WINDY CITY TIMES

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Laverne Cox.
Photo by Melissa Hamburg

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LAVERNE COX

Trans star talks success, love and secrets

VOTING THEIR CHOICE

LGBTQs make gains in nationwide elections.

Photo of Danica Roem from official Facebook page

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SKI RUN

Out athlete/actor Gus Kenworthy talks skiing, 'Horror Story'

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A LIFETIME OF ADVOCACY

Activist David Mixner tells all in intimate talk.

Photo from Pride Films and Plays

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Matthew Modine and Shane Paul McGhie in Foster Boy.
Photo courtesy of Foster Boy

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WHAT'S GOING ON

Gay Chicagoan brings nuances of foster system to the big screen

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online exclusives at www.WindyCityTimes.com

DEAD RECKONING

Chicago House hosted a Day of the Dead event.

Photo (left) by Vern Hester

OH, THE HORROR

Find out about FriGay the 13th–a podcast that talks about horror from an LGBT perspective.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Lucy Liu, Shangela and Andrew Garfield.

plus

DAILY BREAKING NEWS

CALLING ONE'S 'BLUFF'

People behind the NBC drama Bluff City Law talk about an episode that addresses the personal costs of coming out.

Jayne Atkinson and Jimmy Smits of Bluff City Law. Photo courtesy of NBCUniversal

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East Lakeview

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Local LGBTQ activism topic of panel at library discussion

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Chicago Public Library's Pride Heritage Committee and Brave Space Alliance hosted a panel discussion, "LGBTQ Activism's Past, Present and Future in Chicago,"recently at the library's Woodson Regional location.

Pride Action Tank Executive Director Kim Hunt served as the event's moderator. Panelists included Ser el Cambio Founder, community educator and advocate Tania Cordova; Chicago House TransSafe Coordinator, advocate, activist and T, Stands for Truth author Reyna Ortiz; and Brave Space Alliance Associate Executive Director Stephanie Skora.

Following an introduction by Rogers Park library branch Adult Librarian Alexis Cantu, Hunt told the crowd about the all transgender identified panelist lineup.

Hunt asked the panelists who influenced them to become activists.

Cordova said it was her godmother, the late Miss Ketty, because she learned so much from her. She added that Miss Ketty was instrumental in getting many transgender women like herself access to hormone therapy drugs. Ortiz also said Miss Ketty as well as Miss Ketty's daughter Monica Fernandez, who was her Ortiz's mother.

Skora said she has been "yelling about injustice" since she was a child, and that the three people who have inspired her were the late Sylvia Rivera, Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman. She added that meeting both Bornstein and Bergman was very meaningful to her.

Other topics included the Stonewall Uprising relationship to Chicago; the panelists' relationships to the Boystown neighborhood; how LGBTQ people are affected by the current immigration and refugee/asylum seeker policies; and hate crimes against transgender people, especially Black transgender women.

Both Cordova and Ortiz said they did not learn about Stonewall until recently, and Ortiz added that there is an issue with LGBTQ history not being passed down from one generation to the next. Ortiz said transgender people of color are primarily focused on survival.

Skora mentioned the recent Human Rights Campaign- and CNN-sponsored LGBT Town Hall, where transgender women interrupted the proceedings to highlight the issues facing the entire transgender community but were forcibly escorted out of the room. She added that there is a direct line between Stonewall and the town hall "through the organizing and direct action of transgender women of color who are publicly visible and take over stages, grab microphones, interrupt speeches, and shut down Pride parades because people are not interested in listening to us."

Cordova, Ortiz and Skora said they do not feel safe in Boystown and have not for a number of years. Cordova said that, for transgender immigrants like herself, there is no safe space in this country.

Ortiz spoke about being a sex-worker (during 1999-2003) who worked along Halsted Street and how it was a safe space during that time but it is now a racist and classist neighborhood. Skora said for her Boystown is just a place that exists in Chicago and the only safe space for her in the city is at the Chicago Dyke March.

Cordova spoke about her work helping asylum seekers while Ortiz said no presidential administration has been friendly toward transgender immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Skora tied the current anti-immigrant Trump administration policies to what happened to Jewish refugees who were turned away from the United States during World War II and sent back to die in concentration camps.

Ortiz said that hate crimes and violence against transgender people is a community problem that has to be taken care of at the community level. Skora spoke about dismantling white and cisgender supremacy and capitalism, and funneling money toward grassroots organizations and resources that help the most marginalized in the LGBTQ community. Cordova said that this work starts in one's own biological families to eradicate anti-LGBTQ bigotry and violence.

Cordova said Ser el Cambio is a new support and resource network for transgender women of color who have been incarcerated or detained and that they need funding to continue their work.

Turn to page 6

Kim Hunt, Tania Cordova, Reyna Ortiz and Stephanie Skora.
Photo by Carrie Maxwell

Shakers on Clark's Zdebski passes away

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Jason Zdebski, who was a business partner in Shakers on Clark, 3160 N. Clark St., passed away suddenly sometime the weekend of Nov. 2-3. He was 43 and the cause of death is not yet known.

Zdebski was the "face of Shakers on Clark," according to the establishment's co-owner, Mark Friedlander. "He was a 'people-person.'"

In 2014, Zdebski and Friedlander took over the space from Jim Flint, when Flint decided to sell the previous business, 3160 Piano Bar & Cabaret, where Zdebski and Friedlander had both been bartenders. The duo said at the time that they intended for the establishment to be a Cheers-type bar for the Lake View neighborhood.

"We had been looking for a place together for the last two years," Friedlander said, adding that he and Zdebski thus leapt at the chance to take over when Flint announced his intention to sell. "We always sat in that room and said, 'God, can you imagine what we can do with this place?'"

Friedlander met Zdebski in 2005 when both were managers at the Michigan Avenue Bennigans. Friedlander said that Zdebski was almost his total opposite: "Jason always knew the right thing to say. I'm always afraid I'll say the wrong thing."

But Zdebski's extroversion meant he was in his element when dealing with Shakers on Clark's customers, or when the management would have to communicate with the bar's staff.

"He was a social butterfly of the neighborhood," Friedlander recalled. "Everybody knew Jason. He talked to everybody. Even if someone was trouble, he could carry a conversation with anybody. He was like that person you invite to the party because you know that he would make the party."

Jason Zdebski. Photo by Kirk Williamson

But Friedlander also emphasized how devoted Zdebski was to his family and friends: "He had a lot of 'best friends,' and they would do anything for him. That's the kind of guy that he was."

Shakers on Clark's patrons have been invited to write their thoughts on the bar's rear wall, which is covered in chalkboard paint.

"I know we're going to go on without him," Friedlander said. "It's just not going to be the same. We started this business to do it together."

"Jason was one of the most liked people anyone could have ever met," said Shakers on Clark staff on the bar's Facebook page. " … We can't imagine a world without Jason in it. He was such a big part of Shaker's, and will be greatly missed by the many who knew and loved him."

Funeral services for Zdebski took place Nov. 8 at Thompson & Kuenster Funeral Home, 5570 W. 95th St., Oak Lawn. A visitation was held Nov. 7.

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Center for Law and Social Work gives LGBTQ families equal footing

BY ANGELIQUE SMITH

According to the Equality Illinois publication Growing Your Family: A Guide for Prospective LGBT Adoptive Parents, there are more than "34,000 same-sex couples in long-term relationships living across the state, and 21 percent of these couples are raising children." While the passing of marriage equality afforded same-sex couples with children some protection, whether or not parentage is recognized can vary by state.

The Center for Law and Social Work (CLSW)—a non-profit located in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood—addresses the unique challenges that LGBTQ families may face. Windy City Times spoke with CLSW's executive director of 10 years, Dr. Maria Nanos, LCSW, about the importance of LGBTQ families protecting their future through second-parent adoption services.

Windy City Times: How did the Center for Law and Social Work start?

Dr. Maria Nanos: It started in 2003 with mostly grandparents raising grandchildren and that grandparent having a standby adoption in the event he/she passed away or was unable to take care of the kids anymore. There'd be an automatic, seamless transfer to another person that he/she chooses and the whole family knows what that plan is. That's where it started but we have expanded quite a bit.

WCT: How has it evolved to where it is now?

MN: We now serve a lot of programs for adoption and guardianship. It's really three big buckets: one is working with Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) involved families, post-adoption, post-guardianship. The next is our adoption listing service, so people interested in adopting our kids on the Heart Gallery on our site. The third big bucket has nothing to do with adoption and guardianship, but it's kind of a referrals resource for students that are sexually assaulted on college campus. It's called Porchlight Counseling. And then also we have our legal services: We can be your adoption attorney.

WCT: Tell us about the second-parent adoption services that CLSW offers.

MN: Because we are a non-profit, we're able to put our clients on a sliding scale based on income, which can slide down to $100. We don't discriminate because somebody doesn't have any money. This is true for any person and we offer [sliding scale] to everyone. ... We can do stepparent adoption with heterosexual couples and we're trying to get out there more with second-parent adoptions. If anyone needs to adopt a child, make a referral, the social worker can come meet your family and talk to you, make sure everything's on the up and up, then the attorney makes contact, they file it in court and it happens.

WCT: What are the typical demographics of the couples that seek out your services for second-parent adoptions?

MN: It's usually two lesbians. However, we've also had a transgender man whose spouse gave birth to the baby, and he wants to be identified as the father.

WCT: What are some of the LGBTQ-focused events that CLSW supports?

MN: Six months or so ago, there was a recruiting event for prospective foster parents at the Center on Halsted. We have a lot of youth who identify as LGBT and we need homes to at least foster them until they're eighteen years old. We also have an LGBT new moms group in Oak Park, so we're going to talk to them about second-parent adoption and how important that is.

WCT: And you sponsor a Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) volleyball team?

MN: We do! It's called Second Parent Strong.

WCT: CLSW had a second-parent adoption workshop over the summer—can you tell us about that?

MN: We were a sponsor of [Pride Kids &] Family Fest on Clark Stteet the day before the Pride Parade. They had about 300 families and we were handing out information about second-parent adoptions. We had a lot of people calling asking for more information, so we set that date and we had fourteen couples come for the first workshop. We hope to have another one in January; one up here and one on the southside because we have an office near 35th and Ashland which opened in May. We also have an office in Springfield and we hope to do one there, as well.

WCT: What happens in the workshop?

MN: It's basically a second-parent adoption 101. We basically explain why it's important and then it's a Q&A. We actually went around and met with each family, because everybody's got a different situation. Here's the thing that came up that was kind of interesting. With three of the couples that I talked to, the mom who carried the baby used their spouse's egg. So, then they asked, 'Who's the birth mother?"

WCT: Right, because there's the mother who gave birth and the genetic birth mother. I assume it would be similar to surrogacy.

MN: Yep, the birth mom is the genetic mom, even though you gave birth. And you'd still need second-parent adoption.

WCT: What are the advantages of LGBTQ couples pursuing second-parent adoption, particularly in light of marriage equality passing?

MN: When we were at the Fest, all kinds of people came through. Some said, 'Oh, I'm on the birth certificate.' Just having your name on the birth certificate is enough in the state of Illinois because we recognize a birth certificate as parents. There was a case, an interracial couple—one parent was African American and one Caucasian. The Caucasian spouse had the babies, they were much more "Caucasian-looking," and there was an accident. The Caucasian mom was incapacitated and the African American mother was, like, 'These are my kids[to the authorities].' She produced the birth certificate and they were like, 'We care about your birth certificate and we don't acknowledge that in our state.' She had not adopted them. It's just too risky. If she's had those adoption papers…

Windy City Times' Angelique Smith talking with Dr. Maria Nanos.
Photo by Elizabeth Springer

WCT: That's awful.

