WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985 | DECEMBER 5, 2007 • VOL 23 NO 12



Chicago Marks World AIDS Day page 8



'Bible' Premieres page 20



See Ross Run page 34



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CDC MUM ON STATS

BY BOB ROEHR

Estimates of just how many Americans become infected with HIV each year are at the center of a controversy at the 2007 National HIV Prevention Conference that opened in Atlanta Dec. 2.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has used an estimate of 40,000 new infections per year since the early 1990s, before the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy. The new estimates could increase that by more than 50 percent and top 60,000, according to news stories that have appeared in the major media.

But the CDC isn't saying; it neither confirmed nor denied the figures at its own premier meeting on HIV. Kevin Fenton, who heads up the agency's HIV efforts, acknowledged that it has been working with testing technologies that give a better sense of whether or not an infection is recent.

In a statement released to the media, and in a speech at the opening session of the conference, Fenton said, "Given the importance of the new estimates in guiding HIV prevention policy and programs, CDC's public health responsibility is to ensure accurate information."

"The estimates are currently being reviewed and analyzed by external experts prior to acceptance and publication in a scientific journal…This expert external peer review is important to make sure that the methodology used and the conclusions derived are accurate." He anticipates publication in early 2008.

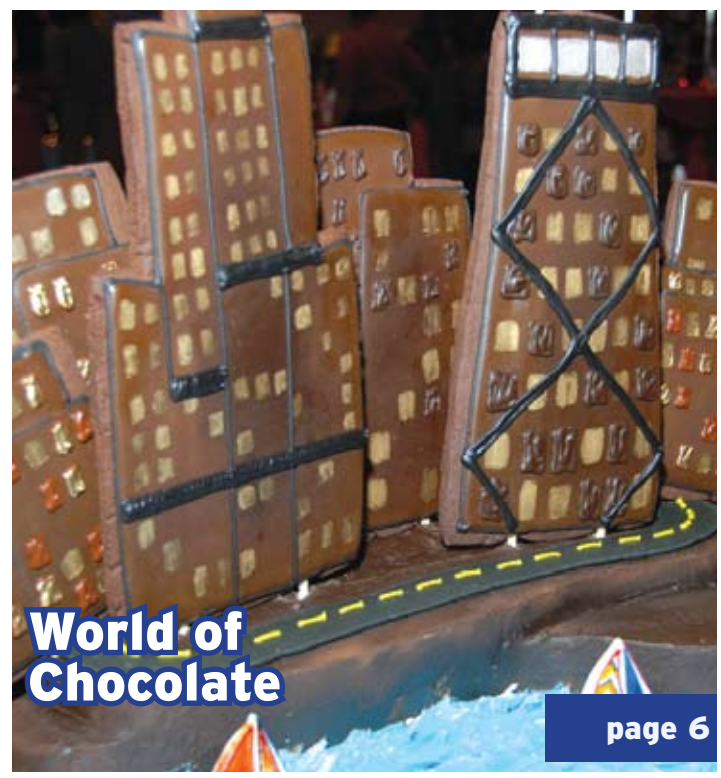
Until then, it remains unclear whether there have been more infections recently, or the numbers have been higher all along. One thing is clear, the CDC HIV prevention budget has been flat over the last five years. And that has resulted in a 19 percent decline in the purchasing power of the dollars because of inflation.

Speaking from the same stage, AIDS advocate Jesse Milan, Jr., grumbled, why couldn't that peer review analysis have been ready by this meeting, the first in two and a half years.

