BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Director Steve Scott has been a significant presence at the Goodman Theatre since 1980, working his way up from director of educational programs to his current titles of producer and a member of the Artistic Collective. But as he turns 67 this month, Scott has decided to step away from his administrative duties at Chicago’s flagship regional theater.

“I felt like it was really time for the younger staff to have a chance to help guide the ship in a more meaningful way,” Scott said. “And I realize that I’m not going to be alive for another 37 years, so there...”
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Cory Frederick's newest column is “Paragraph 175 revisited: Genocide in Chechnya.”
Photo courtesy of Frederick

Director Steve Scott steps away from the Goodman Theatre since 1980, working his way up from director of educational programs to his current titles of producer and a member of the Artistic Collective. But as he turns 67 this month, Scott has decided to step away from his administrative duties at Chicago's flagship regional theater.

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Trump properties included on IGLTA’s ‘LGBTQ-friendly’ list

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Three Trump properties, among them the Trump International Hotel & Tower in downtown Chicago, have been named “LGBTQ-friendly businesses” by the Fort Lauderdale-based International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA), despite President Donald J. Trump’s tumultuous relationship with the LGBT community. IGLTA officials, on July 6, defended that inclusion, noting that the hotels were owned independently of Trump and had met the organization’s criteria.

The Chicago property was alongside the Trump International Hotel & Tower New York and the Trump SoHo New York on a list of partners released on July 5.

In a statement to Windy City Times, IGLTA President/CEO John Tanzella said, “IGLTA is a member-based travel association promoting LGBTQ friendly travel options. IGLTA also aims to support and educate businesses that want to better respond to the needs of LGBTQ clients.

“The Trump branded properties which are current members of IGLTA are independently owned hotels and not owned by Mr. Trump.”

Tanzella further noted, “Of the three properties that are IGLTA members, two have been with the organization since 2012. Trump SoHo is owned by a California-based real estate investment company; Trump International Hotel & Tower New York and Chicago are condo hotels where each unit is individually owned; and these properties have hosted numerous same-sex weddings in its banquet and event space. Their catering sales associates have also completed the Gay Wedding Institute Certification Course to better serve the LGBT wedding market.”

The Unicorn Booty blog, which broke the story, noted that a 2011 Change.org petition asked IGLTA to reject Trump properties. Organization officials at the time said they would reconsider the matter.

The Trump administration has committed several missteps with respect to the LGBT community. The president, for example, has professed support for so-called “religious freedom” laws that would in principle shield individuals from charges of anti-LGBT discrimination should those actions be based in a person’s religious convictions; on a number of occasions, advocates have mobilized for an executive order—which never materialized—allowing such rules to be more easily slipped into place. Six members of the White House’s HIV/AIDS advisory council resigned, citing the administration’s indifference to the epidemic. Trump officials also rejected the previous administration’s position that transgender students should be given access to school facilities in line with the gender with which they identify. Lastly, the White House did not acknowledge June as Gay Pride month.

On June 20, Trump’s Chicago hotel was briefly illuminated in rainbow colors, presumably in recognition of Pride celebrations the following weekend. NBC 5 tweeted a photo of the display, but, according to the JoeMyGod.com blog, it was then not re-illuminated on subsequent evenings. The hotel has been the site of several anti-Trump demonstrations.


Correction

The June 28 issue attributed certain Pier Pride photos to Kamal Bosamia; Heidi Zeiger Photography actually took those images. Windy City Times regrets the error.
LGBT chamber of commerce leader steps down
BY MATT SIMONETTE

The LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, on July 3, announced that Executive Director Gerardo Rodriguez would step down effective July 7.

“We are extremely grateful for Gerardo’s contributions to our organization and wish him well with his next opportunity in the private sector,” said Board of Directors Chair William Stevenson in a statement.

He added, “We will continue to carry on with our mission of supporting and promoting LGBT businesses, workplace equality, and supplier diversity.”

Rodriguez, who described himself as a “straight ally” to the community, was named the Chamber’s executive director in early 2015. Prior to this post, he had worked as a business advisor to both the Chicago Urban League and the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

In April 2015, he told Windy City Times that he wanted to make both community activism and workforce development a key part of the Chamber’s overall advocacy.

“We want to provide training for our small businesses to grow and to be leaders within the LGBT community, and we want LGBT employees of major corporations to be advocates,” he said.

Crew to leave current location
BY MATT SIMONETTE

The LGBT sports bar Crew Bar + Grill, on July 5, announced that it will be closing its Uptown location at Lawrence Avenue and Broadway on July 15 and will be searching for a new home elsewhere on the North Side.

Crew posted the news on its Facebook page. “Crew is seeking to relocate in Uptown, Andersonville, Edgewater or Rogers park but has not yet found the right space to continue Crew’s legacy,” read the posting. “We want to thank Uptown for many memorable years and, most of all, we want to thank all our dedicated team members and amazing customers who have made Crew Chicago’s best LGBTQ sports bar.”

The bar will be closing just four days shy of its 13th anniversary; Crew opened July 19, 2004. The original owners were Brian Wells and Steve Milford, who met at Roscoe’s Tavern in Lakeview in the late ’90s. They spent about five years in the planning stages, they told Windy City Times in 2014, just as the bar celebrated its 10th anniversary.

“I shared the plan I was working on [with Milford] and we decided to team up,” Wells said. “It is scary to make that jump from dream to reality.”

Galvanize Program mini-summits
July 15-16

The Galvanize Program—a nationwide effort toward turning the passion of women across the country into strategic action—will kick off its national series of mini-summits July 15-16 at McCormick Place, 2301 S. Martin Luther King Dr.

The Galvanize Program will allow participants to explore gender equality issues and a broad set of national and local policies that impact women and their communities. Attendees will choose one of five tracks (political candidates, campaign management, grassroots organizing, leadership and entrepreneurship) based on their interests to receive in-depth and skills-based training developed by national partner organizations.

Valerie Jarrett, former senior advisor to President Obama and chair of the Obama Administration White House Council on Women and Girls; and Tina Tchen, former chief of staff to First Lady Michelle Obama and executive director of the White House Council on Women and girls will be honorary co-chairs of the Chicago Galvanize program.

See UnitedStateOfWomen.org/galvanize.

Obergefell attorney running for Congress

Indiana native Dan Canon has announced that he will run for Congress in the state’s 9th District. Canon is one of counsel for the pioneering Kentucky and Indiana marriage-equality cases (Bourke v. Beshear, Love v. Beshear and Love v. Pence), and counsel for the Kentucky plaintiffs in the landmark Supreme Court case of Obergefell v. Hodges, according to the website of his law firm, Clay Daniel Walton Adams, PLC.

A press release stated that Canon, 39, is a first-time candidate who says people in his district are ready for a member of Congress who truly represents south-central Indiana. Canon added, “Our current representative [Republican Trey Hollingsworth] isn’t working on those issues. He’s an opportunistic multi-millionaire who came to Indiana just to buy a seat in Congress.”
What are the other possible side effects of DESCOVY?

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

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- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
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- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if DESCOVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking DESCOVY.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

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

Please see Important Facts about DESCOVY, including important warnings, on the following page.
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Please see Important Facts about DESCOVY, including important warnings, on the following page.

What is DESCOVY®?

DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years and older. DESCOVY is not for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. DESCOVY combines 2 medicines into 1 pill taken once a day. Because DESCOVY by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1, it must be used together with other HIV-1 medicines. DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS.

To control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses, you must keep taking DESCOVY. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to reduce the risk of passing HIV-1 to others. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

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

DESCOVY may cause serious side effects:

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

DESCOVY can cause serious side effects, including:

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

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of DESCOVY.

Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking DESCOVY.

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

BEFORE TAKING DESCOVY

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

• Have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
• Have any other medical condition.
• Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
• Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed.

Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

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

GET MORE INFORMATION

• This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
• Go to DESCOVY.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
• If you need help paying for your medicine, visit DESCOVY.com for program information.
Symposium examines disconnect between LGBTQ youth, researchers

Despite disagreements, panelists and youth seek common ground
By David Thill

The second annual “State of LGBTQ Youth Health and Wellbeing” symposium presented plenty of research on LGBTQ youth. The question now seems to be how—and whether—that research can serve LGBTQ youth.

The June 29 symposium—subtitled “Strengthening Schools and Families to Build Resilience,” and with the Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing (ISGMH) at Northwestern University sponsoring the event—focused primarily on the roles of families and educators in caring for LGBTQ youth in the United States. LGBTQ youth who attended the conference, however, said that they would have liked to see researchers pay more attention to the youth themselves.

An estimated 1.3 million U.S. high school students identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, said David Purcell, JD, deputy director for behavioral and social science at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, delivering the keynote address.

Purcell presented data from CDC’s 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey showing that LGB students reported higher rates of suicide ideation, sexual and physical dating violence, and bullying at school or online than their non-LGB-identifying peers, among other findings. He added that other research indicates similar discrepancies exist between transgender youth and non-transgender youth.

Reasons for the discrepancies between LGBT youth and non-LGBT youth may include social isolation and stigma, lack of caregiver or parental support, lack of safety and support at school, and rigid norms about masculinity and femininity, Purcell said.

He described several programs throughout the country aimed at promoting LGBTQ safety and support in schools. These programs include Florida-based Broward County Public Schools’ “Critical Support Guide” aimed at training school staff to competently address their LGBTQ students’ needs; LGBTQ-inclusive school curricula in San Francisco public schools; and the “National OUT For Safe Schools Campaign,” which allows school staff to wear badges identifying themselves as LGBTQ allies for students. This campaign, which began in 2013 as a partnership between the Los Angeles LGBT Center and Los Angeles Unified School District, has since expanded to nine other school districts across the country, including Chicago Public Schools.

Dorothy Espelage, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of Florida, described a “bully-to-sexual violence” pathway in schools, in which peer-to-peer bullying escalates to homophobic name-calling, which escalates to sexual harassment. Schools need to acknowledge and include LGBTQ students before students reach high school, Espelage said.

She discussed other issues too, including high-er rates of suicide ideation among LGBTQ youth than non-LGBT youth, negative effects of gang presence in schools on LGBTQ youth, and lack of LGBTQ competency on the part of school staff. “We just need a lot of work,” she concluded.

Family and parental support has significant effects on reducing rates of HIV and mental health problems in youth, said panelist Brian Mustanski, Ph.D., a Northwestern professor and the ISGMH director. He added, however, that research needs to extend beyond simply examining parental support and acceptance, to look at the effects of specific parenting practices on the well-being of sexual and gender minority youth and the prevalence of risk behaviors among those youth.

Following the research panel, Alloíza Mari and Elon Sloan, youth leaders at the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, addressed the audience to discuss their perspective on the findings. They said that while the research presented at the symposium might be helpful to researchers, youth like themselves often don’t experience its benefits.

Mari said that research should focus on harm reduction rather than stopping risk behaviors. Sloan noted that while they appreciate that the research exists, “it doesn’t affect me in a direct way.” Research should focus on the youth themselves—not their parents, Sloan said.

Both of the youth expressed their wish that the quantitative data resulting from studies such as the ones conducted by Purcell and the others be paired with more qualitative, narrative data that documents individual LGBTQ youths’ experiences.

Espelage defended the studies, saying that the research teams on which she works take the quantitative data back to the youth they study, who then drive the research that follows.

The group of researchers and youth had a chance to address their differing perspectives in a closed working group Friday. In emails to Windy City Times following that working group, both Mari and Espelage said they felt the group made progress.

Mari wrote that the youth in the working group “pushed for more research on the number of trans and gender expansive youth in the country and how they could be better served.” The working group found common ground, they added, in identifying the need to expand the scope of research to include topics that have received limited focus, such as issues trans gender youth face.

Report: There are 1.1M married same-sex couples

The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law is publishing a research brief finding that 1.1 million LGBT adults are married to someone of the same sex.

Other key findings include:

—An estimated 10.7 million adults in the U.S. identify as LGBT.

—More than 547,000 same-sex couples in the U.S. are married.

—Since the Obergefell decision in June 2015, at least 157,000 same-sex couples have married in the United States.

The report is at https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/experts/adam-romero/obergefell-effect/.

LGBTQ seniors sought for study

Howard Brown Health is looking for subjects to complete a survey on LGBTQ aging as part of the LGBTQ&A: The Aging Project.

Subjects need to be at least 50 years old, identify as members of the LGBTQ community and be Cook County residents.

The survey is confidential and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Gift cards of $10 will be offered to the first 400 participants.

Email TheAgingProject@HowardBrown.org or call 773-630-9429.
Providers, politicians react to budget passage

BY MATT SIMONETTE

After two years, Illinois finally has a budget. The General Assembly overrode Gov. Bruce Rauner’s veto July 6 after a protracted session to prevent, among other consequences, Illinois bonds being reduced to “junk” status. Numerous organizations and politicians issued statements in response.

AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), which played a large part in organizing a coalition to advocate for a responsible budget, responded approvingly to the legislation’s passage.

“We have worked for three years to ensure that Illinois has a responsible budget that generates revenue and supports residents across the state,” said President and CEO John Peller. “Stop-gap spending plans or other Band-Aid solutions have been unacceptable. An untold number of Illinoisans have died or suffered preventable health crises in the meanwhile because of a lack of funding for essential services.”