MN: Not only going out of the state, a birth certificate is not going to cut it if a couple gets divorced. If you didn't adopt that baby, it could get messy. What if the birth mother takes physical custody and denies the other person visitation? Adoption is forever, it's about having equal footing.

WCT: What do you see as the future of the organization?

MN: We'll probably venture into working with older people who need guardians. We also do adult guardianships—minors with special needs who turn 18 and they need an adult guardian. Those adults need to be protected. I want the LGBT community to be protected. And I want their kids to be protected, as well.

To learn more about the Center for Law and Social Work's services and second-parent adoption workshops, or to donate, visit CLSW.org. Also, one of the couples will be celebrating Adoption Day with other adoptees at the Daley Center, 50 W. Washington St., on Friday, Nov. 22, at 10:30 a.m.

Appeals court hears discrimination case against archdiocese

On Nav. 5, attorneys for former Catholic church music director Sandor Demkovich appeared in the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, in oral arguments against the Archdiocese of Chicago and Calumet City's St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Parish.

Kristina Buchthal Alkass of Schaumburg-based Lavelle Law argued before a three-judge panel, answering questions about whether the federal appeals court should allow Demkovich's claims of harassment and hostile work environment to proceed. Demkovich, who is gay, filed suit in December 2016 after he was terminated from his job as a music director at St. Andrew when he married his longtime partner in 2014.

The suit alleges that Demkovich was subjected to harassment and a hostile work environment based on sex, sexual orientation, marital status and disability while he was employed as music director during 2012-14 at St. Andrew.

On Sept. 30, 2018, Judge Edmund Chang in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois ruled that Demkovich's claims for hostile work environment and harassment as to his disability could proceed. However, Chang dismissed Demkovich's harassment and hostile work environment claims as to sex, sexual orientation and marital status. The archdiocese appealed that order to the federal appeals court, claiming that the litigation infringes on the church's constitutional rights under the First Amendment.

The appeals court has not given a date for its ruling.

Windy City Times reached out to the archdiocese and St. Andrew for responses. The archdiocese stated, "We do not comment on lawsuits.

Affordable Ordinance Dashboard is out

The Chicago Department of Housing unveiled a new, interactive, user-friendly tool—the Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO) Dashboard—to make affordable housing data more transparent and accessible to the public.

The new ARO Dashboard can be viewed by visiting Chicago.gov/ARO.

ACTIVISM from page 6

Ortiz spoke about helping house 90 transgender and gender nonconforming people who were previously experiencing homelessness.

Skora said Brave Space Alliance is partnering with the Transformative Justice Law Project to address issues around Illinois name change laws as well as partnering with the Intersex Justice Project co-founded by Pidgeon Pagonis to make Illinois the first state to delay medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex babies and children.

See https://prideactiontank.org/, https://serelcambiotrans.org/, https://www.chicagohouse.org/, https://www.bravespacealliance.org/ for more information.

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LGBTs make gains in nationwide elections

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

More than 75 percent of openly LGBT candidates running in the Nov. 5 off-year elections won. The total was 112: 106 Democrats, one Republican one Independent and four with undeclared party affiliations.

It was a happy night for Democrats. Anti-LGBT Republican Gov. Matt Bevin of Kentucky was beaten by pro-LGBT Democrat Andy Beshear—although Bevin had yet to concede. In 2016, the Republican presidential nominee won Kentucky with a 30-point margin over Democrat Hillary Clinton. In Virginia, where gerrymandered districts installed Republican majorities in both the state House and Senate in 2017, courts quashed the map and voters gave Democrats a sizeable majority in both chambers.

All nine openly LGBT candidates in Virginia won their races, including five incumbents in the General Assembly. Among those five was Danica Roem, a transgender candidate who won a stunning upset victory against an incumbent Republican two years ago for a House seat. On Nov. 5, she won re-election against another anti-LGBT Republican challenger, with a margin of victory six points larger than in 2017. Roem raised nearly twice as much money as her opponent, Kelly McGinn. McGinn had signed onto a letter calling same-sex marriage "morally repugnant."

Human Rights Campaign (HRC) President Alphonso David said the results in Virginia sent "a powerful message that Virginians support a bold, progressive vision for the future of the Commonwealth." David said HRC helped turn out 1.2 million "Equality Voters" in Virginia and spent over $250,000 to elect "pro-equality candidates across Virginia."

Pennsylvania, a state that President Trump won by less than 1 percent in 2016, experienced a "blue wave" of voter support for Democratic candidates. According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, said Republican candidates were "fading even on friendly turf." The Keystone State fielded the largest number of LGBT candidates than any other state: 14. And 13 of those 14, all Democrats, won, including Jessica Rothchild to the Scranton City Council.

Transgender incumbent Danica Roem was re-elected in Virginia.
Photo from official Facebook page

Ohio also voted for Trump in 2016, but Democrats did well this year, and all 12 of Ohio's openly LGBT candidates won, including new Toledo City Council member Theresa Gadus.

In Indiana—which gave Trump an almost 20-point margin over Clinton in 2016—the 25-member Indianapolis City Council picked up three new openly LGBT City Council members to join another who won re-election Nov. 5. Alison "Ali" Brown, Keith Potts and Ethan Evans will now join Zach Adamson on the capital city's governing board. Brown and Evans are openly bisexual and married to spouses of the opposite sex. Evans and Potts both beat Republican incumbents.

In Georgia, openly gay Doraville City Councilman Joseph Geierman won the plurality of votes (39 percent) in a field of four candidates, and is in a Dec. 3 run-off election against the incumbent (who received 28 percent of the votes).

Among the more stinging of the 21 LGBT losses Nov. 5 was that of Telluride, Colorado, Mayor Sean Murphy, who lost his bid for re-election to a second term. Telluride was among only five incumbent LGBT candidates who lost their re-election bids. In Houston, where five openly LGBT candidates were running as Democrats for City Council, only two won.

Of the 112 openly LGBT candidates, 105 were running for local office. The field included 67 men, 44 women (including six trans women), and one non-binary candidate.

The national Victory Fund said 80 of the candidates it endorsed won Tuesday night. The organization said it directed more than $420,000 to its endorsed candidates.

"We are building a pipeline of out LGBTQ leaders at every level of government," said Annise Parker, president of the LGBTQ Victory Fund and former mayor of Houston.

Other highlights among the Nov. 5 results:

—In a Seattle City Council race, openly gay candidate Egan Orion appears to have beaten an incumbent in District 3. Orion, a gay activist and former organizer of Seattle's pride parades, told local news outlets that he was "really frustrated" that the corporate giant Amazon supported his campaign through a political action committee that gave half a million dollars to his bid.

—In the Texas House district outside Houston, lesbian Eliz Markowitz was the top vote-getter among six candidates and the only Democrat. But now she'll have to run against just one of those Republicans for the heavily Republican 28th District seat. The runoff will take place in December.

—Former Florida State Rep. David Richardson will meet and opponent in a runoff for a seat on the Miami Beach Commission. Richardson came up just one point short of reaching enough votes to win the seat Tuesday. Richardson won 49 percent of the vote; his runoff opponent won 38 percent.

—In tiny Carrboro, North Carolina, openly lesbian Mayor Lydia Lavelle won re-election unopposed and openly gay newcomer Damon Seils won one of three seats on the town's Board of Aldermen, coming in second out of five candidates. In nearby Hillsborough, openly gay incumbent Matt Hughes came in first out of four candidates running for three seats on the Board of Commissioners.

—In Newton, Massachusetts, transgender candidate Holly Ryan was unopposed for a seat on the City Council, making her the first transgender woman to win election to public office in the 11th most populated city in the state. Prior to running for office, Ryan served as the LGBT liaison for two mayors.

The Victory Fund estimates there are 765 openly LGBT elected officials nationwide. Parker said "Americans are understandably focused on the 2020 presidential and congressional elections, but the LGBTQ candidates who won tonight will arguably have a greater impact on the everyday lives of their constituents."

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EI comments on results

Equality Illinois noted the election-night developments, stating, "LGBTQ representation in public office matters. Last night over 80 LGBTQ people won in their elections across the country. This bipartisan group of leaders will undoubtedly make their communities better—for LGBTQ people, our allies, and all constituents.

"Congratulations to every LGBTQ person who won last night and more importantly, congrats to the communities in which they'll serve. We applaud our partners at the Victory Fund who did so much to help support this LGBTQ wave last night.

"Onward to 2020!"

Protest set at Deerfield Chick-fil-A

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A group of suburban activists plan what they say will be a "family-friendly" protest Thursday, Nov. 14—the opening day of a new Deerfield Chick-fil-A franchise.

Atlanta-based Chick-fil-A has long caught the ire of the many in the LGBT community, largely because of CEO Dan Cathy's 2012 statements against marriage equality. Though Cathy and officials tried to walk back those statements to varying degrees, the company has reportedly given to organizations with anti-LGBT stances since.

Carolyn Pinta—whose daughter Molly helped conceive of the Buffalo Grove Pride Parade, and who is co-organizing the Deerfield protest—said that residents conceived of the protest "organically."

A Deerfield resident, Adrienne Schwarzbach-Johnson, asked fellow posters to a community Facebook group what they thought about the pending Chick-fil-A franchise. "It just absolutely blew up," Pinta said. "People were really upset about it."

Pinta, who with her family created the Pinta Project non-profit, emphasized that the protest would be very "grassroots" and is not stemming from a larger rights organization. The Pinta Project "stepped in because we had the resources to do so," she added. "We are working with Adrienne to put a schedule together. It will be a one-hour rally/protest, and we're making sure that 'family-friendly' is in the title, because we really want to encourage families to bring their children."

Including young people, according to Pinta, "shows them that you have choices where you spend your money. You can spend your money in places that show love and acceptance for all."

Pinta added that about 15 speakers are planned for the event, which is slated to take place at 3:30 p.m. on Nov. 14 at the Chick-fil-A at 75 S. Waukegan Rd.

In a statement to Windy City Times, Chick-fil-A, Inc., said: "We are aware of the planned demonstration by concerned community members and will provide a place for this group to peacefully demonstrate. Chick-fil-A is a restaurant company focused on food, service and hospitality. Our restaurants are locally owned and operated, and support organizations that are reflective of their own communities. The newest Deerfield Chick-fil-A will strive to provide a welcoming place for everyone that walks through its doors."

ALMA marking 30 years on Nov. 15

The Association of Latinx Motivating Action (ALMA) will mark its 30th anniversary with an event Friday, Nov. 15, at the Puerto Rican Arts Alliance (PRAA), 3000 N. Elbridge Ave., 6-9 p.m.

In partnership with the PRAA, ALMA will be unveiling its archives to the community. Additionally, art inspired by the archive and created by young people from After School Matters' program, BLOOM, will be showcased alongside the ALMA archive to contribute to dialogue regarding past, present and future movements within the Latinx LGBTQ community.

During the event, a panel of Latinx LGBTQ leaders will share reflections about LGBTQ Latinx activism.

See "ALMA Presents Our Past, Present and Future '30 Years Of Archives'" on Eventbrite.com.

David Mixner recounts tales of activism at intimate talk

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A longtime LGBT-rights and anti-war activist spoke with several Chicagoans Nov. 9 at a talk entitled "David Mixner: 60 Years of Activism."

