney  
**Raven Theatre**  
**Thursday October 12**  
**From the writer of the Oscar-winning film, Moonlight** |
| **BLKS**                    | By Aziza Barnes  
**Steppenwolf Theatre**  
**Friday December 8**  
**“Riotously funny... a truly original American voice”** |
| **MACBETH**                 | By William Shakespeare  
**Chicago Shakespeare Theater @ The Yard**  
**Wednesday June 6**  
**From the award-winning team of CST’s The Tempest, Aaron Posner and Magician Teller** |

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SUMMER THEATER SPECIAL

Chicago theaters offer warm staycations

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Your favorite neighborhood playhouses don’t close from Memorial to Labor Day, like they did when many of them didn’t have air-conditioning. However, the summer season also hosts a number of theatrical entertainments suited for balmy temperatures and lengthy daylight hours. Here are some of them. (* = free event)

One-stop destinations
First Folio Theatre, Peabody Estate at Mayslake, 1717 W. 31st St., Oak Brook: Shakespeare’s As You Like It is a romantic comedy set amid leafy greenswards, so what better place to stage it than on the grounds of an estate adjoining a 1919-vintage Tudor Revival mansion? From July 15 to Aug. 20, you can stroll the grounds, dine on a box supper (ordered in advance) and pretend you’re in the Forest of Arden instead of barely a quarter of a mile away from Illinois Route 83. Information and schedule are at FirstFolio.org.

Oak Park Festival Theatre, Austin Gardens, 167 Forest Ave., Oak Park: Located in the heart of Oak Park’s historical district, this 43-year-old troupe presents Shakespeare’s Macbeth June 15-July 22 before making way for the 20th-anniversary production of The Fair Maid of the West—Thomas Heywood’s classic swashbuckler, adapted by Kevin Theis—whose premiere production in 1995 launched a golden age of stage combat for Chicago (and a few Hollywood careers, too), playing July 27-Sept. 2. Those wishing to nosh alfresco can find supplies at nearby Trader Joe’s (but keep the alcohol under wraps, okay?). Information and schedule at OakParkFestival.com

*Shakespeare’s Motley Crew, Winnemac Park, 5100 N. Leavitt St., Chicago: For its fifth season, this neighborhood ensemble presents Midsummer Mayhem: The Very Witching Hour, a company-generated mashup of Shakespeare’s favorite weird sisters and midnight hags, playing on weekends Aug. 4-27. Picnics can be assembled with provisions from the flagship Mariano’s on Lawrence Avenue. Information and schedule at smcplays.org

Neighborhood tours
*Chicago Shakespeare Theater: Adapter Marti Lyons whistles Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet down to a brisk, family-friendly 75 minutes for a traveling production whose itinerary between July 26 and Aug. 27 ranges from 96th Street to Loyola Avenue. Complete schedule and locations at Chicagoshakes.com

*Midsummer Flight: No matter how dark the play’s themes, Shakespeare’s actors played in daylight and so does this North Side company July 8-Aug. 27. This year’s presentation is the shadowy revenge tragedy, Hamlet, in a 100-minute adaptation directed by Beth Wolf, featuring sword fights by Chris Smith and Maureen Yasko. Complete schedule and locations at midsommer-flight.com

Theatre Hikes: Lovers, clowns and magical sprites chase each other through the woods in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and so do the audiences in these promenade-staged daytime productions performed between June 24 and July 30 amid real-life foliage in Horner and Wicker Parks, the Morton Arboretum and the North Park Village Nature Center. Complete schedule and locations at theatrehikes.org

Indoor festivals
Baudelaire in a Box Project, Links Hall at Constellation, 3111 N. Western Ave., Chicago: Theater Oobleck presents the final episode of its nine-part multimedia adaptation of 19th-century poet Charles Baudelaire’s scandalous Les Fleurs du Mal, in a 15-hour festival performance spanning the weekend of Aug. 4-6. More information at TheatreOobleck.com

Chicago Fringe Festival, Jefferson Park, Chicago: An international array of comedies, dramas, musicals, performance artists and “unclassifiables” play at five venues in the Jefferson Park district between the dates of Aug. 30 and Sept. 10. Complete schedule and locations are at ChicagoFringe.org

SPOTLIGHT

Lesbian love songs are in the mix of Things to Ruin: The Songs of Joe Iconis. Refuge Theatre Project presents the local premiere of this “theatrical rock concert” in a venue that describes itself as “Chicago’s Original Punk Bar since 1981.” Things to Ruin: The Songs of Joe Iconis continues through Sunday, June 18, at Exit Chicago, 1315 W. North Ave. Performances are at 7:30 p.m., Fridays through Sundays. Tickets are $20. Visit RefugeTheatre.com.

Caption: Lauren Paris, with Kedgrick Pullums Jr., Thomas Squires and Deanalis Resto in the background in Refuge Theatre Project’s Things to Ruin. Photo by Zeke Dolezalek

THEATER REVIEW

Ideation

Written by: Aaron Loeb
Directed by: Gus Menary
At: Jackalope Theater Company
Broadway Armory Park, 5917 N. Broadway
Tickets: JackalopeTheatre.org: $15-25
Runs through: June 17

BY ERIC KARAS

What if you were assigned a task at work that could potentially kill other human beings? That is the premise behind Ideation, Aaron Loeb’s drama/comedy being produced by Jackalope Theater company at the Broadway Armory.

A successful team headed by family man Ted (Michael Kingston) and Brock (Japhet Balaban) have to decide on a means of killing and disposing of people infected with a pandemic. They have engineer Sandeep (Kaiser Zaki Ahmed) for the details and corporate executive Hannah (Rachel Sullivan) overseeing the project. A hapless intern, Sooter (Henry Greenberg), is there to write everything down. Their overall job is to whiteboard their suggestions and plan and present it to the all powerful god-like CEO.

This is a well-written and -acted drama with loads of comedy. As they write on the board, things get more and more intense. Eventually, they start arguing about how many people they actually kill or the people who put those plans in motion? Where in the chain is the responsible party? When does discussing a plan become the plan? When the killing starts, how do you know you won’t be next? These are just a few of the things that come to mind. A very thought-provoking but funny play, it’s definitely worth seeing.

*Scooter is amusing and you wish he was in the meeting room. This play seems to be about many things. Who are the villains? The ones who actually kill people or the people who put those plans in motion? Where in the chain is the responsible party? When does discussing a plan become the plan? When the killing starts, how do you know you won’t be next? These are just a few of the things that come to mind. A very thought-provoking but funny play, it’s definitely worth seeing.

One thing the cast does well is bring humanity to their discussion. Michael Kingston’s Ted is blustery and exasperated; at times, I wasn’t sure if his sputtering was nerves with the script or his acting choice. One can’t help but identify with his need to just get this all over with. The play belongs to Japhet Balaban as Brock, his arrogant intense performance really brings everything together in this piece. Rachel Sullivan’s Hannah gives voice to the women in the office who have to be tougher than their male counterparts just to get respect. Kaiser Zaki Ahmed’s Sandeep is funny and his break to bring humanity to their discussion rings true. Unfortunately Sullivan and Ahmed do not have good chemistry together which makes their relationship slightly unbelievable. Henry Greenberg’s Sooter is amusing and you wish he was in the action more.

Overall, director Gus Menary keeps things moving and interesting in a one set environment, a meeting room. This play seems to be about many things. Who are the villains? The ones who actually kill people or the people who put those plans in motion? Where in the chain is the responsible party? When does discussing a plan become the plan? When the killing starts, how do you know you won’t be next? These are just a few of the things that come to mind. A very thought-provoking but funny play, it’s definitely worth seeing.

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This is a well-written and -acted drama with loads of comedy. As they write on the board, things get more and more intense. Eventually, they start becoming paranoid and turn on one another—becoming a bit “Ten Little Indians,” with everyone pointing the finger and not trusting each another. It’s 90 minutes with no intermission, and the time flies by because it’s very engrossing.

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EVENTS

Spacey honored while Billings hosts Steppenwolf gala

There were two major theater fundraisers on May 13 in Chicago. One celebrated one of the most respected actors working in movies today, and the other a multifaceted actress returning to her roots in a city that sparked her bright career.

Kevin Spacey received the Gene Siskel Film Center Renaissance Award at the Four Seasons Chicago after a cocktail reception and a discussion led by actor Jeremy Piven covering Spacey’s lengthy career.

Spacey stopped to talk with Windy City Times on the red carpet about his upcoming film Billionaire Boys Club, based on the past story and film starring Judd Nelson, although with a different take on it. He said that this is the second film he shot last year with actor Ansel Elgort.

He also mentioned that his character in House of Cards “would get firmly behind Donald Trump in order to push him in the right direction!”

Entourage actor Jeremy Piven spoke with WCT about how lucky he was to be an ensemble member of the TV series Ellen and how groundbreaking it was. “I encouraged Ellen DeGeneres to come out for a while before she did publicly, because she was so funny and a self empowered woman. I knew that she would lead the way to be a great spokesperson,” he said. “She did and continues to.” He added that he regretted missing the 20th-anniversary celebration of Radiohead’s “Creep” that brought down the house.

A live auction offered prizes such as a barbecue in the home of a Steppenwolf ensemble member Tom Irwin, a dinner with comedian Chris Rock and Lady Gaga concert tickets. Paddles were raised to more than $10,000 for each item, totaling more than $150,000 for the experiences.

Afterward, out singer JC Brooks brought his soulful band along to many upbeat tunes that had the crowd getting their groove on. A late-night DJ played at the after party in the spacious tent located next to the theater on Halsted.