The new budget restores HIV/AIDS funding to 2015 levels, which amounts to about $25.4 million for testing, treatment and education. As the budget crisis played out, numerous service-providers had to scale back or close outright. AFC said in May that the impasse resulted in a significant decrease in the detection of new HIV infections for Illinoisans.

“It is incredibly hard to vote to increase taxes, but it was the only responsible choice for moving our state forward,” said Ramon Gardenhire, vice president of Policy and Advocacy at AFC. “We thank them for this act of political courage.”

Rauner’s challengers in the 2018 election blasted the governor for his budget veto and accused him of grandstanding.

“Rauner led the state to $14.7 billion in unpaid bills, interest on state debt continues to skyrocket, and local governments across the state have been forced to raise taxes to compensate for a lack of state funds,” said businessman J.B. Pritzker. “...It will take years to clean up the mess of this failed governor’s creating and it’s clear that getting our state back on track can only happen with a new governor next November.”

Businessman Chris Kennedy said, “Other states don’t need to threaten the future of their institutions in order to create a balanced budget. It doesn’t have to be this way. We can have a balanced budget. We can honor the contracts of our pensions and we can invest in our economy and see it grow. But, we need to give our state a budget and a government that’s free of corruption, that’s free of self-dealing, that’s free of self-interest. If we do that we can turn this state around.”

State Sen. Daniel Biss (D-Evanston) said, “We need to build on this collaboration and come together to create real progress by making the rich pay their fair share to fund our schools, protect people’s health care, and get our economy moving.”

Ald. Ameya Pawar (47th) said, “While Bruce Rauner’s reckless veto made clear he doesn’t care about the future of our state, today’s bi-partisan veto-override proves there are legislators still willing to put Illinois’ hard-working families over reckless partisan politics.”

“The term ‘balanced budget’ is becoming a ubiquitous political talking point, but the term ‘balanced budget’ isn’t just political rhetoric—it’s a real thing, and means that expenditures cannot exceed revenues,” said state Rep. Ann Williams (D-Chicago). “It means if we want to spend money, we need to raise revenue. Governor Rauner’s budget proposed $37.3 billion in spending, but included no correlating revenue increase. In other words, he proposed a budget but has no way to pay for it. The bipartisan plan, in contrast, spends over a billion less than the Governor’s, and $3 billion less than if we continued with no budget in place. And it is fully funded. It’s a balanced budget.”

Report analyzes lack of measure of judicial diversity

States fail to collect basic information on the demographic and professional backgrounds of state judges, according to a new report Lambda Legal and the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy (ACS) released.

In the 35-page report—“Diversity Counts: Why States Should Measure the Diversity of Their Judges and How They Can Do It”—researchers ask key decision-makers to collect and release judicial diversity data, including the demographic and professional backgrounds of state judges and judicial candidates.

The report shows, among other things:

—Why diversity on courts matters, what is known about diversity on state courts, and why states should prioritize collecting judicial diversity data and making it available to the public, policymakers and journalists;

—Findings of a new study by researcher Liz Seaton that examines whether and how 12 states collect and disclose judicial diversity data. (Illinois is not among the states.); and


For more information, see http://diversity-counts.com/.

Belmont Rocks project planned

The Belmont Rocks played an undeniably important part in the LGBTQ community’s history and in the lives of many LGBTQ Chicagoans.

“The Rocks” were “a place to call our own—a place of celebrations and partying, of social and sexual encounters, a place of artwork, memorials, cookouts, unions, and so much more. A place to do nothing or do everything. The meaning and importance of that iconic strip of land needs to be chronicled and preserved,” said author Owen Keehnen in a press release.

Keehnen is compiling a book to help safeguard the memory of The Rocks for future generations. He is seeking pictures as well as short essays, personal recollections and anecdotes of up to 500 words about LGBTQ life at the Belmont Rocks.

“If The Rocks were an meaningful part of your life, please consider contributing anything which captures what The Belmont Rocks meant to you. With your help we can let future generations of LGBTQ Chicagoans know the significant role this gathering place played in our history. Preserving our past is our responsibility.” Keehnen stated.

Send submissions to OwenKeehnen@yahoo.com. Put “The Rocks” on the subject line. The deadline for submissions is Oct. 1.

Drug-treatment programs get federal funds

Three suburban court programs will get boosts to existing efforts that help drug users, courtesy of a new federal grant.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded $324,811 to the Circuit Court of Cook County Drug Treatment Court programs in the Markham, Maywood and Bridgeview courthouses. The grant has a potential total value of $947,519 over a three-year period, as the Circuit Court will re-apply for more funds.

Defendants enter the drug courts voluntarily, and all participants are charged with non-violent crimes.

“For nonviolent defendants who are driven by drug addiction, the court exercises compassion in the pursuit of justice. Treatment, not punishment, is the best option to pursue,” Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans said in a statement.

Activism meet-ups, personal book recommendations, weekly events, Kids Storytime, and more! There are so many reasons to support Chicago’s only feminist book store.

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More than 70 major corporations, small businesses, government agencies and nonprofits are expected for the third annual in the Windy City Times WERQ! LGBTQ job fair Friday, Sept. 22, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St. In 2016, more than 500 people attended the fair.

The event—free and open to the public—is hosted by Windy City Times with Center on Halsted, MB Financial Bank, US Bank, Uber, Pride Action Tank, Chicago House, Association of Latino/as Motivating Action, Affinity Community Services, AIDS Foundation of Chicago and Out & Equal Chicagoland.


This is the third WERQ! LGBTQ Job Fair. The first focused primarily on youth experiencing homelessness, and in 2016 there was a special emphasis on youth, trans individuals and seniors. This year’s fair is open to all LGBTQ and allies, and will coincide with the launch of a #HireTrans local initiative.

The Center on Halsted computer lab will be open all that day for people to use for working on and printing their resumes.

Booths at the job fair are $95 for businesses, $75 for nonprofits. Deadline is Sept. 1. Email Tracy Baim for details: editor@windycitymediagroup.com, or call 773-871-7610. Businesses can register online at www.werqchicagojobfair.com and individuals wishing to attend can also RSVP on that website.

Also see Facebook.com/LGBTQJobFair.

Disability Pride
July 22 in the Loop

The 14th Annual Chicago Disability Pride Parade will take place Saturday, July 22, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., starting at 401 S. Plymouth Ct.

Post-Parade festivities will take place at Daley Plaza at 12 p.m.

There is no registration fee to participate in the parade, although a donation is suggested. The grand marshals are Karen Tamely, Kevin Irvine and their daughter, Dominika, who have all been to the parade since it began in 2004.

See “The 14th Annual Chicago Disability Pride Parade” on Facebook or visit DisabilityPrideParade.org.

LGBT aging summit report July 12, 17

Pride Action Tank will host a community report on Wed., July 12, 5-7 p.m., at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.; and Monday, July 17, 5-7 p.m., at Affinity Community Services, 2850 S. Wabash Ave.

The organization will report on findings from the recent OUTAging summit and field a discussion about the next steps.

RSVP at PrideActionTank@AIDSChicago.org or 312-922-2322, ext. 723.

Congressman Brad Schneider.
Official head shot

Schneider unveils HRC endorsement

Congressman Brad Schneider (D-Illinois) recently announced the endorsement of the Human Rights Campaign in his re-election campaign for Congress.

“The Human Rights Campaign proudly stands with Congressman Brad Schneider,” said Rob Nezhart, an Illinois resident and member of HRC’s national board, in a statement.

Schneider is an original co-sponsor of the Equality Act—federal legislation that would guarantee permanent protections for LGBTQ people in employment, access to public spaces, housing, credit, education, jury service and federally funded programs, under our nation’s existing civil rights laws. In March, CSchneider joined Congressman Scott Taylor (R-Virginia) to introduce the bipartisan Fair and Equal Housing Act.

WARNING: This product can cause mouth cancer.
Will the Court let business refuse the LGBTQ community?

VIEWPOINT BY REV. IRENE MONROE

Recently, the U. S. Supreme Court announced that in the fall it will hear the case Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission. The case—which will have many of us LGBTQ Americans on pins and needles—will argue the parameters of one’s right to practice their religion and their right to express themselves freely that’s enshrined in the First Amendment.

In 2012, gay couple David Mullins and Charlie Craig wanted to order a cake for their upcoming wedding reception. With plans to marry in Massachusetts, because same-sex marriage wasn’t legalized in Colorado until 2014, the couple decided to celebrate their nuptials back home. Jack Phillips, owner to Masterpiece Cakeshop informed the couple that because religious views he doesn’t provide cakes for same-sex weddings.

“We do a variety of cakes. We do birthday cakes and shower cakes. ... We don’t do Halloween cakes and adult-themed cakes,” Phillips stated on New York Times YouTube.

Many conservatives in Phillips’s camp argue that his position is not a repudiation on same-sex marriage but rather it’s a principled stance to fight for free expression unfettered by the tyranny of political correctness.

“We at Cato have long supported both religious liberty and gay rights, insofar as the agenda of each is consistent with the liberty of unlimited constitutional government,” Roger Pilon, founding director of the Cato Center for Constitutional Studies, said. “But we draw the line when same-sex couples turn around and use government to force venues against their religious beliefs to participate in same-sex ceremonies, as happens too often today.”

Oddly, however, when the argument is framed as Pilon states there’s no room to ensure that LGTBQs will not be discriminated against because of who we are and who we love. And I’m not certain that this government has our back.

As a matter of fact, since Trump has taken office I’ve worried about the erosion of LGBTQ rights. In February, his administration revoked federal guidelines permitting transgender students from using facilities that aligned with their gender identity. This June Trump paid tribute to the 49 LGBTQ victims of last year’s Pulse Nightclub massacre, but failed to issue a proclamation for Pride Month. I am immensely thankful as a married lesbian that I reside in Massachusetts, especially if Trump tries to overturn Obergfell v. Hodges, the historic U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage throughout the country. With Trump having potentially three Supreme Court seats to fill with Antonin Scalia-like justices, I can exhale knowing that Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court legalized same-sex marriage in the 2004 Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health landmark case, and it’s sticking.

However, that may not be the case for many LGBTQ married couples outside of Massachusetts. For example, “in a Trumped-up Supreme Court there is talk among Christian evangelicals of walking [Obergefell] back without disrupting other precedent on marriage,” Rebecca Buckwalter-Pozza wrote in the article “The End of Gay Rights” in the June issue of Pacific Standard Magazine.

She added, “The Supreme Court can significantly undermine LGBT rights even without reversing a single case. Right now, the federal prohibition against sex discrimination doesn’t bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity; the Equal Protection Clause affords no specific protections for LGBT people, as it does for members of groups defined by race or nationality. The Court can strip the rights to intimacy and marriage of their meaning, carving away gradually and masking the magnitude of changes by phrasing them in arcane legal terms.”

A movement for some time now has been afoot in state legislatures across the country to disenfranchise LGBTQ Americans. These bills are called “Religious Freedom Restoration Acts” (RFRA), and are a backlash to the growing acceptance of same-sex marriage and the growing fear of when the Supreme Court legalize it nationwide. Lawmakers used them to codify LGBTQ discrimination to justify denying us services.

For example, in 2013 a family-owned bakery in Gresham, Oregon, called Sweet Cakes by Melissa wanted to exercise religious freedom.” However, instead of servicing an LGBTQ clientele Sweet Cakes closed the family shop and moved the business to their home making it clear LGBTQ dollars are not wanted.

Colorado law prohibits public accommodations, like Masterpiece Cakeshop, from refusing service based on race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or gender identity.

“No one should ever have to walk into a store and wonder if they will be turned away just because of who they are,” Mullins told ACLU Colorado.

With Justice Neil Gorsuch newly appointed to the Supreme Court and recent rumors of Justice Anthony Kennedy retiring and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg failing to retire during the Obama administration the ideological balance of the Court is at stake in this uber-conservative Trump administration.

Let’s hope in the fall the Supreme Court does the right thing and not codify LGBTQ discrimination, because democracy can only begin when those at the margin can experience what others take for granted.

Jesse Alexander and Owen Daniel-McCarter.
Photo by Mary Cay Marubio

Judges honor head of safe-schools group

The LGBT group Alliance of Illinois Judges honored Owen Daniel-McCarter, executive director of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, with its Community Leadership Award on June 21.

Held at the Chicago Bar Association, the event also featured the Alliance installing its officers and board of directors.

Photo by Judge Mary Cay Marubio
Hundreds tackle 200-mile Ride For AIDS Chicago

BY ROSS FORMAN

Kelly Southard was in her fourth Ride For AIDS Chicago—the two-day, 200-mile bicycle ride July 8-9, organized and benefitting the Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN)—and it still personal, emotional for her.

Southard was riding in memory of her cousin, Scott, who lost his fight with HIV/AIDS in 1995. “Being an experienced rider, I had some idea of what to physically expect out of Ride weekend,” Southard said. “[There’s] the adrenaline of day one, the pain of riding when your body is tired on day two, how difficult some of those hills are, the adrenaline push of the last 10 miles to the finish line in Evanston, how emotional it is at the start, and the finish [with] the Riderless Bicycle,” representing those who have passed from HIV/AIDS.

