REACHING THE SUMMIT

WCT profiles longtime activist/businesswoman Marge Summit

DANCE MASTER

Ashley Wheater marks a decade at Joffrey’s helm

ROXANA PIXLEY
Trans Latina owns successful local restaurant.
Photo by Roberto Sanabria

EDMUND WHITE
WCT reviews book about esteemed writer.

OWEN DANIEL-MCCARTER
Leaving Illinois Safe Schools Alliance.
Photo courtesy of Mary Morten
WELCOME, DR. BRIAN ROSETT!

Dr. Brian Rosett is excited to come home to Chicago to join Shifrin Plastic Surgery. An accomplished surgeon, Dr. Rosett has performed thousands of cases and has a proven track record of helping patients realize their best vision of themselves.

His return to the Midwest comes after an advanced fellowship in Los Angeles, where he worked with some of the very best surgeons in Beverly Hills. There, he also subsequently trained with one of the most regarded facial plastic surgeons in the United States, honing his aesthetic surgical skill and brings many of the field's newest techniques back to the Midwest.

During his plastic surgery training at the University of Illinois-Chicago, Dr. Rosett performed nearly twice the number of cases required by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, affording him a broad range of operating competency in the realms of both aesthetic and reconstructive surgery.

Additionally, his medical background includes five years of general surgery residency at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit and medical school at Rush University in Chicago. Having grown up in the Windy City, he brings an earnest Midwestern sensibility to both the office and the operating room.

At the center of his medical philosophy is the belief that strong communication leads to the best outcomes. From consultation all the way through post-operative recovery you can expect Dr. Rosett to be engaged and easily accessible for any questions or concerns.

His patients often remark that his kindness and demeanor helped ease the stress and fear that can sometimes come with surgery. Dr. Rosett's hope for every patient is a surgical success that boosts their self-esteem allowing them to live more confident and fulfilling lives.

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NEWS
Top 10 LGBT political stories of 2017 4
Changes at Illinois Safe Schools Alliance 6
Chicago Board of Health's Juan Calderon 8
LGBTQ Care Fair focuses on seniors 10
Families of Color honor LGBTQ youth 12
In the Life 13
Profile of businesswoman Marge Summit 14
Viewpoints: Monroe; letter 18

ENTERTAINMENT/EVENTS
Dancin' Feats: Ashley Wheater marks decade at helm 19

THE JINGLE LIFE
Photo by Rick Aguilar Studios

‘FALL-INCLUSIVE
Steve Grand (on the right in left photo) talks about his newest project, his acting debut in the web series Falling for Angels.
Image courtesy of Here Media

THE JINGLE LIFE

Last Minute
Five Worth Finding has one last list of holiday ideas, from To'ak Chocolate to the Onyx Youth Magnet Mask.

That’s Show Biz
Find out the latest about Lenny Kravitz, Ruby Rose and Kristin Chenoweth.

Plus
Daily Breaking News

Kesha (above), Demi Lovato and Liam Payne were among the luminaries at this year's 103.5 KISS FM’s Jingle Ball.
Photo by Jerry Nunn

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Top 10 LGBT news stories of 2017

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

This was the year the 1960s tried to make a comeback.

There was the resurgence in white nationalist activity, widespread sexual harassment, and renewed concern about the use of nuclear weapons. The new president, Donald Trump, fanned perilous fires. He also tried to make friends with Russian President Vladimir Putin while an unfolding investigation was showing the Trump campaign had met with Russian officials as Russian operatives hacked into and leaked damaging information from the campaign of Trump's 2016 opponent, Hillary Clinton.

There was fierce resistance to the white nationalist uprising. Crowds of counterprotesters met them on the streets of Charlotte, Virginia, and other towns around the country. And large numbers of women (and some men) came forward to point a finger at men in powerful places who had sexually assaulted or harassed them. Pro-LGBT legal groups doubled down to fight efforts by right-wing groups to find loopholes in the law that could open the floodgates to discrimination against LGBT people. And the pro-LGBT groups sought new ways to use existing laws to provide protection from such discrimination.

By year's end, the “cultural war,” which in the United States has frequently included a prominent conflict over equal rights for LGBT people, had intensified and seemed to reach a standoff. Many political observers looked to a U.S. Senate race in Alabama—one to fill the seat vacated when Senator Jeff Sessions became U.S. attorney general—to break the tie. The Democrat won, and that vote in Alabama seemed to many people to signal a change in voters throughout the country. It gave hope to many LGBT leaders that control of Congress might also change in 2018.

Here is a closer look at 10 stories that made 2017 such a tumultuous year for LGBT people:

1. The U.S. Supreme Court wobbled. After Congress refused to consider then-President Obama’s nominee to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia, the LGBT community braced itself for a Scalia-like replacement from newly inaugurated Trump and the Republican-dominated Senate. And Trump’s nominee, Neil Gorsuch, filled that bill. But what LGBT legal activists did not anticipate was that one of Trump’s champions of equal rights for LGBT people on the court, Justice Anthony Kennedy, would begin to falter. First, he voted with a majority in Trinity Lutheran v. Comer to say that church schools should receive state grants the same as non-church schools. Lambda Legal said the ruling amounted to state support for discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Then, six months later, during oral arguments for Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado, Kennedy appeared to favor the idea that a business could simply claim a vague religious belief hostile to LGBT people to gain a right to refuse service to them. The decision in that case—and future prospects for Kennedy’s record on LGBT rights—will be revealed sometime next year.

2. Donald Trump was sworn in as president. In March that re-voked one by President Obama that had required companies winning contracts from the federal government to demonstrate they are in compliance with 14 federal laws, including those that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender stereotyping, and gender identity. Lambda Legal said Trump’s executive order would make it “extremely difficult” to force federal contractors to comply with non-discrimination laws.

7. Courts roller-coaster on fight over Title VII. Two federal appeals courts ruled this year that Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act should be interpreted to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. But in December, the U.S. Supreme Court refused an appeal brought by an employee in Georgia trying to establish the right to protection under that law. LGBT activists say the fight is not yet over and that other cases will likely come before the Supreme Court to test the issue in the future.

6. Gay ambassador nominee is still pending. In one of the few pieces of good news involving Trump and the LGBT community this year, Trump nominated an openly gay political operative, Ric Grenell, as ambassador to Germany. But by year’s end, the full Senate had yet to vote on Grenell’s nomination, and reports indicated Democrats were behind the stall.

5. Trump issues transgender executive order. In July, Trump announced on Twitter that the Department of Defense should ban transgender people in the military. A month later, he issued an official memorandum, directing the DOD to do so. But the ACLU and LGBT legal groups jumped into action, filing lawsuits and requesting injunctions to stop the order from taking effect. By year’s end, at least three federal judges issued preliminary injunctions to stop the Trump order from taking effect until the courts can decide whether the ban is unconstitutional, but the Department of Justice is seeking stays of those injunctions.

4. Trump administration gutted many policies for LGBT people. Under Trump, the Department of Education, with the Department of Justice, withdrew an advice letter to schools that had suggested transgender students were protected by Title IX. The Department of Health and Human Services announced it would no longer interpret the Affordable Care Act to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and it removed questions from at least two federal surveys that would have identified data specific to LGBT people. Housing and Urban Development canceled a survey to determine the prevalence of homelessness among LGBT people, and removed from its website a link that instructed emergency shelters on sensitivity to transgender people seeking help. The Census Bureau removed any mention of LGBT people among potential questions for the all-important upcoming surveys.

3. There was a resurgence in activities by white nationalists. One of the loudest chants by white supremacists staging a violent protest in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August was “Fuck you, Faggots.” The driver of the car who plowed into a group of counter-protesters was associated with a right-wing group that called LGBT people “sexual deviants.” Trump offered words of support for the right-wing protesters who chanted and carried signs with messages that were hostile to African-Americans, immigrants, and LGBT people. “Not all of those people were neo-Nazis, believe me,” said Trump. “Not all of those people were white supremacists by any stretch.” He blamed counter protesters for the violence. And soon, there seemed to be an uptick in incidents of hate against LGBT people, women, Muslims, Jews, African-Americans, and Latin Americans—many in very public places, like major league ballparks and public schools. A Southern Poverty Law Center study found that 37 percent of 1,094 hate crimes recorded during the first 34 days after Trump’s election “directly referenced either President-elect Trump, his campaign slogans, or his infamous remarks about sexual assault.”

2. Trump administration gutted many policies for LGBT people. Under Trump, the Department of Education, with the Department of Justice, withdrew an advice letter to schools that had suggested transgender students were protected by Title IX. The Department of Health and Human Services announced it would no longer interpret the Affordable Care Act to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and it removed questions from at least two federal surveys that would have identified data specific to LGBT people. Housing and Urban Development canceled a survey to determine the prevalence of homelessness among LGBT people, and removed from its website a link that instructed emergency shelters on sensitivity to transgender people seeking help. The Census Bureau removed any mention of LGBT people among potential questions for the all-important upcoming surveys.

1. LGBT people felt more like they needed protection from Donald Trump. He chose heads of departments with notorious anti-LGBT histories who rolled back many of the pro-LGBT policies established under President Obama, he appointed federal judges who disagreed with landmark pro-equality Supreme Court decisions, he initiated and directed a ban on transgender people in the military, he repeatedly praised Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose anti-LGBT policies have escalated in recent years, and he used the most high profile bully pulpit in the world to give solace and encouragement to extreme right-wing protests that included anti-LGBT chants and signs.

1. Alabama voters chose Democrat for Senate seat. A special election in Alabama in December became a bellwether. In a surprise development, the heavily and historically Republican state chose a progressive Democrat over a ultra-conservative Republican to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Jeff Sessions’ departure to the attorney general’s seat. This was not a simply partisan or ideological race. Moore’s claim to being a staunch Christian with reliably conservative, family-oriented values was shredded by persistent widespread allegations that, in his thirties, he had sexual contact with two females under the age of consent in Alabama (16) and five who were between 16 and 18. LGBT people had plenty of reason to oppose Moore’s ascension to the U.S. Senate long before those revelations drew national attention to the state. Going back more than a decade, Roy Moore was quick and comfortable with expressing his opposition to LGBT people.

After the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state bans on sexual relations between same-sex partners, then Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Moore said he thought such relations should be illegal. When the U.S. Supreme Court struck down bans on marriage for same-sex couples, Moore refused to comply. And during his contentious campaign this year for a U.S. Senate seat, he claimed his campaign troubles were LGBT people trying to ruin his campaign and “change our culture.” Moore, in the U.S. Senate, would have been a reliable vote against LGBT people in any context. And Moore had the endorsement of Trump, who won 62 percent of the Alabama vote in 2016, despite his own problem with widespread allegations of sexual misconduct.

But on Dec. 12, by a narrow margin, voters in Alabama elected progressive Democrat Doug Jones, who pledged to “fight hate and discrimination in all forms.” Some commentators say the vote indicates voters are beginning to turn against Republicans and Trump. They predict next November’s Congressional races could change the partisan majority in the Senate, maybe even the House, from Republican to Democrat. It’s the kind of change that could be as dramatically good for the rights of LGBT people as this past year has been bad.

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After grant cuts, director to leave Safe Schools Alliance

By Liz Baudler

At the beginning of December, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance announced two significant pieces of news: Following cuts in a State of Illinois grant, the Alliance is looking to form a strategic partnership with another organization, and Executive Director Owen Daniel-McCarter is leaving the organization.

Alliance Board Vice Chair Mary Morten said that the organization has already made short-term plans to address the funding cuts, with individual donations replacing some of the funding.

“We have a lot of people that have come to understand and support the work of the Alliance, so we’ve really grown our individual donor work, which is not something a lot of small organizations can say. We’re very proud of that,” Morten explained.

Daniel-McCarter had been the Alliance’s policy director before taking over as executive director in July 2016. At that time, he became the first openly transgender leader of a major LGBT nonprofit in Illinois. Morten said that he excelled at both of his positions.

“We love Owen, and we love the work that he’s done for the Alliance, and so this is a very bittersweet sort of transition,” she said. “We’ve had just tremendous success with some of our advocacy work over the past couple of years and that has been directly as a result of some of Owen’s work.”

Morten credited Daniel-McCarter with building strong relationships with the ACLU and Lambda Legal. In particular, she highlighted Daniel-McCarter’s work with the District 211 case, where a trans student was prohibited from using the locker room corresponding with her gender identity.

“At the beginning of December, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance announced two significant pieces of news: Following cuts in a State of Illinois grant, the Alliance is looking to form a strategic partnership with another organization, and Executive Director Owen Daniel-McCarter is leaving the organization. The Alliance’s interim director will be Mac Grambauer, who Morten described as a consultant with a long history of working with the organization. Morten said that Laura McAlpine—who heads McAlpine Consulting for Growth, LLC, and is a co-founder of the Alliance—will be facilitating the strategic exploration process. Morten anticipates the Alliance first finding the partner organization before settling on a permanent executive director, but is thankful that both McAlpine and Grambauer are deeply familiar with the case.

“I think it’s really important for people to know that the work continues, that the Alliance has not and will not stop doing any of the very important work for young people in schools,” Morten said. “And we’ll certainly continue with our policy and advocacy works. That has become a hallmark of the organization, and that’s going to continue.”

Words banned at various agencies

The Trump administration reportedly informed multiple divisions within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that they should avoid using certain words and phrases in official documents related to next year’s budget, The Washington Post reported.

Officials at the Centers for Disease Control, the country’s top public health agency, were banned from using seven words or phrases—including “fetus” and “transgender”—in any official documents being prepared for the 2018 budget, according to The Washington Post.

The forbidden word list includes “vulnerable,” “entitlement,” “diversity,” “transgender,” “fetus,” “evidence-based” and “science-based.”