Photography and text by Jerry Nunn
Dance heats up this summer

BY JOANNA FURNANS

Although summer doesn’t officially begin for another couple of weeks, the 2017 Chicago summer dance season wastes no time getting started. Here’s what should fill your dance card this season:

— The free grand-finale performance of the Chicago Human Rhythm Project’s third annual “STOMPING GROUNDS” series will celebrate five of Chicago’s percussive dance companies. This is an exciting opportunity to see works from the Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater, the Mexican Folkloric Dance Company of Chicago, the Muntu Danse Theatre of Chicago, the Trinity Irish Dance Company, and the Chicago Human Rhythm Project all on the same night. (7:30 p.m. Friday, June 2, at the Studebaker Theater, 410 S. Michigan Ave.)

— Red Clay Dance’s annual spring concert, “The Art of Resilience,” will feature two world premieres by founding artistic director, Vershawn Sanders-Ward, alongside repertory favorites. The evening is devoted to complex and intersecting narratives connected to identity. Themes of resistance, community, power and fortitude, womanhood, and the right to self-determination are given narrative in five complementary works infused with Red Clay’s signature Afro-contemporary style. (7:30 p.m. Saturday, June 3, and 3:30 p.m. Sunday, June 4, at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E. 60th St.; RedClayDance.com)

— The fifth annual Pivot Arts Festival will spotlight site-specific dance performances by the mesmerizing and thorough Ayako Kato/Art Union Humanescape in an exploration of “movement and stillness” and Synapse Arts presenting its new work “soften every edge.” The following weekend will highlight Same Planet Performance Project’s production of “Honey,” a contemporary dance interpretation of disco-era eroticism. Although problematic in its singular point of view, the dancing is divine. (3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday, June 4, and 6 p.m. Saturday, June 10, at FLATstudio, 1136 W. Wilson Ave.; PivotArts.org)

— SheFest (formerly LezFest) promises to be a pride-reviving performance celebration of multiple “experiences of queer femininity.” Held at the Pride Arts Center (PAC) and hosted by Pride Films and Plays, this event has a dense and diverse line-up of performers including dance artist Jessica Martin, who’s new work aptly reminds audiences that differences in appearance, mobility, and sexual orientation are far more complex than meets the eye. (7:30 p.m. Monday, June 12, 4139 N. Broadway; PrideFilmsAndPlays.com/she-fest/)

— The “JIM”—an innovative new summer program for adult dance and somatic practices—is the brainchild of dancer and producer Jessica Marasa, in collaboration with the Chicago Moving Company. In addition to offering a wide range of classes, workshops and community discussions open to dancers and non-dancers alike, this three-week series will include informal Friday night performances by local and visiting dance-makers. Most notably, Chicago dancer Darrell Jones and NYC-based Michelle Boulé will come together to perform improvised research relating to a larger work they are making with the legendary Bebe Miller. This is a rare opportunity to witness some of the best contemporary dancers in the field practice their craft. (7:30 p.m. Friday, June 30, Hamlin Park Fieldhouse, 3035 N. Hoyne Ave.; TheJim.org)

— Thodos Dance Chicago produces its final “New Dances” series featuring fresh work by eight company ensemble members flexing their choreographic and directorial muscles for a change. (7:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 15, and 3 p.m. Sunday, July 16, at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave; AthenaeumTheatre.org)

WCT writer in Steppenwolf event

Windy City Times senior entertainment writer Jerry Nunn will be part of “You’re Being Ridiculous: PRIDE,” which will take place the first three Wednesdays (7, 14 and 21) of June at 8 p.m. at Steppenwolf Theatre’s 1700 Theatre, an 80-seat cabaret-style space connected to Steppenwolf’s Front Bar; Coffee and Drinks at 1700 N. Halsted St.

Nunn plans to tell his coming-out story on June 7.

Tickets are $20 each; visit Steppenwolf.org or call 312-335-1650.

‘Black Pearl’ benefit June 3

A benefit performance of Black Ensemble Theatre’s Black Pearl: A Tribute to Josephine Baker will take place Saturday, June 3, at 8 p.m. at the theater, 4450 N. Clark St.

The $50 ticket includes a private reception preceding the performance and premium seating. Proceeds benefit The Legacy Project, which educates the public about the many roles LGBT people have played in the advancement of world history and culture.

This performance is made possible through Jackie Taylor, the Black Ensemble Theatre and Dr. Paul Lisnek. See https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-pearl-benefit-for-the-legacy-project-tickets-34629085527.

New CSO album out June 16

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is releasing its eighth recording with Music Director Riccardo Muti on its own CSO Resound label—Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 in D Minor ($19.99)—worldwide via retail and online outlets on June 16.

Anton Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony was recorded live in June 2016 at Orchestra Hall. Muti dedicated the performance to “all the orchestra musicians who have made the Chicago Symphony Orchestra great in Chicago and for the world.”

The CSO’s commercial recording history began more than 100 years ago, on May 1, 1916.
BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

Musician Chelsea Shag wants to spread the love

With her new single “One Kiss,” musician Chelsea Shag wants to spread a message of universal love.

Shag released a video recently for the song that shows a mix of diverse couples sharing a kiss. The couples include a lesbian couple, a gay couple and two mixed-race straight couples.

“I think it’s important in this time,” Shag said. “I’m all about love, whatever race, man or woman, and I just want to express that through my music too.”

Shag, who is lesbian, said she wants anyone struggling to come out to feel supported and that it is okay to be who they are and hopes the song and video’s message help them.

“If they are in the situation where they can’t come out or are scared to be themselves, I want them to know they’re not alone and that love is love.”

She added, “In America, there is a lot of culture that is so anti-gay and Trump-minded people so it’s kind of scary and I want them to know, you are not alone.”

Shag said the idea for the music video came about with help from her partner.

“I’d imagined a diverse crowd of people in my video, but wasn’t sure how [to do that], and she said ‘right in the chorus I just see people kissing and they are diverse.’ We started with this idea together.”

Shag said the song originally was written a few years ago when she had fallen for a friend.

“I was really infatuated with this person who was my friend and I got inspired to write a song,” she said. “I started with a beat and it came out of me in the moment, because I was feeling so intensely about this person. I thought, if something were to happen between us, would it change our friendship, and I had no idea. I was just expressing that.”

“One Kiss” will be on Shag’s full-length album coming out in the fall. She said while the songs on the album are varied, love is definitely a main theme.

“Most of my songs are about love. … They all sound very different from each other, but they’re all about love.”

Shag said it’s hard to describe her sound and style of music because she draws from a variety of genres and influences, but she particularly loves pop and R&B and said she is a big John Mayer fan.

“I love his style and writing and what he writes about,” she said.

She also finds inspiration from Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, Erykah Badu, Amy Winehouse, Ella Fitzgerald, Fleetwood Mac, Justin Timberlake and Pharrell, to name a few.

Shag is recording her album in Atlanta where she lives. She is working with music producer Stefan Skarbek [who has worked with Amy Winehouse and Lily Allen].

“I never worked with him before ["One Kiss"] and he kind of brought something different out of me and that was a really cool to experience, so I look forward to recording the other songs,” she said.

Shag said Atlanta is a great place to be a musician.

“There is such a great underground scene in Atlanta. It’s so diverse and there are so many talented people. What’s different from other cities is we really support each other. People go to each other’s shows. I play guitar for someone and she sings backup for me. It’s really supportive and cool.”

Shag said “One Kiss” is already spreading the love. During filming for the music video two of the actors hired for the shoot turned out to have met previously and had been interested in each other.

“They consider that as their first date and plan on going on another date,” Shag said of the men.

“One Kiss” is available on iTunes, Amazon and Spotify.
Chicago is finally heating up, with the summer movie season now in full swing. There are many new releases primed and ready for the air-conditioned theater. Every year there is a variety of big-budget popcorn flicks mixed with a few possible special-effect Oscar contenders. This list will give an idea of what to see—and possibly what to skip.

May
Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2: The outer-space story has already smashed much of the competition this month, with humor and visual effects. The regular version has enough going on so skip the 3-D price tag and just enjoy the roller-coaster without it.

Many stuffy critics did not enjoy Mother’s Day weekend release Snatched; for others, including myself, Amy Schumer was much more than just a comedic boob. She was not afraid to let actors like Wanda Sykes shine. Joan Cusack steals every scene without even uttering a word. Snatched is a feel-good movie that starts off the summer with a light-hearted adventure.

Don’t get stabbed by King Arthur: Legend of the Sword, though. Director Guy Ritchie is not known for his character development, and that is where this classic tale falls apart. Audiences are not exactly stampeding to the cineplexes, as plummeting box-office sales have trampled the plan for a six-movie franchise.

Alien: Covenant was recently reviewed in Windy City Times and is a hit already with a smart storyline, deft direction and stellar acting.

Baywatch hits the beach for nostalgic fans of the TV show, and I am betting to see a cameo or two. If a shirtless Dwayne Johnson or Zac Efron in drag can’t save a life no one can. May 25.

Still not wet? Try the day after with the premiere of Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales. This shopworn series sets sail with Johnny Depp channeling rocker Keith Richards once again. It’s out May 26.

June
Pride month arrives with a rainbow of movies. A gaggle of gays screamed for joy at a recent screening I attended when the Wonder Woman trailer played. Gal Gadot, as the warrior princess Diana, has a lot riding on her skinny shoulders on June 2.

For The Mummy (out June 9), Tom Cruise did his own stunts in zero gravity for this time-worn tale in a reboot that has an Egyptian goddess as the villain instead of a man wrapped in gauze. Does he still have what it takes to carry a big-budget movie?

Transformers: The Last Knight: Director Michael Bay isn’t apparently stopping until this franchise rusts out or runs out of steam in a fifth installment of Transformers. Don’t go blind, as the 3-D version might overwhelm the senses. June 21

Spider-Man: Homecoming: Who isn’t excited about a new take on our favorite arachnid/human hybrid in tights? This time, the young Peter Parker studies in high school during the day and fights rotten scoundrels at night as Spider-Man. This second reboot has unforgettable lines delivered by Robert Downey Jr. as Iron Man, and Michael Keaton playing avian baddie Vulture. How can Spidey not swing into success this time? July 7

War for the Planet of the Apes: The monkeys go bananas once again as Caesar and the gang return for war against the humans, with hairy results. July 14.