Mixner's was an especially prominent voice during the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" controversy, but he has been an advocate on a number of issues over the years, among them HIV/AIDS, Anita Bryant's anti-LGBT crusade of the '70s and the Vietnam war, among many others. His talk took place at the Human Citizen Workspace, 4101 N. Broadway, in Buena Park; Mixner was interviewed by journalist Steve Kmetko.

"I'm like an old hooker who's worked the block for 60 years, and I know all the johns and their secrets," joked Mixner.

He spoke about being jailed alongside both Nelson Mandela and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. on various occasions, and said he was guided by principles of liberation theology—predicated on the idea that people should live to serve others—that took root in his Catholic religion.

Mixner was especially critical of how various LGBT activists deploy the idea of "coming out," noting that every person has to do it on their own schedule and that he indeed did not do so until he was 30.

"I came out, and every Democrat that I gave money money to sent it back to me," he recalled.

Mixner also discussed at length the AIDS crisis of the '80s, during which he lost not only a partner of 12 years but more than 300 friends. He spoke of his amazement at their commitment to overcoming the numerous socio-political obstacles placed before the LGBT community during that era: "I knew guys who were going to jail two weeks before they died."

Mixner has ramped back his activism for health reasons and is concentrating on writing now. He, unsurprisingly, had no love for the current White House, but confidently added that if the progress he has witnessed is any indication, all is not lost for the United States.

"I'm here to tell you not to give up hope," he said.

David Mixner (left) and Steve Kmetko.
Photo by Matt Simonette

Groups ask Pritzker, IDOC to save life of transgender prisoner

A coalition of advocacy organizations sent a letter urging Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker to step in and help save the life of Janiah Monroe—a Black transgender woman currently forced into solitary confinement at Logan Correctional Center and at risk of ending her life.

Monroe is a plaintiff in the class-action lawsuit *Monroe v. Baldwin*, filed on behalf of five women who are transgender and detained in Illinois prisons, aimed at reforming the larger systemic crisis regarding how IDOC treats the hundred or more transgender prisoners in its facilities throughout the state.

The organizations signing onto the letter include AIDS Foundation Chicago, American Friends Service Committee Chicago, Black and Pink Chicago, Center on Halsted, Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, the Chicago chapter of the National Organization for Women, Chicago Community Bond Fund, Chicago Abortion Fund, Chicago Foundation for Women, Chicago House, Children and Family Justice Center, Equality Illinois, Friends Who March, Indivisible Oak Park Area, Men4Choice, Midwest Access Coalition, Mijente, Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration, Planned Parenthood of Illinois, Pride Action Tank, She Votes Illinois, Shriver Center on Poverty Law, Social Change, Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois, Women's Connection Project and Women's March Illinois.

Spelman gets $2M gift for queer studies chair

Spelman College—an Atlanta-based HBCU (historically Black college/university) that specializes in the liberal arts education of women—announced the creation of a chair in queer studies backed by a matching gift from philanthropist Jon Stryker of up to $2 million.

This first-ever chair of its kind housed at a historically Black college or university will be named after celebrated poet/civil-rights activist Audre Lorde and attached to the Comparative Women's Studies Program housed at Spelman's Women's Research and Resource Center.

Spelman will immediately implement a fundraising campaign to raise $2 million, which Stryker's gift will match.

Stryker is the founder and president of the Arcus Foundation—a private, global grantmaking organization.

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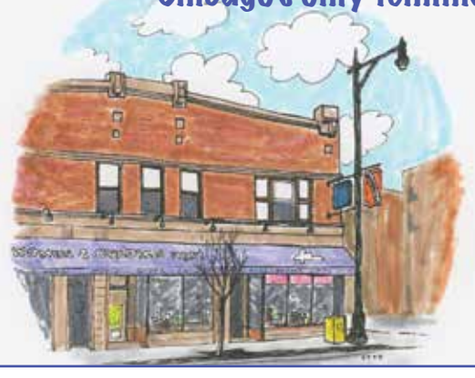

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viewpoints

THE AMAZON TRAIL
The Terminator

This week I went to the movies. It's been a long time since I've said that. Do people even say "the movies" anymore?

I married a movie geek. My sweetheart can tell you within a nanosecond who starred in which and the director was so and so and oh they filmed that in such a place. Plus, the year.

I, on the other hand, am inclined to stay in a cozy chair and read. With my sweetheart beside me, reading or wearing earbuds and laughing at mysterious one-liners.

But last week, she definitely shocked me when she said, "I'm going to see the new Terminator [Terminator: Dark Fate] next Tuesday at 2:40."

As it happens, I have a kind of mild PTSD relationship with movie theaters. For most of my life, I was so severely allergic to corn that the very scent of the stuff popping impacted me physically and emotionally. This made movies more intensely movie-ing for me. The physical symptoms were not life-threatening. The emotional ones were both life-threatening and life-changing.

Down films and the accompanying popcorn sometimes sent me into deep depressions. Once I understood my condition, I was able to avoid them by walking out on a film like The Godfather before its corruption, sexism and facile attitude toward violence made me head for the barfroom.

Up films have inspired me to test my mettle. For example, after seeing Rocky, I quit a job I loved, found another that freed up more of my time, and got back to writing.

It was a quandary. I have had treatments for the corn allergy, but it's impossible for me to tell if the fumes still affect me, or if they trigger ghost reactions. Would I ruin my sweetheart's return to movie theaters if I accompanied her and became ill? Would we grow apart if she found herself alone in theaters for the rest of her life with only a bag of popcorn for company?

Linda Hamilton in Terminator: Dark Fate.
Photo courtesy of Ryan Turrin

I love my wife beyond measure and want to share what she loves, as she does so well for me. Therefore, I girded myself with earplugs to moderate the sensory overload, swallowed a calming prescription drug (deep breathing in the cinema is not a good practice for me), and took a few hours off from writing to squire my sweetheart to the movies for the first time in twelve years.

So. The Terminator. Number six, I believe—but my first. My only previous experience with the film happened before the franchise was a franchise. I was in a stereo store having something repaired and, because the business had a sales component, I was surrounded, nay, assaulted, by sounds and moving images. I watched a TV screen in horror as a large metal robot who would later become Governor of California performed acts of greater violence than I had ever before witnessed. The soundtrack had been fine-tuned to an off-the-charts noise level.

Of all the films in the world, this new Terminator was not one I could have imagined willingly watching. Fortunately, I'm a little savvier than I was 30 years ago in that stereo shop. Plus, the internet is at my disposal. I researched the heck out of the new Terminator.

The reviews were rock-bottom dismal. Former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was in this movie. My sweetheart warned me about violent scenes, so I determined to filter the scary parts with humor. I mean, really, turning puddles of glop into king-size killer droids? Who thought that one up?

But the promo picture was, may I say, hot? The tall androgynous woman, the sweet-looking young woman beside her, and on her other side, the Irresistible. Mature. Weathered. Woman Warrior. Someone involved in the production was quoted as saying that the lesbians wouldn't be ready for this trio, but I gotta tell you, this lesbian was more than ready.

Tough-talking, gutsy women against a giant male machine? Oh, yeah—right up my alley. Shoot him up, ladies, bash him good. Accept some help from the Governor 'cause he has a more intimate familiarity with terminators. Improvise fast, create weapons out of nothing, parry the blows of the violent malevolent, mindless robot and his government.

Quintessential butchy heroine, young femmey type finding herself and her strength while under attack, enraged mother avenging the loss of a child—I want to be on their team come an apocalypse. I want them on the Supreme Court with Ruth, Sonya and Elana. I want them, one at a time for 24 years, to be president.

Yes, I was a little disoriented and wobbly when we eventually left the theater, after watching until the very last credit rolled off the screen. But after this maiden voyage, me and my sweetheart will be going to the movies again.

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letters

Voice your choice

Dear Editor:

On Nov. 5, New York City overwhelmingly approved ranked choice voting by referendum. We should do those residents one better and enact ranked choice voting for all of Illinois.

The Illinois Senate currently has a bill—SB2267, sponsored by state Sen. Laura Murphy. We must contact our legislators and show our support for this bill.

Ranked choice voting would forever end the concepts of the "spoiler candidate" or "lesser evil" voting. It would also greatly reduce the online vitriol around election time (take note Twitter, and Facebook comment sections). It would increase voter participation because it's a system that better represents a voter's beliefs.

The best way I have of explaining ranked choice voting is through a simplified 2016 election. Let's say there are only three candidates for president—Hillary Clinton (Democrat), Donald Trump (Republican) and Jill Stein (Green Party). You are a progressive, and you like the platforms and policies of Jill Stein, but are afraid to vote for her, thinking it's a wasted vote, and that it would be like giving a vote to Donald Trump. With ranked choice voting, you rank the candidates instead of voting for just one, so in this case—#1 Jill Stein, #2 Hillary Clinton. The votes come in, and let's say Jill Stein comes in last place. She is then knocked off the ballot, and whoever ranked her at #1 has their #2 ranking get counted instead. The votes are then recounted. (The full name of the system is ranked choice/instant runoff voting).

There's a good analogy for the Democratic primaries, also. If you are hoping for a progressive Democratic candidate in the current voting system, it's problematic. It is quite possible that the votes for the two progressive candidates, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, will be split, allowing the more moderate Joe Biden to win. If there was ranked choice voting, you could vote for both Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, and even include your preference for one over the other.

Please note: All of these examples are coming from my progressive/left ideology, but it works the same way for any ideology. Ranked choice voting is simply a better indication of the actual beliefs and wants of a voting population—in whatever direction that might take it.