An official who participated in a briefing said that a second HHS agency received similar instructions in order to avoid using “entitlement,” “diversity” and “vulnerable.” At the State Department, meanwhile, certain documents now refer to sex education as “sexual risk avoidance.”

In a press release, National LGBTQ Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey said her organization “will show this President he cannot ignore the transgender community, women, or scientific progress.

“The health, science, and justice communities are organizing together to demonstrate that federal funding for health and science matters. How the CDC runs is vital to our well-being. This is not just about freedom of speech: it’s about our existence.

“The LGBTQ community is encouraged to #resist now. Tell@CDCgov, you can’t ban my existence. I’m #transgender and proud. #CDC-censorship.”

Shin Inouye, director of communications and media relations of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, said in a separate press release, “President Trump and his administration have launched the latest salvo in their all-out war on truth and science. This latest tactic could be taken from a George Orwell novel, or taken by an oppressive authoritarian regime. Banning the use of words like transgender, science-based, and diversity will only harm the public health as the CDC carries out its important mission.”

However, according to PBS Newshour, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald tweeted on Dec. 17 that there are “no banned words” while stressing the agency’s commitment to data-driven science. At one point, she posted, “I want to assure you there are no banned words at CDC. We will continue to talk about all our important public health programs.”

But in subsequent reporting, The New York Times cited “a few” CDC officials who suggested the move was not meant as an outright ban. Instead, it was a technique to help secure Republican approval of the 2019 budget by eliminating certain words and phrases.

The Post article is at https://www.washingtontop.com. The PBS article is at https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/cdc-director-says-there-are-no-banned-words-at-the-agency.

Report focuses on the lives of LGBTQ students

A special journal of the American Educational Research Association has an article that shows that people do not always accurately know the lives of LGBTQ students, The Washington Post reported.

For example, “Introducing a Methodological Research Collection on Pressing Issues for LGBTQ Students” reveals that many topics remain that need further research, such as the growing visibility of trans and gender-creative youth or the potential rollback of protections for LGBTQ youth.

The journal’s issue covers many topics, including gay-straight alliances, intersectionality and youths who experience homelessness.

The Post item is at https://www.washingtontop.com; the report (written by Joseph R. Cimpian and Carolyn D. Herrington) is at http://www.aera.net/Publications/Journals/Educational-Researcher/Educational-Researcher-669.
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Juan Calderon talks health board, career, activist work

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Among his many accomplishments, community leader Juan Calderón was recently named by Mayor Rahm Emanuel to the newly vacated seat on the Chicago Board of Health. The city council approved his appointment this past September.

“This appointment means a great deal to me,” said Calderón. “I am the first openly Puerto Rican/Latinx gay man to serve on the Chicago Board of Health ... To fully leverage this position, I want to be a voice that helps intersect the community and its development to public health, including encouraging Chicagoans to lead overall healthier lives. As a gay man, it is important to me to promote changes and improvements in the overall health of the LGBTQ community.

“We need to live healthier lives and eradicate the obstacles that block us from receiving life-saving resources and education. I want to be the voice for the Latinx community and other people of color as well as LGBTQ people, including fighting poverty and giving people the resources they need to create a healthier community.”

“As an activist and community leader, Juan has dedicated his career to leveraging community and government support to address disparities in education and access to resources for some of Chicago’s most vulnerable residents,” said Emanuel. “His breadth of experience and commitment to this city makes him highly qualified for this role on the Chicago Board of Health.”

“With his extensive experience, Juan will be an excellent addition to the Board and we welcome this appointment,” said Chicago Board of Health President Dr. Carolyn C. Lopez. “Juan’s dedication to the Latino community of Chicago has been proven through his work at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), and he will continue to be a great advocate for not only this community, but for all Chicago residents in need of quality healthcare.”

Calderón is PRCC’s COO; he directs all the center’s programs, including ones serving the LGBTQ community. He leads the management team that oversees PRCC’s health, culture, art, housing and education components.

Prior to his role as COO, Calderón was PRCC’s Vida/SIDA director focused on providing HIV/AIDS education and preventative services in Humboldt Park.

“In order to do the role justice, I needed to become an unwavering advocate for the resources needed to provide these services,” said Calderón. “I became acquainted with elected officials, city and state department heads and other community organizers, and cried out for the equitable distribution of resources. I was not going to allow our communities of color to receive trickle down resources; we demanded to receive them directly. I led efforts that called for government agencies and elected officials to recognize our agency. To respect our unique vantage point to know what our communities required and how best to deliver the life-saving resources we all deserve. Another goal was to ensure sustainability—providing the community and city a vibrant and expanding base where there has been a lack of resources from public and private sector foundations.”

Calderón has a unique perspective due to his combined Puerto Rican/Mexican heritage. His father is from Puerto Rico and migrated to Chicago as a young adult while his mother is Mexican and emigrated to the states as a young woman.

“I was raised in my mother’s home, which was deeply rooted in Mexican culture—food, music, dialect, religious practices, etc.,” said Calderón. “Nonetheless, I grew up in the Puerto Rican Humboldt Park neighborhood, and eventually became involved with the community including exploring what it means to be Puerto Rican. Now I feel an intense connection to that heritage.”

Calderón describes his childhood as culturally rigorous and rooted in Mexican traditions that his mother instilled in him. He attended Yates Elementary School, Steinmetz as an honor roll student and later graduated from Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School—part of the Alternative Schools Network. Calderón went to the City Colleges of Chicago for two years and transferred to Northeastern Illinois University where he earned his B.A. in Sociology. Currently, he is enrolled in the University of Illinois-Chicago School of Public Health Master of Public Health program and expects to receive his master’s degree sometime in 2018.

In addition to his new role at the Chicago Board of Health, Calderón is the chair of Trans Chicago advocacy organization that promotes safe and welcoming communities for Latinx and Black trans people and a board member of the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture. Calderón is also an education advocate including his role as a Yates Local School Council board member.

Among his many accomplishments, Calderón organized and led a Chicago and New York delegation to Cuba this past May where he partnered with Cuban National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX) Director Mariela Castro (Cuban President Raul Castro’s daughter). CENESEX’s mission is the eradication of transphobia and homophobic in Cuba.

“We introduced public health information focusing on transgender people and other members of the LGBTQ community from Cuba, Puerto Rico and other Puerto Rican diaspora locations,” said Calderón.

Calderón has been recognized by La Voz del Paseo Boricua’s “Top 10 Under 30,” this publication’s “30 under 30” annual list of movers and shakers in the LGBTQ community, DIFFA Chicago and the IVI-JPO Gay & Lesbian Caucus.

When Calderón is not working he likes to plan culturally relevant programming for the PRCC, traveling to Puerto Rico, Cuba and the diasporic Puerto Rican community advancing pan latino public health initiatives. He enjoys attending cultural events in and around Chicago and more recently, working out at the gym. Additionally, he has served as a volunteer for Rep. Luis Gutierrez, state Rep. Cynthia Soto, state Sen. Omar Aquino, state Sen. Iris Martinez and Alderman Roberto Maldonado’s political campaigns.

Center’s Torres receives Allstate scholarship

Hector Torres, chief program officer at Center on Halsted, will join 30 other nonprofit leaders from across the country to participate in the Allstate Foundation Greater Good Nonprofit Leadership program.

Now in its fourth year, the Greater Good program is designed to help nonprofit professionals develop their leadership skills. More than 400 finalists applied for this program that pairs nonprofit leaders with renowned academic practitioners.

This Greater Good cohort will meet in-person twice more through May 2018. The entire roster of the 2017-2018 Greater Good class is at https://www.allstatefoundation.org/pdf/greater-good-class-of-2018.pdf.

Juan Calderón.
Photo by Ricardo Santiago

Dr. Hector Torres.
Photo courtesy of Torres
Tired of planning your life around diarrhea?

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Mytesi (crofelemer):
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What is Mytesi?
Mytesi is a prescription medicine that helps relieve symptoms of diarrhea not caused by an infection (noninfectious) in adults living with HIV/AIDS on antiretroviral therapy (ART).

Important Safety Information
Mytesi is not approved to treat infectious diarrhea (diarrhea caused by bacteria, a virus, or a parasite). Before starting you on Mytesi, your healthcare provider will first be sure that you do not have infectious diarrhea. Otherwise, there is a risk you would not receive the right medicine and your infection could get worse. In clinical studies, the most common side effects that occurred more often than with placebo were upper respiratory tract (sinus, nose, and throat) infection (5.7%), bronchitis (3.9%), cough (3.5%), flatulence (3.1%), and increased bilirubin (3.1%).

IMPORTANT PATIENT INFORMATION
This is only a summary. See complete Prescribing Information at Mytesi.com or by calling 1-844-722-8256. This does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

What Is Mytesi?
Mytesi is a prescription medicine used to improve symptoms of noninfectious diarrhea (diarrhea not caused by a bacterial, viral, or parasitic infection) in adults living with HIV/AIDS on ART.

Do Not Take Mytesi if you have diarrhea caused by an infection. Before you start Mytesi, your doctor and you should make sure your diarrhea is not caused by an infection (such as bacteria, virus, or parasite).

Possible Side Effects of Mytesi Include:
- Upper respiratory tract infection (sinus, nose, and throat infection)
- Bronchitis (swelling in the tubes that carry air to and from your lungs)
- Cough
- Flatulence (gas)
- Increased bilirubin (a waste product when red blood cells break down)

For a full list of side effects, please talk to your doctor. Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or does not go away.

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.

Should I Take Mytesi If I Am:

**Pregnant or Planning to Become Pregnant?**
- Studies in animals show that Mytesi could harm an unborn baby or affect the ability to become pregnant
- There are no studies in pregnant women taking Mytesi
- This drug should only be used during pregnancy if clearly needed

**A Nursing Mother?**
- It is not known whether Mytesi is passed through human breast milk
- If you are nursing, you should tell your doctor before starting Mytesi
- Your doctor will help you to decide whether to stop nursing or to stop taking Mytesi

**Under 18 or Over 65 Years of Age?**
- Mytesi has not been studied in children under 18 years of age
- Mytesi studies did not include many people over the age of 65. So it is not clear if this age group will respond differently. Talk to your doctor to find out if Mytesi is right for you

What Should I Know About Taking Mytesi With Other Medicines?
If you are taking any prescription or over-the-counter medicine, herbal supplements, or vitamins, tell your doctor before starting Mytesi.

What If I Have More Questions About Mytesi?
For more information, please see the full Prescribing Information at Mytesi.com or speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

To report side effects or make a product complaint or for additional information, call 1-844-722-8256.

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Mytesi comes from the *Croton lechleri* tree harvested in South America.
Affinity, Care Plan hold second annual LGBTQ Care Fair

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

LGBTQ older adults were the focus of Affinity Community Services (Affinity) and The Care Plan, LLC’s second annual LGBTQ Care Fair Dec. 16 at Affinity’s headquarters.

The event featured resources and education centered around Medicare and Medicaid coverage, advanced directives, care planning and aging as an LGBTQ person.

Affinity Executive Director Imani Rupert-Gordon spoke about the history of the organization and why it was founded 22 years ago. She noted the primary reason for Affinity’s creation was to elevate Black LGBTQ women’s voices at a time when other LGBTQ organizations were not giving them a platform and to bring a queer presence to the South Side. Rupert-Gordon explained that Affinity recently began working on older adults concerns because the membership is aging and this is what they wanted. She called on attendees to visit the community partner tables, previewed Affinity’s annual Burning Bowl on Jan. 13 and noted that SAGE sponsored the lunch from Subway.

Ahead of the presentations, Affinity Trailblazer Phyllis Johnson (co-peer leader alongside Toi Williams) spoke about the group’s two monthly activities—Movie Mondays on the third Monday of the month at 2 p.m. and an evening potluck on the second Wednesday of the month where they engage in fellowship and discuss an agreed upon topic—as well as other events held throughout the year.

The Care Plan owner Jacqueline Boyd said she hoped attendees would come away from the event with tools to live longer, live well and protect themselves both physically and financially. She noted LGBTQ elders are underserved and overlooked by healthcare systems and said one of Affinity’s missions is to turn that around.

AARP Illinois Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach Terri Worman spoke about advanced directives including the resources available to the public. She said many of these things can be found on the AARP and American Bar Association websites.

Worman explained that a digital power of attorney focuses on everything one does online including social media and financial accounts. She noted that each person needs to have a designated person or people who have access to these accounts so they can be dealt with after a person dies. Worman said Illinois passes a law that gives a personal representative or trustee the authorization to access and manage a deceased person’s digital life.

Among the other topics Worman focused on were the five steps of estate planning for LGBT couples, health directives, living wills, power of attorney and organ/whole-body donation.

Transitional Care of Arlington Heights Clinical Liaison Libby Reinecke spoke about the post-acute care services they provide including the fact that all staff members are required to complete LGBTQ and cultural competency training. She also outlined the differences between Medicare (federally run) and Medicaid (state run) and how to enroll in each program and noted Transitional Care takes both of those insurance plans in addition to private insurance.

Representatives from vendors Joyful Bliss (they also offered mini-massages for attendees), Nuptune Society, New York Life Insurance, Howard Brown Health, Center on Halsted/Center on Addiction, The Village Chicago and Dawson Relocation Services also spoke about the services they provide.

Weather permitting, Affinity’s annual Burning Bowl on Jan. 13 can be experienced from the comfort of the warmth and only minutes from the action of the event, which is devoted to educating the LGBTQ community about services and resources with an emphasis on aging and the needs of elders.