Southard said the camaraderie, spirit, and cheerleading-like support this year “was amazing.”

“(Cycling) 200 miles over two days gives one a lot of time to reflect—on where my life is [at] in general, about what I want to change, and most importantly, it gives me time to reflect on [my] cousin, [such as] the fun memories growing up to the heartbreaking ones at the end of his life.

“I curse the hills I have to climb, but I am motivated because what I do is a small part of finding a cure, a small part of ensuring that my friends who live with HIV/AIDS don’t have to go through what he did. I am grateful that the people the Ride has brought into my life, the friendships I have made, my Ride Buddy Lauren, that my friends and family are generous with the money they donate, but most importantly that I am physically able to ride and represent those who can’t.”

Patrick Lannon was in his eighth Ride and his first on the executive committee board. “After every Ride, I think it can’t get any better or more fulfilling, and yet it does. I learned this year all the hard work, energy and heart it takes to make this event successful.”

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Thank you Susan, and best wishes to you and Joan on your move and travels!

Sincerely,
Tracy Baim, Publisher
Terri Klinsky, Assistant Publisher
and our entire Windy City Media Group team

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CHICAGO BLACK PRIDE WEEKEND

Individuals, groups honored at 10th Esteem Awards

BY EMAGIN TANASCHUK

The 10th Esteem Awards honored seven individuals for their contributions to the African-American and LGBTQ communities July 1 at Sidetrack in Boystown.

The Esteem Awards is part of Chicago’s Black Gay Pride weekend and reminds the community of how much support the Black LGTB community in Chicago generates support for those in need.

The honorees included individuals and organizations that have demonstrated notable efforts concerning civil rights, social services, business, media, art and entertainment.

In the awards, there was a live performance by Michelle E. Brown, who performed two original spoken-word poems, as well as the band Acres to Miles, which performed several original songs.

Phillip Esteem, the main organizer of the event, funded the event; he said that working toward this event each year and making sure that admission is free “is a labor of love.” He said that it is vital that people be recognized for the work they do so that those honorees may inspire others and also be motivated to continue making strides forward.

CHICAGO BLACK PRIDE WEEKEND

Caucus celebrates Black Pride with day party, festival

BY VERNON HESTER

On July 1, The Chicago Black Gay Men’s Caucus—in partnership with Rails Marketing Group and FZ Entertainment—celebrated Black Pride with the 13th Annual Love Fest, which featured live celebrity performances, a brunch, DJs, a health and wellness fair, stand-up comedy and drag performances. The event, held at The Promontory, ran from the afternoon through the evening.

Among the artists performing this year were vocalist Seven Streeter; Ms. Ruff N Stuff; comedian Terry D’Mor; vocalist LaRon J.; female impersonators Saffire Blue, Amelia Black and Iyanna Frantz; and DJ Sedrick and DJ Superman. Beloved personality/entrepreneur Otis Mack made a return to the festival after a long hiatus and emceed throughout the day.

Chicago Black Gay Men’s Caucus Executive Director Erik Glenn expressed appreciation and surprise with this year’s event, saying, “We are so excited by how much the festival has grown. We have people from the North, South and West sides of Chicago all together, and the turnout is phenomenal. We are really amazed with the response; we even got a couple of dozen volunteers and, this year, so many people wanted to come and support.”

The festival, which annually takes place at the end of Black Gay Pride, has always included a health village, and this year was no exception. Howard Brown Health and the Chicago Department of Public Health were on site offering free HIV, STI and blood-pressure testing as well as offering a wealth of information on PrEP, safe sex and long-term wellness options.

The entertainment got off to a ribald start with Mack cracking jokes about his 165-pound loss, and D’Mor playfully ribbing him and defending her girth. Local vocalist LaRon J. performed next setting a tone of danceable soul and opening the show for the arrival of Ms. Ruff N Stuff and her squad of performers. DJs Sedrick and Superman then ignited a dance floor free-for-all that featured house, rap and old-school disco. Streeter closed the show with a short set that featured many of her hits (“I Like It,” “Next,” “It Won’t Stop”) as well as an onstage dance-off with members of the audience.

Evanston city attorney receives LGBT award

BY MATT SIMONETTE

According to Evanston Assistant Corporation Counsel Mario Treto, much of his work—both in his professional life and his volunteer activities—is about providing a voice for the voiceless.

“I like to be in a position to advocate for individuals who might be unable to otherwise advocate for themselves—just having a seat at the table to discuss issues that are important,” Treto said.

Treto was this year named to the National LGBT Bar Association’s annual list of the Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40. That list honors 40 outstanding LGBT legal professionals “under the age of 40 who have distinguished themselves in their field and demonstrated a commitment to LGBT equality,” according to a release from the organization.

Other Chicago-area honorees include Tony Neuhoff, a vice president of legal and compliance at GCM Grosvenor; Russell King, a partner at Kirk-land & Ellis LLP; and Louis Klapp, a senior associate at Quarles & Brady LLP. The awards will be presented during the Lavender Law Conference & Career Fair in San Francisco on Thursday, Aug. 3.

“T’m pretty excited, and pretty humbled, to be part of a group with 39 other individuals across the country who are moving forward and helping with LGBT causes, in a variety of capacities,” Treto, who is a Chicago native and who currently lives in Lake View, said.

As assistant corporate counsel for Evanston, he is lead counsel on a number of the suburb’s boards and commissions, and is especially involved with Evanston’s Planning Commission, among other planning-and development-related entities. He also acts as attorney for the mayor and city council in various matters.

One of Treto’s first tasks when he went to work for the City of Evanston was update its Human Rights Ordinance to cover its transgender residents. “That was done by adding gender identity protections in the Chicago area—and that there are few suburban gay bars, creating an opening for this new spot.”

The article is at ForestParkReview.com/News/Articles/7-3-2017/'Hard-Wood'-is-Forest-Park's-newest-gay-bar/.

Gutierrez responds to pol’s anti-LGBT slur

U.S. Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-Illinois) has responded to Thomas Rivera Schatz, the Puerto Rican Senate President and a leader of the Statehood Party who, during a radio interview, used the masculine pronoun “señor” repeatedly to describe Ana Matosantos.

Matosantos is the only female member of Puerto Rico’s Financial Oversight and Management Board (known locally as the Junta de Supervisión Fiscal or simply the Junta), and is a lesbian. Previously, she was the first Latina and openly gay person to direct the California Department of Finance.

“This crossed a line,” Gutierrez said, according to a press release issued from his office. “This wasn’t an accident or a slip of the tongue. This fits the pattern of how statehooders relate to the LGBT community—namely, with hostility and homophobia.” Gutierrez recently spoke on the U.S. House floor to warn his fellow Democrats that so-called statehooders in Puerto Rico are not political allies. (See http://bit.ly/2sUVb19.)

Schatz did not respond to an inquiry from Windy City Times by the press deadline.

—Andrew Davis

Northwestern offers gender-neutral, multi-stall restroom

The Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing (ISGMH) recently announced that Northwestern University has become the first major university in Chicago to offer a gender-neutral, multi-stall restroom.

Safe access to restrooms for transgender and gender nonconforming people has been debated across the country.

Northwestern University joins more than 150 other universities and colleges in offering a safe space for individuals to use the restroom. Other universities have offered single-stall, gender-neutral restrooms.

‘TRUE LOVE’ block party July 21

Howard Brown Health Clark, 6500 N. Clark St., will host a “TRUE LOVE” block party on Friday, July 21, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

This community gathering will reveal the TRUE LOVE interactive sculpture at the Clark Street clinic in Rogers Park. Conceived by artist Bob Faust, TRUE LOVE is proclaimed as Howard Brown Health’s “message for Pride month and beyond.”

See HowardBrown.org.

New gay bar to open in Forest Park

A new gay bar named Hard Wood is slated to open in the Chicago suburb of Forest Park later this month, according to the Forest Park Review.

Hard Wood will be at 7414 W. Madison St., replacing Chalk Craft Beer House Bar. Chalk owner Matt Mathey and David Lipka, who runs bars in nearby cities, are collaborating on the rebranding. (Mathey will be the owner, with Lipka the general manager.)
Saying goodbye

Dear editor:

Chuck Renslow, rest in peace.

One thing I am certain about Chuck was his love for this very diversified community. Was he perfect? No, he was not perfect, but he was a good person. Like Harvey Milk, Renee Hanover and Marie Kuda, he committed his life to the welfare of his community and understood that change was hard work. He walked the talk.

Chuck was not about self-aggrandizement; his gaze was not on black-tie events and publically beating his chest about his accomplishments, which spoke for themselves with a quite dignity.

My brother, rest in peace. Your leadership will be missed and will leave a vacuum in our community.

To Chuck’s family and friends: He accomplished much, helped many people and gave voice to those who had no voice in our community. This is what it means to love your neighbor. Please know you are in my thoughts and prayers. God bless.

Joe Murray
Executive Director
Rainbow Sash Movement (LGBTQ Roman Catholics)

Trump twist

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) is facing controversy after welcoming three Trump hotels as members. Below first is a letter from IGLTA responding to the controversy, followed by a member’s response.

Dear Mark [Goldstein],

Thank you for your patience with your inquiry about the memberships with the Trump Hotels.

IGLTA is a member-based travel association promoting LGBT friendly travel options. IGLTA also aims to support and educate businesses that want to better respond to the needs of LGBT travelers.

The Trump-branded properties that are current members of IGLTA are independently owned hotels and not owned by Mr. Trump.

Information from the three Trump hotel members of IGLTA:
—Of the three properties that are IGLTA members, two have been with the organization since 2012.
—Trump SoHo is owned by a California-based real estate investment company.
—Trump International Hotel & Tower New York and Chicago are condo hotels where each unit is individually owned.

—These properties have hosted numerous same sex weddings in its banquet and event space.
Their catering sales associates have also completed the Gay Wedding Institute Certification Course to better serve the LGBT wedding market.

Tony Warner,
Controller, IGLTA

Response:

Thanks, Tony. I appreciate your attention and getting back to me with this information.

As you can imagine, this explanation that you have offered is not going to go far to placate people’s feelings about sharing membership with destinations flying the Trump name.

We personally will no longer participate in the IGLTA as long as any business that uses the Trump name is a member.

I wholeheartedly ask that you remove them as members, even with the explanation that they have hosted gay weddings... truly is a very weak explanation as to why they are an accepted member of a strong Gay and Lesbian organization.

I have to say that I am beyond surprised that I will need to put energy into fighting this when there are so many other battles that we are fighting against the stigma on our society that is the Trump administration.

I think it is horrible that the explanation given is all that IGLTA is offering, and I can only hope that when this becomes a far more exposed story that you and the board will do better than this.

I’m keeping this professional because that is how I approached you and that is how I want to leave this, but know that I am raging and angry and will be doing more to let other members and the media know about this.

The board knows that Trump’s money has ties to these hotels, how could it not?
Even if there is just one drop of his blood mixed in with this, it is one drop too many.

He is disgusting and sure will be on the wrong side of history as to anything decent or moral and so shame on the IGLTA for fostering anything what so ever to do with him.

Mark Goldstein,
Owner, Prana Rainforest Retreat,
Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica, www.pranarainforestretreat.com

Send columns or letters to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com.
Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.

A message re Dyke March

Esteemed Editors Davis and Simonette:

I write to you in response to G. R. Hammond’s article in the June 28 issue regarding the banning of Jewish flags at the Chicago Dyke March.

First and foremost, I took a few days to vent my ire and to collect my thoughts regarding such article.

I consider myself multicultural. I am an American, born in New York. My parents were born in Puerto Rico. My faith is Judaism. My orientation is gay. I am 49 years old, and am a lead security officer and my two directors have been Skokie Police Department leaders.

Why this introduction? Because I am so tired of being the victim, individually or collectively, for being who I am. You see, people treat me well or antagonistically, based on their prejudices and as they see whatever part of me they focus on.

Whether in my personal or professional life, I have had to struggle with bullying in all forms, from young and old alike, from the ignorant to the elite. I have lived and struggled with depression and anxiety, persistent mood disorders which are exacerbated by such harassments.

Regarding my orientation, I am a late bloomer, and the road from knowing to acceptance has been painful and complex, to say the least. I remain in a mixed-orientation marriage as I continue to sort out the puzzle of life.

Therefore, it greatly troubles me that Jewish flags in a gay parade were publicly and disgracefully banned.

It is sickening to be subjected to such acts of discrimination in 2017! Everybody has differing opinions of every sort, but what unites us all is the long, very long worldwide struggle to live free as part of the LGBT community, regardless of additional adjectives.

I do not care for after-the-fact explanations of what was meant by anti-Zionist, Jewish or -Israel sentiments. Discrimination is all-encompassing and self explanatory.

To the Dyke March Chicago/Collective entity I say unequivocally and in no uncertain terms, you are pure trash, well beyond what anti gay forces are; you should know how it feels to be smashed by others. We are under constant political attacks nationwide, and banning Jews is what you choose to accentuate!

I stand in solidarity with the three banned Jewish Dyke March participants!

I am an American, Puerto Rican, Jewish and gay man; you cannot put me in the hellish closet I came out of at all.