The time is now!
Sincerely,
Scott Free
Campsongs Productions

WINDY CITY TIMES

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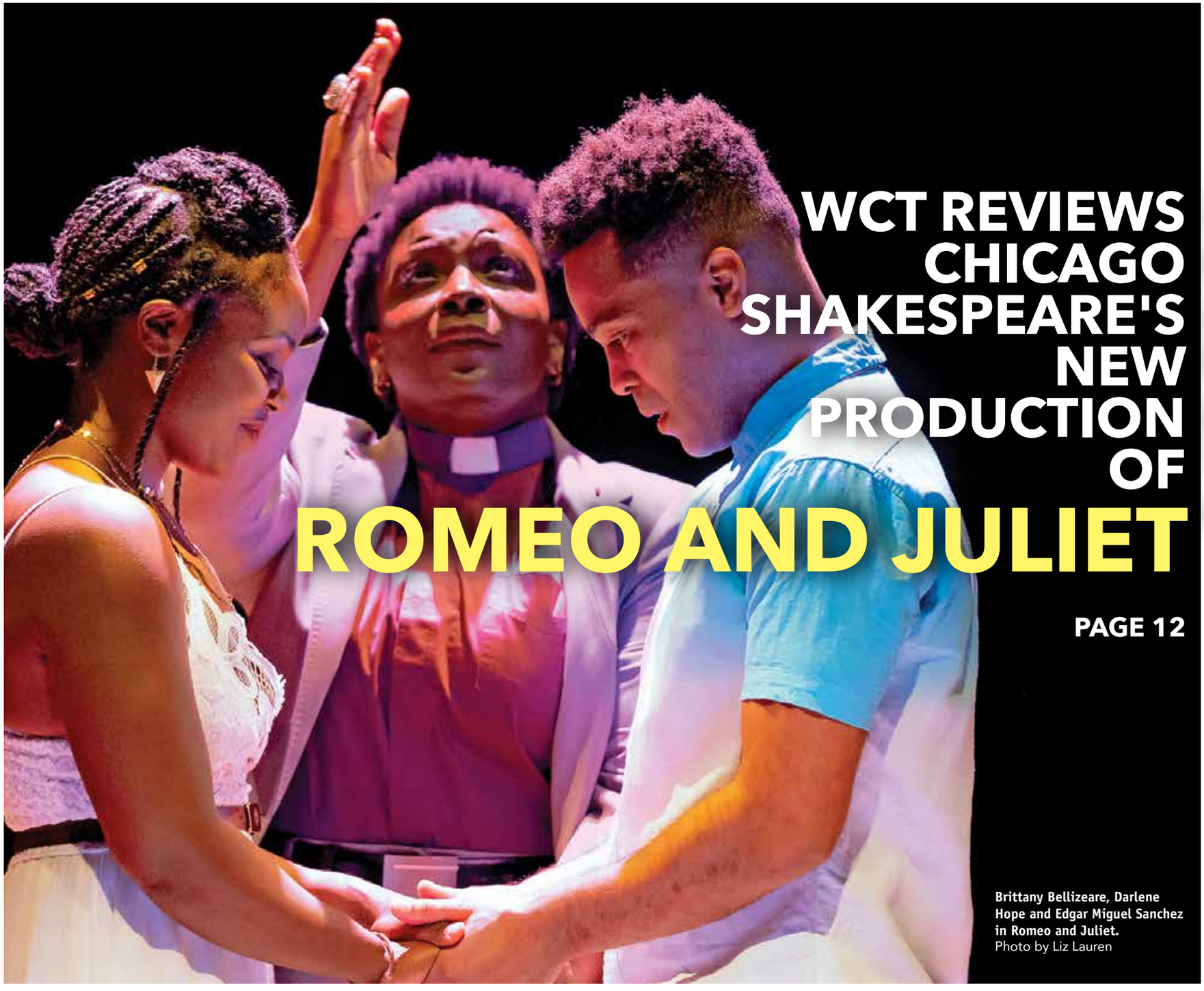


WCT REVIEWS CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE'S NEW PRODUCTION OF ROMEO AND JULIET

PAGE 12

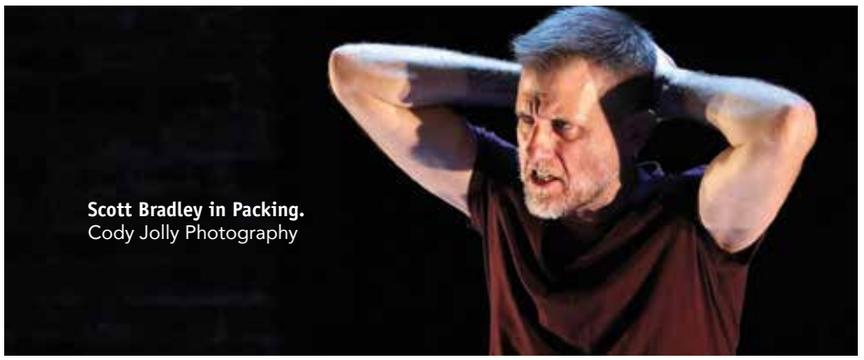
Brittany Bellizeare, Darlene Hope and Edgar Miguel Sanchez in Romeo and Juliet.
Photo by Liz Lauren

THEATER REVIEW

Packing

Playwright: Scott Bradley
At: About Face Theatre at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave.
Tickets: 773-975-8150 or AboutFaceTheatre.com; $20-$38
Runs through Dec. 7

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN



Scott Bradley in Packing.
Cody Jolly Photography

There's so much to unpack in Packing. Scott Bradley's searing autobiographical monologue, now receiving a sterling world premiere courtesy of About Face Theatre and director Chay Yew, is a heart-wrenching journey of a gay man searching for a sense of self and of home.

Bradley is mostly known around Chicago as one half of The Scooty & Jo-Jo Show, or from his campy pop-cultural musical comedy mashups like Alien Queen, Carpenters Halloween or We Three Lizas.

Packing is a complete change as Bradley reveals, often with unflinching detail, his many life struggles.

Bradley begins with his often traumatic childhood at age 3 in 1969 Iowa. There are happy memories about riding a pony and meeting with grandparents who boast about their special rifles (likely part of the reason why the show is called Packing).

Yet those chipper anecdotes get subsumed by Bradley's mother's unfair post-partum guilt. There's also his father's dangerous alcoholism and gambling, plus terrible bullying in school.

Like so many gay men, Bradley finds a safe haven away from his worries with pop culture. There's a Flip Wilson-inspired ventriloquist dummy, a devotion to disco dancing, plus lots of Cher adoration.

But the salve of entertainment and performing can only go so far, as Bradley (and Yew with sound designer Eric Backus) reveal a debilitating "glitch" within his head. It recurs and trips Bradley up whenever the outside and inner-voices get the better of him.

Packing allows Bradley to share and analyze his life's journey to find himself emotionally and artistically. What's also so invaluable about it is that Bradley's life can be seen within a much larger LGBTQ historical context. Packing works for those who lived alongside similar historical traumas (like the height of the AIDS crisis), and for later generations so they can get a sense of what their elders endured in the push for so many more freedoms.

As a performer, Bradley keeps things breezy with lots of humor, so Packing isn't solely a depress-fest. But he's also able to access the past pain and palpably relive it in the moment.

Bradley is also aided with great technology to tell his tale. Projection designer Stephen Mazurak and lighting designer Lee Fiskness illustrate Packing from above onto the stage floor with great atmospheric videos and saturated color.

With Packing, Bradley reveals a serious side to himself that is therapeutic for himself and everyone else along for the ride. It's a personally brave and fulfilling story that deserves to be seen.

THEATER REVIEW

Romeo and Juliet

Playwright: William Shakespeare
At: Chicago Shakespeare Theater at Navy Pier, 800 E. Grand Ave.
Tickets: ChicagoShakes.com 312-595-5600; $35-$90
Runs through: Dec. 22

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Although tribal enmity dating from 1957 could, in 2019, plausibly be labeled an "ancient grudge" let's make it clear from the start: The warring Veronese neighbors we meet in this production are not the descendants of the Jets and Sharks, bent on reviving old quarrels rooted in long-forgotten slights.

Neither are we to assume from the architecture of the Capulet's vacation house, with its spacious back-yard patio and proximity to boulder-strewn northern beaches, or from the unaccented locution of its residents (vocalized in short bursts replete with flattened "a"s, nasalized "e"s and hard "r"s, rather than the spoken-word arias we associate with Elizabethan drama) that the locale of our story is within the environs of Cape Cod, or the Indiana Dunes, for that matter.

Director Barbara Gaines clearly states in her playbill notes, after all, that Shakespeare's tragic tale of communal disintegration arising from the legacy of violence imposed upon credulous children by parents unwilling to break with ancestral ties, can occur in "any town torn apart … by all that divides us."

To emphasize the global relevance of her parable, Gaines has cast across ethnic and gender lines—e.g. Friar Lawrence (whose church now displays a Protestant altar) is now played by African-American female actor Darlene Hope—and instructed her designers to adopt a visual palette blending vivid tropical hues and subdued preppy tints, and to swaddle the lovers in soft disco-era dance music, while searing the adolescent bro's in harsh LED chiaroscuro. This conceptual immediacy is further underlined by a text not re-edited, so much as rescored, in order to highlight phrases often muted, if not excised completely.

The initiators of the brawl that begins the play, for example, are now the elderly Capulet and Montague patriarchs, whose kin are forced to join in the melee, despite the protests of their wives at these juvenile antics. (Those spouses, by the way, have more to say in this contemporary setting, commandeering speeches originally consigned by the author to their male counterparts). Romeo's crew—volatile Mercutio (portrayed as a military veteran prone to bouts of PTSD), badass Tybalt and effete Paris are likewise granted hints of backstory.

Such analogies can only be extended so far toward spanning four centuries, of course, and while the familiarity of Gaines' characterizations endows the filial bickering with the congenial tone of a television comedy during the first act, this levity cannot be sustained over the second, making for an increasing reliance on straightforward classical declamation. The final word—delivered this time by the ever-mediatory Benvolio—is an exhortation to peaceful reconciliation sealed, not only in verbal acquiescence, but in action.

THEATER REVIEW

P.Y.G. or The Mis-Edumacation of Dorian Belle

Playwright: Tearrance Arvelle Chisolm
At: Jackalope Theatre Company @ Broadway Armory Park, 5917 N. Broadway
Tickets: JackalopeTheatre.org; $27-$35
Runs through: Dec. 21

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

This high-energy new play from Tearrance Arvelle Chisholm (Hooded: Or Being Black for Dummies) provides a dissertation on who can or cannot say, write or even think the n-word. Whites are forbidden, no surprise. Beyond that, P.Y.G. is a lively work of satire about cultural appropriation, which can flow both ways across the black/white divide. At the end, a serious message supporting Black Lives Matter feels tacked on, despite being appropriate.

Dorian Belle (Garrett Young) is a tattooed Canadian pop sensation (think Justin Bieber), now aging from boy to man, who embraces hip-hop to change his image. To that end Dorian contracts P.Y.G., a successful street-wise rap duo, to teach him black style. "Hip-hop is Blackness but not all Blackness is hip-hop," they advise, to which Dorian insists, "I want to be whatever kind of N-word you guys are."

Thing is, Alexand Da Great (Tevion Devin Lanier) and Blacky Blackerson (Eric Gerard) aren't sure themselves. They say they're South Side Chicago but really are from Naperville. Privately they ask some basic questions. "The greatest paradox to the American Negro is why we call ourselves by the n-word," Alexand observes, to which Blacky replies, "We are taking possession." "Yeah, but of what?" Alexand counters.

Eventually the three record together and are asked to headline a mammoth music festival as their cultures influence each other. Visiting Canada with Dorian, Blacky—the more in your face P.Y.G. partner—embraces skiing, arugula (he likes Gordon Ramsey) and the opportunity for P.Y.G. to become crossover artists, gaining a vast new (white) audience and big bucks. Projected tweets, however, indicate that the P.Y.G. base audience sees this as a sell-out, driving a wedge between Blacky and Alexand.

Much of the play is presented as a reality TV show about Dorian's transition, so Chisolm has created outrageous TV commercials for "White Man's Shoes" (allowing one to step ahead of, or on, others), truth cancelling DeWoke Spray and rentable white guys to make black events appear safely integrated.

In the closing minutes, Dorian backs out of the festival rather than present a Black Lives Matter (BLM) message with P.Y.G. After all, Dorian is Canadian, non-political and white. It's a weak argument, especially since BLM—obviously unsuitable for satire—hasn't been mentioned by Alexand or Blacky up until then.

Director Lili-Anne Brown is perfect for this work. She handles its musical moments well and has inspired Lanier and Gerard to really feed off each other's energy and personality. Stefani Azores-Gococo's multi-patterned, colorful costumes are dazzlers and the dreads and huge Afro hair styles are perfect. Aaron Stephenson's original music channels rap and Bieber pop equally well, and there are superb, animated projections by Paul Deziel, engineered by Steve Labedz.