The Emoji Movie: This computer-animated film might need a filter as the smartphone landscape is explored in the world of Textopolis. The emojis are voiced by a plethora of comedy stars, but Patrick Stewart (as Poop) reeks of a bad idea. July 28

August
Summer winds down with several sequels at this time. We have quite a range, from horror doll-centered Annabelle: Creation to a purple squirrel cartoon called The Nut Job 2: Nutty by Nature. They’re both out Aug. 11.

The Hitman’s Bodyguard might have the best movie poster ever, with a parody of The Bodyguard that starred Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston. Ryan Reynolds sweeps Samuel L. Jackson right off his feet in the photo. Aug. 25

Stephen King’s The Dark Tower hits the desert Aug. 4, with The Gunslinger, Roland Deschain, roaming a dying world while hoping for a multi-picture deal with this eight-book series. Only time will tell if audiences are ready to commit. If it fails, there is always King’s It to drag us down into the fall movie season sewer in September.

The Chicago Home Theater Festival will take place through May 29 in various spots around the city.

Some of the featured artists will include xican cultural producer Afr@cubarian DJ and performance artist Jacquelyn Carmen Guerrero (CQCHIFRUIT), transfeminine dance artist Darling Shear and Surviving the Mic Executive Director Nikki Patin.

International women’s rights advocate Bernardine Dohrn and writer and activist Bill Ayers (Kenwood); queer Black scholar and author E. Patrick Johnson (Bronzeville); and cultural producers Elijah McKinnon and Kristen Kaza (Humboldt Park) are some of the 2017 hosts.

All events begin with a tour from a designated CTA bus stop to the home. More information is provided upon purchase of a ticket. Visit ChicagoHTF.org.
Chicago Underground Film Festival
May 31-June 4

The Chicago Underground Film Festival will showcase more than 100 unique visual works May 31-June 4 at the Logan Theater, 2646 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Among the LGBT movies that will part of the festival are Whatever Happened to Gelitin, The Magic Hedge and Cruising Elsewhere. “Gelitin” (82 minutes) features artist/actor Salvatore Viviano setting out on a cinematic search for Gelitin, an Austrian performance group.

“Hedge,” a nine-minute short, involves same-sex encounters within trees and shrubbery; and “Cruising” (13 minutes) involves memories of a once-legendary gay beach.

Tickets are $20 for opening night, which includes admission to after-party at Elastic Arts, and are $10 per program. Festival passes are also available for $90, which grants admission to all screenings and events (excluding opening night); visit Universe.com/cuffchicago and CUFF.org for tickets and schedules.

Cinema/Chicago promote Kutza, Plauché

Cinema/Chicago, the parent organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, announced the promotion of two longtime employees.

Mimi Plauche has been named artistic director of the Chicago International Film Festival and Cinema/Chicago, effective immediately. Michael Kutza, who founded the festival in 1964 and has since served as artistic director, will continue to serve as the president and CEO.

The 53rd Chicago International Film Festival will take place Oct. 12-26 at Chicago’s AMC River East theater; entries are now open at ChicagoFilmFestival.com/submit.

House-music film looks at gay origins

A new two-part documentary by the British television broadcaster Channel 4 — entitled I Was There When House Took Over The World — is coming out this month, according to teleSUR.tv.

The film will highlight the origins of house music: the Black gay scene in Chicago’s South Side.

“House Was Born” focuses on the social and cultural environment that gave rise to the genre, while “House Went Global” explores the music’s ascent.


Web series looks at South Side, queer women of color

Quare Life is a comedy web series centering the lives of a group of Chicago queer women of color on the city’s South Side.

The series centers on Michelle Jones (played by Ambria Sylvain) who has a nice home, a girlfriend, and a foot on the rung of professional ascension. When her marriage proposal is rejected and work contract ends; Michelle must rely on her close friends, twin brother and formerly homophobic mother for support.

Quare Life is the brainchild of Chicago-based writer M Shelly Conner, who also curates the dapperqueer lifestyle website DapperVista.com; she also is the founder and executive director of Quare Square Collective, Inc. Sylvain, Tara Smith, Dominica Strong and transgender comedian Dina Nina Martinez star in the series.

A crowdfunding campaign runs until Sunday, May 21, at SeedAndSpark.com/fund/quare-life. For updates on production and screenings, follow Quare Life on Instagram and Facebook as well as the DapperVista.com website.

Lea DeLaria seems to have achieved overnight stardom with her SAG Award–winning, standout role as Carrie “Big Boo” Black in the Netflix hit series, Orange is the New Black. However, DeLaria’s multifaceted career as a comedian, actress, and jazz musician has, in fact, spanned decades.

DeLaria holds the distinction of being the first openly gay comic on television in America, which led to countless television and film roles portraying police lieutenants, PE teachers, and the lesbian who inappropriately hits on straight women. Her TV credits include Awkward, Clarence, Californication, The Oblongs, One Life to Live, Law and Order: SVU, Will and Grace, Friends, and Matlock, and her film credits include First Wives Club, Dear Dumb Diary, and Edge of Seventeen.

She’s received Obie and Theater World Awards and a Drama Desk nomination for her portrayal of Holiday in the Public Theatre’s revival of On the Town, an Ovation nomination for The Boys From Syracuse, and has played both Eddie and Dr. Scott in the gender-bending Broadway musical The Rocky Horror Show.

DeLaria was the featured vocalist at the 50th-anniversary Newport Jazz Festival, and she has performed in some of the most prestigious houses in the world, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Chicago’s Symphony Center, the Hollywood Bowl, Royal Albert Hall, and the Sydney Opera House.

DeLaria has five records on the Warner Jazz and Classics label, and her book Lea’s Book of Rules for the World is in its third printing at Bantam Doubleday and Dell.

Her sixth record, House Of David: delaria+bowie=jazz, was released in summer 2015 to critical acclaim.

Lea DeLaria will be performing an evening of comedy of music at Ravinia’s historic Martin Theatre on June 25. This show is 18+. Tickets and show information are available at ravinia.org. Follow Lea on Twitter and Instagram @realleadelaria and Facebook. www.delariadammit.com.

Chicago Connection: Lea has been a long-time activist, who two years ago, received the Equality Illinois Freedom Award for her work as a cutting-edge performer who has used her talent to entertain and enlighten millions of Americans. On receiving the award at the 2015 Equality Illinois Gala in Chicago, DeLaria said, “As an out performer for over 33 years who made it her life’s work to change people’s perception of butch, queer and LGBT, it is an honor for me to receive such recognition from my home state. I feel like I’m doing Belleville proud. Go Maroons!”

Lea will be riding in a convertible near the front of the parade procession.
**PRIDE MONTH CALENDAR**

as of Mon., May 22

compiled by PRIDEChicago

www.ChicagoPrideCalendar.org • PrideChgo@aol.com • 773-348-8243

**JUNE 1 - TELEVISION SHOW** - "Out & Proud in Chicago" 9 pm on 11.1 on WTTW HD. Encore presentation of the critically-acclaimed show featuring historical coverage of LGBTs in Chicago. Narrated by actress and Chicago native Jane Lynch. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (Repeated on June 2 at 3 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com

**JUNE 2 - TELEVISION SHOW** - "Out & Proud in Chicago" 3 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. Encore presentation of the critically-acclaimed show featuring historical coverage of LGBTs in Chicago. Narrated by actress and Chicago native Jane Lynch. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

**JUNE 3 - FUNDRAISER** - “2017 Dick Uyvari Memorial Celebrity Bowl” benefit for LGBT Hall of Fame at Waveland Bowl, 3700 N. Western Ave, in Chicago. 10:30 am until 12:45 pm. Information: www.GLHallofFame.org, friendsglhalloffame@gmail.com, 773-401-8893.

**JUNE 3 - BENEFIT PERFORMANCE** - for Legacy Project: “Black Pearl: A Tribute to Josephine Baker” by Black Ensemble Theatre, 4450 N. Clark St., in Chicago. Tickets $50 includes a private reception (6:30 pm) proceeding the performance and premium seating. Curtain: 8 pm. Reception made possible through the generosity of Jackie Taylor, the Black Ensemble Theatre and Dr. Paul Lisnek. Indoor valet parking available for an additional $10. See the Legacy Project’s Josephine Baker display in the lobby and meet the cast from this breathtaking homage to one of the world’s greatest entertainers and social justice warriors. Tickets: www.eventbrite.com/e/black-pearl-benefit-for-the-legacy-project-tickets-34629085527

**JUNE 4 - PRE-PRIDE MIXER** - by Boi Magazine at Halsted Flats, 3740 N. Halsted in Chicago. 6-9 pm. No purchase required, 21+. Those on guest list will get exclusive entry to the cocktail party with food, drinks, music, wine tasting and building tours. To be on guest list, e-mail your name to: 773RSVP@gmail.com or fill out guest list form on website: www.boimag.com

**JUNE 6 - TELEVISION SHOW** - Independent Lens “The New Black” 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. This documentary is an encore presentation about how the African-American community dealt with the gay rights issue in light of the same sex marriage movement and the fight over civil rights. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

**JUNE 6 - TELEVISION SHOW** - Independent Lens “The New Black” 9 pm on 11.1 on WTTW HD. Encore presentation of the critically-acclaimed show featuring historical coverage of LGBTs in Chicago. Narrated by actress and Chicago native Jane Lynch. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (Repeated on June 2 at 3 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com