Shame on you!

Brian Shockman
were some things I wanted to do and some stuff I wanted to see, and to spend more time with my husband, Ted [Hoerl].

Scott was quick to emphasize that he isn’t retiring entirely. He has many directing projects this season lined up for other theaters including John Patrick Shanley’s comedy Outside Mullingar for Buffalo Theatre Ensemble in Glen Ellyn and Tennessee Williams’ drama Summer and Smoke as part of his teaching duties for Roosevelt University. Also in the cards is Scott’s revival of the Kennedy matriarch solo show Rose. It will not only play Chicago’s Greenhouse Theater Center, but also in Palm Beach, Florida.

“Just down the street from Mar-a-Lago,” said Scott with a laugh, referring to the much-in-the-news Trump-branded resort. “So that should be interesting.”

Scott will also continue his association with the Chicago storefront companies Redtwist Theatre and as part of the ensemble of Eclipse Theatre Company.

“I’ll be around a lot,” Scott said. “But the nice thing is that I won’t have to go rehearsals at Eclipse at night after working a 10-hour day (at the Goodman).”

Scott’s day-to-day duties at the Goodman was often to represent the theater in place of Falls for a variety of administrative duties—be it on community discussion panels or meeting with donors. “For somebody who has a short attention span, it’s almost the perfect job because no two days are the same,” Scott said. “I never know in the morning when I come in what I’ll need to do in whatever capacity. It’s been really fascinating.”

During his time as the Goodman’s producer, Scott has overseen more than 200 productions as well as directed dramas and comedies himself ranging from Margaret Edson’s Wit to Christopher Durang’s Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike.

“I’ve been very proud of the way that the Goodman has grown in the last three-and-a-half decades since I’ve been here,” Scott said. “It’s been a real trip to be a part of that growth and to see all of those changes that have come not only at the Goodman, but also in the Chicago theater community in that time.”

Scott is also glad to have contributed to the Goodman’s Artistic Collective with his perspective as an openly gay man. The Artistic Collective was spearheaded by Falls and the late Michael Maggio to install diverse artists into leadership and planning roles for the theater.

“If we’re going to be a major arts institution in a city that is so diverse itself, we need to make ourselves available to as many different points of view as we possibly can,” said Scott, referring to fellow Artistic Collective members like Chuck Smith, Mary Zimmerman, Regina Taylor, Henry Godinez and others. “It’s also quite frankly good business, because the more points of view that are represented on our stages, the more people want to come in and see those different points of view and see themselves represented.”

Scott’s administrative farewell to the Goodman coincides with a revival he directed of Eugene O’Neill’s classic 1933 Broadway comedy Ah, Wilderness! Goodman Theatre artistic director Robert Falls was originally announced to stage the production, but Scott took over directing duties at Falls’ request.

Scott said the switch was in part to Falls wanting to rethink the direction of the Goodman in light of the 2016 presidential election. Then there was the opportunity for Falls to direct the world premiere of Jim McGrath’s Ernest Hemingway-inspired play Pamplona in the Goodman’s Owen Theater space. Unfortunately, the run of Pamplona was cancelled after star Stacey Keach suffered a minor heart attack on opening night.

Scott’s production of Ah, Wilderness! prominently features colorblind casting. Scott also wanted to stage the play in this political climate as “a kind of healing thing and the idea of family being so important.” Scott also was struck in previews by the final speech by the character of Nat Miller about the seasons, and how it related to his own life.

“I’m kind of in the fall entering the winter, I guess in some ways in terms of my own relationship. I’ve been with my husband for about two months less than I’ve been at the Goodman Theatre,” Scott said. “And still celebrating how rich the world still is when you’re older and have a perspective on what happened—you win some things, you lose some things—and now it gives me a chance to learn even more what that’s about. It turned out to be a great metaphor for leaving my post and experiencing my own ‘wilderness’ in the wintertime, which is feel is very exciting.”

Ah, Wilderness! continues through Sunday, July 23, at the Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St. Performances are 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays, 2 and 7:30 p.m. Thursdays (no matinee July 20), 8 p.m. Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are $20-$75; call 312-443-3800 or visit GoodmanTheatre.org.
THEATER REVIEW

The Nance
Playwright: Douglas Carter Beane
At: Pride Films and Plays at the Pride Arts Broadway, 4139 N. Broadway
Tickets: $30-$40
Runs through: July 30

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The effeminate—or merely unmanly—male has been a stock character in comedy since antiquity, his risible appeal arising from the reversal of expectations at the foundation of popular humor to this day. In Western literature, the overtly gay element gradually became de-emphasized, with Aristophanes’ Cleisthenes and Plautus’ Ballio giving way to the less sexually disambiguous Casper Milquetoast. Playwright Douglas Carter Beane pays homage to the last of this venerable archetype, the “nance” of burlesque—vaudeville’s coarser counterpart—and his ribald celebration of same-sex eroticism from the safety of double entendre repartee.

Beane’s microcosmic setting is New York City in the winter and spring of 1937, where nance-act Chauncey Miles stars at Greenwich Village’s Irving Place Theatre, sharing the stage with Efram, Ned, Sylvie, Joan and Carmen—respectively, Top Banana, Second Banana, Red Hot Mama, Blonde Bombshell and Spitfire Exotic.

Chauncey has a secret, however: His puffy persona is not just a “masquerade,” like drag—no, he really is what he pretends to be for a living. In an election year, when Mayor LaGuardia has vowed to stamp out “public indecency” and entertainment promoting it (what goes on in the balcony when Chauncey speaks of “falling on a cactus and feeling a little prick?”), this could mean arrest, imprisonment and an end to his career.

Chauncey himself is something of a stock character in gay history, too, his downfall recalling that of Oscar Wilde—both talented individuals, so sure of their protected status that they ignore the signs warning them of imminent retribution. We first meet Chauncey in a local eatery, where he instructs a down-on-his-luck country boy in methods of arranging assignations under the very eyes of police informers. We learn that his political views, unlike those of his leftist colleagues, lean toward support of the status quo he never suspects will someday turn on him. Finally, we watch him reject an offer of a stable relationship to instead pursue the reckless behavior that will prove his undoing.

Burlesque has largely gone the way of minstrel shows, its amusing properties nowadays viewed as a quaint reflection of a more parochial age. As stated by Pride Films and Plays with museum-like accuracy period authenticity (fan dances, balloon dances, “Sister Kate’s Shiny” and the famous “Niagara Falls” sketch) by John Nasca and a hardworking ensemble led by Vince Kracht’s bravura performance in the title role, though, this forgotten art form cannot help but awaken nostalgia even in the most enlightened playgoer.

Patrick Rybarcyzyk in The Nance. Photo by Paul Goyette

THEATER REVIEW

The School for Lies
Playwright: Adapted by David Ives from a play by Molière
At: The Artistic Home, 1376 W. Grand Ave.
Tickets: $28-$32
Runs through: Aug. 13

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

You have to admire David Ives’ commercial savvy: After making his fortune in 1993 with a collection of short, funny, low-budget, actor-friendly sketches suitable for classroom or cabaret, his “translaptations” of obscure pre-19th-century French playwrights have, since 2006, attracted hitherto-undetected legions of theatergoers enamored of actors dressed in big skirts and big wigs making dick jokes and saying “fart” in rhymed couplets.

There’s nothing fundamentally wrong with this brand of humor—situation comedy, after all, is based in ordinary people doing ridiculous things (just as “fish-out-of-water” comedy is founded upon ridiculous people doing ordinary things). Ives’ plot revolves around the frivolous socialite Celimene and her circle of fashionable acquaintances. These include newcomer Frank—whose sartorial taste runs to leather-coated gangster drag, in contrast to the foppish garb in vogue for gentlemen of his class—and whose sole pastime is ranting against the shallowness of his hostess’s companions. Nowadays, such overprotective tactics would be grounds for a restraining order, but the young widow welcomes his vituperation, if only for relief from the fawning attentions of fortune-hunting suitors.

Satire is not synonymous with farce, however, and the aim of Molière’s mockery is always rejection of extreme convictions in preference of a moral code stressing tolerance of human foibles, but Ives’ irreverent parody apparently proves the irresistible to its youthful interpreters that the onstage action on opening night resembled a circus more than a symposium, its gaudily wardrobed and garishly painted personnel proclaiming their affectations so exuberantly as to eclipse the exposition informing the motives for their eccentric sallies, often reducing the characters to empty costumes kaleidoscoping in a vacuum.

It’s not often that actors under Kathy Scambia’s direction are permitted to stray from the text-focused approach to performance that is the Artistic Home’s hallmark, but no one can deny the perspiration worked up by the enthusiastic ensemble, however nebulous its inspiration. If you are inclined to giggle at a ribbon-bedecked slack rear named Clitander (played with heroic concentration by Ted James) repeatedly addressed by his Artistic Home’s hallmark, but no one can deny the accuracy period authenticity (fan dances, balloon dances, “Sister Kate’s Shiny” and the famous “Niagara Falls” sketch) by John Nasca and a hardworking ensemble led by Vince Kracht’s bravura performance in the title role, though, this forgotten art form cannot help but awaken nostalgia even in the most enlightened playgoer.

THEATER REVIEW

Alone, with Friends
Playwright: Lee Peters
At: Prop Thtr, 3502 N. Elston Ave.
Tickets: 773-742-5420; proprotheater@gmail.com; $20
Runs through: July 15

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

No matter where you are in the spectrum of sexual orientation, your first breakup almost always is difficult and painful, especially if initiated by your partner. It’s also commonplace and unexceptional—which is the big problem with Alone, with Friends. Steve, the 30-year-old gay Black man at the play’s center, is perfectly likeable (especially as played with a dazzling smile by handsome, husky Jonathan Rivera) and perfectly ordinary as the audience sees him, and so are his friends. Steve is exceptional only in his apparent isolation from his own communities, having few Black or gay friends. His ex-boyfriend was white and his three seemingly best buds are not only white but straight. You never understand why because author Lee Peters provides relatively little information about how Steve came to be who he is. Writing this play may have been cathartic for Peters—the play seems autobiographical—but it isn’t for the audience.

Part of the reason, and another problem, is that Steve is a reactive character. Plays are stronger when the hero makes active choices and decisions that drive the story, which Steve doesn’t do. In a repeated structure of two-character scenes, he asks his acquaintances “Why are we friends?” The answers are not profound: we went to school together, we were frat brothers, we work together, we smoke pot together (a lot of pot), we have fun together, etc. All the responses imply that Steve and his acquaintances demand very little of each other. The one insight Steve achieves is the understanding that these things are not the basis for meaningful friendships.

Steve also seems aimless, perhaps because the emotional stuffing has been knocked out of him by the break-up, but that isn’t well-delineated. His true friend, Black and straight Tonya (sympathetic Nichole Green, with a classy hairdo), asks “You’re all of 30 years old, how can you not know what your goals are?” She tells Steve to define what he seeks in a lover/partner, but all he does is replay his superficial attraction to straight (or straight-acting) white guys. There just isn’t much of a story unless Steve takes and completes a significant journey, or at least reveals some special personal quality beyond likeability.

Peters delineates his characters quickly and effectively, but only gay drag artist Philip (Christopher Sylvie in a lively, campy turn) has enough personality to be interesting, although the other actors are perfectly capable in roles of limited dimension. Peters also turns out some great performances from the husband-wife team of John Reeger and Paula Scrofano-Reeger, who are both very convincing as two lonely seniors who form a testy friendship over cards. SCM

Parade, Writers Theatre through July 15. It’s the last week for this outstanding musical telling of the factual story of Leo Frank, a Jew lynched in Georgia in 1915. Jason Robert Brown’s richly varied score—inspired by traditional music—is passionately rendered with unexpected entertaining flourishes despite the grim subject matter. JA

The Gin Game, Drury Lane Theatre, Oakbrook Terrace, through Aug. 13. D.L. Coburn’s sturdy and Pulitzer Prize-winning two-hander features great performances from the husband-wife team of John Reeger and Paula Scrofano-Reeger, who are both very convincing as two lonely seniors who form a testy friendship over cards. SCM

Going To a Place Where You Already Are, Redtwist Theatre, through July 23. Even atheists can have a crisis of faith when Heaven—or something claiming to be—beckons, but Bekah Brunstetter makes no judgments regarding an individual’s speculations on the hereafter. MSB

Her Majesty’s Will, Lifeline Theatre, through July 16. Rob Kauzlaric’s brisk adaptation, an agile-footed ensemble and swashbuckling stuntwork keep the action in David Blixt’s brainy plot heavy Elizabethan romp hurrying at looney-tunes velocity. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan
THEATER REVIEW

The Bridges of Madison County
Music & Lyrics: Jason Robert Brown
Written by: Marsha Norman
Directed by: Nick Bowling
At: Marriott Lincolnshire, 10 Marriott Dr., Lincolnshire
Tickets: Marriotttheatre.com: $50-60
Runs through: Aug. 13

BY ERIC KARAS

The Marriott Lincolnshire is presenting the regional premiere of The Bridges of Madison County. This is the musical version of Robert James Waller’s best-selling romance novel that was later made into a movie starring Meryl Streep.