The event, which will take place throughout the state in January, is as follows:
- Region 2: Thursday, Jan. 18: Normal Public Library, 206 W. College Ave., Normal, 6-8 p.m.
- Region 7: Tuesday, Jan. 23: Waukegan Public Library, 128 N. County St., Waukegan, 5-7:30 p.m.
- Region 3: Thursday, Jan. 25: Simmons Cancer Institute at SIU School of Medicine, 315 W. Carpenter St., Springfield, 12-2 p.m.
- Region 6: Friday, Jan. 26: Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, 201 W. Kenyon Rd., Champaign, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
- Region 1: Saturday, Jan. 27: Moline Public Library, 3210 41st St., Moline, 12-2 p.m.
- Region 5: Tuesday, Jan. 30: Carbondale Civic Center, 200 S. Illinois Ave., Carbondale, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- Region 4: Wed., Jan. 31: Doubletree Hotel, 1000 Eastport Plaza Dr., Collinsville, 2-4 p.m.

Transportation and childcare assistance are available upon request; contact Sara Semelka at sssemelka@aidschicago.org To learn more about Getting to Zero, visit AIDSchicago.org/gtz.

‘Getting to Zero’ town halls in January

Over the next year, the Getting to Zero project will be engaging communities across Illinois to gather ideas and write a plan to eliminate the HIV epidemic in the state.

The goal is to have zero new HIV infections and zero people living with HIV who are not connected to health care and medication by the year 2027.

To that end, town halls will take place throughout the state in January. They are as follows:
- Region 2: Thursday, Jan. 18: Normal Public Library, 206 W. College Ave., Normal, 6-8 p.m.
- Region 7: Tuesday, Jan. 23: Waukegan Public Library, 128 N. County St., Waukegan, 5-7:30 p.m.
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Judge subjects Dennis Hastert to restrictions

In Chicago, U.S. District Judge Thomas M. Durkin ruled that disgraced former U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert is barred from contact with minors unless another adult is around who knows Hastert paid money to conceal that he’d sexually abused teenage boys, The Washington Post reported.

The Illinois Republican is also banned from possessing pornography and using sex-chat lines, and allow authorities to search his home and belongings—even without a warrant. In addition, he must get approval before using any computer or any device with internet access.

In 2015, Hastert, 75, admitted to issuing hush money and lying about it to the FBI. This past July, he left a federal prison in Minnesota after serving 13 months of a 15-month sentence.

In related news, depositions for Hastert and one of his alleged victims are expected to take place within the next couple of months, the Northwest Herald noted. Anonymous accuser James Doe claims that Hastert promised to pay him $3.5 million to keep quiet about Hastert’s sexual assault of Doe when he was a freshman at Yorkville High School—but has said that Hastert only paid him $1.7 million.

The Post article is at https://www.washingtonpost.com; the Herald article is at NW Herald.com.

Women’s March announces affiliation

Women’s March Chicago’s Jan. 20, 2018 “March to the Polls” announced its affiliation with March On, a national organization of women’s marches and progressive organizations.

According to a press release, “The move is intended to amplify the group’s local actions in its focus on motivating women and their allies to get to the polls for the 2018 election. Similar actions are being planned by other women’s march organizers around the world, furthering the alignment and power of the movement.”

March On will launch some strategic initiatives in the next year that Chicago organizers believe will be useful in organizing around common goals as women prepare to cast their ballots in 2018. For more information and to participate, volunteer or donate, visit WeAreMarchOn.org.

Back 2 School aiding underserved students

Back 2 School Illinois (B2SI)—a Chicago-based nonprofit that provides tens of thousands of kids from low-income families with free school supplies to help them succeed in the classroom—has announced its first-ever holiday campaign.

B2SI is running the campaign through Sunday, Dec. 31.

To participate in the campaign, donors visit B2SI.org/Holiday and click on the “Donate” button in the upper right-hand corner. Next, they can make a tax-deductible donation (and have the option of making the donation “in honor of” or “in memory of” a friend or family member).
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Families of Chicago celebrates LGBTQ youths of color

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

“Dance fusion” was the theme of Families of Chicago’s (FOC) second annual holiday banquet celebrating Chicago’s young Black and Brown LGBTQ communities Dec. 10 at University of Chicago’s Ida Noyes Hall.

Among the banquet committee members were family leaders, The Village (University of Chicago) staff and University of Chicago staff and students.

FOC is affiliated with the University of Chicago Medicine and consists of over 10 Houses and Families from across the city’s south and west side neighborhoods. These families, like the well-known house and ball communities, include individuals from across the queer spectrum.

The family scene is a kinship and cultural formation entity that fosters resilience and persistence for queer youth and young adults who may have encountered difficulty at home, school and/or finding employment. All families consist of an Overall Mother or an Overall Father who is tasked with providing family members with life skills, housing and employment assistance as well as emotional support to their entire families.

“FOC’s mission is to provide support, guidance and development for members of FOC as they navigate and persevere through the obstacles of life that come along with being a member of the young LGBTQ community of Chicago,” said event organizer and University of Chicago Hospital Department of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Education and Training Manager Joel Jackson.

FOC Kash Family Founder and community leader Jo Jo Kash recognized members of each family during the legends, statements and stars showcase ahead of brief remarks by The Village Youth Program Coordinator Denim Carter, University of Chicago Biological Sciences Division Director of Diversity Initiatives Tobias Spears and Jackson, who led a moment of silence.

Following the dinner, FOC bestowed the organization’s first community leadership awards to Kardashian Family Founder Halle B. Kardashian, Moncler Family Founder Meghan Moncler and Rajah Family Founder Kentrell Rajah for their unique and substantial contributions to the family scene.

This included, but was not limited to, their visibility within the scene itself and community work outside the scene. These awards will be presented at forthcoming annual banquets.

The Miata Family won FOC’s first annual Best Dressed Family award. Performers included Bionca Black from the Carter Family and Sha Sha Golden from the Golden Family.

D.J. Matty spun the music; Porkchop in Hyde Park provided the food for the evening’s festivities.

Full Kit Gear to remain after sale of Man’s Country

With the announced closure of Man’s Country and the pending sale of the two buildings at 5015-5023 N. Clark St., there have been rumors regarding the future of Full Kit Gear. Full Kit Gear released a statement that said it has a very long lease and anticipates being at 5021-23 N. Clark St. for many years to come.

Having Full Kit Gear come to Chicago and become part of the local community was very important to Chuck Renslow. Ron Ehemann, Chuck Renslow’s long-time partner, current owner of the buildings, and Trustee of the Renslow Family Trust stated: “From the time Chuck and I decided to sell the buildings, it was very important to us that FK stay put to serve the community we so love. We negotiated to make sure of that in the sale of the buildings, and the new owners have committed to that as well. Full Kit Gear will remain here, as part of the community, and as part of Chuck’s legacy for many years to come.”

For further information from Full Kit Gear or Ron Ehemann and the Renslow Family, email info@FullKitGear.com.

Leather Archives has new director

The Leather Archives & Museum, 6418 N. Greenview Ave., has announced that Gary Wasdin will assume the role of executive director on Jan. 2, 2018. Wasdin will succeed Rick Storer, who was with the organization for 15 years.

Wasdin was one of three finalists for the position. (Christina Court had been named interim executive director after Storer’s departure.) The other candidates were current LA&M Director of Operations Jeff Storer and volunteer and curator Alissa Swindell, according to GreatLakesDen.net.

The archives/museum is dedicated to the compilation, preservation and maintenance of leather, kink and fetish lifestyles.

For more about the archives, visit https://leatherarchives.org.
Zach Barnard has been painting for as long as he can remember. “I just love how it completely takes me away from the real world,” he said. “I can completely phase out and not really even pay attention to what I’m doing, which is so healthy for my mental state.” He grew up an only child, using painting as a way to entertain himself in his hometown of Richmond, Virginia.

At the prompting of his high school art teacher, Barnard decided to apply to study art at Columbia College of Chicago, where he is now entering his senior year. It was the right decision, he said, because the city has become a huge source of inspiration for him. “Moving to Chicago was the best thing ever because I’m always finding new places to paint,” Barnard said. “I especially love [the city] at night. It’s so beautiful.”

Not only has Chicago served as a muse for the young oil painter, but it also has become his canvas. In March, Barnard debuted an installation piece at Danny’s Tavern in Bucktown. “I just love the building and thought, ‘How cool would it be to take the painting off of the canvas, and make it feel like you’re walking into it yourself?’” he said. Barnard completely transformed a room of the tavern into a romantic art lover’s dream. The walls were almost entirely covered in his large-scale painting and Barnard even added extra touches like a hand-painted gramophone and entryway. “It was really awesome to come and have people sitting in it having a great time and not even know they were inside an art piece,” he said.

Barnard said he’d love to do more installation work in the future, but for now canvas and oil paint is his medium of choice. Interested persons can check out his work on display at The Leigh Gallery, 3306 N. Halsted St., or peruse his online gallery at ZachBarnardArt.com.

• Age 25
• Orientation Gay
• Job titles Student, server, painter
• Relationship status “Single and ready to mingle”
• Hobbies Seeing concerts, singing in the shower, wandering aimlessly through Whole Foods and admiring all of the overpriced groceries
• Recent movies watched The entire Lord of the Rings series
• Fun Fact He’s obsessed with pugs, especially his own, Lois.

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Chicago Icon: The Marge Summit Story

BY OWEN KEEHNEN

PART ONE OF A TWO-PART FEATURE

Marge Summit is a Chicago icon. The former bar owner, community organizer, and longtime activist has been a very visible member of Chicago's LGBT community for more than 65 years.

Marge began hitting the bars in the 1950s and managed several of them before opening her own. She was the longtime owner of His 'n' Hers, a favorite community bar that, among other locations, was right under the Chicago L tracks on Addison. His 'n' Hers catered to both men and women, had an extremely popular open mic night, and served some of the best burgers in town.

Among Summit's numerous accomplishments, she was an organizer of the Gay $ campaign which showed the strength of LGBT dollars, produced the anti-gay violence film Crimes of Hate, and appeared in the award-winning documentary Before Stonewall. Five years ago, Marge met and married the love of her life, Janan Lindley.

Talking with Marge is always a pleasure, and she sure has some terrific stories to tell. The following interview is just a glimpse into this incredible woman's life. Thank you Marge, for all you have done and continue to do for the community.

Windy City Times: So, where did it all begin?

MS: I was born Sept. 3, 1935 on the North Side of Chicago in an attic. My mother went into the attic and was not going to tie off the cord. Luckily, for me, my grandmother, who lived right around the corner, came and saw what was going on and started screaming at my mother. If it wasn't for my grandmother I wouldn't be here.

WCT: And your father?

MS: My father was a whoremonger. I never met him, never saw a picture of him. He left my mother when I was in the belly.

WCT: What area on the North Side?

MS: Milwaukee and Central area, a Polish neighborhood. We lived on Barry. I lived there with my grandparents. My mother dropped us off there after she divorced my father. My brother and I lived with them until we were 12 years old.

WCT: Tell me about your grandparents.

MS: My grandmother was loving and caring, a better parent than my mother. I have great memories of the wonderful food my grandmother made for us. Every meal was homemade. We never had anything processed or store-bought—her pierogies and breads were to die for. Her pies. She knew I loved blueberry and apple pies and her pies. Her pierogies and breads were to die for. Her pies. Her pierogies and breads were to die for.

Summit at a 1970s bar party. Gay Chicago archives

mother would also always send me to the store to get her newspaper and since I couldn’t speak Polish, I’d just look at the rack of newspapers and say, ‘Give me that one.’ The first time I saw someone killed was right there at Barry and St. Louis. There was a grocery store catty corner to our building and a Tip Top Bread Truck was coming down the street and this girl came out of the store and the truck hit her. All I saw was celery and a loaf of bread flying in the air.

WCT: So that was the first time you saw someone killed?

MS: Well, the only, and I’m glad for that.

WCT: So back to your grandparents.

MS: I remember one time coming home from school and my aunt and uncle lived above us. I baby sat for their kids. Anyway, I got a star and a flag on my report card, which meant I got a nickel from my aunt, so I ran upstairs to get my money. When my uncle opened the door, I fell backwards down two flights of steps and busted open my head. I still have a dent in my head from that. I remember my grandma running with towel and ice and saying, ‘Don’t worry Margie, don’t worry, it will all be healed by the time you get married.’ Gram said the same thing for every scrape and bruise.

Eventually we moved from Barry to Kimball. I remember when we were there my grandfather giving me a quarter and saying, ‘Here you go, go to Riverview [Riverview Amusement Park on Belmont west of Western, 1904-1967].’ In those days, you could spend the whole day there for a quarter. Rides were a penny or a half cent. Riverview was a kid’s paradise. I loved that place. The Bobs, Silver Streak, Flying Turns. Not so crazy about the freak show. Loved Aladdin’s Castle [the funhouse at Riverview].

My grandfather was strict. He demanded respect and I remember him making homemade Polish sausages. He liked to fix things. He hated my jazz, thought it was noise, but he loved his polkas. He fell down the stairs one day and when they took him to the hospital they found cancer and the only way to stop the cancer was amputate his leg, but the cancer spread. They gave him six months to live and he ended up living another two-and-a-half years. In the meantime my mother and stepfather came and said they would take us now so we moved in with them.

WCT: How did that go?

MS: I loved my stepfather. He was the coolest. Taught me so much. How to lay tile and how to fix things. I helped him build a darkroom. He took one of the bedrooms and converted it into a darkroom. He taught me how to develop negatives and print pictures. He was an amazing man. He died when he was 44. He had a blood clot in his chest and went to work his 3-11 shift at the steel mill. That night we got a call that they were rushing him in an ambulance to the hospital. Medical care was different in those days. So, he was gone before they could save him. I really loved that guy. He died the day before my birthday, so for me, birthdays were not a thing to celebrate anymore.

WCT: When were you first realized you were a lesbian?

MS: I always knew I was different. I didn’t know what it was or what that meant. I think I realized that when I didn’t want to wear dresses, probably around 10 or 11. My mother married my stepfather when I was 12, and we went to live with him on the South Side. When I had to make my confirmation, he was thrilled because he was going to see me in a dress, but I told him, ‘Not for long.’ When my brother wasn’t around I’d put on his clothes and walk around like I was a big shot. This was the 1940s. Life was just better if you looked like a guy.