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**JUNE 9 - PRIDE KICKOFF** - Retro Style by Women For Women. Join Center on Halsted’s Women’s Action Committee for this event featuring a throwback rendition of The Dating Game at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., in Chicago. 6-9 pm. Price: to be announced. Retro-cocktails and a rooftop dance to groovy retro beats, too. www.centeronhalsted.com

**JUNE 10 - CAAN CONGRESS** - Topic: “Creative Community Solutions Without a Budget” at Disability Resource Center, 77 N. 129th Infantry Dr., Joliet, IL 11 am - 1 pm. Everyone/every group welcome. Free. Sign language interpreter will be present. info@caanmidwest.org, 815-729-7906

**JUNE 10 - BBQ** - “Flag Day Beer Bust & BBQ” - annual fundraiser for American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) at Replay Bar, 3439 N. Halsted in Chicago. 3-7 pm. $10. www.averchicago.org, jamesdarby@aol.com, 773-752-0058

**JUNE 13 - TELEVISION SHOW** - Independent Lens “Limited Partnership” 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. This encore presentation chronicles the 40-year love story between Filipino-American Richard Adams and his Australian husband Tony Sullivan who, in 1975, were one of the first same-sex couples in the world to be legally married (thanks to a courageous county clerk in Boulder, Colorado). After that, Richard was denied a green card and the Immigration and Naturalization Service sent a letter stating, “You have failed to establish that a bona fide relationship can exist between two faggots.” Outraged at the tone, tenor and politics of the letter—and to prevent Tony’s deportation—they embarked on a journey that included bringing a lawsuit against the federal government. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (Repeated on June 29 at 10 pm on 11.1 WTTW HD and on June 30 at 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime) www.wttw.com


**JUNE 15 - WORKSHOP** - “What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up?”. Maybe you aren’t sure what your dream job is. This workshop could help you identify your special skills and define your new direction ... and also allows you freedom to explore. Facilitated by Judi Lansky of Lansky Career Consultants at 115 S. LaSalle St. #2600 in Chicago. 6:30-8:30 pm. Reservations required, no cost. www.lanskycareerconsultants.com, jlnsky@lanskycareerconsultants.com, 312-494-0022.

**JUNE 15 (though June 18) - WOMEN’S FUNNY FESTIVAL** at 1225 W. Belmont Ave., in Chicago. 2-11 pm. $15. show: All day pass available. www.stage773.com, info@stage773.com, 773-327-5252.

**JUNE 16 - RECEPTION** - “Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame Pride & Joy Reception” at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., in Chicago. 5-8 pm. Tickets: $20 includes two drinks and light hors d’oeuvres. www.chicagolgbohalloffame.org, inquiry@chicagolgbohalloffame.org, 773-281-5077.


**JUNE 17 - CHICAGO PRIDE FEST** - A street festival with vendors and entertainers by Northalsted Business Alliance (NBA). 11 am to 10 pm. Two-day festival continues on June 18. www.northalsted.com

**JUNE 17 - OUTDOOR WOMEN’S FESTIVAL** - “Back Lot Bash 2017” - a mix of music and entertainment. 6 pm. (continues on June 22 to June 25). For information: www.backlotbashchicago.com

**JUNE 17 - PRESENTATION** - “Pride LGBTQIA Storytelling Show” at Women & Children First Books, 5233 N. Clark St. in Chicago. 7 pm. Information: www.womenandchildrenfirst.com, wcffbooks@gmail.com, 773-769-9299.
JUNE 17 - PRIDE BRUNCH & RECEPTION
“Sharing Light, Sharing Faith in Divided Times” hosted by Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches (CCWC) at Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1331 Ridge Ave., in Evanston, IL, 10 am to 12 noon. For CCWC member churches and those interested in joining. RSVP by June 14 to Jacki@chicgowelcomingchurches.org

JUNE 18 - CHICAGO PRIDE FEST - A street festival with vendors and entertainers by Northalsted Business Alliance (NBA). 11 am to 10 pm. Second day of a two-day festival. www.northalsted.com

JUNE 19 - TELEVISION SHOW - Independent Lens “Real Boy” 10 pm on 11.1 WTTW HD. This presentation is a moving and intimate story of a family in transition that follows the journey of trans teen Bennett as he navigates adolescence, sobriety and the physical and emotional ramifications of his changing gender identity. Through the process, his mother Suzy makes her own transformation, traveling a difficult road toward accepting that the daughter she raised as Rachael is now her son Bennett. Filmed over the course of four years, “Real Boy” is a love story about a mother and son who rediscover connection with each other and find support from their communities. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (repeated on June 20 at 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com

JUNE 20 - TELEVISION SHOW - Independent Lens “Real Boy” 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. Also shown June 19. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

JUNE 21 - AWARDS CEREMONY - “30 Under 30 Awards” by Windy City Media Group at Polo Cafe and Catering, 3322 S. Morgan St. in Chicago. Reception: 5:30 pm; Program: 6-7:30 pm. The awards honor 30 outstanding young Chicago. Reception: 5:30 pm; Program: 6-7:30 pm. For more information: www.backlotbashchicago.com

JUNE 22 - OUTDOOR WOMEN’S FESTIVAL - “Back Lot Bash, 2017” - a mix of music and entertainment. 6 pm. (continues June 23, 24, 25). For information: www.backlotbashchicago.com

JUNE 22 - TELEVISION SHOW - American Masters “Billie Jean King” 9 pm on 11.1 WTTW HD. The story of athlete and activist Billie Jean King. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (repeated on June 23 at 3 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime and on June 24 at 10 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com

JUNE 22 - TELEVISION SHOW - “Penny: Champion of the Marginalized” 10:30 pm on 11.1 WTTW HD. This documentary is a multi-dimensional portrait of Penny Cooper, a celebrated criminal defense attorney, art collector, supporter of female artists and protector of the underdog. Cooper’s life brims with stories mirroring the profound changes in our country from the 1940s to the present. In this revealing documentary, she, along with the people that she has impacted with her dynamic spirit have anecdotes and stories to tell. Cooper offers a unique perspective on important social narratives such as social justice, the artists and collectors who generate today’s global contemporary art market, gender equality, and more. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (repeated on June 23 at 4:30 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com

JUNE 23 - AM KESHET COMMUNITY AWARDS - by Temple Sholom of Chicago - Or Chadash, 3480 N. Lake Shore Dr., in Chicago. 5-6:15 pm. Free event. Please RSVP to Shayna@sholomchicago.org. www.sholomchicago.org/community-groups/or-chadash/773-435-1559


JUNE 23 - COMEDY SHOW - “Gaywatch” by Gayco Productions at Playground Theater, 3209 N. Halsted in Chicago. 10 pm. This is an entirely improvised show inspired by true stories told by heroes of the LGBT communities. Another show on June 24. Information and tickets: www.gayco.com

JUNE 23 - TELEVISION SHOW - American Masters “Billie Jean King” 3 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. The story of athlete and activist Billie Jean King. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (repeated on June 24 at 10 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com

JUNE 23 - TELEVISION SHOW - “Penny: Champion of the Marginalized” 4:30 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. Also shown June 22. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

JUNE 24 - CHICAGO DYKE MARCH - For more information: www.facebook.com/groups/dykemarchchicago or chicagodykemarch.wordpress.com, dykemarchchicago@gmail.com

JUNE 24 - PRIDE LITURGY - annual event by Dignity/Chicago at Broadway United Methodist Church, 3338 N. Broadway in Chicago. 5 pm. www.dignitychicago.org

JUNE 24 - TELEVISION SHOW - American Masters “Billie Jean King” 10 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. The story of athlete and activist Billie Jean King. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com

JUNE 24 - WALK & RUN - “Proud To Run” - 36th annual event includes 5K and 10 K race/walk. 8:04 am from Montrose Harbor. Benefit for community organizations. The event is USA Track and Field-certified, CARA-certified and included bringing a lawsuit against the federal government. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (repeated on June 30 at 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com


JUNE 28 - CONFERENCE - “Aging With Pride” by Rush University Medical Center, 1725 W. Harrison (Searle Conference Center, Ste. 543, billing) in Chicago. 1 pm. www.rush.edu/LGBTQ, christopher_nolan@rush.edu, 800-757-0202

JUNE 29 - TELEVISION SHOW - Independent Lens “Limited Partnership” at 10 pm on 11.1 WTTW HD. This encore presentation chronicles the 40- year love story between Filipino-American Richard Adams and his Australian husband Tony Sullivan who, in 1975, were one of the first same-sex couples in the world to be legally married (thanks to a courageous county clerk in Boulder, Colorado). After that, Richard was denied a green card and the Immigration and Naturalization Service sent a letter stating, “You have failed to establish that a bona fide relationship can exist between two faggots.” Outraged at the tone, tenor and politics of the letter—and to prevent Tony’s deportation—they embarked on a journey that included bringing a lawsuit against the federal government. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. (repeated on June 30 at 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime). www.wttw.com

JUNE 30 (through July 3) - CHICAGO BLACK PRIDE - There will be various events for the LGBTQ Black communities and allies, including: June 30- “ELATION” Black Pride Kick-Off at Fantasy by Clubhouse/URBANO, Rails Marketing Group & FZ Entertainment. 11 pm to 4 am w/ DJs, dancers and a celebrity TBA. Also: JULY 1 - “Annual URBANO BLACK PARADE” at Metro sponsored by Southside Help Center & AHF. 11 pm to 5 am. Serayah (Tiana from Empire) will be live onstage with her dancers. Also DJ spinning until 5 am. Flavaworks is flying in national dancers. First 50 people get in free with an HIV test. www.windycityblackpride.info

JUNE 30 - TELEVISION SHOW - Independent Lens “Limited Partnership” at 4 pm on 11.2 WTTW Prime. Also shown June 29. This is one of several LGBT-related shows on WTTW HD and WTTW Prime during June Pride Month. www.wttw.com
Loving Oliver Sacks and the city: Bill Hayes’ new memoir

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Shortly before his death in the summer of 2015, the eminent and beloved neurologist Oliver Sacks did an interview with the public radio show Radiolab.