The theater has been transformed into a huge bridge with projections that give you a real sense of the farmland of the location (the beauty of farm life, along with the isolation). It literally surrounds the audience members, putting them in the mindset of farm wife Francesca. Kudos go to set designer Jeffrey D. Kmiec and projection designer Anthony Churchill.

The familiar plot is about an Italian-American farm wife and mother (Kathy Voytko) whose family is out of town at a county fair. She meets a National Geographic photographer (Nathaniel Stampley) who is taking pictures of the bridges. They share meals and experiences, and they fall in love. Will she leave her life to escape with this stranger who offers her adventure or do what is expected of her?

Voytko, as Francesca, is really incredible. She brings the correct amount of emotion and pathos, but also so much humor. It is unexpected how funny this show is. This musical is really hers in all ways. Stampley, as photographer Robert, has such a wonderful singing voice you can totally understand why she would fall for him so quickly. They are well-matched and believable.

The supporting cast really fills out this story. Bart Shatto—as Bud, her husband—reflects the frustration of a busy farm life with little time for vacation or romance. Neighbors Marge (Wydetta Carter) and Charlie (Terry Hamilton) provide a lot of comic relief and steal every moment they have. Carter brings down the house with her musical number. Emily Berman was also a standout as the ex-wife of Robert in a really beautiful moment. The rest of the cast sports fine vocals as they fill in the residents of Iowa, being more ethereal than Greek chorus. In addition, Allyson Graves and Nick Cosgrove do some magical dancing as a young Francesca and her youthful beau.

As a musical, the score is beautiful and emotional, with a pop-country feel. Unfortunately, after the main action and character choices are made, the show continues with an unnecessary epilogue. I wish book writer Marsha Norman had showed some restraint.

Overall, it’s a funny, poignant, beautiful show that exceeds expectations.

Kathy Voytko and Nathaniel Stampley in The Bridges of Madison County.
Photo by Liz Lauren

The uproarious, subversive black comedy by renowned performance artist

Taylor Mac
Directed by Hallie Gordon

Tickets Through July 16
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How to be a Rock Critic (Based on the Writings of Lester Bangs) is a solo play examining the influential and controversial title journalist who was famed for peeling away the veneer behind great music stars. Each evening performance is followed by a music tribute act, while matinees feature a talkback with music critic/biographer Jim DeRogatis. How to be a Rock Critic (Based on the Writings of Lester Bangs) continues through Saturday, July 22, at Steppenwolf Theatre’s 1700 Theatre, 1700 N. Halsted St. Performance times are 8 p.m.
Gays behind the American Bandstand

BY SARI STAVER

When The New York Post published a story that a new coffeetable book, Bandstand Diaries, revealed stories about the secret gay lives of some of the dancers, sales of the book went through the roof. Beginning at 6 a.m. on Sunday morning, March 12, when the Post story by tell-all journalist Jerry Oppenheimer was published, “We could barely keep up with the flood of orders,” said publisher Sharon Sultan Cutler, co-author of the 175-page book that includes more than 700 pictures from American Bandstand as well as interviews with many of the regulars.

“Who knew that the LGBT angle would be so powerful?” asked Cutler rhetorically in a telephone interview. Cutler, an ally, co-wrote the book with two LGBT Bandstand dancers, Arlene Sullivan and Ray Smith. While Sullivan, one of the most popular dancers on the show, and Smith, a longtime NBC-TV Today Show producer, had included information about their sexual orientation in the book, “We never intended to publicize it,” said Cutler. But when the Post put the news in a headline, “We had the largest day in book sales.”

The cover of Bandstand Diaries proclaims it’s “the book you’ve waited over 50 years to read.” For me, the hype was true. Like many adolescents growing up in the 1950s, I ran home from middle school every afternoon to tune into the ABC show hosted by Dick Clark, featuring rock-and-roll stars as well as the “regulars,” dancers who became famous and were featured on teen magazine covers. I went overboard as a fan, writing to many dancers and launching a national fan-club for regular Barbara Levick, who was the best friend of co-author Sullivan.

So I adore the book, as I believe others would if they grew up watching the program. For LGBT people, reading about the show from the perspective of two LGBT dancers makes it even more fun.

A chat with LGBT co-authors Sullivan and Smith offers some clues about why the program, which also launched the career of media mogul Dick Clark, was such a longstanding success.

“I never thought of myself as any sort of celebrity,” said Sullivan, 75, modest and soft-spoken.

Sullivan, who spent most of her adult life as a blackjack dealer in Atlantic City, has been an “out lesbian” since her late teens. “We were just ordinary middle-class kids in Philly,” she said in a telephone interview. “Kids watching might’ve identified with us. I was totally shy and wasn’t even a good dancer” when she first went on the show.

Sullivan, who received hundreds of fan letters every week and had fan-clubs formed in her honor, said the attention didn’t phase her.

“I was really just an ordinary kid,” she said. She dated boys on the program, including her longtime dance partner Kenny Rossi (“still to this day a very close friend”) and Joe Wissert, who also turned out to be gay, and went on to become a successful Hollywood producer. But she “always knew I was a bit different,” although she didn’t act on any of her lesbian fantasies until she was 17 and had graduated from high school.

Smith, the third co-author, was an occasional dancer on the show, always in awe of the “regulars,” he said in a phone interview. He went on to have a longtime career as a producer on NBC-TV’s Today show.

In 1952, Bandstand went on the air locally in Philadelphia, backed by an advertising push. More than 1,000 kids lined up to get into the show. By 1956, with its audience growing, the producers hired good-looking Dick Clark to take over the show, renamed it American Bandstand and sold it to the network. The two-hour, five-day-a-week show got strong viewer ratings, and the brand took off.

Through the power of television, average teenagers from Philadelphia became “teen idols,” said Smith, as recognizable as movie stars and with more fan mail than Hollywood celebrities.

The program had a seven-year run until 1964, when Clark moved the program to Los Angeles, where it aired until 1989. In 2004, Clark announced plans to revive the show in time for the 2005 season, but this did not occur, due at least in part to Clark suffering a severe stroke.

Sullivan and Smith look back fondly on their years on Bandstand, and took the opportunity to revive their memories when publisher Cutler approached them about writing the book. Cutler put the book together because she was convinced there were “many untold stories” people her age would want to read. The book, updated for its third printing in time for the show’s 60th anniversary celebration, continues to sell briskly, with a bump in sales every time it’s featured online or in print. Asked whether she’d consider including a new LGBT section, Cutler said, “Yes, absolutely. What a great idea.”

This review originally ran in the Bay Area Reporter.

Fans can order autographed copies of Bandstand Diaries at BandstandDiaries.com.

Some of the Regulars (dancers) watching a playback of the last show broadcast from Philadelphia.

Photo from the book Bandstand Diaries

Sharon Sultan Cutler, co-author of Bandstand Diaries.
Photo courtesy of Sultan Cutler

‘True Blood’ actor Ellis dies at 39

Nelsan Ellis, best known for playing gay cook Lafayette Reynolds on HBO’s True Blood, has died at age 39.

Ellis, who joined the cast of CBS’ Elementary this past season, was also in the Oscar Best Picture nominee The Help alongside Octavia Spencer, Viola Davis and Emma Stone.

He was born in Harvey, Illinois, and he and his family moved to Alabama before he moved to Chicago in his mid-teens. After being in the military, Ellis studied at Illinois State University before getting his bachelor’s degree at the New York City’s Juilliard School.

Many celebrities mourned Ellis’ passing on social media. Said True Blood creator Alan Ball: “Nelson was a singular talent whose creativity never ceased to amaze me. Working with him was a privilege.” Former True Blood co-star Joe Manganiello posted, “Crushed today by the loss of my friend and castmate Nelsan Ellis. He was a wonderful person, a pioneer, and a one of a kind artist. RIP.”

Ellis was also behind the local group The Collective Theatre, an African-American company. He discussed the company’s first play, HooDoo Love, with Windy City Times in 2012; see WindyCityMediaGroup.com/lgbt/Nelsan-Ellis-From-True-Blood-to-Hoodoo-Love-39569.html.

DJ/musician comes out as transgender

LCD Soundsystem synth player/technician Gavin Russom, 43, has come out as a transgender woman.

Talking with Pitchfork, Russom said, “Over the last year and a half, I went from my trans identity being something I was in touch with and worked through in one way or another, to suddenly this shift where it’s on the front burner. Now it’s time to become a whole person.”

Russom will DJ publicly for the first time as a trans woman at the Femme’s Room party on Thursday, July 13, at Chicago’s Berlin nightclub. The following night, LCD Soundsystem will be part of the Pitchfork Music Festival.


Nelsan Ellis.
PR photo

‘True Blood’ actor Ellis dies at 39

Photo from the book Bandstand Diaries
There’s a certain tone of absurdity that NewTown Writers Press often hits in its anthology; often droll, occasionally glib.

Volume 20 focuses on that queerest of spectacles—the theater. As such, a large percentage of the volume is plays; poetry, fiction and the others take a backseat here. This is unfortunate because the others are the most compelling pieces in this anthology.

Often it feels like the plays are trying a little too hard, relying on goofy stereotypes and dialogue or else redoing Shakespeare while simultaneously trying to make a larger point about marriage or LGBTQ teen suicide. These efforts belong somewhere, but almost should stand alone; otherwise, they’re taking up too much room on the stage.

An exception to all of the above—probably because it’s so mile-a-minute zany and punny that one can’t help but marvel at the mind that put it together—is Allison Fradkin’s play Girl, You Know Its True Colors. Five women who “vary in presentation,” as Fradkin’s stage directions say, and who go by names like Chick Van Dyke and Portia De Bossy, are getting together to have a beauty demonstration party for Very Gay Cosmetics.

Said party evolves into a very witty discussion of today’s lesbian issues, like representation, being lesbian enough and the dreaded bisexual menace. It’s ridiculous—on par with Holly Hughes’ “The Well of Horniness”—but it’s so ridiculous you just want to see it done. Fradkin’s always welcome to put her own work in any NewTown anthology, although this reviewer would read a whole book of hers with relish.

So what about the less theatrical pieces, then? Quieter works, like “Mermaids” (a short story by Jan Bowman about a girl discovering her sexuality while her parents’ marriage dissolves) and Lancelot’s Secret (where an intern for a traveling theater company in the South gets to observe both gay life and the incestuousness of acting) are the ones that permeate. And William Broderick’s “Man in a Dress” (one actor’s honest account of his terror at becoming frock-wearing Roger De Bris for a run of The Producers) is a nice insight into the craft ... and dress-wearing. How do women do it so well?

Overall, Volume 20 from NewTown is more light than impactful, and if it’s prose you’re after, you might be disappointed. But tastes differ, and it’s always worth checking out what NewTown has to offer.

**BOOK REVIEW**

**Off the Rocks, Vol. 20**

Allison Fradkin, director; $15; NewTown Writers Press; 279 pages

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Series looks at trans athletes

Featuring the inspiring journeys of five transgender athletes and how sport helped them find their true identities, *Identify, the new original series from the Olympic Channel, profiles athletes who are making their mark in the sports world.*

The five-episode docuseries is available worldwide exclusively on the Olympic Channel digital platform mobile app and at Olympic-Channel.com.

Athletes Chloe Anderson (volleyball player), Schuyler Bailar (swimmer), Harrison Browne (hockey player), Pat Manuel (boxer) and Chris Mosier (triathlete) each share their personal stories of the challenges and triumphs they’ve endured while facing gender and identity issues in their desire to compete. VICE Media produced the series exclusively for the Olympic Channel.

Trans-focused doc has funding campaign

*America in Transition*—a documentary series exploring community, family, and faith for trans people of color across the United States—is in the midst of a crowdfunding campaign that ends Thursday, July 13.

Among the individuals profiled are a veteran-turned-activist, a two-spirit dancer and a model navigating family life.

The director, Andre Perez, is a latinx, genderqueer transmasculine person from the South who started this project two years ago because he wanted to return home and work with local folks to shed light on what it’s like to live there during much social change.

The Kickstarter link is at http://kck.st/2m5PjX. A Windy City Times article about America in Transition is at WindyCityMediaGroup.com/lgbt/America-in-Transition-breaks-convention-crosses-boundaries/59388.html.

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**CULTURE CLUB**

**A’ville hosting new shopping series**

The Andersonville Chamber of Commerce (ACC) has launched “Andersonville First Fridays,” with the next event happening Friday, Aug. 4, 6-10 p.m.

In an effort to promote local shopping and dining, businesses will keep their doors open late to welcome visitors with promotions, refreshments, and special experiences on the first Friday of each month.

Some of the businesses involved include Andersonville Brewing, Candyality, Hamburger Mary’s, Swedish American Museum, Foursided and Women & Children First.

Information will continue to be updated on Andersonville.org/firstfridays.

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Brandon Hayes turns his camera toward U.S. parks

BY JAKE EKDAHL

Brandon Hayes is a professional photographer who specializes in nature photography.

He and his husband, Sean Santos, plan to travel to and photograph all 59 U.S. national parks. (Their trips are documented on AsTheyAre.net.)

Windy City Times: What is the main inspiration for your work?