CRITICS' PICKS

The Effect, Strawdog Theatre Company, through Nov. 23: Is love in the brain or in the mind, playwright Lucy Prebble asks, and can it save two human guinea pigs (and their handlers) in a pharma trial? *MSB*

Sunset Boulevard, Porchlight Music Theatre, through Dec. 8: Sure, love or hate composer Andrew Lloyd Webber—I think this one of his best scores—but ya' gotta' love Hollis Resnik pouring heart into desperate, dangerous, deranged Norma Desmond. *JA*

—By Mary Shen Barnidge and Jonathan Abarbanel

Chicagoan helps bring nuances of foster system to the screen

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago attorney Jay Paul Deratany, who is gay, recently penned the screenplay for a new film about the inherent dysfunction within the U.S. foster care system—a realm he knows well.

"Practicing law is telling a story when I'm in a courtroom," said Deratany, who added that he finds writing to be especially cathartic when he is telling the stories of injustices that LGBT people face. "It's work, but it's joyful."

The film, Foster Boy, does not center on LGBT characters, but Deratany drew from his own experiences with litigation that involved children struggling within foster care. Matthew Modine (Full Metal Jacket, The Dark Knight Rises) portrays a powerful corporate lawyer who is charged with representing Chicagoan Jamal (Shane Paul McGhie) in litigation against the for-profit foster care agency that placed him in a home with a known sex offender. Louis Gossett, Jr. (Watchmen, An Officer and a Gentleman) also appears as the judge overseeing the case. Shaquille O'Neal is among the executive producers on Foster Boy, which is currently making the rounds on the film festival circuit.

Matthew Modine and Shane Paul McGhie.
Photo courtesy of Foster Boy

Foster Boy is especially critical of the roles that privatization of foster care play creating systems perpetuating abuse. "In a significant number of states, we've allowed the privatization of service-care systems," Deratany said. "A child or a human being is not a 'product.'"

He added that Foster Boy should resonate with many in the LGBT community.

"A lot of kids who are perceived to be part of the LGBT community become more vulnerable to sexual violence," Deratany explained. "I've seen it in case after case. … I want to see children be children, and not be subject to this abuse. I think we can do so much more as a society to prevent this."

Deratany has long been a prolific writer besides practicing law in Chicago; among his notable works have been the play Haram Iran and the screenplay for the 2015 film Saugatuck Cures. He completed an MFA in screenwriting from the University of California at Riverside.

He admitted that he "doesn't sleep a lot" when working on a writing project, but also that his partner is instrumental in helping him balance the passions in his life. Deratany added that he looked forward to Foster Boy finding its audience.

"Sometimes, social awareness films are perceived as being less marketable," he said. "It has got to have a good story, and I think our film has a good story. I think [the story] propels the film forward and I don't think it's just 'talking at the audience.' Hopefully, it's making the audience interested in the story, while still giving them a good message."

SPOTLIGHT

It's a short run for **Sombras Tango Cabaret**, only through this weekend, but it promises to be exotic and colorful with the sensuality of The Tango, and a backstage story, too, all sung and danced to the echoing sound of the bandoneon (and piano, flute, violin and bassoon), This original dance story show was created last year for Tango 21 Dance Theater. Joyful, funny and full of surprises, the story is told through Argentine-style tango, contemporary dance, acting and original music and songs. Sombras Tango Cabaret was written by Liz Sung, with choreography by Jorge Niedas and a score by Bob Solone. Sonio Oyola is the featured vocalist and Rion Klawinski anchors it all on bandoneon. At the comfortable Edge Theater, 5451 N. Broadway. Tickets: tango21dancetheater.com

Photo by Joe Kwon

THEATER FEATURE

New York theater gets political

Alyse Alan-Louis is a Wonder Woman-ish Hillary in Soft Power at the Public Theater. Francis Jue (extreme left) plays David Henry Hwang.
Photo by Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

For the first time in two years, I was in New York City recently to see some theater. I chose three highly political hot-button shows: Slave Play on Broadway, and Soft Power and Heroes of the Fourth Turning Off-Broadway. All three are wonderfully staged and provocative, with two likely to receive future local Chicago productions (vs. commercial tours). One, however, may not have showbiz "legs."

Slave Play (on Broadway, at the John Golden Theatre) is by self-described Afro-Queer author Jeremy O. Harris, directed by Afro-Queer artist, Robert O'Hara (whose plays Barbeque and Booty Candy were seen at Straw Dog Theatre and Windy City Playhouse respectively). Harris briefly attended The Theatre School at DePaul University and appeared at Steppenwolf once before hitting the Yale School of Drama. Slave Play opens with three explicit scenes of sexual domination on an Ante-Bellum plantation: white male/black female slave, white mistress/black male slave and white indentured servant/black slave, both male. These titillating scenes have moments both comic and violent, but folks who've watched porn—gay or straight—won't find them shocking.

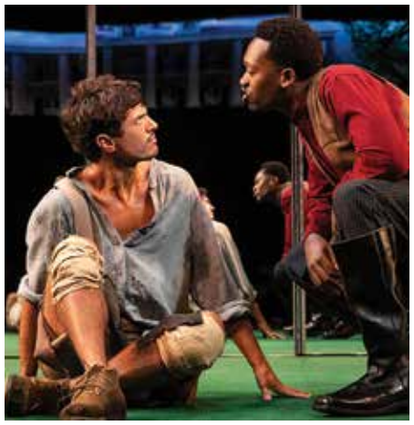
They soon yield to the play's main situation, a sex therapy program for contemporary mixed race couples, for whom Ante-Bellum antics were the Day Four exercise. Slave Play devotes the bulk of its two hours (without intermission) to a lively, extremely thoughtful, emotional and surprisingly frank discussion of the psycho-sexual nature of mixed race relationships, which Harris correctly maintains cannot be separated from America's history of slavery and race dominance (by extension, all slave-based or colonial societies as indicated by one white character being British). The subject is complex, fraught and layered and seeing Slave Play once is insufficient to extract full value from it.

Nonetheless, one would have to be in denial not to respond to specific, well made points. I reacted particularly when the black gay lover observed how one individual in a relationship often is regarded as "the prize." This resonated based on my own relationship histories, although it was unconscious and never verbalized. I found it a universal beyond gay or straight and even beyond sexual aspects. Consider the "Golden Child" of Chinese culture or the "My son, the doctor" stereotype of Jewish mothers.

For me, this confirmed the universality of Harris' play, even though his specifics are drawn from race-based situations. However, another theater critic attending Slave Play with me could not separate the concept of "the prize" from her own experiences as a black woman. I thought the play was broad, she found it specific. The play also resonated with me because I've been in an Asian/white relationship for 24 years, which is easier (I think) than a black/white mix. Still, Slave Play focuses only on the black/white mix, so in that respect the play is entirely specific where I might have wished it universal. Slave Play, quite obviously, offers a lot to chew over.

Heroes of the Fourth Turning (off Broadway, at Playwrights Horizons through Nov. 17) is a controversial breakthrough for author Will Arbery, who intelligently presents conservative political views. Scarier than Slave Play, it reveals a community few of us know exists; one of conservative Catholics in semi-rural Wyoming, organized around a parochial college teaching survival skills along with academics and theology. Arbery grew up in such an environment before rejecting its views. His five characters represent views ranging from true Christian conservatism to extreme ideology which blends religiosity (vs. true faith), right wing paranoia and fringe socio-historical theories (the "Fourth Turning" of the title; look it up) predicting imminent chaos.

Late in the play we meet the newly inaugurated, middle aged college president who is the voice of reasonable conservatism. Earlier, we meet three former students, now 28, who've returned for the ceremony. One is the prexy's daughter, painfully ailing from an unspecified illness. Another is a lost soul—literally—binge drinking to dull his raging horniness and emotional isolation. The third student is the extremist, whom Arbery makes the most impassioned, prodigious orator of the bunch, and a looker. The final character, 38, is the post-inaugural party host; a former military assassin who teaches riding and survival at the college. Never without a gun or knife, he speaks least and threatens most.



James Cusati-Moyer (left) and Ato Blankson-Wood in Slave Play.
Photo by Matthew Murphy

Arbery presents the various shades of political black and white without comment. He does not discredit his characters' positions (any more than they may discredit themselves), which is why the play is difficult for some observers to accept. His characters exhibit various degrees of confidence, self-awareness, dissolution, questioning of faith and longing in realistic and believable ways, especially as performed by a powerful Playwrights Horizons' cast under director Danya Taymor.

The production boasts an oddly strong physical setting: the host's backyard, 11 p.m.-1 a.m., illuminated only by light spilling from the backdoor and window. We never see faces clearly in bright light. The characters comment on the brilliant stars, but the skyscape is black. Are these characters points of light surrounded by misguided American darkness? Or have their benighted

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Laverne Cox. Photo by Michael Simon

10 QUESTIONS with Laverne Cox

BY VIC GERAMI

With various "firsts" in her already impressive career, the Emmy-nominated actress, documentary film producer and prominent equal -rights advocate **Laverne Cox**, continues to make history in her career and significant strides in her activism. Debuting on the scene in the groundbreaking role of Sophia Burset in the critically acclaimed Netflix original series Orange Is the New Black, Cox is the first trans woman of color to have a leading role on a mainstream scripted television show.

Cox has earned numerous honors and award nominations for her work and advocacy, from being featured on the cover of TIME Magazine, to an Emmy nomination for "Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series," to a SAG Award for "Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series."

An advocate with an empowering message of moving beyond gender expectations to live more authentically, she was also named as one of Glamour magazine's 2014 Women of the Year, one of The Grio's 100 Most Influential African Americans, one of the Top 50 Trans Icons by the Huffington Post, and honored with the Courage Award from the Anti-Violence Project and the Reader's Choice Award from Out magazine, among other accolades.

Recently, Cox has partnered with the BAND-AID® brand Johnson & Johnson and (RED) to #BandTogether in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Every purchase of (BAND-AID®) RED bandages is enough to provide a day's worth of life-saving medication to someone living with HIV.

Cox was interviewed at West Hollywood Andaz Hotel's red suite.

Windy City Times: My first one I ask everyone, it's the same, and you can interpret it as you wish. Modesty aside, how would you describe yourself?

Laverne Cox: Oh, wow! It depends on the day. Today—oh, my God! I guess I don't think about this much. I like to call myself an artist. There was a moment I went to the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham, Alabama, and I started studying dance when I was in third grade, but I didn't study ballet until high school, so when I auditioned for the Alabama School of Fine Arts, I needed to get a scholarship and I didn't think I would be able to get the scholarship if I hadn't ever studied ballet before. I had been writing a lot, and so I submitted myself as a creative writing major, and got in and got a scholarship, and the very first piece I wrote at the Alabama School of Fine Arts had the recurring line, "I would like to call myself an artist."

I think that has been the throughline of my life, that at every point when I feel adrift or unsure, uncertain of myself for my direction, something artistic gets me back on track—and even now, at this point in my life, I am so blessed. This year has been so transitional in so many ways, with "Orange" ending. I started the year feeling like this is a transitional year. I don't know where I am transitioning to and where I am at now, is the art.

WCT: You seem to be on top of the world, with your career, coming off Orange in The New Black, all your other projects, a film coming up, covers of Cosmo, Time and British Vogue.

LC: The interesting thing about perception is that it is complicated. This means, you said, that it seems like I am on top of the world and there are so many things that are quite wonderful about my life and my work, so many dreams have come true. I am really living the dream in so many ways. But at the moment, I mean I am being quite honest, I broke up with my boyfriend—or he broke up with me, I should say—at the end of June. We were dating for almost two years, and I was madly in love, and I am still heartbroken. So, my career is kind of wonderful right now in so many ways, but I am also heartbroken, so it is complicated. So, yes, I am living a dream that a lot of people I think would like to live.