For the first time, Sacks was open about his sexuality: he was, in fact, gay. Though he spent much of his life without a relationship, in his final years Sacks fell in love with the writer Bill Hayes. They met after Sacks failed to write a blurb for Hayes’ forthcoming book and wrote the other man an apologetic letter. As Sacks recalled on the radio show and in his memoir, On the Move, after some months of acquaintance Hayes came to him and told him, “I have conceived a deep love for you.” They were together until Sacks passed away.

Two years later, Hayes penned his own tribute to his partner in his new memoir, Insomniac City. While his relationship with Sacks threads the narrative, the book begins with Hayes’ decision to move to New York after the sudden death of his partner, Steve, in San Francisco.

“New York saved my life,” said Hayes, “I had just reached a point in San Francisco, where, it’s not like it was the end, but I didn’t see my life going forward in any meaningful way. I could have stayed, but I sort of felt like it would have turned into this sort of sad, sort of boring life, and I didn’t want that. I moved to New York and I felt just embraced by this big crazy chaotic diverse city.”

Despite the clear presence of Sacks, Hayes considers New York the book’s main character, and he illustrates his love for the city with both images and stories of its denizens. Equally talented as writer and photographer, Hayes often chronicles his encounters with random New Yorkers. The stories people tell and their faces paint a vivid picture of both the city and the author.

“Having the eye of a photographer combined with the storytelling instincts of a writer makes me not only curious, but sort of driven,” Hayes explained. “It gives me a sense of purpose, even though I may just be walking to the drugstore to pick up a prescription. If I have my camera with me, I’m sort of on the lookout.”

Although he’d describe himself as quiet, Hayes said his reserve disappears when he rides the subway or hops in a cab. “I’m completely fearless with strangers. Part of it is just curiosity, genuine curiosity, and openness to other people. I can’t exactly explain why that is, it’s just how I am, and what I find is my openness brings out openness in other people. And it can be kind of disarming, but they often respond in kind.”

Hayes described the process of putting together Insomniac City as intuitive. His reflections and city encounters mingle with scenes from his relationship with Sacks. “I really wanted the photographs to come and go and appear almost like you’re passing strangers on the streets of New York,” Hayes explained. “They would be part of the narrative without explicit description or explanation.”

Most of the book took shape during a six-week trip to Rome, where Hayes combed through a 750-page journal Sacks had encouraged him to keep when they began dating.

“I spent my first week in Rome reading through the journal with a yellow highlighter, just highlighting passages that jumped out at me, conversations we’d had, or even just one-liners,” Hayes recalled. “Once the reader is introduced to Oliver and to me and the concept of the journal entries, you get it. It was important to me that they have dates, because the dates of the journal entries drive the narrative forward in time.”

He struggled with how much of each part of his New York world—the city versus Sacks’ apartment—to include. “This may sound a little harsh, but I didn’t want to get sick of Oliver and me,” Hayes explained. “You could sort of go too far into ‘one more dinner with Oliver’. Up until the last draft, one of the challenges was cutting things out, just to leave things in that were the most vivid, or the most moving, or the most funny.”

“It’s hard to imagine ever being sick of Hayes and Sacks as a couple. The journal entries reveal a charming, moving, hilarious, unquestionably unique bond. Decades and lifestyle separated them—Hayes carried a smartphone, Sacks never sent an email in his life—but the two shared a love of language, people, and intense curiosity about the world.

“One of the most delightful things about being with Oliver was watching him blossom in a domestic relationship,” Hayes recalled. “Whereas I had been in long-term relationships and probably took for granted the pleasure of making dinner with your partner, with Oliver, it was fun. He’d led this life as a bachelor, where he would eat a tin of sardines over the sink. He wasn’t familiar with his appliances before he and I met. And once he got to know his appliances, he totally delighted in it. He loved to clean up the kitchen, he loved to load the dishwasher. If it wasn’t full, he’d put clean mugs and glasses in so they’d all be snug and have company.”

Hayes loved seeing how quickly Sacks took to having a partner. “We brought different things to the relationship,” he said. “I was the more experienced one in terms of even having a relationship and experiencing love. He came to this with this lifetime of knowledge and reading. Oliver, this man who knew so much about evolution and evolutionary history, was a prime example of accelerated evolution. He was entering into totally new territory.”

He takes exception to the idea that Sacks was closeted. “I understand the use of the word, but the truth is, Oliver had led a very private life,” Hayes said. “It was a monk-like existence devoted to his patients and his practice and his writing. It was just a very different life than most of us lead. Certainly very different from the life I had led. But not necessarily tortured in the way that that sounds with the word ‘closeted’.”

Although Hayes had to adjust to Sacks’ initial concern for privacy, he soon found it was nothing to chafe against. “Looking back, I really treasure it. Not everyone knew the details,” he said. “People understood that we were very close. But it was private in a way that was lovely. A friend of mine described our relationship as being like a beautiful secret. I thought that was such a nice phrase. It was like a beautiful secret, but it was also one that, at the end of his life, [Oliver] shared with the world.”

He remembered with amusement that Sacks didn’t really connect to his own fame. “He understood that he was famous, and that when he did readings or lectures there were thousands of people,” Hayes said. “And it also slightly puzzled him in a way. It was exactly that quality that drew people to Oliver Sacks. Here was this obviously brilliant man, but someone who had a kind of humility and modesty and innocence, almost. He was very boyish in that way. Definitely a part of what I fell in love with, this boyish charm and curiosity.”

By all rights, Insomniac City should feel like a book about loss—in addition to losing two partners, Hayes also writes about the death of his beloved agent, and, in passing, his mother. Yet the book teems with vibrant examples of life, which Hayes says reflects his own outlook.

“From my early 20s, living in San Francisco in the midst of the AIDS epidemic, illness and sudden death were part of my life, so it wasn’t just the loss of Steve and the loss of Oliver,” he explained. “I wanted that to be sort of seamless within this book, that acceptance that death is part of life, but so is joy. And joy and pleasure and play and enjoyment are very much part of this book.”

Because of his time with Sacks, Hayes looks forward to aging. “Which is not the kind of thing you normally hear,” he laughed. “I’m 56, so I’m already old, but [Oliver] was 75 when I met him, and he made—and he would use that term himself—he made being old seem fun. He fell in love, he wrote three amazing books, we went to Iceland three times, we swam three times a week, and he would go to the gym. Even though there were hardships...he adapted to old age really well.”

He also believes that old age was part of the reason he had a relationship with Sacks at all. “We both experienced very painful losses, and [Sacks] had experienced a very scary cancer with the melanoma in his eye. He had had his own brush with mortality not long before we met,” Hayes reflected. “And I think that also contributed to Oliver’s openness in entering a relationship for the first time. He knew ‘life is short and this is something I never really experienced, and here’s this guy named Bill Hayes, I don’t know where he came from, but he keeps calling, and we keep having a good time together.’ So he went with it.”

Bill Hayes’ website is BillHayes.com.
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(773) 657-8000

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PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657
(508) 413–9676
Wednesday, May 24
IML Best of Chicago Welcome Party A big welcome from "the city of big shoulders." Come meet and greet the city with host Mr. Chicago Leather 2017 Daddy G. 9 pm, Touche, 6412 N. Clark St.

Thursday, May 25
IML Opening Ceremonies The official beginning of the contest to choose the 39th International Mr. Leather. Ticket packages available at Congress Plaza Hotel, 1st floor Ticket Sales Desk. Event includes the introduction of judges, contestants and number selection. Doors open at 8 p.m., show begins at 8:30 p.m. Congress Plaza Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave., www.imrl.com

Sidetrack: Leinie Lodge Deck Party Kick off the big weekend by kicking back on Sidetrack’s famous rooftop deck. Sponsored by Leinenkugel. Stick around until 2 a.m. for music, drinks and mous rooftop deck. Sponsored by Leinenkugel.

Chicago Bearfest Launch Party Kicking off a new bear tradition in Chicago for Memorial Day weekend. 9 pm, Touche, 6412 N. Clark St.

Friday, May 26
IML: Chicago Rubbermen and Mister Intl. Rubber Meet & Greet The Chicago Rubbermen and Mr. International Rubber join forces to host their annual IML gathering. Start your weekend off by meeting fellow kinksters from around the globe. In the Rendezvous Room, 2nd Floor. 8-11 pm, Congress Plaza Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave. www.imrl.com

IML: San Francisco Party / Leather Archives & Museum Silent Auction Folsom Street Events delivers the biggest warm-up party of IML weekend right inside the host hotel. So, leather up, gear up, hang out and cruise at this non-stop slaezfest, featuring the deep underground sounds of DJ Jack Chang (London). As always it’s free. In the Florentine Room, 3rd Floor. Leather Archives & Museum silent auction takes place right outside the room until midnight. 10 pm - 2 am, Congress Plaza Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave. www.imrl.com

TPAN’s Ride For AIDS Happy Hour Fundraiser for TPAN's annual 200-mile bike trek to raise funds for all the work TPAN does all year in empowering everyone living with or at risk for HIV/AIDS to live open, healthy, and productive lives. 3:30-7 pm, The Sofo Tap, 4923 N. Clark St.

Chicago Bearfest Welcome Party Welcome the boys of the new Chicago Bearfest. 8 pm, Mary’s Attic, 5400 N. Clark St.

Friday at Sidetrack 4-7 pm: TGIF Show Tunes videos; 7 pm: The official VH1 RuPaul’s Drag Race viewing party; 9 pm: GLOW Dance Party until 2. Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Leather Pig Daddy Appearance by adult star Rocco Steele. Benefit for Leather Archive & Museum. $10 donation at the door. 10 pm, Touche, 6412 N. Clark St.