Brandon Hayes: That’s a really good question. Certainly, the biggest inspiration for my work is being out in nature in the national parks. These landscapes are saved because we’ve decided as a nation that we want to protect and hold in esteem this amazing heritage. ... Definitely being out in these spaces, you know, seeing Denali [National Park in Alaska], looking into the Grand Canyon. These are inspiring things. Just visually I’m inspired by these spaces. But in addition to that, when we’re out there I’m inspired by seeing flowers, trees plants, the way the light plays across. It’s sort of capturing that living, dynamic place in nature, too.

WCT: Walk me through your creative process. Do you typically have an idea and then go out and pursue it, or do you just go to a place and let the ideas come to you?

BH: I definitely let the ideas come to me. And so, when we go, we sort of have an idea of what we want to do there. And so we approach them, first and foremost, as this exploration; this odyssey, we’ve given ourselves 16 years to visit all 59 national parks. ... It isn’t so much going out and trying to capture the perfect image. It’s very much documenting and capturing what we’re seeing.

WCT: Do you have a favorite park?

BH: When I’m asked this question, I usually say Big Bend, in Texas. We went for my birthday, and it’s in November—which really limits the number of parks you can go to, but Big Bend was one of them. And I thought I’d like it, but I fell in love with that park. Because it has desert, it has mountains... It’s just a magical, magical park.

WCT: Do you have a favorite plant or animal to photograph?

BH: That’s a really good question. ... I actually really like coyotes. There’s a really great book, called Coyote America, that came out last year by Western historian Dan Flores, and he refers to them as “little Western song dogs” and I find that romantic. And so, I actually just printed four images for a client and its four coyote images, and I call them “sweet little Western song dogs.” Yeah, I really like coyotes, actually!

WCT: So where did the idea for As They Are come from?

BH: So, the initial idea, way back when I was a youth—I think I was 12—my aunt took me to the Grand Canyon with my cousins. And I grew up in Detroit, so going out west was always really fun and exciting. It was just amazing. And the following year we went to Yosemite. And I had this book, Reader’s Digest book of the national parks—full color, photographs and all that—and I would stare at them and I thought to myself, you know, as a [youth] someday I will go to all the national parks.

Later, my then parter [and current husband] Sean and I went to a friend’s wedding in Akron, Ohio. We were there in Akron, in our hotel room, and we were looking out northwest of Akron and there was all this green. And I said to Sean “that has to be Cuyahoga Valley Park, just that sweep of green with all those trees.” And he was very much game to try to visit all the national parks.

WCT: You guys [have visited] 23 of 59 national parks. Do you know what 24 is going to be?

BH: [Laughs] we do not. So last year, we hit eight because it was the 100th anniversary of the [National] Parks Service. And I [thought] “Let’s catch up” because I had been to four national parks before we started this and Sean had been to one and, so last year, we calibrated.

I went back with Sean to the parks I had been to when I was a kid, and then we went to Dry Tortugas National Park which he had been to back when he was in college and then picked up some other ones along the way. I would say that probably the next big trip we want to do, possibly this fall, would be to fly into Portland and do the three national parks [around there], so Crater Lake, Lassen Volcanic and Redwood, and then we’d fly out of San Francisco.

WCT: I heard that the frames for your photographs are sustainably produced from bamboo and rubber trees. How important is produce and selling environmentally friendly products for you?

BH: It’s hugely important. I mean, the photographs that I make, the art that I’m doing; they are inspired by and capture nature. And so to travel to these places and then to put the work together in ways that kind of ignore sustainability would seem like a betrayal of the process.

WCT: Some of your pictures look like they’re taken from really high up. Are you and Sean pretty experienced climbers/outdoorsmen?

BH: Some of the images are certainly from hicking up. I do have a fear of heights, so a lot of the stuff that’s up high is trails that we’ve gone to as opposed to actually rock climbing. Sean has a background in rock climbing, but I don’t think I could handle that ... and some of it is from an airplane flying over.

WCT: Do you think you might ever expand this project and go abroad? Are there any international locations you’d really like to see?

BH: That’s a good question. Sean got me this gift: the National Geographic guide to the National Parks in Canada. And I said “Well, let’s do the U.S. first.” But I think definitely I could see us going to the Canadian national parks, because it’s exploring more of North America, and then also the Mexican national parks, too.

WCT: What draws you to nature photography?

BH: I think that the thing that I like about capturing nature and about this project is two-fold. I’ve got this friend who is this really talented street photographer; his portraits of people in Chicago are just extraordinarily good. And that’s just not my thing; I think I’m too shy to do that. You know, you can take a picture of a tree, or a mountain, or a coyote, or an elk, and the elk either acknowledges you or it doesn’t.

But I also like the idea that these landscapes are also transient. You know, the rocky mountains won’t always be there, and certainly when we went to Alaska, these glaciers are actively retreating in front of you. And also, I’m fascinated by ... this idea that the national parks are meant to protected in perpetuity, but that the parks themselves change.

WCT: When you’re traveling to these parks, I imagine you and Sean have come across some pretty interesting places and people. Are there any that come to mind?

BH: Definitely. There’s this couple in Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota. They were both retired and her husband had [multiple sclerosis], and they had sold their house and were traveling around as much as they possibly could while they were mobile enough for him to still do this. ... She knew that eventually they would come back and probably go into assisted living or something and that would be their life. But, for the moment, their life was traveling and seeing these amazing places. They were a really amazing couple to meet.

See AsTheyAre.net.
Event looks at gender mysteries in artist Henry Darger’s works

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Concurrent with its Henry Darger exhibit, “Betwixt and Between,” coming to a close, Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outside Art has hosted a spate of events exploring gender identity in Darger’s work.

Darger was a Chicago-based artist who wrote and illustrated a lengthy manuscript about the adventures of a group of young girls, The Vivian Girls. The illustrations get scholar’s attention. Darger traced pre-adolescent girls from advertisements and stuck them in fields of fantastical flowers, battle scenes, religious classrooms...

and often depicted them nude with rudimentary penises. On July 1, Intuit invited guest curator Leisa Rundquist to share some of her research into Darger’s mystery.

“I look for patterns in his work, a sense of internal logic,” Rundquist said about her approach to Darger. She commented that while Darger is considered an outsider artist, outsider artists are often considered “immune to culture.”

“I don’t think he’s immune to culture at all,” Rundquist said, citing the Little Eva character from Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Shirley Temple as emblematic inspirations for Darger’s girls.

Temple’s movies were a huge cultural touchstone in the 1930s, and spoke to views of innocence at the time. “White little girls transformed adults for the better, as long as men saw them as cute,” Rundquist explained, pointing out that childhood innocence used to be “impervious” to adult sexuality. It was only after Freudian theory went mainstream in the 1940s that movies like Temple’s became more suspect to modern eyes, she said.

Darger’s taste in media and Catholicism may have had an interesting impact on the Vivian Girl’s gender ambiguity. He was a fan of L. Frank Baum’s Oz books, and Rundquist highlighted a an Oz storyline where a little boy has to turn into a princess in order to save the kingdom. She also noted that Darger was a devotee of a saint who called herself “the daughter of Joan of Arc,” a figure who not only figured prominently in WWI propaganda, but is often tied to martyrdom and gender ambiguity. Joan of Arc imagery shows up in some of Darger’s illustrations.

Rundquist explained that early Christian mythology often showed women gaining male characteristics when they achieved “Christlike fortitude.” She offered examples of St. Wilgefortis, a 10-year-old who grew a beard when she heard she was arranged to be married, and St. Vivia Perpetua, who dreamed that she turned into a man the night before she was martyred. Rundquist sees Vivia Perpetua as the Vivian Girls’ possible namesake. She noted that the girls, who Darger constantly claims are not dead despite suffering horrible trauma, are often depicted without clothes and with penises when active or in danger. But she also noted that Darger did not find the girls odd, describing them as both beautiful and beloved. “Nothing in the writing makes them sound different,” Rundquist said.

To quell speculation about Darger’s motives, Rundquist offered more examples of historical media’s depiction childhood innocence, including an article depicting a topless three-year-old girl from a Chicago newspaper, and the infamous Coppertone ad where a puppy pulls down a little girl’s underwear. Rundquist described the latter as a “slippage of erotica.” While people often focus on Darger’s collections of this material—he had twenty copies of this ad alone--Rundquist disputes the idea that it was necessarily his private erotica. “It’s mainstream erotica,” she said. “It’s part of our culture.”

Not only did Darger trace ads, ads educated him; for instance, he consistently depicted the Vivians in above the knee styles to indicate their pre-adolescent age. Rundquist showed tracings of shoes and socks that Darger seemed to focus on intensely. Though Darger’s world was fantastic, Rundquist sees his attention to clothing as grounding. “He tried to make things realistic as possible to make them believable,” she said.

The audience was curious about Darger’s personal life, including whether he might have been queer or trans. Rundquist said while that was a current focus of research, Darger “was really reticent to say much about himself.” Still, Rundquist found it amazing that someone in the 20s or 30s would have “unapologetically” created artwork along these lines. And she praised Darger’s ability as a storyteller, pointing out that his work was originally illustrations for his massive novel. “This is where we’re at in Darger’s work,” Rundquist said, referring to the exhibit’s title, “Betwixt and Between,” from a JM Barrie quote about his own child creation, Peter Pan. “We kind of like it, but we might be apprehensive about looking at it too much.”

‘BLACK!’ in Chicago in July

Michael Washington Brown, in association with Athenaeum Theatre Productions, present BLACK!, July 20-30, in Studio 2 at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave. Opening night is Thursday, July 20, at 7:30 p.m.

The England-born Brown created BLACK! in 2016. In the production, Brown inhabits an array of characters from Africa, the United States, England and Jamaica, performing each person’s individual perspective and sharing his experiences. The production highlights the nuances and life perspectives of various people who are from the Black global community.

The performance schedule is Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 7:30 p.m. as well as Sundays at 2 p.m. The running time is 100 minutes, including a 10-minute intermission.

Tickets are $25; visit AthenaeumTheatre.org or call 773-935-6875.

Theater Bike Ride on Sept. 9

The Third Annual Chicago Theater Bike Ride: Love Hard will take place Saturday, Sept. 9, at Foster Beach, 5200 N. Lake Shore Dr.

The ceremony will be at 11 a.m., with the first ride wave at 12 p.m. A community potluck barbecue will start at 1:30 p.m.

It’s an organization that will benefit The Actors Fund, a nationwide human services organization that helps all professionals in performing arts and entertainment (ActorsFund.org); and The Emergency Aid Fund, which has assisted community members with funeral and apartment fire expenses with proceeds from the first two Rides.

The Ride will host a benefit at Four Moon Tavern, 1847 W. Roscoe St., on Monday, July 31, 5-8 p.m.

Organizers seek rider sponsorships, which include logo placement on the website, T-shirts and the race day banner; visit LoveHardBikeRide.org/sponsors.html.
Lesbian singer Jennifer Knapp continues to break new ground

BY TARINA HARGRAYS

Lesbian singer-songwriter Jennifer Knapp has sold more than 1 million records and crossed over into a completely different genre.

Knapp has recently returned to the music industry and will be headlining a show in Michigan on Friday, Aug. 11, at the Acorn Theater in Three Oaks, Michigan. Joining her as an opener will be singer/songwriter Natalie Gaza.

Knapp, who first got her start in the contemporary Christian genre back in the '90s, quit the music industry after being nominated for two Grammys and then coming out as lesbian. When it came to singing Christian music she told Windy City Times that she wondered, “What’s the point? There were also some things I didn’t agree with in the genre.” She also added that when she quit Christian music she thought she was quitting music altogether.

However, she doesn’t fully fault her coming out for her quitting music. “There were things in my personal life that I wanted to deal with such as my sexual orientation,” she said. In addition to that, Knapp explained that there were several things she was battling at the time, but she didn’t know how to deal with it in the public eye. “At some point things needed to shift and I didn’t know what,” said Knapp.

Soon after she left the music industry, Knapp moved to Australia for a few years with her partner—a move she claimed was “vital” to her healing. According to Knapp, Australia was a place where she could live her life freely and without judgement from others while also enjoying its beauty and nature. “People in Australia don’t care if you’re gay or Christian,” said Knapp. Knapp, who has been back in the States since 2009, said the decision was not easy. “I debated a long time about whether I was going to come back,” she said. However, those seven years of healing gave her the opportunity to find herself and her happiness. Knapp said that one day she plans to go back and grow old there but her reason for returning was to “reboot” her career. It was then that she released her hit album Letting Go, which crossover communities enthusiastically received.

Despite her departure from Christian music, Knapp said she believes that her fan bases that existed before and after she came out have since intersected, and she doesn’t consider her fan base as a strictly LGBTQ or Christian crowd. In fact, Knapp said that she believes her coming out allowed some of those Christian fans to do the same. She also added that she sees her fan base as “all across the map.” With this in mind, Knapp said she makes sure she doesn’t let her identity as a lesbian define her everyday life. “Most of the time, I go throughout my day and I don’t think, ‘What am I going to do as a gay person? Life is more complicated than ‘gayness’ and Jesus. It doesn’t dominate the conversation,” said Knapp.