WCT: So with not being fond of wearing dresses, when did you realize that liking women was part of being a lesbian?

MS: I was in high school. I went to Chicago Vocational. I hung out in the school store with all the kids who were bad and smoked.

WCT: The fun crowd.

MS: Oh yeah. Those were my people. We talked dirty and had fun. I met this girl and we were talking and she said, ‘Why don’t we go to a show together someday.’ So I said okay. I was driving already and had a 1935 Pontiac with a stick shift. I paid $35 for that car and even painted it myself with a brush. Anyway, I went and picked her up in my car and we went to the show and then I took her home. By then it started hailng something awful and she said, ‘Okay, call from inside and then you can come upstairs and sleep with me.’ And that was it.

WCT: How old were you then?

MS: A freshman in high school, so 14 or 15.

WCT: And off to the races.

MS: Yes! I used to be in the band and used to play for graduations. I was always a flirt. I had straight girls come to my house just wanting to kiss and I said, ‘No problem.’

WCT: What instrument did you play?

MS: Trumpet.

WCT: So your kissing muscles got practice.

MS: Oh yes. During graduation we’d be in the pit playing and the school was huge because it used to be a naval academy. Anyway, I’d be in the pit playing and some of the girls I knew would be carrying bouquets of roses and when they walked by me, they would stop and give me a rose. All the guys were asking me, ‘Why are you getting flowers from all the girls?’ I just told them it was because I was special.

WCT: When did you leave home?

MS: After my stepfather died, my mother went...
My girls’ I said, ‘Rich, you only go out with ugly girls!’ And he did too. When I talk about being attracted to beautiful women, I don’t meant physical beauty, that’s a dime a dozen. I mean beauty in the way women carry themselves and behave. That’s beauty to me.

**WCT: How did you support yourself?**

MS: I was working part time for the phone company in Hyde Park. Then, just before I graduated from high school, they said they were opening an office downtown. There I worked in the accounting department sorting the operator tickets and then giving those to the billing department. Then they opened an office in Harvey, Illinois for those who lived on the South Side. So I went from sorting bills to typing them up. I was the fastest typist there and with the phone company you were always evaluated by production. I knew my section average and was sure to only turn in an amount that was over that so if I came in the next day hungover or something, I could turn in the extras. Eventually I started working on the mainframe computers there, and that interested me. Always loved learning new things.

**WCT: What was the first gay bar you went to?**

MS: On 99th and Southwest Highway. It was called Lill’s. That was before I found Calumet City. At Lill’s you had to go in a side door and she put us off as her ball team. We couldn’t dance, just drink. I was 15 then, I think. Drinking age was a different story back then. When I went to my first bar in the neighborhood I was 14 and asked for a screwdriver and the bartender gave it to me. No questions asked. That wasn’t an issue like today.

**WCT: Tell me about Calumet City at the time.**

MS: A friend who I went to high school with from high school, they said they were opening an office downtown. There I worked in the accounting department sorting the operator tickets and then giving those to the billing department. Then they opened an office in Harvey, Illinois for those who lived on the South Side. So I went from sorting bills to typing them up. I was the fastest typist there and with the phone company you were always evaluated by production. I knew my section average and was sure to only turn in an amount that was over that so if I came in the next day hungover or something, I could turn in the extras. Eventually I started working on the mainframe computers there, and that interested me. Always loved learning new things.

**WCT: And this is in the 1950s?**

MS: Yes. Then a friend’s sister opened a bar called The Patch on Wentworth Avenue. That was the cha cha and we were good. But people never realized that I was the one leading.

**WCT: Are many of these guys you hung around with in those years still around?**

MS: Some. None of them died of AIDS, but one couldn’t go alone because I was a woman and technically you couldn’t go with another girl. So, I had the cover of three or four gay guys. One of the guys, Donna May, and I would get up and do the cha cha and we were accepted. But people never realized that I was the one leading.

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**WCT: Where are some other places you’d go in the 1950s?**

MS: I’d go downtown with my gay friends and they would take me into The Millionaire’s Club because they were members. And we’d go to Cafe Margarita and the Gaslight, which had a gay speakeasy on the third floor. I wiped a cup from there. When you walked into the Gaslight Club they had a library room and then a piano bar and then upstairs you knocked on a door and a guy opened the peephole and you said, ‘Lou Sent Me.’ Then he’d let you in. It was a speakeasy. I
SUMMIT from page 15

MS: I almost did. I was at the Midget Inn on Montrose and Kedzie. The first floor of that place was a straight bar and then you went through the bar and up the stairs and there was a big room for gay women with a jukebox and a bar. When it got raided, the cops had to come through the bar and up the stairs, so there was time to get out. We kicked out the screens to the windows and jumped from the second floor and started running. That was in the 1950s. That was a bad decade for us gay people. Old Man Daley [Mayor Richard J. Daley] did not like us at all so he raided our bars all the time.

WCT: So even if they were syndicate bars, they weren’t under police protection?
MS: If they liked you, the bar people would let you know about things. For example, there was a bar on Lincoln called Chez Ron, another women’s bar. If the guys who ran it liked you, they’d say, ‘Don’t come here next weekend, we think we’re going to get a raid.’ That place you had to pay a $2 cover to get in which was a decent amount of cash in the 1950s.

WCT: So gay bars had a cover?
MS: Lot of them did and then they’d serve rot gut liquor in the call brand bottles.

WCT: So did the syndicate bars have other demands?
MS: Yes, you had to take their jukebox service and sometimes their beer brand demands.

WCT: What other places did you frequent?

We actually had a lot of house parties during the era when the raids were so bad.

WCT: You were also interviewed in the Emmy winning 1984 documentary Before Stonewall...

MS: Yes, they were filming in Chicago, and one of the producers asked me if I wanted to be in it. Of course I did, so they came by and filmed it.

WCT: When they talked with you, what did you want to get across about the pre gay-liberation era?
MS: They wanted them to know how bad it was to be gay and that our lives were always lived in the fear of being murdered or raped or beaten up. It was not an easy time to be gay, but we endured and came out of it OK, I think.

WCT: What was the first bar you worked at?
MS: Togetherness. Ralla Klepak’s bar on Hubbard off of Clark Street [61 W. Hubbard].

WCT: What did you do there?
MS: I was a bartender and then I managed it for her. I was working full time downtown. That’s when I was doing mainframe computer stuff. So I was working downtown and I went to Togetherness. I loved the bar. Togetherness was about everybody being together and I loved that. Togetherness was a cool drag bar. The Baton hadn’t come into its own yet. The Baton was on the corner of Hubbard and Clark and then moved into where it is now [436 N. Clark St.] when The [Sugar] Shack closed.

Anyway, one day I was walking to Ralla and said, ‘You know you’re getting ripped off.’ These bartenders are having a field day because you’re not around. I happened to go to a party at one of their apartments and they had half gallons of liquor. Not many people have a lot of half gallons of liquor in their homes. So, Ralla asked me to manage it. She asked me to come in to the bar after my day job. So I came in at 11 and worked until 5 in the morning. I took the money, counted it, and gave her a list of what needed to be ordered. I also found out who was stealing and got rid of them. Togetherness was a fun place.

WCT: Togetherness was in the early 1970s, right? Tell me about some of the drag performers who were there.
MS: Roby Landers was there. Leslie Rejeanne, Jan Howard, Tina King. Tina King was the first woman I knew that went to New York and had a sex change.

WCT: Do you remember what numbers they did at Togetherness?
MS: Leslie did the Diana Ross numbers. Jan Howard did the sexy stuff. Jan was legally blind. So when I went up to tip her I took the candle from the table and held it over my head for her to see. As for the other two, really can’t remember the numbers.

WCT: How long did you work at Togetherness?
MS: Two years maybe.

WCT: What did you do after managing Togetherness?
MS: Then I was at P.Q.’s which was a disco on Clark and Erie [661 N. Clark]. Big disco, very early, before The Bistro. I liked that bar because it was men and women and gay and straight. That place was always packed. Always. I heard the Bistro was opening down the street [420 N. Dearborn] and I told the owner, ‘This place is going to take away your business’ and he said, ‘No we’ll be OK’. And once the Bistro opened, you could go through P.Q.’s with a pool cue sideways and not hit anyone. So I went there after all this happened and the owner said I’d been right and asked me if I wanted to take over P.Q.’s. I said, ‘OK’; but I wanted it to be a girl’s bar. So, I used my initials and that became MS.

WCT: I never realized that, always thought MS was a nod to feminism.
MS: No, but it was right when Ms. Magazine was becoming big too. So we closed P.Q.’s down and cleaned it up and reopened as a girl’s disco. The bar was huge. The front bar was good-sized and had a pool table and pinball and a bar. Then restrooms were down the hall. Then the hall opened up into this big room. That’s where the disco was. There was a huge horseshoe bar and a DJ booth and the patron seating area was on platforms that went around the dance floor. The setup was wonderful.

WCT: Nice.
MS: I ran MS for three years and this bar was mixed Black and white and I liked that. I had a nice ball team, but it was half Black and that was back in the time when things were different. So when we played ball, everything was out for our team and safe for the other. I remember one game, my girls were getting mad and I said, ‘No, if that’s how they have to win, let them.’ When we went back to the bar I had food laid out for them and I had trophies made up for them. They were all champions in my book.

Mine was really the only integrated bar for gay women at the time. When the late-night crowd from other bars showed up I said, ‘If they bother you let me know, don’t touch them. That’s just
what they want. Let me know. Those other crowds always tried to antagonize my Black girls. One night they started in so bad that I told the DJ to turn the lights on and lower the music. Then I got on the microphone and said, ‘Let’s get one thing straight, we’re all gay and we’re all going to get along. If you start in with my girls again, I’ve got a garden hose in the back and so help me I will turn it on you.’ Then someone started giving me some lip and a friend and I picked her up and carried her to the sidewalk and I said, ‘There, now you’re barred.’ I grew up seeing prejudice all around me. I wasn’t going to take that shit in my bar. That whole thing just always struck me as so ignorant.

WCT: Tell me about your MS float in the Pride Parade.

MS: We had won Girl’s Bar of the Year that year. A friend of mine had her lover in town and this woman was an exotic dancer and I painted her gold. I learned how to mix the body paint with olive oil and how not to paint the palms of their hands and the bottoms of their feet. You can kill someone if you do it wrong. Anyway, she was a statue riding on our float like the award we won for Best Girl’s Bar. Well, when she was riding on the float we’d hit a bump and her tits would bounce and everyone would say, ‘Oh my God, she’s real. She’s alive. We thought she was a statue.’

WCT: When you had MS was when you adopted your daughter, Tanya, right?

MS: Yes. When I had MS, a gay woman who came to the bar was a case worker and through my conversations with her she realized I liked kids. She said I should become a foster parent. I said I can’t, I’m a lesbian. She told me they didn’t have to know that. So I did. I got Susan, who was pregnant with Tanya, first. Then I fostered another child who didn’t do well in a home with men in it, so now I had two and a half kids. Next came an emergency case, a rehabbing drug addict who just had a child. Now I had a full house. I didn’t need the checks since the bar was doing very well. They all had great clothes and 10-speed bikes and water beds to sleep on.

One day I came home from work and went straight to bed. When I woke up, it was to a very quiet house. I asked my friend’s daughter where all the kids were and she said children and family services took them away. Seems the one who didn’t like male dominance told her advocate that I had molested her. Short story—I told CFS that I wanted her to go on the stand to say that.

She chickened out, but they still sent Susan and Tanya, the baby, to live with the advocate. Then one day Susan called and asked if she and Tanya could come home. They had nothing to eat and no milk or food for the baby. The advocate was busy with a new boyfriend. I said of course. When they got to my house I called CFS and told them I had the two children back and if they wanted to, they could take me to court. They dropped the case.

With adopting Tanya, I got a great lawyer. The case worker was harassing me. She would come to the house unannounced to see us. She had a spy that came into the bar. When I finally found out about that, I took her to court. The case worker didn’t show, so we had to subpoena her. She came the next day and had one line about my not being a good parent. The rest was all accusing me of being gay. The judge got so mad at her, he slammed the gavel and said, ‘Adoption granted.’ That was music to my ears. I went into the side room to get Tanya. Then the case worker came in and said she was not finished with me. She would get me and take that child away. My lawyer told her if she didn’t leave us alone he would be back in court to take action to sue her and CFS. So that was how I got my wonderful daughter, Tanya.

WCT: What year was this?

MS: Tanya was born in 1973 and the adoption went through in 1974/75.

WCT: Speaking of that, you are also an important part of starting a local parents support group, around the time PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) started in New York in 1972.

MS: I had a friend, Guy Warner, who use to come to the bar and he worked with Mattachine Midwest. This was in the mid 1970s. He talked to me about counseling parents of gay children. I said OK, as long as I could bring two other people along, an entertainer and a nurse who worked in a hospital. That’s how it began. When that group started to get bigger, they started a more formal group. I loved the fact that I could change a few parent’s minds and help them learn to love and accept their gay kids.

WCT: Why did you bring the entertainer and the nurse?

MS: I wanted them to see gay people were from all walks of life, like some priests and nuns were gay. You really can’t tell until we tell you we are gay.

Next week, the final part of our interview with Marge Summit.
The New Jim Crow targets LGBTQ Americans, too

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments for the case Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission. The case—which has many of us LGBTQ Americans on pins and needles—will litigate a baker’s rights to refuse to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. Dave Mullins and Charlie Craig, on the grounds of religious freedom enshrined in the First Amendment.