WCT: Well, you just humanized it. Because the public seems the outside for the most part, but might not realize that you have your own challenges.

LC: It almost feels like this: You know I had a moment, especially after my Emmy nomination. I was, like, "I have an Emmy nomination." Then the British Vogue came out, and it was my first Vogue cover. And I am like I am on the cover of Vogue and this Emmy nomination and I am, like, heartbroken. I end up waking up crying, you now, because I miss him, I mean I miss us. I think it is for the best, you know the spiritual part of me knows that things happen for a reason and there is a plan bigger than my understanding. But the grief process is the grief process, you know that when you have been in a relationship with someone for two years and have healed so much trauma and shame in that relationship and all of a sudden, it's over; it's devastating. So, yeah! It just sobers the whole experience of what it means to be on top of the world.

WCT: Your immense success is notable and impressive, but it's even more significant when one factors in that you are a transgender woman of color. How would you reflect on your career when noting all the glass ceilings that you have broken?

LC: I think we have to because there is a case going to the Supreme Court [in which] a trans woman named Aimee Stephens was fired from her job for being transgender. Her employer concedes that is why he fired her, and the Supreme Court may decide that is legal to do. We have to keep talking about it because transgender people are banned from serving openly in the military; we have to keep talking about it, because this current administration wants to discriminate against us in homeless shelters and in healthcare. We have to keep talking about it because trans people are being murdered in record numbers and 78 percent of trans youth are bullied in schools—that is why we have to keep talking about it.

WCT: Your career, in itself, it's incredible. How do you reflect on that?

LC: I just think it feels like a miracle. It feels like a miracle, and I think because I have always dreamed of having this kind of career, but I never saw someone openly trans have this kind of career before me. That I am wondering if I was crazy, wondering if it was actually even possible right before I moved [toward] this Black, I was going to stop acting and go to graduate school and get a job. It feels just remarkable, but what I am very clear about is that I believe this happened to me when it happened to me because I was ready to be of service and I could be of service.

But I think it's really about being of service and that is why I partnered with Band Aid and RED on this incredible campaign that is really about continuing the work RED has been doing since 2006 of making sure that folks in sub-Saharan Africa have access to medication to prevent the spread of HIV, medication to keep their viral load undetectable if they are HIV-positive, to keep mothers from transmitting the virus to their babies if they are HIV-positive—all the incredible work that RED has been doing. We can actually end AIDS and HIV in our lifetime. It is possible. There is no reason why people should be dying of HIV and AIDS still in 2019. So that piece of getting to be service, I believe, I really believe in my spirit, that its partly why I have been given the opportunities by the world, by the universe, by those I partner with, so I can be of service. And I think that is why, I know that is why I get to enjoy this wonderful life.

WCT: In addition to your remarkable achievements as an actress, you are often seen as the pinnacle of success in the trans/non-binary/gender not conforming (TGNC) community. How does that part feel? Is it too much pressure to live up to that?

LC: As things shift for me, and I rethink the advocacy work that I am doing and where I want to focus my energy, there is so much work that needs to be done, and I get guilty. I feel like I can't be everywhere and I can't do everything.

It's just not possible and continue to try to build a career as an artist, it's not possible. And so, where I am at now, I just saw my dear friend Angelica Ross on women on the conversation on her network. And she just was so brilliant in the way in which she had the conversation, with the Black women in the Black community about trans lives. I was so inspired and moved by everything that she said. And she said it so much better, and I was like, "Oh, this is wonderful." Angelica got that, she's got it and I don't have to do that.

And then I saw India Moore's insanely moving speech at the Fashion Media Awards a few weeks ago and she wore these beautiful earrings that had pictures of different trans women who had been murdered this year. And she made this incredibly moving speech that was just dead-on, smart and nuanced. So, India, who identifies as non-binary, was just so brilliant, and I was, like, "Oh, yes. India's got this; I don't have to do that." I see my trans siblings out there with platforms as big as mine doing the work.

And then I see fans on the ground doing grassroots activism and handling that so beautifully, and so I want to lift up that work when I can, but then I [think], "OK, I don't have to bear the weight of all this." And so I don't know if the weight is lighter; the load is lighter, but I just feel so lifted up by other trans folks who have these wonderful platforms as well and are even more articulate than I am on some of these issues. I mean, Janet Mock—oh, God! How can I forget Janet Mock?

WCT: Thank you for that. Let's switch topics and talk about your film, Jolt, that you just shot. Tell me about that.

LC: Oh my gosh! Jolt is an action-comedy starring Kate Beckinsale, who I just adore, and I have been a fan of hers for years, and they [asked], "You want to do a movie with Kate Beckinsale and Bobby Cannavale?," and I was, like, "YEAH!" You sort of say yes even before you read the script, because it's a dream for me to work with an actress of that caliber; I mean, that is the company I would like to be keeping.

So, in Jolt, [there is] a woman who sort of has impulse control and the therapist has given her this suit; when she feels a murderous urge, she presses the button and it kind of gives her an electric jolt. And she has trouble meeting men, and she meets a guy and then he ends up dead. So, it becomes her trying to figure out who killed him. I play this police detective who thinks she killed him. And so, it's just a wonderful road. We had a blast shooting, I had a blast shooting in London and then Bulgaria—I'd never been to Bulgaria before. We were in Sofia, Bulgaria, run-

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Gus Kenworthy.
Photo courtesy of Alexis Sadoti

Gus Kenworthy: On skiing, 'Horror Story' and coming out

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Gus Kenworthy first made an impression upon many LGBTQ individuals not so long ago—in 2018, when he was one of three openly gay U.S. athletes competing in the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea (Brittany Bowe and Adam Rippon being the others).

Since then, Kenworthy has stayed in the headlines, thanks to appearances on such shows as RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars, an upcoming role on Will & Grace and his leading role as Chet Clancy on the current season of the FX show American Horror Story: 1984.

Kenworthy talked with Windy City Times when he was briefly in town (his first time in Chicago, incidentally) for "Halloween Rocks with Gus Kenworthy!" at Roscoe's Tavern.

Windy City Times: You did a project with Coors Light.

Gus Kenworthy: Yes; the mountain that's on the Coors can is the one in my hometown. We hiked that mountain [Wilson Peak, in Telluride, Colorado]—it's about 14,000 feet or so. It was the real deal; it took a whole day, and we got caught in the rain and hail. It was fun but also rewarding.

WCT: You really like Halloween. Do you know what you're going to be?

GK: I always do a few costumes because I'm very extra. I feel Halloween is not a one-night thing; you have the weekend before and the weekend after, so you have lots of opportunities for costumes. Last year, I did three. This year, I'll do a couple. I'm going as Evan Peters from the first season of American Horror Story for a party this Saturday; for tonight, I'm doing a rocker vixen look.

WCT: Let's talk acting. What was filming like?

GK: Well, it was pretty whirlwind. I feel like I was thrown into the deep end of the pool; I kind of didn't feel like I knew what I was doing the first few days on the set. There's so much to do that's not directly acting, like hitting your marks and knowing your eye line. All the actors on the show are really wonderful and are really helpful. I'm quite comfortable on the set now, and I don't need a ton of direction for the simple stuff. The schedule has been pretty daunting. I'm excited to see the final episodes—and I want to book something else.

WCT: You wrote an essay in ESPN because you got negative feedback about being cast in "Horror Story." Has the feedback gotten better since?

GK: It's gotten better. After the first episode, I made the mistake of looking at my Twitter and reading what people were saying. I've constantly been told, "Don't read [the posts]—even if you're thinking you've done the best job ever." So, I've changed my approach, but you still see comments here and there.

At the beginning there was pushback—which I totally understand. As the season has gone on, people have been a lot kinder and supportive.

WCT: In that ESPN essay, you said that the gay community can be very supportive—but it can also be very quick to undercut someone. Do you still feel that way?

GK: I feel that it's true with myself, the gay community I know and the LGBT community, as a whole. We are very quick to support someone; when someone comes out, I feel like that person is immediately embraced and supported—but you have to watch where you step and what you say; there are pressures and expectations, and you will learn very quickly if you've done something wrong. However, sometimes it's not explained WHY you've done something wrong.

There are so many wonderful things about the LGBT community: It's smart, poignant and supportive. But what I ask of myself and of others is to be more forgiving and accepting, and to help others learn. However, that's not just for the LGBT community—it's for everyone.

WCT: It seems like you're proving something to yourself as well as the general public.

GK: Yeah. I've always wanted to do, and it's what I want to continue to do after this show. I definitely think I've proven to myself that I'm capable and competent, as an actor—and I think that some people are definitely agreeing with that.

WCT: I'm going to contrast that with Will & Grace. Which is tougher to do: comedy or drama?

GK: I think drama is harder. I think I'm quite funny, whether or anyone does. I feel that I have a good sense of timing, and that comedy lines are easier to deliver. With drama, sometimes it's hard to know how to deliver a line. But Will & Grace was so much fun—a multicam show with a live audience. With Will & Grace, they film a whole episode in less than a day; with "Horror Story," an episode can take two weeks—and sometimes it can take 12 hours to get one shot. It is what it is, but Will & Grace is like a well-oiled machine.

WCT: Going back to "Horror Story," what is Ryan Murphy like?

GK: He's a sweetheart. He can be intimidating, but he is sweet. He truly has more going on than just about anyone. Trying to pin him down is difficult, but when you have him, it's undivided attention; he's very, very present.

WCT: You mentioned performing in front of audiences when talking about Will & Grace—and you're used to that, being a competitive skier. Is it too early to talk about Beijing [the site of the 2022 Winter Olympics]?

GK: No; I'm training. The qualification process hasn't started yet, but I plan on being there, although I'm concentrating on acting right now. I want to go to one more Olympics.

WCT: And you also connected to a skin-care line?

GK: Yeah. I'm working with one. [Previse] reached out to me and it's a really wonderful product. I don't have a background in skin care, but I take care of my skin. [Smiles] So I've partnered with them, and we're working on new items.

WCT: How do you feel about being a role model?

GK: I think anyone who's in the public eye is automatically a role model, whether they want to be or not. It's something you have to take seriously because there are so many people who are being influenced by you. I guess since my first Olympics I've taken it quite seriously. I used to be so prudish that I didn't swear, but I feel that I've now found my groove.

WCT: This interview is being conducted during National Coming Out Month. Who was the first person you came out to?

GK: The first person I came out to was actually my sports agent. I was in the closet with a closeted boyfriend, and everyone thought we were friends. But there was another skier, older and more established, who gave me a ton of shit and made me feel totally uncomfortable; I told my agent I wanted to be done with the company the older skier and I were connected with. The agent asked if I was upset because there was a little truth in it, and I broke down, crying—and I came out.

The agent said, "Your secret's safe with me, but anytime you're ready to come out I've got your back." It was three years before I told anyone else—and that person who was my mom. She's been wonderful.

BILLY Masters

"The booing is fucking us up. It's messing with everyone's mic. You can grimace and all that. All we hear is booing."—**Whoopi Goldberg** admonishes the studio audience during **Donald Trump Jr.**'s appearance on The View. After the fiasco, Junior said, "I don't think I've enjoyed an interview this much in my life." And they say he's the smart one!