That being said, Knapp said she wants her concert to serve as a way to welcome LGBTQ people. Tickets to Knapp and Gaza’s Aug. 11 show will be discounted for gay youth groups.

Knapp said that she couldn’t be more “elated,” not only about the tickets but having Gaza open up for her as well. “I actually don’t know Natalie,” said Knapp, who joked that she likes for it not to be all about her. Gaza is a local lesbian folk/rock singer who has been writing and recording songs since 2014 has quickly gained a following in the Midwest.

In preparation for her upcoming show Knapp recently released a new song, “Love Comes Back Around,” on June 23, during Pride month; Knapp said that she believes her LGBTQ fans will be able to relate to the record a lot. Knapp, who has lived in Michigan before, said that she is “excited to catch up with Michiganders. I’ve only done a couple of shows in Michigan so I am absolutely excited to be back.”

In the meantime, Knapp can be found enjoying nature or working toward obtaining her masters in theological studies at Vanderbilt University. She explained that she finds the study of Christianity enjoyable. When she isn’t doing that you can catch her listening to her favorite artists, who include Tracy Chapman, Patty Griffin, Dave Matthews, Cowboy Junkies, Natalie Merchant and more. Regarding her favorite artists, Knapp explained that “they’re driven to write about their perspective; they’re commentators on their life and experiences and that’s always appealed to me.” This is something that Knapp said she strives to “emulate.”

To learn more about Knapp and Gaza visit their websites at http://jenniferknapp.com/ and http://www.nataliegaza.com/. To find out more about Knapp’s show, visit AcornTheater.com.

‘Kiki’ in Chicago throughout July

“Kiki – Queer Comedy with Variety” is showcasing queer comics, storytellers, spoken-word artists and improvisers at Transistor, 5224 N. Clark St., on Sundays throughout July.

Producers Eric Lewis-Baker (10), Erin Diamond (Paper Machete), Scott Duff (Laugh Factory, OUT CHICAGO) and Peter Kim (Second City) are presenting free weekly shows that feature local, diverse, queer talents.

See https://www.facebook.com/TheKikiComedy/.

Beth Ditto to sing in Chicago in July

Beth Ditto will celebrate the release of her debut solo album, Fake Sugar, with a North American headline tour.

The run will kick off on July 12 in Washington, D.C., and conclude on July 26 with a show at The Independent in San Francisco. She will perform at Chicago’s Lincoln Hall on July 17.

Virgin Records released Fake Sugar on June 16. Tour tickets are on sale; see https://www.facebook.com/gossipimusic/ or LH-st.com.

In addition to releasing six albums with the Gossip, Ditto has recorded with such artists as Blondie and disco legend Cerrone; collaborat-ed with Jean Paul Gaultier on her eponymous plus-sized luxury clothing line; modeled for Marc Jacobs; and appeared in Tom Ford’s Oscar-nominated film Nocturnal Animals.

Sedaris, Ginsburg, Ailey dancers part of Auditorium’s season

The Auditorium Theatre announced its 2017-18 season under new Chief Executive Officer Tania Castroverde Moskalenko—along with its new tagline, “The Theatre for the People.”

Diverse programming is the hallmark of the upcoming season, with everything from a talk with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre’s annual visit.

Some of the highlights are as follows:


—Kathleen Battle: “Underground Railroad—A Spiritual Journey” (Sept. 30, 2017): Legendary soprano and five-time Grammy winner Kathleen Battle makes her Auditorium Theatre debut with a program of songs inspired by the Underground Railroad, the secret network that helped bring 19th-century slaves to freedom.


—“Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah” (Jan. 12-14, 2018): “Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah” will take place for the 13th consecutive year over Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend.

—Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (March 7-11, 2018): The Auditorium Theatre has been the company’s Chicago home for nearly half a century. See AuditoriumTheatre.org.

Rolling Stones exhibit at Navy Pier

The Rolling Stones’ first-ever major exhibition, “Exhibitionism,” will make its Chicago debut at Navy Pier through July 30.

The Chicago engagement follows the exhibit’s global premiere in London and its star-studded U.S. premiere in NYC. Exhibitionism is the largest touring experience of its kind ever to be staged, and the first time in history the band has unlocked its vast private archive.

Originated and produced by Australian-based iEC Exhibitions! with the full participation of the band members and curated by Ileen Gallahger, this immersive and interactive exhibition explores the Stones’ career featuring more than 500 rare and original items.

Tickets for “Exhibitionism” will go on sale to the general public on Feb. 24, 2017 at 10 a.m. See StonesExhibitionism.com.
Thousands of LGBTQ and HIV+ prisoners around the country are awaiting pen-pals with people in the ‘free-world.’ Writing letters and sending mail to our community on the inside can help save lives.

Will you become a pen-pal?

BLACKANDPINK.ORG
BOOK REVIEW
James Baldwin: The FBI File
by William J. Maxwell; $22.99; Arcade Publishing; 440 pages
BY MAX S. GORDON

Those who have seen Raoul Peck’s I Am Not Your Negro know the film is based on James Baldwin’s unfinished project, an extended essay on the end of the civil-rights movement—which Baldwin often referred to as the “last slave rebellion”—and the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Medgar Evers. The book was to be called Remember This House, but could easily have been entitled Martin, Malcolm, Medgar and Me.

Having also witnessed the assassinations of the Kennedys; civil-rights activists Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner; and the Birmingham church bombing that killed four little girls, Baldwin was more than aware of the danger he faced as a civil rights-related public figure: “He’d received death threats and feared he might be next.” Some associates considered it grandiose and paranoid when Baldwin insisted that his phones were being tapped and claimed that he was under surveillance by the FBI as one of the leading proponents of the movement and the most eloquent critic of U.S. injustice toward the Negro. If William J. Maxwell’s James Baldwin: The FBI File served no other purpose than to vindicate Baldwin’s suspicions that he was indeed being pursued by government agencies, it would be worth the read.

Initially obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by Baldwin biographer James Campbell after a successful 1998 court challenge, most of the contents of the file are accessible online. But one can be overwhelmed or left cold just looking through endless clippings and memos. (Many pages were redacted before release.) It helps to have a guide to provide context and to enable the reader to appreciate why Baldwin’s FBI file mattered then and now—specifically to activists in 2017. In the introduction, entitled “Baldwin and His File After Black Lives Matter,” Maxwell argues that Baldwin (as author and activist) is still vital to our progressive movements, that intersectionality defined his work before it became a “thing” and that he is an “exemplar of the queer-inflected mood of the Black Lives Matter [BLM] era now.”

Readers learn from Maxwell that the FBI had a relationship with outspoken Black writers dating all the way back to the Harlem Renaissance. A special report to J. Edgar Hoover in 1919 acknowledges the “marked ability” of the new Negro writer: “(H)e means business, and it would be well to take him at his word.” James Weldon Johnson, author of The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man (1912), after reviewing a related FBI report on African-American literature, wrote, “[W]hat astonishes [them] most is the fact that these articles are written by Negroes who know how to use the English language.” And no one, it can be argued, was more skilled at using the English language as a weapon of resistance than Baldwin.

The information we learn from the file is fascinating, divided into sections such as “Baldwin as Homosexual and Public Enemy” and “The Bureau Stalks Baldwin on Broadway.” Wiretaps of a conversation between Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam, and Malcolm X reveal that Muhammad was deeply impressed by Baldwin after watching him on television—which may be one of the reasons he agreed to sit down with him later, their meeting memorialized in Baldwin’s iconic essay The Fire Next Time. Baldwin was publicly sassy despite his private concern: he knew he was being watched, and his response was to watch the watchers. His criticisms of the FBI were edited out by the USIA (United States Information Agency) from a television interview he gave in 1963, and yet he was openly critical of the bureau and said specifically of J. Edgar Hoover: “[H]e is history’s most highly paid (and most utterly useless) voyeur.”

It is astonishing to discover not only that Baldwin’s 1962 novel Another Country was considered objectionable by many readers and banned in parts of the country, but that a bookseller in New Orleans was arrested by the vice squad for merely having the book on the shelf. District Attorney Jim Garrison, that Jim Garrison, refused to move the case forward, but assistant city attorney Edward Pinnor determined, pronouncing the book “so sickening that if the obscenity were removed, you’d have nothing but the covers left.” A reader in the FBI’s General Crimes Division was assigned the book, and after reading it wrote a report to Hoover: “Another Country by James Baldwin has been reviewed and it has been concluded that the book contains literary merit and may be of value to students of psychology and social behavior”—a review so favorable that Maxwell posits it could have gone on the dust jacket of the book.

After several public comments by Baldwin, in 1963 he was placed on the FBI’s Security Index, “the highly classified database tracking American citizens judged to be grave threats to national security.” He knew there was a precedent for America missing with its Black artists. During the McCarthy years, Paul Robeson, for example, was denied renewal of his passport in 1955 despite filing a suit in federal court. And Native Son author Richard Wright’s application for a passport in 1946 was also turned down by the State Department, until a formal invitation came from the French government, orchestrated by Gertrude Stein—with Marc Chagall and Jean Paul Sartre as supporters. Baldwin’s file states that at one point he was considered “a dangerous individual who could be expected to commit acts inimical to the national defense.” Reading this now may help us better understand his ultimate decision, for which he was often criticized, to live out his remaining days in St. Paul de Vence, France.

One can’t help but mourn the time and personal resources that went into creating Baldwin’s file. And at the core of the file is heartbreak: the betrayal by and suspicion of one’s country, and the fact that Baldwin was never fully appreciated in the U.S. The file is his shadow tribute. People can only speculate how history might have been altered had Hoover gone after the terrorists who bombed the church in Birmingham with the same fervor with which he besieged Baldwin, an artist whose only “crime” was that he loved America enough to tell us the bitter truth about ourselves. Baldwin, who always reminded us about the importance of the “witnessing” in his work, can be seen today in the BLM activist who captures police brutality on her cellphone, who speaks out against a Trump administration—well aware that she may be inviting an FBI file of her own.

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Cirque du Soleil buys Blue Man Group

Cirque du Soleil has acquired Blue Man Productions, reportedly for tens of millions of dollars.

The acquisition marks one step on Cirque’s path toward growth and diversity, Variety noted. Blue Man Group started as a small show in New York more than a quarter-century ago; it has since played in 20 countries and has six resident productions in the Germany and United States, including one in Chicago’s Lake View neighborhood at the Briar Street Theater, 3133 N. Halsted St.

China will be one major focus of expansion for both companies, according to Cirque du Soleil CEO Daniel Lamarre, who said Cirque will soon unveil a couple of major projects there.


JAY-Z’s mother comes out as lesbian

Gloria Carter, JAY-Z’s mother, came out as lesbian in a new track featured on the rapper’s just-released 4:44 album, which went platinum in less than a week.

The song, “Smile,” features JAY-Z and Carter discussing her sexuality in a public first for either one.

“Mama had four kids, but she’s a lesbian / Had to pretend so long that she’s a thespian,” JAY-Z raps in the song, which contains a sample of Stevie Wonder’s “Love’s In Need Of Love Today.”

In 2012, JAY-Z said he supported same-sex marriage in an interview with CNN.

The musician’s new album is arguably more personal than any other work he has released. In addition to his mother’s sexuality, the rapper also seemingly apologizes for infidelities he has committed while being married to superstar Beyoncé—dealing with rumors she brought up in her 2016 album Lemonade. One line in JAY-Z’s title song goes “I apologize, often womanize/Took for my child to be born to see through a woman’s eyes.”

Sean Wiggins in Chicago July 14

Singer Sean Wiggins is scheduled to perform Friday, July 14, at The Glenwood, 6962 N. Glenwood Ave., 9-11 p.m.

This performance will be with a full band that includes two Chicago locals, Chandler Marino and Sheila Reddy, as well as guitar player Paul Houston. They play a mix of covers and originals from rock to country to blues.

Admission is $10, or $5 for those who arrive before 8:30 p.m. See SeanWiggins.com.

Sean Wiggins.
Photo courtesy of Wiggins
Jason Collins, Sky star discuss facing adversity

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

To kick off its diversity and inclusion celebration weekend, the Chicago Sky and retired NBA player Jason Collins hosted a meet-and-greet panel July 6 at Midtown Athletic Club. Collins and Chicago Sky’s starting center Imani Boyette spoke at the “Facing Adversity Through Sports” panel, with retired NBA player Stephen Bardo moderating.

Collins holds the distinction of being the first active male professional athlete in basketball, baseball, football or hockey to come out as gay in the United States. He made this announcement in Sports Illustrated when the 2012-2013 NBA season ended. Collins currently serves as an NBA global ambassador and diversity advocate.

Boyette made headlines earlier this year when she wrote an open letter on her website to retired WNBA player Candice Wiggins refuting Wiggins’ claim that 98 percent of WNBA players are lesbians. In her letter, Boyette said Wiggins “reinforced unfair stereotypes” about women in sports with her comments. Wiggins also said WNBA culture is “toxic” and “harmful” which Boyette and her teammates said is a lie.

During the audience Q&A, someone asked Boyette about growing up with a mom (Pam McGee, an Olympic gold medalist and coach) and at the time he knew he was gay but could not accept it. He said this made him harbor a lot of resentment toward his mom and kept him in the closet for a longer period of time. Collins explained that after he came out to her they went to therapy together and she has also become well versed in LGBT issues.