If the case is decided in favor of the baker, Jack Phillips, it will be a colossal blow to civil-rights gains and state nondiscrimination laws, legalizing the denial of services to LGBTQ Americans based on business owners’ religious beliefs. President Trump’s solicitor general, Noel Francisco, suggested these businesses should hang anti-LGBTQ placards like “No Gays Allowed,” warning us to stay away. When Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders was asked to clarify the president’s position on the matter at a White House Press Conference, she responded: “The president certainly supports religious liberty. ... I believe that would include that.”

As a Black lesbian living in this Trump administration, I now feel like I am moving into a new Jim Crow era of re-establishing discriminatory laws targeting LGBTQ Americans. I grew up knowing about racist placards that read “Colored Water Fountain,” “Waiting Room For Colored Only,” “We Serve Whites Only” and “No N-word Allowed,” to name a few.

Since Trump has taken office, there has been an erosion of LGBTQ rights under the guise of religious liberty. For example, transgender Americans being denied access to public lavatories is eerily reminiscent of the country’s last-century Jim Crow era denying African-Americans access to lunch counters, water fountains, libraries, gas stations, theaters and restrooms, to name a few.

In Jim Crow America, restrooms were a hot-button issue, as today, and a battleground for equal treatment. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on national origin, race, gender and religion. The law mandated desegregation of all public accommodations, including bathrooms. The Obama administration expanded the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect LGBTQ Americans. However, in February, Trump’s administration revoked federal guidelines permitting transgender students from using “gender-appropriate facilities” that aligned with their gender identity.

This past 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.

And, in July, LGBTQ Americans received a one-two punch from the Trump administration. The first punch was President Trump’s ban on transgender service members, eerily reminiscent of when the military did not want to integrate its ranks racially. In his inimitable style of communicating to the American public, the order came in the form of a tweet. Ironically, Trump’s tweet came on the 69th anniversary of President Harry Truman’s executive order desegregating the U.S. military in 1948.

The second punch occurred on the same day of Trump’s ban. The Justice Department filed court papers citing Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which bars discrimination in the workplace but does NOT bar discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

While Trump’s ban caught the Pentagon and Capitol Hill off guard, the announcement was enthusiastically applauded by numerous anti-LGBTQ hate groups across the country who have long advocated for it, promulgating the fear that healthcare services to our transgender troops would gravely hurt defense spending. In an ad by the Family Research Council, for example, Chelsea Manning was pictured next to a military jet with the question “Which one do you want our military to be spending your tax dollars on—transgender surgeries or equipment?”

On Dec. 11, a federal judge denied request of the Trump administration to delay enlistment deadline for transgenders Americans into the military. They can enlist as early as Jan. 1, 2018.

I am immensely thankful, as a married lesbian, that I reside in Massachusetts, especially if Trump tries to overturn Obergefell v. Hodges, the historic U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage in all states.

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

“The Supreme Court can significantly undermine LGBT rights even without reversing a single case,” Buckwalter-Pozza wrote. “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. Since lawmakers used them to codify LGBTQ discrimination to justify denying us services on state and local levels, and Trump is in lockstep with these discriminatory practices, Jim Crow is already here.

The Advocate.com urging others to follow suit and shedding light on net neutrality’s impact on LGBTQ Americans.

The fight for net neutrality does not stop at the FCC, it is time for Congress to step up and listen to advocates who are leading the fight to preserve this freedom of expression.”

GLAAD previously assembled leaders from LGBTQ digital media to weigh in on net neutrality on the internet-wide day of action to save net neutrality. GLAAD also filed a comment with the FCC in support of net neutrality and published a guest post on invisible,” said Sarah Kate Ellis, President and CEO of GLAAD. “The internet is a lifeline for LGBTQ people to build community support networks and access LGBTQ resources on history, suicide prevention, and health—allowing broadband providers to regulate access is a direct and unconscionable attack on freedom of expression.”

We must protect this lifeline. GLAAD will be collecting testimonials from the LGBTQ community about how the open Internet has affected their lives. Head over to GLAAD’s Twitter to read their stories thought out the day.

GLAAD
Ashley Wheater marks a decade at Joffrey’s helm

BY JOANNA FURNANS

A tarot card reading in the ’80s predicted that Ashley Wheater would become the artistic director of the Joffrey Ballet.

Well, maybe it didn’t specifically mention the Joffrey Ballet and the reading was not for Wheater himself; it was for his sister. But it did clearly indicate that her brother would one day be an artistic director and that he would make a lasting impact on his field.

Sometimes even unknown dreams come true. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Wheater at the helm of the Joffrey Ballet.

Wheater holds a career as a ballet dancer that began at the Royal Ballet School in England and carried on through the London Festival Ballet, the Australian Ballet, the Joffrey Ballet (under the direction of Gerald Arpino) and the San Francisco Ballet (SF Ballet). Over the course of more than 20 years, he worked with some of the most renowned dancers and choreographers in the world, including Rudolf Nureyev, Frederick Ashton, William Forsythe, Paul Taylor, Mark Morris and John Cranko.

It was during his time with the SF Ballet that Wheater suffered an acute injury while attempting to execute a choreographer’s new movement idea in rehearsal. These sorts of immediate, life-altering injuries are rather rare in the dance world. More often than not, dancers accumulate injuries over time as the extreme demands of the form meet the wear and tear of the aging body. This often facilitates a more gradual decision to stop dancing. Unfortunately, circumstances were different for Wheater.

“I had no choice but to retire,” Wheater recalled. “The end result was that I had ruptured the discs in my neck so I had a lot of pressure on my spinal chord and numbness in my upper body, particularly in my arms. Also, some of the vertebrae were cracked. So the choice we made was to remove some of those discs. The doctors said, ‘This is kind of it.’

But the rest of Wheater’s career was just beginning. With the immeasurable support of Helgi Tomasson, artistic director of the San Francisco Ballet, Wheater was encouraged to take on a new role with the company as ballet master. “Helgi was there for me every step of the way,” Wheater told Windy City Times. “He said, ‘You have so much more to offer. We want you to teach, we want you to coach, we want you to be here.’ It was really good to be in the studio again even though it was in a very different capacity. And, honestly, I haven’t looked back.”

Wheater eventually became Tomasson’s assistant and learned the ins and outs of running a successful company. The ballet world took notice of this new potential leader and, in 2007, when the Joffrey search committee began looking for a successor for Arpino, Wheater’s name was at the top of the list. Although incredibly honored, he originally declined the invitation to apply because he was quite happy in his role at SF Ballet.

But after teaching a master class at the Joffrey that summer, he realized that he maintained a deep connection to the company, the city of Chicago and the legacy of Robert Joffrey. It was clear to both Wheater and the Joffrey organization that he was the right fit for the job.

The organization has grown steadily in the last 10 years with the establishment of the Joffrey Academy of Dance founded in 2008 along with community engagement programs that ensure young people have access and exposure to ballet. The company also continues to work with a diverse group of both established and up-and-coming choreographers keeping in line with its founder’s original vision.

“A beautiful mind”

“Robert Joffrey was a classicist at his core,” Wheater explained, “but he was the biggest fan of dance. And he realized that the company didn’t need to fit a certain criteria to be valid. So, Joffrey acquired a ‘different’ kind of dancer and gave opportunities to people really in the left field. … He was experimenting. I would like to think that over the last 10 years we have recaptured the spirit of Robert Joffrey in that way. In terms of being bold, of doing new work, challenging ourselves and the art form because we want the art form to thrive and survive. Therefore, we have to keep moving forward.”

Of course, “thriving” and “surviving” mean different things to different people in our current cultural and political climate. One can imagine the difficulties of engaging new ballet audiences when the art form has a historical reputation of exclusivity, elitism and hegemony. These concerns are not lost on Wheater. “We have to keep making our art form really accessible to our audiences,” he said. “And to engage them in stories that are reflective of our time. We want to be relevant.”

Thanks to Wheater and his team of administrators, the Joffrey is well-poised to develop future ballets that will tell new stories and enliven the old. If their reimagined Nutcracker, choreographed by Tony-winning Christopher Wheeldon, is any indication of the direction to come, fans are in for a bold new decade of reinvigorated ballet.

“I think that by the end of my time, whenever that is, I would hope that the Joffrey is passed on in the best shape it has ever been in” Wheater said. “I don’t think anybody does anything on their own. And I am incredibly grateful to everyone at the Joffrey ballet and our supporters.”

“But,” he added, “I really owe everything to my husband, Brian Johnson. For 20 years … he is the greatest source of my life.”

Performances of The Nutcracker take place through Saturday, Dec. 30, at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Pkwy. For tickets, visit Joffrey.org/nutcracker or call 312-386-8905.
THEATER REVIEW
Red Velvet
Playwright: Lolita Chakrabarti
At: Chicago Shakespeare Theatre
runs through: Jan. 21

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

There’s no disputing that William Shakespeare was an Englishman writing in the 17th century, albeit often employing natives of foreign locales—Italy, Cyprus, Egypt—in his scenarios, so that nowadays, it’s not uncommon for their portrayals to approximate the ethnicity of these personae.

Indeed, for several decades, audiences arriving at a performance of Othello have come to anticipate an actor of African descent in the title role, along with players roaming the stage as in real life, or reconfiguring classical verse to conform to prose vernacular often distorted by emotion (with fight directors standing by, should the aforementioned emotion grow too physical).

Lolita Chakrabarti’s historical drama takes us back to an age before any of these familiar practices we take for granted—specifically, London’s fashionable Theatre Royale in 1833. This was when enormous playhouses forced actors to maintain full-front poses in order to achieve audibility, when a troupe’s leading players/shareholders determined a show’s appearance, and the prospect of a—a gasp!—Yankee replacing Edmund Kean in a Shakespeare play was nearly as shocking as the novelty of the usurper’s race matching that of the Moorish protagonist he was to depict.

The account of how Ira Aldridge broke the color bar and the personal sacrifice exacted by this distinction would, in itself, supply sufficient material for a quotidian “famous first” lecture, but under Gary Griffin’s direction, the saga beginning from the Beach Boys’ “Kokomo” incorporating middle-school euphemisms for female genitalia, concluding with a full-frontal I-See-London flash of white spandex. (This selection is promptly followed by a scappy cover of Beyoncé’s “Girls Run the World” to forestall feminist ire.) Gay-male cultural references include a parody involving “Mary Poppers” offering advice on sexual enhancement devices, with choreography—despite being mostly executed in silhouette behind a screen—temporarily pushing the Red Liners’ PG-13 burlesque sensibility into R-rated territory.

The program also encompasses clever mashups of sacred and secular ditties (“Come All Ye Faithful” with One Republic’s “Love Runs Out”) and medleys united by theme or lyrical keynote—for example, a collection of “Believe” songs segueing with his excoriation by London critics aghast at his “domestic” acting style, and ending with him donning beard, wig, and whiteface to play Lear in Europe, occupies a universe encompassing a diversity of opinions on issues affecting not merely show business, but its social context as well—the controversy over England’s boycott of goods produced by slave labor in the United States, for example, and the economic hardships on both sides engendered thereby.

This doesn’t mean that the debate eclipses its instigator. Virtually every scene proposes Aldridge squaring off in verbal combat against an adversary—confrontation emphasized by the addition of African American Ben King as a young producer Don King—whom Aldridge emasculated but converted to an arena, on whose perimether onlookers retreat to await the outcome of the argument. This arrangement also mandates a circular Grand Drape whose crimson depths, our hero reminds us, constitute “a crushed map of who was here, folded in”—perhaps waiting for their labors, centuries hence, to be granted full merit by playwrights like Chakrabarti.

THEATER REVIEW
It’s a Fabulous Life
Playwright: Julie Hill
At: The Chicago Red Line at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.
Tickets: $20
Runs through: Dec. 22

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The playbills hadn’t left Santa’s shop on opening night, but that’s just another part of the hey-kids-let’s-put-on-a-show charm of this holiday revue by the troupe calling itself The Chicago Red Line, whose fluid aesthetic owes as much to Glee as to Forbidden Broadway in its enthusiastic effort to ensure a good time for everybody.

The plot revolves around George Gayly, who resides contentedly in Boystown with his partner, Harry Snatch. This holiday season, though, their coziness is threatened by massive debts resulting from the city’s red-light ordinances and the kickbacks engendered thereby falling into the hands of the rapacious Fancy Cotch-Rotter. One night, following a melancholy pub-crawl, George prays for deliverance from his despair. Heavenly benefactors, hearing his plea, dispatch his two guardian angels, Clarence and Terence, to restore his faith in the future.

All this is merely a clothesline upon which to hang a jukebox musical with a score ranging from sweet solo renditions of country ballads like the Zac Brown Band’s “Colder Weather” to a raunchy spoof of the Beach Boys’ “Kokomo” incorporating middle-school euphemisms for female genitalia, concluding with a full-frontal I-See-London flash of white spandex. (This selection is promptly followed by a scappy cover of Beyoncé’s “Girls Run the World” to forestall feminist ire.) Gay-male cultural references include a parody involving “Mary Poppers” offering advice on sexual enhancement devices, with choreography—despite being mostly executed in silhouette behind a screen—temporarily pushing the Red Liners’ PG-13 burlesque sensibility into R-rated territory.

The program also encompasses clever mashups of sacred and secular ditties (“Come All Ye Faithful” with One Republic’s “Love Runs Out”) and medleys united by theme or lyrical keynote—for example, a collection of “Believe” songs segueing with Cher’s “Believe” to the Book of Mormon’s “I Believe” to the Monkees’ “I’m a Believer” and many, many more.

The opening-night performance was somewhat hampered by shaky amplification and occasional wobbling harmonies, and the two-hour running time (“Go buy alcohol” an angel exhorts us at intermission) could use some trimming. If an evening that includes “Waving Through a Window” (from Dear Evan Hansen), “It’s Raining Men” and Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” sounds like your cup of eggnog, however, then this gloriously goofy neighborhood revue may be exactly what is needed to rest you merry amid the pressures of this busy season.