Men’s Room IML w/DJ Harvey Two floors of music and debauchery featuring DJ Harvey, Jeremiah Meece, Mister Wallace, Harry Cross, Jacob Meehan and aCeb00mbaP plus BDSM performances all night long. $20 pre-sale tickets/$30 at the door. Pre-paid ticket holders enter the party via the back alley behind Jackhammer. Access the alley from Devon Ave. Free clothes check. Men’s Room welcomes all genders, races, fetishes and weirdnesses. 9 pm - 4 am, Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St. Tickets: https://www.facebook.com/events/1886221144970081/

Manhunt at Hydrate: DJ Deanne Kick off IML weekend with the sweaty sounds of DJ Deanne. Open until 4:10 pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.

Live Show at Steamworks Featuring adult stars Dolf Dietrich, Hugh Hunter and Rikk York. 11 pm, Steamworks, 3246 N. Halsted St., www.steamworksbaths.com

Saturday, May 27
IML: Pecs and Personality Contest Night one of the official contest to choose the new International Mr. Leather. Ticket packages available at Congress Plaza Hotel 1st floor Ticket Sales Desk. IML contestants are judged on their appearance and stage presence. Doors open at 7 p.m., contest begins at 8 p.m. Proudly sponsored by sportlube. Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress Pkwy., www.imrl.com

IML: Gear Blast Hot guys in sports, racing, rubber, leather, lycra and other perv gear keep things hot, sweaty and kinky! Everyone is invited to get yer gear on and come party hard and sweaty. After all, it’s always better IN gear! In the Renzovend Room, 2nd Floor. 10 pm - 2 am, Congress Plaza Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave., www.imrl.com

IMBB: Spitshine: The Bootblack Party Join the contestants for this year’s International Mr. Bootblack Competition and meet bootblacks from across the nation. Jump in to the auction bidding to help raise travel funds for this year’s winner. Featuring the roast of outgoing International Mr. Bootblack 2016, Erick Joseph. IMBB is proudly sponsored by Stompers Boots of Fort Lauderdale, FL. In the Buckingham Room, 1st Floor. 10 pm - 2 am, Congress Plaza Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave. www.imrl.com

Furball Chicago Joe Fiore returns to Chicago for yet another IML, throwing Saturday night’s hottest party. Music from DJs Ralph Rosario and Ted Eiel. Hosted by Daddy Ersin. 11:30 pm - 4:30 am, Metro Chicago, 3730 N. Clark St., Tickets: www.metrochicago.com

ONYX: Old School IML Dance Party The men of ONYX bring you this annual IML dance party with music by DJ Ron C. Project VIDA will be on hand testing: First 25 people tested get free admission; anyone tested after that gets $5 off admission. $20. Free shuttle from Congress Hotel starting at 10:30; doors open at 11. Opera Lounge Chicago, 235 N. Ashland Ave., www.onyxmidwest.com

Chicagow Bearfest Showtunes & Cocktails 4-9 pm, The Call, 1547 W. Bryn Mawr St.

Wet n’ Wild Bear Party Get wet with the boys of Bear Pride. 11 am - 6 pm, Steamworks, 3246 N. Halsted St.

Stoli Big Deck Party Like big decks? Sidetrack’s got ya covered! Sip some Stoli on the sunny rooftop deck all day. Then stick around until 3 am. 1 pm, Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Chicago Bearfest: Mr. Chicago Bear Contest

Check out these official International Mr. Leather 2017, International Mr. Bootblack 2017, Chicago Bearfest Midwest and other related events throughout Chicago over Memorial Day weekend!

Download the official guide to IML 2017:

HAMBURGER
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MAY’S
OAK PARK

contact: Kat@WindyCityOpenMic.com
155 S. Oak Park Ave • HamburgerMarys.com/OakPark

mondays 7pm

OPEN MIC
See who'll be named the first Mr. Chicago Bear. Will it be you? This “bears & boxers” party will answer all your questions. 10 pm, Touche, 6412 N. Clark St.

**DILF: IML Edition** The monthly party for hot men over 35 and the men who want them. Music from DJ Moose. 9 pm, The Sofo Tap, 4923 N. Clark St.

**Manhole at Hydrate: DJ Shane Stiel** Shane Stiel returns to Chicago for this second night of Manhole parties at Hydrate for IML weekend. Open until 5. 10 pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.

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**Fetish Hell** The ultimate fetish party featuring surprise guests and performances. Fetish scenes encouraged. Tickets available next door at Leather 64TEN, 6410 N. Clark St. 10 pm - 5 am, Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St Chicago. www.leather64ten.com

**BRÜT Chicago IML Weekend** BRÜT blows into Chicago just in time for IML. With so much testosterone in town that weekend, we couldn't resist the chance to bring it home! DJs and BRÜT creators Dan Darlington & Peter Napoli will both be in town to spin. Official Sponsor: IML. Please go to www.imrl.com for the entire schedule of events and times of the contest. Early Bird tickets are $30 now at www.brutparty.com. To receive BRÜT updates, scroll down at brutparty tickets are $30 now at www.brutparty.com. To receive BRÜT updates, scroll down at brutparty landing page and become a BRÜT BUDDY. #WeAreBRÜT. 11 pm - 4:30 am, Steamworks, 3246 N. Halsted St.

**Manhole at Hydrate: Nuts to Butts** Celebrate Bear Pride with this annual dance party, gridding to the beats of DJ Jesse Mercado. Open until 4. 10 pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.

**Live Show at Steamworks** Live show at 11 pm featuring adult stars Jackson Grant and Jack Vidra. Steamworks, 3246 N. Halsted St., www.steamworksbaths.com

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**Monday, May 29**

**IML: Black & Blue Ball** The official wrap-up party of IML weekend. Keep the party going with the return of DJ/producer Tom Stephan (London/ Superchumbo) and DJ Karsten Sollors (Toolroom/Farris Wheel Recordings). Doors open at 9. Tickets available at www.imrl.com and at the door (if available). Presented by IML and Matthew Harvat. 9 pm - 4 am, Sound-Bar 226 W. Ontario St., www.imrl.com

**All-day Beer Bust/Cookout/Survivor Party** Wind up your IML/Bearfest weekend with $1 drafts all day, a cookout 3-7 pm and the Survivor Party, starting at 9. Touche, 6412 N. Clark St.

**Chicago Bearfest Farewell Brunch** Celebrate the first Chicago Bearfest weekend with the girls of Mary's, 11 am, Hamburger Mary's, 5400 N. Clark St.

**“What's the T?” Throwback T-Dance** All the jams you remember for Memorial Day. Party on the rooftop deck 1-5 pm. Showtunes 8 pm until close. Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

**Sweet & Savory BBQ Ride 4 AIDS Fundraiser** Shots, drink specials and raffles! Purchases of select beverages, raffle tickets, etc. or direct donations all help support the Ride for AIDS Chicago/ TPAN. Direct donations can also be made at the following link: http://bit.ly/teamtouche. 2-6 pm, Touche, 6412 N. Clark St. www.facebook.com/pg/TeamToucheFans/events

**Live Show at Steamworks** Live show at 9 featuring adult stars JJ Knight and Brent Corrigan. 9 pm - 1 am, Steamworks, 3246 N. Halsted St.
The ties that bind: ’15 IML Patrick Smith launches new kink encyclopedia

BY TONY PBERGRIN

Leatherpedia—an online bible of BDSM—was launched earlier this year by Patrick Smith, International Mr. Leather 2015, after an experience he had with curious kinksters in Trinidad and Tobago.

“One of the things I tried to do in my title year was to go around to places where it is still scary to be gay and learn about it, and then do some fundraising and raise awareness—and I went to Trinidad and Tobago for that reason,” said Smith during a recent phone interview with the Windy City Times. “I scheduled meetings with all the big gay rights groups and I thought we would be talking about what life was like there for a gay person and how it is difficult to come out and be visible—so that is what I was ready to talk about. But what they came to talk about was very different—they wanted to talk about Japanese rope bondage also known as Shibari,” explained Smith with a hardy laugh.

Smith, a Canadian-American LGBT activist, said the experience caught him off guard, but that it was also a pleasant surprise because he realized LGBT life on the Caribbean islands was not only about survival and concealment.

“There was that light bulb moment where I went, okay, there are pockets of kinksters all over the world… and there should be that resource for them to learn about the community,” said Smith.

Similar to Wikipedia, Leatherpedia.org relies on collaborative knowledge gathering supplied by registered users of the site. Content is organized into categories—people, city, knowledge, business, and titles.

“These are just the main broad buckets of where we thought the initial interest would lie,” explained Smith. “For example, the city index is really powerful because if you are traveling somewhere, you are going to want to know who the key players are, what bars you should go to, and info about any businesses that are there. The beauty of the site is that this is how it exists right now, but that’s not to say that we can’t adapt to meet future demands. For example, I’ve thought of throwing up an event index, a calendar for the entire community.”

As of mid-May, Leatherpedia had 570 registered users and more than 150 entries. The site receives a full audit every 24 hours by a small group of volunteer site monitors, all of whom Smith described as “good writers who are passionate about this project, have some background in leather history, and who are connected within the community.”

Even with a core group of knowledgeable volunteers, verifying new content without censoring contributors can be challenging.

“It’s a tough balancing act because we don’t want to censor anybody especially in this beginning phase when we are really looking for content. We want to err more on the side of inclusion. Having said that, things need to be written well and they need to be formatted properly and they need to be accurate. We can’t 100 percent stand by the accuracy of everything on Leatherpedia, just the same way as the people who run Wikipedia can’t stand behind that. At the end of the day, this is a resource by the community and for the community.”

Prior to launching Leatherpedia, Smith solicited feedback from stakeholders throughout the leather community.