Both Collins and Boyette talked about how awkward it was to be so much taller than the rest of their classmates. Collins noted that both him and his twin brother Jarron (who also played for the NBA) were 5’3” in third grade and taller than their teacher.

Collins added that his grandmother told him the most important thing to have is a good reputation because it will take one far in life.

Boyette spoke about her depression and being a survivor of sexual abuse as well as her three suicide attempts. She said how important it is for her to use her status as a basketball star to speak out about these issues.

In addition, Bardo asked about the current state of locker rooms since Collins came out. Collins said all of his Brooklyn Nets teammates had his back right away, and noted the evolution of basketball player Tim Hardaway after retired NBA player John Amaechi came out as gay. Hardaway, Collins explained, started out as someone who said he hated gay people; however, he is an LGBT advocate who has worked with the Trevor Project and called Collins after he came out to offer his support.

When asked how sports has helped them overcome things in their lives, Boyette said playing basketball is a confidence-booster while Collins said it became his refuge when he was still in the closet.

Boyette said writing poetry helped her process things while Collins explained that the lockout during the 2010-2011 basketball season was the turning point in his coming out process.

As for their biggest influences, Collins said it was his parents while Boyette mentioned fellow WNBA star Lisa Leslie.

During the audience Q&A, someone asked Boyette about Wiggins’ comments and she reiterated what she’s said in the past about this issue. Collins noted the most important thing is to be a good teammate whether it’s in sports or other parts of one’s life.

Collins also participated in a breakfast networking event with the LGBT Chamber of Commerce July 7 at Nacional 27 as well as a Q&A and meet-and-greet with Center on Halsted members and Sky fans July 8 at Allstate Arena.

Force era ends with loss to Boston

The Chicago Force women’s football team ended its 15-year existence with a 47-33 loss to the Boston Renegades at Della Russo Field in Revere, Massachusetts, on July 8.

The Renegades seized at 21-0 lead in the first quarter en route to the win.

Force team owner Linda Bache announced before the 2017 season that it would be the team’s last under her leadership. The team established a 7-1 regular-season record before defeating Pittsburgh and losing to Boston in the playoffs.

Chicago’s won the national championship in 2013—it’s lone title among three championship game tries.

Boston now plays the Dallas Elite on Saturday, July 22, in the national-championship game at Pittsburgh’s Highmark Stadium.

‘CLLAW XXVII’ on July 29 in Chicago

The Chicago League of Lady Arm Wrestlers (CLLAW) will be featured at “CLLAW XXVII: Summer Smackdown” on Saturday, July 29, at Logan Square Auditorium, 2539 N. Kedzie Ave.

CLLAW’s 27th benefit match will feature lady-identified arm wrestlers, musical entertainment from Jackass Magnets and a cash bar.

Doors open at 9 p.m., with the first match beginning at 9:30 p.m. Tickets are $15 each; visit CLLAW.org or purchase at the door.
BY ANDREW DAVIS

I just left the set of Mad Men. OK: Obviously I wasn’t there, mostly because the show ended a couple years ago. However, Lawry’s The Prime Rib (100 E. Ontario St.; LawrysOnline.com) is straight of out that era, putting it in an exclusive group of Chicago restaurants that are considered classics and that have remained largely unchanged over decades.

Located just off The Magnificent Mile, Lawry’s has been open in Chicago since 1974 (based on the Beverly Hills restaurant that launched in 1938). the very attentive servers (who are almost always women) wear spiffy brown uniforms and are called Mrs. So-and-So. Most of the extremely friendly staff has been there for decades (again, distinguishing it from the newer spots), save for a few, such as new Executive Chef Steve Goellner.

There’s even a plaque stating the restaurant’s code of ethics that’s on the left upon entering the establishment.

I mentioned all of these frozen-in-time elements to emphasize what the people at Lawry’s already know: Being “old-fashioned” can be a wonderful thing.

As for the cuisine, it will also take you back—again, in a very fulfilling way. The calamari (with chipotle aioli and arribiata sauce) is very tasty, and the spinning-bowl salad (prepared tableside) is a must.

However, as the restaurant’s name indicates, it specializes in the steak cut known as prime rib—and it does it remarkably well (perfectly served by the master carver who has—you guessed it—been there practically from the beginning). Selections include the Diamond Jim Brady cut (an extra-thick portion that includes the rib bone) and the traditional Lawry cut, which I had. Of course, it was cooked perfectly. By the way, did I mention that each prime-rib dinner comes with the salad, mashed potatoes, Yorkshire pudding (for sopping up gravy from the potatoes) and even whipped-cream horseradish? And when was the last time you had creamed corn? (I wasn’t sure what to think of it, but it was absolutely divine—I kid you not.)

And if you somehow have room after all that, I heartily recommend Lawry’s desserts, which include sticky toffee pudding, cheesecake, hot-fudge sundae and other items.

As for drinks, there’s a tantalizing selection of wines and champagne, including the veritable Dom Perignon. However, feel free to also have a cocktail, including the refreshing Chicago Sunset, which comes with a miniature Chicago flag on a toothpick.

You may have walked by Lawry’s a thousand times (as I had), but check it out: It will not only pleasant surprise you, but that older relative will probably love it as well.

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.
Andrew Garfield (here in The Amazing Spider-Man) is in hot water because of a gay-related comment he made.

Official Facebook photo

It sounds like he's saying that because he watches RuPaul, he's a gay man—well, a gay man not having sex with other men. While I'm sure he didn't mean to stereotype, not all gay men are watching RuPaul. And watching Ru doesn't make you gay. But sex with other men—you know, that's a big thing. Well, in my case it's a very big thing. The point is, Andrew, you are not a gay man ... you're just playing one on stage. And that really should be enough. If you'd like to see a gay man in Angels in America, you might check out Garfield's co-stars—Russell Tovey and Nathan Lane. Now THOSE are gay men!

You know summer is here when we hear about another Vatican sex scandal. Last year, cardinals and priests were holding wet underwear contests in baptismal fonts. This year, they're at it again. The Vatican police got a call about an out-of-control party going on in the apartment of the secretary to Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio—who just happens to be an aide to the Pope. But it wasn't just a party. Reports say that the police broke up what is being called an "orgy" filled with men engaged in sexual activity and doing illegal drugs! Sure sounds like an orgy to me.

And yet, it's not this week's only orgy. You may have heard about an orgy held in the locker room of the Brazilian soccer team. It all happened in Passo Fundo, Brazil, after a match played by the Sport Club Gaucho. Apparently one player was on his knees servicing two other players while another guy was filming them. Call me old-fashioned, but I wouldn't call that an orgy. It just sounds like a typical weekend. Anyhoo, once the video went public, the team's president dismissed all four players. Why? Because the tryst happened on club property. While an edited version of the video is making the rounds, the original footage can be found on BillyMasters.com.

Could it be that a star of stage and screen (well, small screen) has also been filmed in a compromising position? These things happen when you and your boyfriend pick up random guys online for a three-way. In the clip, our newsworthy lad is purportedly filling one side of the hook-up while his boyfriend is filling the other—without ever letting the cell phone fall from his hands. Now, THAT'S multitasking! I should add, it sure looks like the star's beau in the middle. But it really is hard to tell. But there is a brief glimpse of the star's face, and there's no mistaking that hair, that hard body or that Johnson!

When we're finding videos of lost boys, it's time to end yet another column. For more dish, follow the yellow brick road to www.BillyMasters.com—the site that never met an orgy it didn't like! As usual, you can send your questions to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Andrew Garfield watches Good Times and decides he's Black! Until next time, remember: One man's fish is another man's bible.
**Community Calendar**

**Wed., July 12**

Report to Community from Out Aging Summit on Our Possibilities Pride Action Tank reports on the findings of the Out Aging Summit on Our Possibilities which took place May 24-25 and explores next steps. Light refreshments. RSVP to prideactiontank@aidschicago.org or by phone. 5:00pm - 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago 312-922-2322x723 http://prideactiontank.org

Golden Girls, the Lost Episodes Enjoy never-before-seen episodes of The Golden Girls featuring Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, Sophia and all of the siblings, daughters, sons, characters and rare diseases that were mentioned once, but never again. Also GG trivia and games. Through August 26. 7:30pm Mary's Attic 5400 N Clark Chicago 800-838-3006 Tickets: http://www.ticketweb.com

Sean Wiggins Originals, some covers and some brand new ones. Chandler on drums. 8:00pm - 10:00pm Fritz's Pour House, 1511 Plainfield Rd, Joliet

**Thursday, July 13**

Queen and Adam Lambert New show for this tour brings Queen hits, like “Another One Bites the Dust,” “Bohemian Rhapsody,” “We Will Rock You,” “We Are The Champions”. 8:00pm United Center 1901 W Madison Ave Chicago Tickets: http://www.livenation.com/events/641762-jul-13-2017-queen-adam-lambert

Poetry Reading: Oyarsh Ali Lansana, Sandra Jackson-Opoku, Tara Betts, and Keith S. Wilson The year 2017 marks the 100th birthday of the late poet and cultural icon Gwendolyn Brooks. Miss Brooks’ depictions of poor and working-class African-Americans provides insight into the civil rights movement of the 1960s; and her lens on the Great Migration, hard and necessary truths about race injustice, and the Black Power movement interprets and contextualizes current racial inequalities and tensions. This collection of poetry, essays, and art inspired by the work of Miss Brooks celebrates her life, writing, and activism. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St, Chicago http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/poetry-reading-quraysh-ali-lansana-sandra-jackson-opoku-tara-betts-and-keith-s-wilson

**Friday, July 14**


**Saturday, July 15**

Galvanize Program Chicago Foundation for Women and The United State of Women offer training & workshops to take action and continue the fight for women’s equity, locally and nationally. Through 7/16. 9:00am - 8:00pm McCormick Place http://www.theunitedstateofwomen.org/galvanizechicago?bblinkid=51722832&bbsemailid=4266415&bbsuserid=313566539

OPALGA’s July Potluck Please bring a dish to share and BYOB. Guests and new members always welcome! 7:00pm - 10:00pm Contact organizers for River Forest location https://www.facebook.com/events/435313517032652/?tcontxt=%7B%22feed%22%3A%22%22%22%22feed_story,

**Sunday, July 16**

Women Aging with Wisdom and Grace Discussion and Potluck The Odd Woman in the City by Vivian Gornick. 11:00am - 1:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/women-agingwisdomandgracebookgroup

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**CLEANING SERVICES**

CHESTNUT CLEANING SERVICES: We’re a house cleaning service for homes, small businesses and small buildings. We also have fabulous organizational skills (a separate function at a separate cost that utilizes your assistance) for what hasn’t been cleaned in many months or years due to long-term illness, depression, physical/mental challenges, for the elderly, if you have downsized and more. Depressed about going home to chaos? We can organize your chaos, straighten out your chaos, help you make sense of your chaos and finally clean what is no longer a chaos. Can we help you? Bonded and insured. Chestnut Cleaning Service: 312-332-5575. www.ChestnutCleaning.com (11/23/17-52)

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(7/12/17-2)

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**Muffy Fishbasket Presents: Story Time With Drag Queens**

Join Muffy Fishbasket and her Good Time Galz as they each read a classic bedtime story to a roomful of children! Women and Children First will be on hand at COH with the featured stories available for sale Sundays. Suggested Donation $10. Register online. 3:00pm - 5:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago Tickets: http://community.centeronhalsted.org/Muffy1

**Monday, July 17**

TransSafe: Weekly Transgender Care Services Chicago House TransSafe Drop-In provides weekly “one-stop shop,” addressing the vulnerability of transgender individuals. No appointment necessary to access services most needed by those marginalized within the transgender community, including housing, legal, employment, medical including hormones, and social support. 2:00pm - 5:00pm Heartland Health Outreach clinic, 4750 N. Sheridan, Fifth floor http://www.chicagohouse.org/causes/translife-center/
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Cinema/Chicago and the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival invite you to a special tribute to two-time Academy Award® winner and three-time Golden Globe®-winning actress Jane Fonda.

Saturday, July 29, 2017 • Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel Chicago • 221 N. Columbus Drive

6:30 PM  Cocktails and Small Plates  Silent auction  Red carpet arrivals
8:00 PM  Tribute to Jane Fonda  Jane Fonda’s career will be celebrated through an on-stage conversation and a selection of film highlights.
9:30 PM  After-party with DJ  Complimentary wine and select cocktails courtesy of Chloe Wine Collection and Wansas Tequila

EVENING HOST:
Richard Roeper
Chicago Sun-Times columnist and film critic and host of Fox 32 Good Day Chicago.

For tickets and table reservations: 312.683.0121 x122 or CHICAGOFILMFESTIVAL.COM

Net proceeds from this event will benefit Cinema/Chicago’s year-round Education Program. The Program provides free film screenings to more than 7,000 Chicago Public School students annually as well as curriculum support and study guides for educators. The Program will also include a new in-classroom component. Additionally, the Education Program includes the annual CineYouth Festival, which showcases the talent of the next generation of filmmakers 22 years old and younger and our Student Film Council for Chicagoland high school students with a passion for cinema.