THEATER REVIEW
Beautiful, The Carole King Musical
Playwright: Douglas McGrath (book);
Jerry Goffin, Carole King, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil (words & music)
At: Cadillac Palace, 151 W. Randolph St.
Tickets: 800-775-2000;
InChicago.com: $30-$115
Runs through: Jan. 28

BY JONATHAN ABBARBANEL

The Oriental Theatre is packing in the teenie and tweenie females for Wicked, but it’s their grandparents who are whoopin’ and hollerin’ two blocks away at the Cadillac Palace with the return of Beautiful, The Carole King Musical, a biography of the artist who has spent an astonishing 60 years in pop music. The audience base for Beautiful clearly has followed King for a lifetime, quite literally.

King’s music is far from new, but it remains remarkably fresh, appealing and insouciant. In part, it’s because King and her early writing partner, Jerry Goffin, wrote excellent songs with smart lyrics (mostly Goffin’s) and clever tunes (King’s) with a hook and sometimes unexpected modulations. Book writer Douglas McGrath has woven a story—King’s biography—in which the songs fit more tightly and appropriately than in any other jukebox musical. As pleasingly familiar as they are, the songs seem to have been written for the specific characters and situations. Beautiful also celebrates rock’s pre-Motown era when white producers and songwriters worked closely with early Black crossover artists, many of whom are portrayed in musical cameos. The show knowingly creates nostalgia for that seemingly-more-innocent period in pop culture.

King (Sarah Bockel) started early and fast: she was in college and a published songwriter at 16, pregnant and married by 18. Goffin, her golden writing partner, also was her husband for 10 years although he strayed and had substance abuse issues. Beautiful presents King as a trend-setting song stylist with very middle-class, frequently naive ideas about marriage and family—unable to see how Goffin felt personally and creatively confined.

With their break-up, King quite literally found her own voice as a performer and also broke free of her own creative limits. The moment when wise Jewish mama Klein (the real family name) tells Carole that she doesn’t need a man for validation is the moment the audience shouts and claps its approval. Yeah, it’s a woman’s story, so I guess it does belong on the same street as Wicked.

It can’t be coincidence that the show once again stars someone with Chicago street cred. (We breed grit as well as talent here.) Bockel doesn’t make Beautiful quite as exciting as the first time around, with Chicago-bred Abbey Mueller (from a well-known clan of actors) in the lead, but it’s not because Bockel lacks voice or ability; it’s the absence of surprise in the show’s straightforward narrative. First-time viewers won’t have that issue. Bockels supporting team is solid and charming down the line: hunky Brewer as Goffin, Sarah Goake and Jacob Heimer as best buds (and competing song-writers) Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann, James Clay as producer Don Kirshner and Suzanne Grodner as mama Genie Klein.

CRITICS' PICKS

The Nutcracker, Joffrey Ballet @ The Auditorium, through Dec. 30.
This music is passionately the same, but Christopher Wheeldon’s reconception is a social revolution and visual spectacular. This dazzling Nutcracker celebrates Chicago and the Auditorium itself.

A Dickens Carol, Oak Park Festival Theater at Madison Street Theatre, through Dec. 24.
A Dickens Carol, Oak Park Festival Theater at Madison Street Theatre, through Dec. 24.

There’s no shaking the corporate manufactured feel of his 2010 Broadway stage adaptation of the 2003 Will Ferrell film. Yet this musical only reflects the times, so enjoy all of the wobbling harmonies, and the two-hour running time (“Go buy alcohol” an angel exhorts us at intermission) could use some trimming. If an evening that includes “Waving Through a Window” (from Dear Evan Hansen), “It’s Raining Men” and Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” sounds like your cup of eggnog, however, then this gloriously goofy neighborhood revue may be exactly what is needed to rest you merry amid the pressures of this busy season.

—By ABBARBANEL, Barnidge and Morgan
DOUBLE REVIEW

Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer
Playwright: David Cerda
At: Hell in a Handbag Productions at Mary’s Attic, 5400 N. Clark St.
Tickets: $25-$30; VIP tickets available; HandbagProductions.org
Runs through: Dec. 30

The Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes, Holiday Edition
Playwright: David Cerda
At: Hell in a Handbag Productions at Mary’s Attic, 5400 N. Clark St.
Tickets: $25; VIP tickets available; HandbagProductions.org
Runs through: Jan. 10

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Not content to produce just one show for the holiday season, Hell in a Handbag Productions has unleashed three this December.

Bette: Xmas at the Continental Baths has already come and gone after two performances at Steppenwolf Theatre’s 1700 space. But two remaining Handbag holiday shows are still running and snuggly tucked into Mary’s Attic in Andersonville.

Rudolph The Red-Hosed Reindeer is back for its 20th anniversary, while this past summer’s TV sitcom spoof hit, The Golden Girls -- The Lost Episodes, has been resuscitated for a special Holiday Edition. As with most Handbag shows, both are filled to the brim with camp comedy, delicious drag and a bounty of beefcake (the flesh flashed by Chazie Bly as a jazzercise instructor in Golden Girls and Colin Funk as a butch gay elf in Rudolph are very welcome).

Author/actor David Cerda appears in both shows, playing the Golden Girls’ acerbic Dorothy and a number of roles in Rudolph. Though Cerda’s sometimes shaky performances suggest that he may be stretching himself too thin, he’s cleverly done his part to update each property both politically and seasonally.

Hence the corrupted Santa (Michael Hampton) in Rudolph now takes on unflattering traits of the current White House resident. He’s flanked by Iwanka (Cerda), a foreign trophy wife with questionable decorating tastes, and an appalling Kellyanne Conway-inspired press secretary Connie Blitzen (Terry McCarthy, carrying off a red-white-and-blue inaugural ensemble by ingenious costume designer Kate Setzer-Kamphausen far better than the original).

As a spoof of the celebrated stop-motion Rankin/Bass animated TV specials, Rudolph carries an obligatory, if oddly-focused, message about saluting non-conformity both inside and outside the LGBTQ community. Yet the silly and outré performances from an oversize and committed cast is what makes Rudolph such seasonal fun.

Far more contained and to-the-point is the Holiday Edition of The Golden Girls. Now one of its three “lost” episodes hinges on a continuing belief in Santa by Rose (the ever-invaluable and hilarious Handbag regular Ed Jones).

As before, much of the joy of Handbag’s Golden Girls spoof is seeing the beloved sitcom characters spouting out more risqué material that would never have made it on network TV. Adrian Hadlock is a joy as the feisty Sophia, while newcomer Grant Drager layers on the Southern charm as Blanche. Also deserving of praise are Robert Williams and Michael Miller in a number of supporting roles.

Both shows assuredly deliver the naughty laughs you’d expect of Handbag Productions. And with two holiday shows to pick from, you’re spoilt for campy comedy choice.

SPOTLIGHT

Women have largely embodied the title role of Peter Pan onstage since the Edwardian era. Music Theater Works in Evanston continues that tradition by staging a revival of the most popular Broadway musical version of Peter Pan from 1954 (which originally starred Mary Martin). Music Theater Works’ Peter Pan plays nine performances between Saturday, Dec. 23, through Monday, Jan. 1, at Northwestern University’s Cahn Auditorium, 600 Emerson St., Evanston. Tickets are $34-$96, with a half-price discount for youth ages 25 and younger; call 847-920-5360 or visit MusicTheaterWorks.com.

Caption: Captain Hook (Larry Adams) does battle with Peter Pan (Aubrey Adams) for Music Theater Works in Evanston. Photo by Rich Foreran

The Nutcracker

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Victoria Jaiani and Miguel Angel Blanco | Photo by Cheryl Mann

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Dundie Productions
The year 2017 will be remembered as a year with a multitude of superhero flicks, an overkill of biopics and too many unsuccessful sequels. Independent movies rose to the top and summer did not scorch at the box office this time. The challenges of marketing and when exactly the right time is to release a film continue to this day. Labor Day weekend was abysmal and had not hit that low of a number since 1998. The highest-grossing film in 2017 was Beauty and the Beast (released earlier in the year), and it is the 10th highest grossing film of all time.

Going to the movie house can be an expensive trip after tickets, parking and concessions. Audiences are now wisely watching sites like Rotten Tomatoes before spending their hard earned cash. It was a very unpredictable year. For example, one minute Stephen King’s It is a smash—and then his Dark Tower is suddenly tumbling down. Movie versions of TV shows were disappointing as Baywatch was buried in the sand and Chips drove off the road. Tom Cruise tanked with The Mummy, then entertained in American Made. Raunchy female comedies ruled and became a trend with Girls Trip, A Bad Moms Christmas and Rough Night. The horror genre released movies throughout the year, not just to scare in October. Look at Get Out, Raw, 47 Meters Down and It Comes at Night, each different in its own unique way.

Wonder Woman heroically broke the record for highest box office for a female directed film this past summer. Also, she joined the Justice League to make one of the most expensive movies ever; however, continuing the streak of unpredictability, that film struggled to just break even. Other comic books brought in the cash, though, such as Logan, Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 and Thor: Ragnarok. Spider-Man: Homecoming took home more loot worldwide than any of his other amazing friends.

Despicable Me stepped on the previous champi-on Shrek to become the highest-grossing animated franchise of all time this year. Coco cleaned up with ticket sales, although The Emoji Movie (which was critically panned) earned a sad face in that department.

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While going to the movie house can be an expensive trip after tickets, parking and concessions, audiences are now wisely watching sites like Rotten Tomatoes before spending their hard earned cash. It was a very unpredictable year. For example, one minute Stephen King’s It is a smash—and then his Dark Tower is suddenly tumbling down. Movie versions of TV shows were disappointing as Baywatch was buried in the sand and Chips drove off the road. Tom Cruise tanked with The Mummy, then entertained in American Made.

Raunchy female comedies ruled and became a trend with Girls Trip, A Bad Moms Christmas and Rough Night. The horror genre released movies throughout the year, not just to scare in October. Look at Get Out, Raw, 47 Meters Down and It Comes at Night, each different in its own unique way.

Wonder Woman heroically broke the record for highest box office for a female directed film this past summer. Also, she joined the Justice League to make one of the most expensive movies ever; however, continuing the streak of unpredictability, that film struggled to just break even. Other comic books brought in the cash, though, such as Logan, Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 and Thor: Ragnarok. Spider-Man: Homecoming took home more loot worldwide than any of his other amazing friends.

Despicable Me stepped on the previous champion Shrek to become the highest-grossing animated franchise of all time this year. Coco cleaned up with ticket sales, although The Emoji Movie (which was critically panned) earned a sad face in that department.

As far as LGBT cinema, there were several praised offerings, such as Princess Cyd, Beach Rats, Call Me By Your Name and BPM. Thanks to Moonlight in 2016, Hollywood is finally taking notice of the LGBT market and what the gay dollar can do.

Here are a few memorable hits or misses that were released in the past 12 months:

**Worst Movies of 2017**
- 5. Fifty Shades Darker
- 4. Chips
- 3. Transformers: The Last Knight
- 2. The Mummy
- 1. The Emoji Movie

**Best Movies of 2017**
- 5. Get Out
- 4. The Big Sick
- 3. The Shape of Water
- 2. Baby Driver
- 1. Lady Bird

Honorable mentions for creativity include Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri; The Florida Project; and Dunkirk. Seeing these quality films on the big screen are simply a must over home viewing. Be sure to check them out before award season kicks off Sunday, Jan. 7, with the 74th Golden Globe Awards.

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is pleased to announce the producing team of Bea Cordelia and Daniel Kyri as the 2018 Filmmakers in Residence.

The residency is part of the Independent Film Initiative (IFI), a first-of-its-kind program from the Chicago Film Office designed to support, promote and provide career-building opportunities for local film industry professionals and media makers.

As part of the year-long residency, Cordelia (a 2017 Windy City Times 30 Under 30 honoree) and Kyri will be producing The T, a web-series dramedy that explores LGBTQ relationships and the universally relatable milieu of awkward hook-ups, nervous dates and the painful pursuit of lasting love. The six-episode online series will be released next June.

Cordelia (a 2017 Windy City Times 30 Under 30 honoree) is an award-winning writer, filmmaker, performance artist, producer, educator and activist whose work aims to elevate and reimagine the narratives of transgender people. Kyri is a Jeff Award-nominated actor, singer, writer and curator. He is featured in Stephen Cone’s award-winning film Henry Gamble’s Birthday Party, now streaming on Netflix, and has starred in productions at Lookingglass, Steppenwolf, Chicago Shakespeare and Goodman theaters.
Conversations with Edmund White
Edited by Will Brantley and Nancy McGuire Roche
$25; University Press of Mississippi; 208 pages

BOOK REVIEW
Conversations with Edmund White
Edited by Will Brantley and Nancy McGuire Roche
$25; University Press of Mississippi; 208 pages

Edmund White was one of the first important writers to emerge at the dawn of the gay liberation movement, bursting onto the literary scene in 1973 with the publication of his first novel, Forgetting Elena.

White has been at the forefront of gay literature ever since. His work helped bring critical attention to gay books, bridging the gap between gay and mainstream literature. White was a member of the seminal gay writing group, the Violet Quill. His numerous novels include A Boy's Own Story, The Beautiful Room Is Empty, The Farewell Symphony, Fanny, Hotel de Dream, Caracole, The Married Man, Jack Holmes and His Friend, and Our Young Man.

White has written short-story collections, memoirs, released journals, done travel writing, collected his essays (The Burning Library) and penned biographies of Jean Genet, Marcel Proust and Arthur Rimbaud. He also wrote two defining non-fiction works of the post-Stonewall/pre-AIDS era, The Joy of Gay Sex (with Charles Silverstein), and States of Desire, a snapshot of gay sexual life across America. White’s numerous honors include the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Lambda Literary Foundation’s Pioneer Award.