“Before launching the site, I went on a big tour to reach out to all the notable people I know and who are very visible but they might not want their employers to know they are involved with the leather community, and as a result, might not want to be included in an entry on Leatherpedia. So, we built-in an opt-out mechanism where if an entry is written about someone and they don’t like it, we can add them to our blacklist so that any references to them on the site go dark and the system prevents anyone writing about them going forward.”

Publicly documenting leather and kink people, traditions, and techniques may be viewed differently by members of the “old guard” versus the “new guard,” but Smith refuses to be bound and gagged by members of the kink community who oppose his leather lexicon.

“Leatherpedia is about honoring the traditions of the so-called old guard and documenting and chronicling them, but it’s also about showing new traditions and where we are going,” explained Smith. “In terms of some of the guard perhaps not being ready to have this information so easily accessible, I guess I would say, to be blunt—it’s 2017, it’s time to come out of the shadows. Let’s face it, when a movie with BDSM content, 50 Shades of Gray, can become a major blockbuster, I really don’t see the reason to hide anymore. Although, admittedly, it does require bravery and courage to say, ‘This is what I like sexually.’ I mean, I had to do it on stage at IML with my mom in the audience!”

Leatherpedia is a non-profit entity with any leftover ad revenue benefiting the Leather Archives & Museum in Chicago. Smith will be attending International Mr. Leather 2017 and is hoping to partner with the Archives to promote the site at the leather market.
“If he took a dump on his desk, you would defend it.” —Anderson Cooper chastises Jeffrey Lord after the political commentator once again defended Donald Trump—this time, in light of the Russian inquiry. Coop later apologized for the statement: “I regret the crude sentence I spoke earlier tonight and followed it up by apologizing on air. It was unprofessional, I am genuinely sorry.” Still, it was great TV—and, of course, we’ll run it on our website.

Let’s call this a tale of two shows: The Bodyguard and Jersey Boys. Last week, I saw touring companies of both shows during their stay in Los Angeles. The Bodyguard is, of course, based on the Whitney Houston film of 1992. Alas, the stage adaptation is short on dialogue—or plot. The script seems structured to link together the 20 songs almost solely sung by the phenomenal Deborah Cox. (Two of the songs are sung by others.)

Given the fact that she is virtually carrying the entire musical and doing six shows a week (no matinee for Cox), it’s almost understandable that she holds back somewhat. However, I wouldn’t be overstating things to say that her performance had all the energy of a latter-day Sunny von Bulow. Even with her abilities in check, one cannot deny that voice. And certainly she dances better than Whitney. But her comatose performance in a show with major structural deficiencies made for a wholly unsatisfying evening. While the major culprits are the writer and director, I was taken aback watching the musical director, Matthew Smedal, who looked bored stiff. As they say, the fish stinks from the head. But I should add two important points. First, Cox and company let loose for the post-show mini-concert, which was almost worth the price of admission. Second, practically every performance on the tour has been sold out, and audiences respond enthusiastically.

Then we have Jersey Boys, led by Mark Ballas from Dancing with the Stars. Unlike The Bodyguard, Jersey Boys is a well-structured, well-written and well-directed show. Like The Bodyguard, the brunt of the vocal burden falls on the star—although he has able assistance by the rest of the Four Seasons. To say Ballas is not much of a singer or actor would be an understatement. His strain in trying to approximate Frankie Valli’s unique sound is evident from the first note. One wondered how he would get through the second act—let alone five shows a week. (Like Cox, Ballas doesn’t do matinees. He also has something else to do Saturday nights.) Predictably, Ballas ran into trouble as the show went on—the second act was particularly grating. Unlike Miss Cox, Ballas works hard—very hard. He pushes what limited resources he has to extraordinary lengths. While he is often painful to listen to, one can’t deny that he wants this—and wants it badly. And, like The Bodyguard, the show is a crowd-pleaser. And, on opening night, the real Frankie Valli came onstage to congratulate Ballas and company.

So it comes down to this—do you take the exceptionally talented person sleepwalking through an abysmal show? Or do you opt for the lackluster but likable person who is killing himself to get through a better show? In this case, I will give it to Jersey Boys, by a hair. But if someone gives Deborah Cox a Red Bull, I’d go back in a second.

I also attended the Southland Theatre Artists Goodwill Event—otherwise known as STAGE. This fundraiser—the world’s longest-running annual HIV/AIDS benefit—took its final bow with a cavalcade of stars from stage, screen and TV. The ageless Carole Cook was at the very first STAGE concert. She’s been in 31 of the 33, but she had a good excuse for the two she missed—she was on Broadway! It was fitting for her to close the show, easily sounding and appearing a generation or two younger than her 93 years. She embodied everything that has been right with this event, which has raised tens of millions of dollars over these many years. Bravo!

We hear that Sara Gilbert was the driving force behind the Roseanne reboot—which explains why she’s not only starring in it but also an executive producer. So far, it is only slated for a limited eight-episode season. Another high-profile reboot, Will & Grace, is set for 12 episodes. And we may have told you about the Dynasty reboot last week, but now we’ve seen the trailer. And, well, you can judge it for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

Most shows spend the summer campaigning for an Emmy Award. However, the cast and crew of the sitcom Mom are going in a different direction. Instead of spending money on a media blitz, they donated the cash to Planned Parenthood. As far as I’m concerned, they’re already winners.

Our “Ask Billy” question is from Josh in Denver. “I read that American Gods had the most explicit gay sex scene ever. But I don’t watch it. Can you show me what the fuss was all about?”

The sex scene in American Gods has been touted by critics as “the hottest and most pornographic gay sex scene ever on mainstream TV.” Riddle me this—since when is Starz mainstream TV? I’m not sure I even get Starz. Once I have to enter four digits on my remote, I give up. The scene in question is between Omid Abtahi and Maousa Kraish—not really names that roll off the tongue ... unless it’s prayer time and you’re facing east. But it is hot. Producer Bryan Fuller said, “It was no small feat for two gay Muslim characters to have a beautiful, sophisticated, sexual experience.” While I’m not exactly sure what “sophistical” means, I can certainly confirm that there were no small feet! See it for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

Could it be that Billy ran into a legend last week? Yes, at one of the events mentioned in this very column, he found himself next to one of the world’s most recognizable men—and almost didn’t recognize him! On initial viewing, the guy’s face kinda looked like a deflated beach ball. While I suspect there are no undies that could lift that droopy derrière, I find it questionable when someone of advanced age wears skinny jeans with no socks! What is the male version of cansles? In this case, I’m going with “cadaver-kles.” Photos to follow on BillyMasters.com.

When nothing comes between me and a blind item, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. I should add that the notable name was attended to by a coterie of hot young underwear model types. Kinda like the guys you see on www.BillyMasters.com—the site doesn’t charge by the hour. If you have a question for me, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Mark Ballas takes over the lead in The Bodyguard! So, until next time, remember: One man’s filth is another man’s bible.
Former bodybuilder is advocate for LGBTQ Asian/Pacific Islander youth

BY DAVID THILL

May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, and one AAPI activist the LGBTQ community might want to look out for is Amazin LeThi.

LeThi, a Vietnam native who grew up in Australia, began bodybuilding at the age of six, and went on to compete professionally for 20 years. Now, she uses her platform as a global advocate for LGBTQ people and people affected by HIV/AIDS.

This summer, LeThi and her foundation, the Amazin LeThi Foundation, are embarking on their flagship global venture: a sports, education, leadership and mentoring program for LGBTQ youth and children affected by HIV/AIDS, which she plans to bring to Chicago as early as 2018.

The program

As a Vietnamese child growing up in Australia, LeThi experienced “a terrible amount” of racism, she said. “For a very long period, I never had realistically anyone that believed in me, and I always was kind of told that I would never amount to much.”

Those experiences led LeThi to bodybuilding. “Sport became my outlet,” she said. It gave her the confidence she was missing, “and I think if it wasn’t for bodybuilding, I would be in a different place” today.

Indeed, today, LeThi occupies a prominent place in national and international LGBTQ and AAPI circles. She attended the first White House Forum on Global LGBTQ Human Rights in 2014. Currently, she serves as an Athlete Ally and the Vietnam Relief Services global ambassador, and advises the New York Department of Education on Asian youth issues, including LGBTQ issues and issues of racism. In May 2016, LeThi was one of GLAAD’s “7 Asian LGBT advocates to know this AAPI Heritage Month.”

While LeThi’s calling was bodybuilding, she believes all sports offer something valuable to young people trying to figure out where they fit in. “Sport is a way of finding yourself a community,” she said, even if it’s just for fun and not a professional pursuit. This is why sports are central to LeThi’s work, including her new program.

The weeklong program, supported in part by the U.S. and Dutch embassies in Vietnam, will launch in Haiphong, Vietnam, in July. It will primarily serve LGBTQ youth and youth living with or affected by HIV/AIDS—two groups that LeThi said are the most marginalized in the Vietnamese community.

She described the program as a way to “fast track” youth to opportunities for employment and networking. The program will provide participants educational scholarships, as well as access to business leaders through site visits and workshops. As part of the leadership component, the older participants, who will range in age from 16 to 22, will lead workshops during which they teach skills to a younger group of participants, ranging from age 8 to 15.

In addition to athletic opportunities during the program, LeThi plans to have professional athletes share their stories with the youth. “So many athletes were lifted out of poverty through sports and became leaders and mentors” in their communities, she said. “We can use sports as a platform to lift these youth out of poverty.”

She believes that the professional athletic community, with its far-reaching influence, can serve as an important base of support for LGBTQ youth. “It says so much if a professional athlete says ‘I support this right,’” she said.

Above all, LeThi wants the program to “ignite that fire within the youth, [so] that there’s a possibility and hope, and that their dreams are possible.” She hopes that gaining connections to the professional community during the program will leave the youth with a base from which to build once the program ends.