A few years ago, I was sure I was having a stroke. I had the most excruciating pain in my head, blurred vision, dizziness and some numbness. I looked up symptoms of a stroke, looked in the mirror for signs of drooping—which was no help since I always think my left side droops a bit. I didn't feel up to driving to the ER, and was embarrassed to either call a friend or even an ambulance. What if I was fine? Needless to say, I did not have a stroke—I had my first migraine. **Chely Wright** found herself in the exact same position—with strikingly different results. She stated, *"Exactly one year ago today, I went to the ER at Lenox Hill Hospital because I was on Day 3 of a migraine, which isn't uncommon for me. Because I had shows booked for the coming weekend, I wanted to get this headache out of the way. ... After a series of diagnostic tests, I was informed that I'd had a stroke."* While the openly gay country singer is now fine, she shared her story as a cautionary tale. Don't be like me—be like Chely!

The UK's version of the show **Strictly Come Dancing** made a bit of history by having the first same-sex routine. While they've previously featured mixed groups with some same-sex interaction, this was the first time that a routine was solely two men. However, this dance was not part of the competition. It was two pros dancing while singer **Emeli Sande** sang "Shine." The dancers were **Johannes Radebe** (who is openly gay) and **Graziano Di Prima** (who is not). Reaction to the routine was largely positive. Radebe said, "I've never felt so liberated. For the first time in my life, I feel accepted for who I am. That says so much about the people of this country."

Meanwhile, the Danish version of Dancing with the Stars (Vild med dans) has a same-sex couple competing. When **Jakob Fauerby**, an openly gay actor, was cast, he was prepared. He said, "I had already thought that if they called me, I would ask if it was possible to dance with a man." Not only did he get a man—he got two-time mirror ball champion **Silas Holst**, who is also gay. The pair topped the leaderboard four times in the past eight weeks.

Drag star **Courtney Act** competed on Australia's version of Dancing With the Stars. She appeared in drag and had a male dance partner, which technically makes it a same-sex match-up. She did well enough to come in second! These strides around the globe have been noted by the domestic powers-that-be at Dancing with the Stars and I hear they are considering using one of RuPaul's girls next season. Is it just me, or does this have **Shangela** written all over it?

Liam Payne is almost letting it all hang out, Billy says.
Photo by Jason Hetherington

Alas, all is not rosy for some other Drag Race alumnae. **Pearl**, **Shea Coulee**, **The Vixen** and **Kim Chi** have been collectively slapped with a $5 million lawsuit. Allegedly, the ladies made slanderous and defamatory claims about a company that manages LGBTQ entertainers. I won't name the company because: a) I don't know the veracity of the claims and 2) I may need new management someday! The aforementioned drag divas stated on social media that the company never paid them for gigs. I'm reporting this as nicely as possible—so don't sue me!

Meanwhile, **Caitlyn Jenner** is itching to get back to reality television. Rumors abound that Cait may appear on the UK competition I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here! Not only has she pitched herself to the show; the producers consider her a huge "get." You know what else is huge about it? The paycheck. Allegedly, just for participating, Jenner would be paid roughly half a MILLION dollars.

You may recall that last year, The Golden Globes started a new honorary award. In addition to the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement, they inaugurated **the Carol Burnett Award** for outstanding contributions to television on and off the screen. Needless to say, Miss Burnett won the first award—wouldn't it be embarrassing if she lost? This year, the recipient will be **Ellen DeGeneres**. The Golden Globes are given out Jan. 5.

Our *"Ask Billy"* question comes from Walter in Maine: *"I just saw a photo of one of those One Direction boys posing in underwear. He looked pretty grown-up to me. Do you have any of the pics?"*

There are underwear shots, and then there are **Liam Payne**'s underwear shots for Hugo Boss. I'll let Liam explain: *"I hadn't been properly warned about the amount of nudity Mert and Marcus do in their work, let's say...I mean it was just a room full of five or six people and a hell of a lot of tequila to get me to this level. I was standing there and all of a sudden it was, 'Right, OK, take them off.' I'm like, 'Really? Take them off? Off, off? Like on-the-floor off? Oh my God. And there was a real hollow moment afterwards where I was sitting outside smoking a cigarette thinking, 'I have basically just shot soft-core porn.'"* First, where did that body come from? And let's not even discuss the basket—which is ginormous. Because a picture is worth a thousand words, and since I'm close to my limit, I'll post a few thousand more at BillyMasters.com.

When Liam looks like he's putting more than just eggs in his basket, it's definitely time to end yet another column. With so much talent to take in, check outBillyMasters.com—the site that'll give you something to stroke about. As for your questions, send them along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Caitlyn is dancing with a real star! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

the DISH
Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR
Althea

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Althea (700 N. Michigan Ave.; MatthewKenneyCuisine.com/althea) is courtesy of celebrity chef and plant-based pioneer Matthew Kenney, and occupies part of the seventh floor of Saks Fifth Avenue (and is where Sophie's used to be).

There are two things I remember about Sophie's: the models who walked through the restaurant advertising some expensive frocks, and crab cakes featuring crustaceans that had been flown in from Indonesia (which prompted me to jokingly ask, "Aren't there crabs that are closer?").

Althea has crab cakes as well—but considering that this is a vegan spot, quotes should probably be put around that name. However, these particular items—made of hearts of palm, artichoke, quinoa and ancho aioli, with zucchini relish—are pretty delicious themselves, even if they're crab cake-ish.

And that's part of the problem for this writer. If I had never tasted (and appreciated) meat, I might have loved some of these dishes more.

Althea's kimchi dumplings.
PR photo

However, too many of these items should have an "ish" tacked on the end—emphasizing that while vegan items have come quite a long way, there's a bit to go.

That being stated, there were some other standouts. The flora artisanal cheese plate had such treats as porcini truffle, harissa Jack cheddar and wine-soaked mascarpone (even if the accompanying fennel-flax crackers were too brittle to handle anything). Also, the Brussels sprouts flatbread (with smoked almond ricotta, carrot-caraway puree, sauerkraut and apple-cider gastrique) was pleasing—and the people at a neighboring table raved about the kimchi dumplings, which my dining companion and I did not try.

Then there were the entrees.

Neither my dining companion (a strict vegan, by the way) nor I was particularly impressed with the spicy udon or the coconut-curry risotto. My friend thought the udon "is anything but. Short on noodles and stingy on mix-ins (shiitakes, cashews and bok choy), the fine dusting of togarashi (spice blend) around the bowl fails to alert ones taste buds to its presence. Disappointing." My risotto was watery and wretchingly bland—even the mint-cilantro chutney failed to help. However, other dishes sound promising, such as the kelp noodle cacio e pepe and the chickpea frittata.

Desserts were marginally better. The chai-spiced maple cheesecake was pretty good to me, although the crust was diamond-hard. The coconut cream pie was also satisfying

(By the way, nuts are used extensively here—except for peanuts.)

On the night I attended, the crowd steadily increased in size, indicating that at least some people are taken by the cuisine.

My final analysis is this: The appetizers are very appealing, and you can certainly enjoy them while taking in the exquisite sights of the Mag Mile. You may also want to check out brunch; I imagine the avocado toast is amazing.

Sidetrack's MOMosa brunch Nov. 17

Equality Illinois will hold its annual "MOMosa" brunch fundraiser on Sunday, Nov. 17, 1-4 p.m., at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Attendees will celebrate mothers, families and all others who love equality.

All proceeds benefit Equality Illinois. Tickets are $40 each; see https://www.equalityillinois.us/events/momosa-2/.

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

PERFORMER OF THE WEEK

::WILL RETURN IN NEXT ISSUE::

Halloween weirdness.
Photos by Jerry Nunn

Going 'Underground' for Mister International Rubber 23.
Joseph Stevens Photography

NUNN ON ONE: MOVIES

Elizabeth Banks spreads her wings helming 'Charlie's Angels'

BY JERRY NUNN

Elizabeth Banks wears many hats in the third installment of Charlie's Angels. She acted, directed, produced, and wrote the screenplay in the popular story of women working in a detective agency. The film stars Kristen Stewart, Naomi Scott and Ella Balinski as the three new Angels, with Banks, Djimon Hounsou and Patrick Stewart playing multiple Bosleys—Charlie Townsend's assistants.

Many will know Banks' career from The 40 Year Old Virgin, The Lego Movie, Magic Mike XXL and The Hunger Games film series, in which she played the flamboyant Effie Trinket. She made her directorial debut in Pitch Perfect 2.

Television series include Modern Family, Scrubs and 30 Rock, earning two Emmy Award nominations for the latter. She appeared on VH1 with RuPaul and a drag cast for the short promo called Ru's Angels before Charlie's Angels Nov. 15 hits theaters worldwide Friday, Nov. 15.

Windy City Times: Hi, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Banks: Great to hear from Windy City Times. I'm glad that a newspaper that serves the LGBT community is around.

WCT: I appreciated things found in Charlie's Angels for the LGBT community such as having a trans person singing on the soundtrack.

EB: Yes!

WCT: Laverne Cox has been tweeting about the movie and has a cameo.

EB: I've been trying to keep that a secret, but it keeps getting out. I have developed two television shows for her. I was determined to make her a star and she's so talented. I love her so much!

WCT: Can you make us a complete gay film next time?

EB: Alright!

WCT: Was Kristen Stewart's character, Sabina Wilson, flirting with other women intentional?

EB: Absolutely. Kristen and I both agree that we are not interested in labeling anything. One of the more modern ideas we had about these characters was not to put labels on them, to understand that fluidity is modern and to be as open and loving of our entire audience as possible. We wanted them to feel represented in the movie.

Elizabeth Banks.
Photo by Chiabella James

It was important to Kristen that her Angel be seen as queer in the movie. I thought that was great.

WCT: I saw Tan France from Queer Eye visited you on the set.

EB: Yes, we had a lot of people come and visit us on the set. He was one of them. Tan and I had a great time hanging out in Istanbul

WCT: The costumes in the film were amazing.

EB: I'm so glad you think so! It was really hard because we wanted the film to feel a little more grounded with real relatable women. I wanted the audience to feel like they could be an Angel. At the same time, I wanted some glamour and fabulousness in the film. There is a nod to iconic Charlie's Angels generations before this one. It showed [the] actresses' personal style and what Charlie would require on any given mission.

WCT: It was like Lady Gaga's closet with all of those sequins.

EB: It was amazing. We had previous costumes from all of the past films in the closet as well. I put little Easter eggs in the closet. For instance, Cameron Diaz's white outfit that she wears before the beginning of the last movie is there. The lederhosen outfits are in the closet. Drew Barrymore's jumpsuit when she drives the race car is in there, also!

WCT: I read up on the costume designer, Kym Barrett, who did your costumes and also many of The Wachowskis' films such as The Matrix.

EB: She's incredible and open to collaborations. I wanted the sparkles so the lights would reflect off of them. She wanted to make them like jewels.

WCT: Was the Sabina name a play off of original TV character Sabrina Duncan?

EB: Yes. I have a lot of love and fandom for all of the Charlie's Angels. I hope people feel me trying honor everything that came before. As a working woman and a feminist, I'm standing on the shoulders of the women that came before me, as these Angels are standing on the shoulders of all the people that came before them.

See the full interview online at www.windycitytimes.com.