The 21 interviews that compose Conversations with Edmund White span 34 years (1982-2016). In these pieces, White proves to be a spirited interviewee, emerging as frank, thoughtful, wise and always interesting. The chats reflect White’s predilections, his body of work at various stages of the game, his major achievements, and other pivotal moments of his long and varied career.

Through these talks, White explains the methodology of his formidable talent, his take on writing and the writer’s role in society, his sources of inspiration and creative motivation, his habit of writing everything by hand and then reading it back aloud, etc.

However, the underlying strength of these pieces is in the telling of a larger story, the evolution of the LGBT community. As portals on LGBT history, the interviews capture 21 different moments in our journey as filtered through one of our literary giants. In that light, these pieces reflect the endurance of the community as it emerged politically and socially, fought and struggled through the devastation of AIDS, and how it persevered with an unwillingness to regress or return to the closet. All the main themes of our collective development are explored - coming out, reinvention, chosen family, sexual liberation, loss, activism, assimilation and more. Equally fascinating is to see White’s maturing perspective in regards to gay consciousness and the concept of an LGBT community.

Conversations with Edmund White will appeal to aficionados of gay literature and is an extremely inspiring tool for writers of all levels. The interviews come from myriad sources and each stands on its own but, collectively, these pieces compose a mosaic through which the reader can glimpse the life of a true artist and man of letters as well as the journey of the community that he deeply loves.

Tarantella
By Scot T. O’Hara
$18.95; OhBoy Books; 310 pages

BOOK REVIEW
Tarantella
By Scot T. O’Hara
$18.95; OhBoy Books; 310 pages

Anthony’s life is falling apart.

He escaped Florida and his half-Irish, half-Italian, mostly unaffirming family for a life as a newspaper editor in Chicago—except that his hustler, HIV-positive boyfriend Steven doesn’t really seem to appreciate him, if he ever did.

Tarantella begins with a phone call from Anthony’s younger sister, Rosalia, letting him know that the hated patriarch has just had a massive heart attack. Anthony flies down to visit, and emotions—regret and anger chief among them—ensue.

Tarantella is a portrait of Anthony trying to finally confront the deep-seated resentments that have sapped his confidence over the years, to patch the flaws that make him weak. The title comes from an Italian dance that becomes a literal parable his Italian grandmother imparts to him at his sister’s wedding, when they do the dance together. It gets its name from the frenzied gyrations a dancer makes after being bitten by a tarantula, the movement made to wishfully neutralize the poison in the bloodstream. The months after the fateful phone call chronicle Anthony’s embarking upon the tarantella of relationships never fully resolved, though nearly half the book is flashbacks to Anthony’s boyhood.

Writer Scot T. O’Hara is at his best with visceral drama—when a rattlesnake’s head (possibly venomous animals form a thematic motif) fails to get severed and its dark blood streaks a driveway, and when Anthony vomits all over himself on the drive to Florida—and the melancholy of a failed gay connection. All of Anthony’s attempts at finding love and connection with another man are beautifully doomed by his reluctance to share fully of himself, his nature which is both tentative and passionate. His college romance with the artsy Cliff (which ends when Anthony prevaricates about coming out to his family) and his domestic stalemate with the unfaithful Steven are some of the most emotionally resonant in this quiet unspooling of a man’s life.

Characters other than Anthony tend to be a dash too simple. His sister and his grandmother are unabashedly patient explainers of his insufferable family, and the repeated assertions that his father ultimately loved him ring a bit false when confronted with the total history of this man’s behavior, even if it is through his middle son’s biased eyes. This is a man who made his eldest son run away at the age of 16, didn’t seem to care much that he had done so, and made no attempt to contact him in the ensuing decades.

Any reader with an abusive parent will completely understand why Anthony—who watched his older brother disappear at the age of 10, and continued to suffer his father’s treatment until he left for college—wouldn’t want to make amends. Still, Tarantella will stick with its audience for its strength of portraying the internal struggle, for making Anthony sympathetic yet trying, and for admitting that relationships often go awry in less than spectacular but incredibly hurtful ways, with repair often being incomplete and impossible.
It’s indisputable that 2017 will go down as the pinnacle of skullfucky in the 21st century.

The shadow of the presidential administration has managed to pervert everything in its path while accomplishing nothing positive. Women’s rights, healthcare, immigration, the military, civil rights, education, the environment, tax reform and education: you name it and the “The Donald” has pissed on it. Add in the right wing’s freshly emboldened talent for deceit, bullying, media manipulation, scandal and lying and you have a public that seems punch drunk, trying to fight back against all the attacks.

The upside of all this discontent is that the rage it inspires fuels the arts to new levels of creativity and bigger entertainments. In 2017 we watched a multiracial, musically diverse retelling of history called Hamilton grab Tony Awards by the truckload and smash theatrical box office records. At this year’s Oscar ceremony, host Jimmy Fallon spent hours bitch-slapping the president while a low-budget all-Black movie about thug life and queer identity titled Moonlight snatched the prize for Best Picture from the glitzy favorite, La-La Land. In popular music, well, that tsunami of outrage has yet to manifest itself—but at least we got those bigger entertainments.

If anything, 2017 saw rapid shifts in the status quo. Locally, the two-year-old Open Air Festival snatched the thunder from older mainstays like Lollapalooza and Riot Fest, which suffered from exceptionally dull and redundant line-ups. Massive shows found a home at Soldier and Wrigley Field hosting the likes of Metallica, Tom Petty, Billy Joel, Paul McCartney, U2, Coldplay and Green Day.

Two of the biggest tours of the year were buoyed by their queer appeal and managed to turn themselves into major events without hype. The refurbished Queen, fronted by out vocalist Adam Lambert, turned out to be the show everyone and their mother wanted to see while Lady Gaga returned with a vengeance while selling out Wrigley Field and smashing that glass ceiling. To add to that, Sam Smith was back with his second album (as, predictably, copies flew off the shelves) while queer favorite Adele mounted a massively successful tour that found her performing in front of millions in every continent on the planet.

Granted, not everything was peachy this year, as Tom Petty, Chris Cornell, Chester Bennington (of Linkin Park), icon Fats Domino, Jim Nabors and ex-teen idol David Cassidy passed away. Months before Anthony Rapp blew the whistle on Kevin Spacey, up-and-coming queer duo PWR BTM found their fortunes swirl down the shitter after disgruntled fans launched a Facebook campaign accusing them of sexual impropriety at their shows. And, of course, Market Days regular Aaron Carter came out as bisexual, to no one’s astonishment.

Locally, there was much to celebrate, as Lavender Country finally hit town and played The Hideout for a sold out show. Homocore celebrated its 25th anniversary while Glitter Creeps, the monthly queer showcase at The Empty Bottle, sailed into its third year and The Black and Brown Festival restarted itself.

Queer icons Limp Wrist released Facades, their first album in a decade while front man Martin Sorondeguy seemed to be everywhere: participating in panel discussions at Fed Up Fest and Homocon’s anniversary and headlining the Black and Brown Festival with his other band Los Crusados. Local talent in Chicago’s DIY scene continued to make ripples as Meat Wave, Absolutely Not, Bad Bad Meow, Mutts, Melk Belly, Myke Deville, The Kick Back and Ne-Hi released well received albums while the much loved queer fronted Atta

The musical year in review

Boy morphed into Blacker Face and queer friendly Strawberry Jacuzzi reforming as Bash Bang.

And now for the music, events, and other delights that made 2017 special for me:


—Book of the Year: Over the Top and Back by Tom Jones (Blue Rider Press). Laugh if you want to, but this exuberant, action-packed and enormously entertaining memoir by the small-town hip-wiggling boy who whipped the world into a wet panty flinging frenzy was clearly the best read of the year.

—Runner-up: Tranny: Confessions of Punk Rock’s Most Infamous Anarchist Sellout by Laura Jane Grace (Hachette Books)

—Best Venue to See a Show:
(tie) The Hideout and The Empty Bottle

—Best Posh Place: Thalia Hall

—Best Concerts of 2017:
Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers @ Wrigley Field
Perfume Genius with Serpent With Feet @ Lincoln Hall
George Clinton and Parliament/Funkadelic @ Thalia Hall
(tie) Ne Hi and Meat Wave both @ The Empty Bottle
Mutts/Archie Powell and The Exports/Hemmingbird @ Lincoln Hall
Midnight Oil @ The Vic
Ezra Furman/Weaves @ Lincoln Hall
ONO/Moor Mother Goddess @ The Hideout
Green Day @ Wrigley Field (tie) Escort and Vail/Real Dom/Pure Magical
Love all @ The Empty Bottle
Glad Rags/ESSO! Afrojam Funkbeat @ Schubas—Festival of the Year (tie)

1. The 2017 Hideout Block Party. Tim and Katie Tutten managed to create a two-day warm, homegrown anti-festival with the feel of old friends

Artemis Singers concert Jan. 13

Local lesbian feminist chorus Artemis Singers will present “Rise Up”—a call-to-action concert of progressive music with guest artist Melanie DeMore and students from Evanston Township High School (ETHS)—at 7 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 13, 2018, at ETHS, 1600 Dodge Ave., Evanston. DeMore—an Oakland, California, vocal activist and choral conductor—will also lead a vocal music workshop, “Using Your Voice for Change,” at ETHS, Jan. 13, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. DeMore has performed on stage with Pete Seeger, Odetta, Richie Havens, Judy Collins and Laura Nyro, among others.

The “Rise Up” concert program features songs that identify inequities in society and offer solutions.

Concert and/or workshop tickets are $15-$40; visit https://www.riseup2018.brownpapertickets.com.
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Roxana Pixley first came to Chicago in 1989. What began as a vacation turned into a love affair with the city and with her new boyfriend. She closed her profitable beauty salon in Reynosa, Mexico, and leveraged her business savvy to duplicate that success on the north side of Chicago. In a few years, she owned a bakery, a restaurant, a supermarket and another beauty salon.

As for her newest business—El Faro Seafood, at 2701 W. Division St.—Pixley explained that she chose this location in the heart of the Puerto Rican community of Humboldt Park because her salon clientele in Ravenswood was largely Puerto Rican, Cuban and Dominican. “I love Puerto Rico, and I love this area,” she said.

Pixley began her gender transition in Mexico and completed it while living in Chicago. Speaking of herself as a trans woman, Pixley said, “In Chicago, there have not been obstacles when it comes to business. Nothing of this sort has cut into my achievements.” She added that she owes her success to “hard work, respect for her employees, and good administration.”

The only business-related problem Pixley mentioned is her command of English, saying she wished she spoke and understood the language better. When asked whether she encountered anything unexpected while starting her new restaurant, she admitted that she did not expect so many requests for vegetarian dishes. She explained that she was in the process of amending her menu so that vegetarians could join their friends at El Faro.

Pixley works six days a week, traveling between her Ravenswood beauty salon and her Humboldt Park restaurant. On Mondays she stays home, listens to instrumental music and Latin jazz, and plays and cuddles with her eight Chihuahuas. In between cuddles, she organizes what needs to be done for her businesses, such as ordering beauty supplies and food, going over the bills and taking care of the payroll.

Pixley described herself as someone who is not very political; she does not get involved much in politics, but said she now follows the news, and that she supports those who do become involved. She said, “Every day I watch what is going on with this president. Things are going to change. I have hope that they are going to change. They have to change for the next generation.”

OUT MUSICIAN Marsha Malamet on Jason Gould CD

LOS ANGELES—Grammy-nominated, multi-platinum songwriter and openly lesbian musician Marsha Malamet is featured on the new Jason Gould CD, Dangerous Man.

Malamet—a composer, songwriter, singer and coach—met Gould at a lecture, where he asked her to coach him on songwriting. From there, the relationship transformed into them co-writing several songs together, including “Morning Prayer” for his self-released EP Jason Gould.

In 2012, Malamet co-wrote (with Liz Vidal and Stephen Oberhoff) the special end-credit song “Amazing” (with Gould as vocalist), which was from the soundtrack to Scrooge and Marley, a gay Christmas Carol film that Chicago’s Sam I Am Films produced.

Dangerous Man features four songs co-written by Malamet. There is the title cut (Gould/Alan Roy Scott/Malamet), plus “Morning Prayer: The Tribal Version” (Gould/Liz Vidal/Malamet), “All’s Forgiven” (Gould/Alan Roy Scott/Allan Rich/Malamet) and “One Day” (Gould/Malamet).

Quincy Jones/Qwest Records produced the CD, which is available on iTunes.
A #MeToo moment as e. nina jay releases DVD

CHICAGO—The work of Chicago-based African American lesbian poet and spoken word artist e. nina jay is featured in the new film Body of Rooms, based on her book of the same name.

This is a powerful, dramatic exhibition of an artist, a camera and the raw words and emotions of a Black woman navigating the U.S. during a time of #metoo, systemic violence, sexism, homophobic and racism.

jay uses poetry as a tool of survival and to break silences around all forms of violence against girls and women, with particular focus on the intersections of race, sexuality and poverty. As a survivor of incest and rape, jay believes women and girls can create powerful community to fight against the violence and constant degradation that weaves itself into every facet of our lives, by breaking silences and unraveling shame.

The DVD is 98 minutes and available for $20 + $4 shipping through Paypal: https://www.paypal.me/eninajay. A portion of the sales of the DVDs will go to Affinity Community Services.

A sneak peek of the film, and sales of the first DVDs will be held Thursday, Dec. 21, 7 p.m. at Affinity Community Services, during the monthly W.O.M.B. Poetry event, 2850 S. Wabash Ave., #108 (around the back of the building, free parking).

The film was directed by Tracy Baim, publisher of Windy City Times. Steve Maxey, of Maxey MediaWorks, was cinematographer and editor. The sound engineer was Jeff Tudor, with Kiana Smith doing makeup and hair. For more information, email eninajay@gmail.com or see https://www.facebook.com/bodyofrooms.

Magic Cabaret closing Dec. 27

After a decade-long run, The Magic Cabaret is ending.