From left: Then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, Amazin LeThi and Jill Biden.

Photo by David Lienemann

Clashing identities

LeThi has more in mind than just this summer’s Haiphong launch. In 2018, she plans to expand the program nationally within Vietnam, and internationally to the United States, where her proposed initial sites are Atlanta and Chicago.

Logistically, the program may change. A week might no longer be sufficient in future iterations. Also, as LeThi acknowledged, a $1,000 educational scholarship in Vietnam—which she said can cover an entire four-year college education—is much different from a $1,000 scholarship in the United States, which, in many cases, would cover a fraction of a semester of tuition.

LeThi also plans to expand the reach of the U.S. program beyond just AAPI youth, to include other homeless LGBTQ and underserved youth. Still, she aims to address the cultural stigmas that AAPI youth face, and the added challenges for LGBTQ AAPI youth.

Many Asian youth are held to high standards, said LeThi. People often think of these youth as excellent students who work hard and get good grades. But those people don’t realize the inner struggles of AAPI youth. “because for many Asian youth, it’s a very quiet journey that they suffer inside,” she said. “It’s an ask of them that’s so unimaginable, that they can never reach.”

The challenges multiply for those AAPI youth who identify as LGBTQ. “I think this is something that is not mentioned a lot,” said LeThi, “particularly for Asian youth, of how they have to navigate this intersection of their sexual identity and their cultural identity.”

For example, she said, many Vietnamese people came to the U.S. as refugees with specific expectations for their families. When their children go against those expectations—for example, by coming out as gay—the parents often respond with disappointment. The pressure to adhere to certain standards can cause a great deal of shame for LGBTQ AAPI youth, she said.

As a Vietnamese person who spent her childhood in a foreign country, who struggled with homelessness as a young adult, and who also struggled with her sexuality—she prefers not to identify as any one thing, but if she had to, she would identify as “queer” or “label-less”—LeThi identifies with all of these struggles.

The issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness in particular needs to be addressed, she said. If not, these homeless youth “become our lost generation.”

“It’s an epidemic that we have to address,” said LeThi.

For more information on LeThi’s work, readers can visit AmazinLethiFoundation.org.

Registration open for AIDS Run & Walk

Registration has opened for the 16th annual AIDS Run & Walk Chicago on Sunday, Oct. 1.

The event will start and finish at Soldier Field in Chicago, and courses for the 5K walk and the 5K/10K runs will stretch along Lake Michigan. Those runs start at 8:30 a.m., with the walk beginning at 8:45 a.m. (The opening ceremony will start at 7:25 a.m.)

Funds raised through AIDS Run & Walk Chicago will benefit programs and services for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and more than 30 other metropolitan organizations that provide life-saving services to people living with HIV and AIDS. Since it was established in 2001, AIDS Run & Walk Chicago has netted more than $5 million to battle the epidemic.

For more information, visit AIDSRunWalk.org or call 312-334-0946.

King to speak at NU on June 16

Advocate/sports icon Billie Jean King will deliver this year’s commencement address at Northwestern University on Friday, June 16.

King was ranked six times as the year’s number one women’s tennis player and won 39 Grand Slam singles, doubles and mixed doubles titles, including a record 20 championships at Wimbledon. She is the founder of the Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative, the Women’s Tennis Association and the Women’s Sports Foundation, and she is the co-founder of World TeamTennis.

Northwestern’s 159th commencement ceremony will begin at 9:30 a.m. in Ryan Field on the Evanston campus.
or firms. On invitations arranged from restaurants and/ or cuisine.

Troquet River North, will be the restaurant’s executive chef, offering upscale yet casual American cuisine.

The cafe will offer everything from muffins to breakfast items, including a Nutella-themed menu. The cafe will open on Wed., May 31, inside Millennium Park, The Chicago Tribune.

However, I cannot end this without mentioning the wrinkle in the Italian Village’s climate-controlled wine cellar. Wine director Jared Gelband took Windy City Times through what is sometimes called “the cellars.”

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

LEATHER DAYS
May 24-29
International Mr. Leather (IML) activities will take place; see IML.com.

Photo by Andrew Davis

Halsted

Welcome to attend. 9:00pm - 1:00am

Touche 6412 N Clark St Chicago http://www.touchechicago.com

Thursday, May 25
International Mr. Leather Kickoff Party

The night starts at 8 pm with complimentary cocktails, a live DJ and models. Meet the CEO and Founder of Nasty Pig, David Lauterstein and his team! We will be donating 10 percent of the evening’s sales to The Anti-Cruelty Society and every purchase enters you in the raffle for prizes from our brands. 8:00pm - 10:00pm Cram Fashion 3331 North Broadway Chicago http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oe id=a07e458smg6cad0od8lluiu56cabb&showPage=true

Kiss & Tell: The Owl and SlutTalk host a new, monthly storytelling series and open mic about sex, dating and love. Live performance with an open-mic component. No cover $30 The Owl, 2521 N. Milwaukee Ave. http://WeAreSlutTalk.com

Friday, May 26
TPAN’s Ride For AIDS Happy Hour Fundraiser for TPAN’s annual 200-mile bike trek to raise funds for all the work TPAN does all year in empowering everyone living with or at risk for HIV/AIDS to live open, healthy, and productive lives.

3:30pm - 7:00pm The Sofa Tap 4923 N Clark Chicago http://www.tpan.com

Saturday, May 27
Belmont-Sheffield Music Fest Top local tribute bands, food, libations… arti-sans… and an all-new second stage 12:00pm - 2:00am The Godfrey Hotel, 127 W. Huron St.; Tickets: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/peaches-through-the-ages-70s-presented-by-peach-tickets-330627047aff=efbeventix/tickets

Sunday, May 28
IML: International Mr. Leather Contest The big show! Come see who will be chosen as the new International Mr. Leather. Ticket Packages available at Congress Plaza Hotel, 1st floor Ticket Sales Desk. Doors open at 5 p.m., contest begins at 6 p.m. Proudly supported by Miller Lite. 6:00pm - 9:00pm Auditorium Theatre

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BOOK REVIEW

Edges of the Rainbow: LGBTQ Japan
by Michel Delsol & Haruku Shinozaki
$21.95; The New Press; 192 pages

BY ANGÉLIQUE SMITH

Edges of the Rainbow: LGBTQ Japan chronicles modern life in the Land of the Rising Sun as its queer community gains more visibility and recognition. It is part of an ongoing photobook series, with other installments focusing on LGBTQ life in locations such as Delhi, New York City and Australia.

With an enlightening introduction exploring Japan’s complicated history of sexual identity from Mark McLelland (a professor of gender and sexuality studies and previously of Japanese studies), the remainder of the book features intimate images captured by photographer Michel Delsol, along with text by journalist Haruku Shinozaki introducing us to a vast array of characters across the LGBTQ continuum.

In Tokyo, we meet Yosiki, an Episcopalian priest who poses with the solemnity of his position but can’t hide the twinkle in his eye as he recounts meeting his partner of 15 years. Chiga, a “500-percent straight lesbian,” stands proud and well-suited in her aptly named bar, Gold Finger, and talks of ignoring the norms that society dictates. We also span the walls of the akta community center, peppered with monthly newsletters and risqué safe sex ads, as its leaders work to bring HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention to Tokyo.

In Niigata, we meet Keiki, a trans male tarot-card reader who bares it all with friends in his moody-hued photos but is also seen honoring Japanese birthday traditions with his wife and family.

In Osaka, trans woman activist and pop idol Ai showcases her life in the spotlight as she walks through Harajuku sporting panda earmuffs and bright Barbie doll-esque colors while taking selfies with local teens. She started her career as a drag queen and now hosts a show on fighting prejudice. Fuyumi and Makoto’s photos are full of tearful airport reunions and Google+ sessions as they navigate their long-distance relationship. Both born deaf, they’re developing new sign language to represent queer culture-related words.

The sacred city of Kyoto introduces us to intersex Tatsuki and wife Eishin, a Reiki healer, whose photos show us the importance of their faith as Buddhist disciples. The boy band-like members of Apotheke, a pop group that addresses LGBTQ culture issues, puts on a yearly drag ball and performs at pride festivals framed by rainbow balloons dotting the sky.

Although the cityscapes, individual stories and levels of acceptance differ, in a conformist culture where being the “nail that sticks out” is discouraged, this photobook is a triumphant celebration of how those on the margins are fearlessly living their truth.

The photographs are copyright Michel Delsol, from the book Edges of the Rainbow, written by Michel Delsol and Haruku Shinozaki and published by The New Press (May 2017).

WCT publisher named to local power list

Media reporter/watchdog Robert Feder has unveiled his annual list of the most powerful women in Chicago journalism—and Windy City Times Publisher/Executive Editor Tracy Baim is among the top 20.

Baim made the second group of 10 on Feder’s list, alongside such figures as DNAInfo.com Deputy Editor/Social Media Director Jen Sabella and Chicago Tribune columnist Mary Schmich. WGN Television and CLTV News Director Jennifer Lyons headed the top 10; a few of the others include political editor Carol Marin, Chicago Sun-Times columnist Michael Sneed, WBBM Newsradio Managing Editor Julie Mann and The Chicago Reporter Editor/Publisher Susan Smith Richardson.

The article is at RobertFeder.com/2017/05/08/powerful-women-chicago-journalism-2017-edition/.

Levithan wins literary prize

Writer David Levithan has received The Chicago Tribune’s Young Adult Literary Prize.

Levithan is the award-winning author of many bestselling works which explore a wide range of adolescent themes, including Boy Meets Boy (2003); Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist (2006); Will Grayson, Will Grayson (2010); Every Day (2012); Hold Me Closer (2015); and You Know Me Well (2016).

Levithan will be honored at the 2017 Printers Row Lit Fest on June 10 in downtown Chicago.
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