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WEBSITE AND DATABASE assistance from Anna Naden. Experience: set up WordPress for Gerber/Hart LGBTQ library, maintained WordPress for FrontRunners and New Town Alano Club. Coded websites and databases for Accenture. Text 224-254-7343 or email phoenix13technical@gmail.com 24/7 for information. Call evenings for free needs assessment or a visit to your place of business. Phoenix Technical Services (12/25/19-4)

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WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Nov. 13

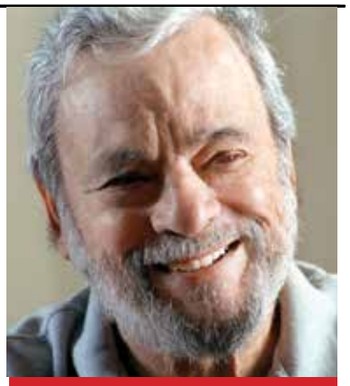
"A Night With Oscar 2020" kickoff party panel discussion about Chicago's legendary underground ball scene featuring Legendary Troy Ebony, from House of Ebony; Nikolay Khan, from the House of Khan; and Legendary Myah Lanvin (Brown), from fierce House of Lanvin.. Featuring a Chicago ball scene talk back. RSVP 6:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago http://centeronhalsted.org

Team Mejia-Beal at Sidetrack Openly gay Democratic candidate Ken Mejia-Beal is running for IL State Rep District 42. Appetizers and happy hour 6pm-8pm followed by a night of dancing until midnight. Ticket includes 2 drink tickets. Special guests 6:00pm - 8:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago Tickets: https://tinyurl.com/ydnfdw4h

Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) fundraiser "Rise Up: A Celebration of Resilience" will recognize the Transgender Day of Remembrance by naming and honoring those trans lives that were taken this year. Performances, food, a photo booth, a DJ and a cash bar. $125. Email Info@WeSayYEPP.com. 6:00pm - 9:00pm Chicago Theater Works, 1113 W. Belmont Ave. Tickets: http://WeSayYEPP.com

Thursday, Nov. 14

LuxeHome Presents CHILL, an International Wine & Culinary Event Food, drink and design in support of three local charities: The Lynn Sage Foundation, Saturday Place and Respiratory Health Association. Registration 5:30 6:00pm - 8:30pm The Mart (222 W Merchandise Mart Plaza Tickets: http://chillluxehome.tix123.com/



EVEN STEPHEN
Saturday, Nov. 16
The music of composer Stephen Sondheim will be celebrated at the Auditorium Theatre.
Photo by Jerry Jackson/HBO

Transgender Awareness Week event to support Kina Collins Leading progressive candidate and trans rights supporter running for Congress in the IL-07 district. Food, drinks, live performance 6:30pm - 8:30pm Cantina Laredo, 508 N State St. http://tinyurl.com/lgbtq4kina Tickets: http://secure.actblue.com/donate/lgbtq4kina

Friday, Nov. 15

ALMA Presents Our Past, Present and Future "30 Years Of Archives" The Association of Latinxs Motivating Action in partnership with the Puerto Rican Arts Alliance, unveiling archives, reflecting on 30 years of activism, organizing, marching, and celebration. Free 6:00pm - 9:00pm PRAA Center, 3000 N Elbridge Ave, Chicago http://www.eventbrite.com/e/alma-presents-our-past-present-and-future-30-years-of-archives-tickets-77043752939?aff=efbevent&fbclid=IwAR0-Mfndtx-GQ0BSmtEUiatPdnjC_o3hv-9P37HyrgOyGrTbhCs0xc5NhrD8

Saturday, Nov. 16

2019 HRC Chicago Gala & Auction 2019 HRC Chicago Gala & Auction 6:00pm - 12:00am Fairmont Chicago 200 N Columbus Dr Chicago https://www.hrcchicago.org/gala.html Tickets: https://www.boxofficetickets.com/go/event?id=337263&k=258275bbfc

November Queer Contra In the heart of Boystown each month friends come together to dance to live music. Bring your friends to experience this uniquely queer, inclusive dance. Lesson at 6:30 p.m. RSVP on Facebook 7:00pm - 9:30pm Second Unitarian Church 656 W. Barry Chicago http://www.facebook.com/events/2221309551503163/

Chicago Celebrates Sondheim! The iconic composer and lyricist—who celebrates his 90th birthday this season—is celebrated with a one-night-only performance. Directed and produced by Chicago's own Joan Curto with Chicago singers and Chicago Philharmonic performing selections from Sweeney Todd, Follies, Company, West Side Story performed by the Chicago Philharmonic, conducted by Rich Daniels. 8:00pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University 50 E Congress Pkwy Chicago Tickets: http://auditoriumtheatre.org

Sunday, Nov. 17

Story Jam Chicago celebs to the stage for a special charity event to benefit The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights. The storytellers are local luminaries from radio, tv, news, and sports: Peter Sagal of NPR's Wait Wait Don't Tell Me; actor/comedian David Pasquesi; LGBTQ advocate and publisher of The Chicago Reader Tracy Baim; actor/comedian and Empire star Antoine McKay; and WGN host/comedian/politician Patti Vasquez. Doors 11 a.m. 12:00pm City Winery Chicago 1200 W Randolph St.; http://www.storyjamshow.com.

MOMosa Brunch for Equality IL at Sidetrack Celebrate mothers, families, and all others who love equality. All proceeds support Equality Illinois. 1-4 pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago

Wed., Nov. 20

LGBT Elder Cultural Responsiveness and Advance Directive Training Free. RSVP 4:00pm - 6:30pm Clark Hill's offices, One Prudential Plaza, 130 E Randolph St., #3900

Meet and Greet Ryan Podges, openly gay candidate for Illinois State Rep. 12th District includes Chicago's Gold Coast, Old Town, Lincoln Park, Lakeview and Uptown neighborhoods. $25. Find "Meet and Greet Ryan Podges" on Facebook, 5:00pm - 7:00pm Uber, 111 N. Canal St.

Transgender Day of Remembrance, PFLAG Rockford Hosted by PFLAG Rockford Chapter. Join us in remembering those who lost their lives. Childcare available. 5:45pm - 7:45pm The Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockford, IL 4848 Turner St, Rockford http://www.facebook.com/events/779089779199357/?active_tab=about

Thursday, Nov. 21

Equality Illinois Network for Equality A space for LGBTQ people and allies to come together, network, and build community. The funds raised support the work of Equality Illinois 5:00pm - 7:00pm Baker McKenzie, 300 E. Randolph St., http://act.myngp.com/Forms/2618507825525230336

David Sedaris Grammy Award-nominated humorist, writer, comedian, bestselling author, and radio contributor, his laconic wit and delivery have ensured his place as one of America's best observant comedians and keenest students of the human condition. 7:30pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University 50 E. Ida B. Wells Dr., AuditoriumTheatre.org

Friday, Nov. 29

Singer Greyson Chance Out musician known for his performance of Lady Gaga's "Paparazzi," a viral success on YouTube, gaining more than 65 million views. Doors 7 p.m., show 8 p.m. The Bottom Lounge, 1375 W. Lake St. Tickets: http://bottomlounge.com/events-archive/greyson-chance

NEW YORK from page 14

views isolated them in a black universe? See Heroes of the Fourth Turning and decide.

I'm quite sure that Slave Play and Heroes of the Fourth Turning will receive Chicago productions some time, but probably not Soft Power (off Broadway, at Public Theatre through Nov. 17). This musical has book and lyrics by David Henry Hwang (M. Butterfly, Chinglish, Yellow Face) and music and lyrics by Jeanine Tesori (Fun Home, Caroline or Change). It's a funny, clever, liberal, dynamic Off-Broadway hit; but it's also 80% political satire, which tends to have a short shelf life.

As in Yellow Face (seen locally at Silk Road Rising), Hwang himself is a character in Soft Power, puzzling out his Chinese identity vs. his American identity via an elaborate structure. Shortly before the 2016 election, a Shanghai entrepreneur commissions Hwang to write a Broadway musical for the Chinse market. When Hwang says the producer's storyline isn't suitable for Broadway treatment, the producer observes that America should be more Chinese, not the other way around. When Hillary loses in the Electoral College, Hwang calls it "The day that democracy broke my heart." Soon after, recovering from a street attack (Hwang really was attacked in 2015), Hwang fantasizes the entire musical.

In Hwang's fantasy, the Shanghai producer becomes the hero and meets Hillary, who campaigns at McDonalds with servers on roller skates. When Hillary loses—the Act I finale is "Why Do I Cry for America?"—the USA is subsumed by China and becomes more Chinese with disastrous consequences for politics and musicals. The Hwang character finally declares in favor of his American identity, and Soft Power ends with a theatrical but genuine plea, "I Believe in Democracy."

Tesori's wonderful pastiche score is a respectful but playful homage to American popular music: R&B, hip-hop, big band (the McDonalds number), ballads, even Aaron Copeland's "Hoedown," with Sam Pinkleton's choreography following suit. The large orchestra (22 pieces) delightfully features a full string section. As Hwang, the truly wonderful Francis Jue dazzles with his ever-alert energy, just as he did at the Goodman Theatre in King of the Yees two years ago. Leigh Silverman directed Soft Power, using an all-Asian cast who don blond wigs to play American characters and chorus.

10 QUESTIONS from page 16

ning around and I got to chase Kate Beckinsale around.

WCT: How is it when a fan recognizes you in public?

LC: It depends on a lot of things; it depends on if I am in the space to receive it. I think I have gone very careful about where I go now, because I have been in situations often with fans where I was not in the place to receive the love that they wanted to give me. I just wanted to go about my daily life as a normal person, whatever that means, and so I think it depends if I am in the space where I can receive it, honestly.

I try to go out like incognito if I am not able to receive that energy. But if I am and I meet—let me think of the last interaction it was somewhere recently. I was out for lunch with a friend with some sort of business, and someone came up and she was quite lovely, and I would say, "Thank you so much." I was able to receive it.

WCT: I have looked up at some of the charities and organizations that you have worked with. Just give me a few of the highlights, the ones that are close to your heart right now—like, obviously, the Band-Aid RED campaign.

LC: I don't know if I mentioned it, but we are doing #BandTogether. That's when [people] go to CVS and buy their RED band aids; we are encouraging them to post photos of themselves on social media with their Band Aids with #BandTogether. I hope they are okay with encouraging people to have conversations with their followers; there is still so much stigma and misconceptions about HIV and AIDS, and I think [talking] needs to part of the process.

WCT: My last question is always this: Tell me a secret—and make it a good one.

LC: I have so few secrets now, I am just spilling all my tongue. Gee! Oh, my goodness—if I haven't talked about it publicly, I probably can't or won't.

Actually, this isn't a secret but they wanted me to wear for the Savage and Fenty Fashion show. I brought my own shoes, because I wear a size 13; I have big ass feet—that's not a secret. And so, they dyed a pair of my white custom Kenneth Cole shoes pink and, like, put stones on them for the show. That's not a secret but I haven't told anyone yet. You are the first person I am telling.

For more information about Laverne Cox, please visit LaverneCox.com.

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The contemporary works of Japanese artist Tetsuya Ishida (1973 - 2005)—a cult artist in his home country—is on view in a limited, 10-week showing at Wrightwood 659. Ishida's work reveals with incisive lucidity the isolation and despair of a generation at the turn of the 21st century. Ishida's sardonic paintings connect audiences to the alienation of a treadmill society dominated by work, productivity, and consumerism.

MUST CLOSE DECEMBER 14

WRIGHTWOOD 659 | ISHIDA
Self-Portrait of Other

IMAGE CREDIT: **Tetsuya Ishida** | *Untitled* | 1997
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