David Parr and Joe Diamond are wrapping up the run with two more performances at Greenhouse Theater Center on Dec. 20 and 27.

Tickets are $25; visit MagicCabaret.com or call 773-404-7336.

HIV+ playwright pens ‘Blue Over You’

HIV-positive Chicago playwright Daniel Noonan and director Sarah Whitney have joined forces to co-found Spot On Company, which is launching with the world premiere of Blue Over You (A Mysterious One-Man Love Story with Musical Bits), starring theater veteran Michael Joseph Mitchell.

Blue Over You will run Jan. 5-28 at Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2515 Central Park Ave., Evanston.

Noonan was born with severe hemophilia and is HIV-positive from a blood transfusion when he was 13. His characters, written from his personal experiences, usually deal with chronic health issues.

Tickets are $20-$25; visit BlueOverYou.com.

Charles Busch at Pride Arts in January

Tony Award nominee, Drama Desk Lifetime Achievement honoree and two-time MAC Award winner, Charles Busch, who performed two sold-out shows at Pride Arts Center, 4139 N. Broadway, in January 2017, will return on Jan. 21-22 with “Charles Busch: My Kinda ‘60s.”

Weaving tales of his Manhattan childhood and adolescence raised by his indomitable Aunt Lillian through the lens of the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, Busch will be singing a great songbook from Broadway to pop, featuring the work of among others Burt Bacharach, Jimmy Webb, the Beatles, Henry Mancini, Bob Dylan, Stephen Sondheim, and Kander and Ebb.

He will be appearing with longtime musical director/arranger Tom Judson in an evening of music and storytelling.

Admission is $40-$75 each; visit http://bit.ly/charlesbuschatPAC or call 800-737-0984.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM YOUR PETS AND WINDY CITY TIMES

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@windycitytimes   www.windycitymediagroup.com
If you want to know how cozy the newest Nick’s Pizza & Pub (2434 W. Montrose Ave.; NicksPizzaPub.com/chicago-pizza-pub/) is, look no further than the crunchy floors.

Yes, you read that correctly—and the floor’s crunchiness is due to the hundreds of peanut shells that patrons are encouraged to toss on the floor while eating the bowls of the legumes that are on the tables. While some would be aghast at seeing this, some people (particularly kids) are all over this tradition.

However, this isn’t the only tradition the place honors. As founder Nick Sarillo told another journalist and myself (and which the other writer already knew), there is a tradition of dipping pizza in ranch dressing.

In all my years on this planet, this is something I had never done—and it’s something I couldn’t imagine doing. However, it wasn’t exactly life-changing (although combining Nick’s homemade ranch with the spot’s onion rings is another matter).

And I don’t think the lack of wonder had anything to do with the dressing; it had to do with the quality of the pizza. As far as I’m concerned, if the pizza is already quite good (and I’m not knocking the onion rings), it doesn’t need the enhancement—and the pies at Nick’s are very delicious, indeed. One example is the Nick’s Special, which is actually not that special, ingredient-wise (mozzarella, sausage, mushrooms, onions and green peppers). However, it’s the little touches—like putting the vegetables on top of the cheese instead of the other way around—that sets the pizza apart.

There are plenty of other delectable items as well. The beer nuggets (meant to be paired with the drink) are deliciously doughy, and there are other appetizers/entrees like bacon cheddar fries, fried mushrooms, Italian beef sandwiches (really incredible), calzones, Nick’s Eggcellent Burger and other tasty (if not necessarily healthful) offerings. And you should seriously consider the double-decker pizza (two layers of thin-crust pizza, meat and vegetables knotted together at the crust).

Sarillo (also the author of A Slice of the Pie: How to Build a Big Little Business) also talked about his employees and treating them like family. My favorite tenet that he mentioned was that employees should basically act and talk as if their grandmothers are present. (I commented that people should treat social media the same way.)

So, be prepared for Nick’s Pizza. You will leave the Lincoln Square spot with a full stomach and a (more) educated mind—or at least the former if you’re familiar with the restaurant’s traditions.

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.
“We singles live empty lives of quiet desperation and will die alone. Now Rubio is demanding that we also fund happy families with children who fill their days with joy.” — Ann Coulter attacks Marco Rubio for his proposed child tax-credit increase. Do we know if Ann Coulter is actually capable of having children? I mean, she does seem to have an Adam’s apple.

“Thank you, Omarosa for your service! I wish you continued success.” With words far more eloquent than “You’re fired,” Trump once again bid the Apprentice contestant farewell. But, oh, Omarosa did not go gentle into that good night. Nope, allegedly she attempted to storm the residential wing of the White House to confront Mr. T in person. Needless to say, she didn’t reach her goal—something you’d think she’d be used to by now.

Last week, RuPaul’s Drag Race alum Aja and his boyfriend were thrown out of a Lyft after the driver saw them kissing—and this was in New York City! The couple complained to Lyft, and the driver was fired. The company stated, “We have zero tolerance for any type of discrimination on our platform, and are committed to maintaining an inclusive and welcoming community. ... The driver has been deactivated from the Lyft platform.”

For those of you who continue to think coming out of the closet is career suicide, let us consider the fortunes of young Charlie Carver, formerly of Desperate Housewives and Teen Wolf. He has starred in a handful of high-profile projects, and has just been cast in the upcoming Broadway production of The Boys in the Band. He’ll be playing Cowboy, the birthday present for Zachary Quinto. (The two previously cavorted together in I Am Michael.) What I find interesting is that Charlie has an equally luscious twin brother, Max, who is certainly talented. And yet, nobody hears about him getting any work.

I am thrilled to report that The Go-Go’s will be represented on The Great White Way when the musical Head Over Heels hits Broadway. Based on Sir Philip Sidney’s Arcadia, the show was a hit when it played the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2015. Announcement of the Broadway run was accompanied by a video featuring four of the five classic Go-Go’s. You’d expect that would include the four current members and exclude ousted bassist, Kathy Valentine, but you’d be wrong. Valentine (who co-wrote the song “Head Over Heels”) is prominently featured in the video, while the backbone of the band, drummer Gina Schock, is curiously absent.

A male model is accusing photographer Bruce Weber of sexual assault. I wasn’t completely surprised because I always assumed something shady was happening behind the scenes. After all, it ain’t easy to convince some of the most gorgeous guys in the world to pose naked on livestock—I learned that the hard way!

The model in question, Jason Boyce, claims that during a 2014 photo shoot, he was “subjected to a series of practices by Mr. Weber that were unlike any he had experienced previously.” It is alleged that Weber removed Boyce’s underwear and forced Boyce to touch his own genitals.

The lawsuit states that “Mr. Weber put his fingers in Mr. Boyce’s mouth. Shocked, Mr. Boyce opened his eyes. Mr. Weber told him to keep his eyes closed, and kept his fingers in Mr. Boyce’s mouth. ‘If you just had confidence, you’d go really far,’ Mr. Weber whispered. ‘How far do you want to make it? How ambitious are you?’ Mr. Boyce did not respond.”

Speaking of foreign objects in one’s mouth, the internet is all abuzz with a video showing a “four-way Brazilian gay kiss.” During Carnatal in Natal in Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil, a group of four male revelers found themselves in a group kiss. Actually, it’s three guys and one straggler. But then they splintered off into more traditional pairings. So? Am I the only one who has participated in group sex with several South Americans?

This leads perfectly into “Billy’s Holiday Gift-Giving Suggestions.” One of my dear friends is Dan Guerrero, who has toured the country with his solo Gaytino, where he reconciled his roots and gay life. He is the son of legendary singer Lalo Guerrero, known “the Father of Chicano Music.” In 1956, Lalo recorded “Pancho Claus,” a song about Santa Claus’ cousin south of the border. Dan has turned the song into a children’s book, with illustrations by our very own Bob Mackie! It’s a terrific book, and a great addition to your multicultural celebrations.

Someone else who has been known to enjoy a foreign tongue is Jason Gould. Barbra’s little boy has just released a full-length album that will surely make you tingle all over. While I wouldn’t consider Gould a “Dangerous Man,” that is indeed the name of the title track. Check it out.

One of our previous Gift-Giving Suggestions has led to an international incident. The Warwick Rowers have been banned by Russia since the government has found their calendar to be “gay propaganda.”

Lastly, a little extra stocking stuffer: Sexy Pietro Boselli (known as the world’s hottest math teacher) recently released some sensational scantily clad seasonal shots, which you can check out on BillyMasters.com.

When we’ve once again ventured into “gay propaganda” territory, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. And since this is coming out in mid-Hanukkah, pre-Kwanzaa and the eve of Christmas, I want to send you my best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season. If your festivities are in need of a little bit of Billy, head over to www.BillyMasters.com, the site that’ll stuff more than just your stocking. If you’re in need of a bit more personal attention, dash off an email to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Weber convinces Pietro to mount a llama. (Yes, I said llama.) So, until next time, remember: One man’s filth is another man’s bible.
Thursday, Dec. 21

Thrive: Weekly group for HIV-positive YMSM
Open process group facilitated by a licensed counselor open to all HIV-positive young men who have sex with men, 18-29. A safe space to process one's HIV status, emotional and mental health, relationships, identity, and personal growth. Also fun activities and cultural outings once a quarter. 6:00pm Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) 5537 N Broadway St Chicago http://www.tpan.com/events/thrive-edition

W.O.M.B. Open Mic and e. nina jay D
Saturday, Dec. 23
Friday, Dec. 22
Disruptive Perspectives ongoing through Dec. 22Photographers works document LGBT identities including work by Jess T. Dugan and Lorenzo Truburgo.
10:00am - 5:00pm Museum of Contemporary Photography Columbia College 600 S Michigan Avenue Chicago http://www.mcpc.org/

Beautiful, the Carole King Musical
The story of Carole King’s journey to write the soundtrack of a generation. 7:30pm Cadillac Palace Theatre 151 W Randolph Chicago Tickets: http://www.broadwayinchicago.com/show/beautiful-the-carole-king-musical-2017 /

Saturday, Dec. 23
Frontrunners, Frontwalkers Chicago Frontrunners, Frontwalkers Chicago’s LGBT running and walking club. Meet at the totem pole 9:00am Addison and Lakeshore Dr. http://www fronwalkerschicago.org

The Nutcracker, The Joffrey Ballet
Newly reimagined holiday classic by Tony Award®-winning choreographer Christopher Wheeldon through Dec. 30. 7:00pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University 50 E Congress Pkwy Chicago

Sunday, Dec. 24
Sober Horizons Group of Alcoholics Anonymous All persons with a desire to stop drinking are welcome. 9:30am Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago http://www.chicagoa.org/about-caso

Monday, Dec. 25
Holiday Meal at Center on Halsted Doors open at 11:00AM. Dinner is at 12:00PM. Event is free but RSVP is required by phone or email. Contact Britta Larson, director of senior services. Space is limited. 312-322-0540 Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago 773-472-5469 Ext 445 http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=14626

Wed., Dec. 27
Golden Girls, The Lost Episodes, holiday edition Campy parody of one of TV’s most beloved sitcoms with Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, Sophia will feature the best of the original run - plus a new holiday-themed episode. Will run in conjunction with the return of Red-Hosed Reindeer. $25, or VIP $35. 7:30pm Mary’s Attic 5400 N Clark Chicago 800-838-3006 Tickets: http://www.handbagproductions.org

Friday, Dec. 29
Christmas Bingo: It’s a Ho-Ho-Holy Night Written by Vicki Quade, co-creator of Late Nite Catechism, Christmas Bingo is the second installment in Quade’s bingo series with new material and a special twist on the story of the Annunciation. Through Dec. 31, 2017. 5:30 8:00pm Royal George Theatre 1641 N Halsted St Chicago 312-988-9000 http://www. nuns4fun.com

Sunday, Dec. 31
Steamworks: The Musical One night only. Ring in the new year with the hilarious story of a wide-eyed young man who moves to the Windy City seeking love... and stumbles into the legendary Boystown bathhouse. 8:00pm Annoyance Theatre 851 W Belmont Chicago 773-697-9693 http://www.theannoyance.com

Thursday, Jan. 4
American Veterans for Equal Rights Chicago Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, the national organization of LGBT veterans formerly known as Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America (GLBVA). 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N. Halsted St., Chicago http://www.averchicago.org/

WINDY CITY TIMES
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Thursday, Dec. 21
Thrive: Weekly group for HIV-positive YMSM
Open process group facilitated by a licensed counselor open to all HIV-positive young men who have sex with men, 18-29. A safe space to process one’s HIV status, emotional and mental health, relationships, identity, and personal growth. Also fun activities and cultural outings once a quarter. 6:00pm Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) 5537 N Broadway St Chicago http://www.tpan.com/events/thrive-edition

W.O.M.B. Open Mic and e. nina jay DVD sneak peek e. nina jay Body of Rooms DVD sneak peek, part of a night of poetry which takes place the third Thursday of each month, hosted by Lucy and e. nina jay. Parking available behind building. 7:00pm - 10:00pm Affinity Community Services 2850 S. Wabash Ave. #108 Chicago http://www.affinity95.org

Altered Boy Good little Catholic boy says his prayers, makes good grades, performs in school plays, wins participation trophies... He’s Catholic, he’s gay - what could go wrong? Through Dec. 30, 2017. $25 7:30pm The Buena, Pride Arts Center 4147 N. Broadway, Chicago 800-737-0984 Tickets: http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com

BlandTherapy.com
Michael J. Bland, Psy.D., LCPC. northside location.
(9/26/18-52)

Steamworks: The Musical
Sunday, Dec. 31
Steamworks: The Musical is returning for one night only at the Annoyance Theatre. Photo by Jon Wes

MUSIC from page 24

A collection of songs from various artists, ranging from pop to rock to hip hop, is featured. Some notable artists include Meat Wave, F.U.P.U., and many more.

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