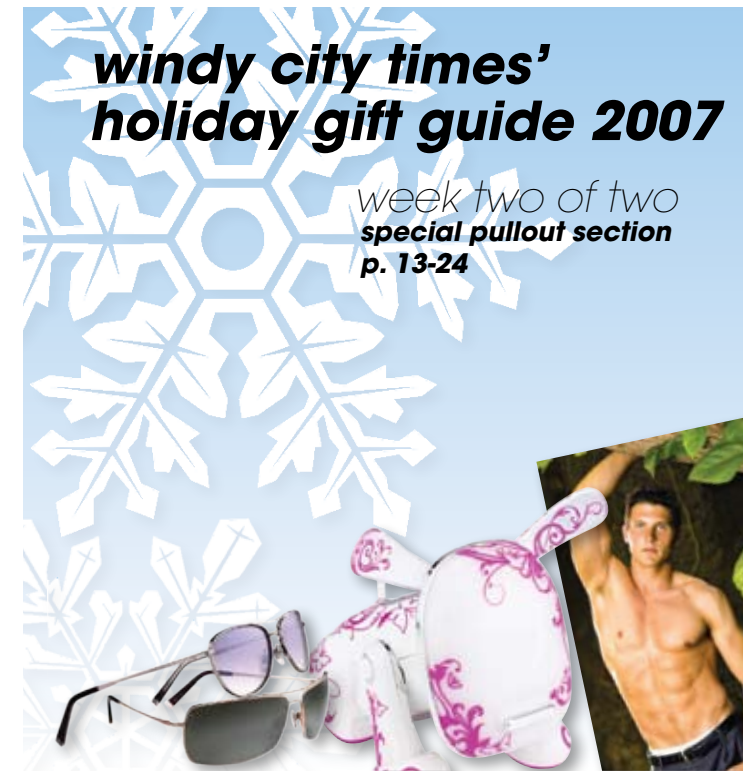
Thomas J. Coates had a different take saying, "It kind of doesn't matter" what the number is. "The important point is that it is better surveillance. Better numbers are going to help us know how much of a difference there is, and how to make the situation better."

The HIV prevention guru, now at the Univer-

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World of Chocolate page 6



windy city times' holiday gift guide 2007
week two of two
special pullout section
p. 13-24

Jane Rule, Author and Reluctant Activist, Dies at 76

BY MARIE J. KUDA

Jane Rule "is one of our finest writers—surely the most significant lesbian writer of the twentieth century." So wrote author/editor Katherine V. Forrest in her introduction to the 2005 re-issue of Rule's 1977 novel "The Young in One Another's Arms".

American-born author Jane Rule died of complications from liver cancer at the home in British Columbia she had shared with her partner of 45 years, Helen Sonthoff. She and Ms. Sonthoff met in the U.S., migrated to Canada and became citizens there in the 1960s. Ms. Sontoff, several years her senior, died at age 83 in 2000.

Jane Rule is the author of seven novels and several collections of short fiction and essays. "Desert of the Heart" (1964), her third novel (the first published) is her most recognizable, though not her critically best novel. It was adapted into the iconic lesbian film "Desert Hearts" by Donna Deitch in 1985, and recently released on DVD. While Rule's literary reputation will rest with her fiction, her pubic life of reluctant activism soared with the publication of "Lesbian Images" in 1975.

"The silence has finally been broken," proclaimed Rule as she forced the academic and literary establishments on three continents to reexamine the lives and work of women writers they had decreed worthy of entry into their literary canons. "Lesbian Images," pressed their noses into the sexual reality of writers like Willa Cather, Gertrude Stein, Elizabeth Bowen, Vita Sackville-West, Colette, Djuna Barnes, and others whose names we accept today, without flinching, as lesbian-identified women. At the nascent Lesbian Writers Conferences in Chicago in the 1970s her book and the reprint of Jeannette Howard Foster's "Sex Variant Women In Literature" burst like twin bombshells illuminating the history and impact of lesbian writing. Rule was the first to speak about "coding" in the works of such writers as Cather and Stein. Lesbianism as "the thing not named" would become a touchstone of later biographers of women writers. Published at the height of the women's liberation movement and on the cusp of women's studies on college campuses, "Lesbian Images" made Rule a lightening rod for both censors and activists.

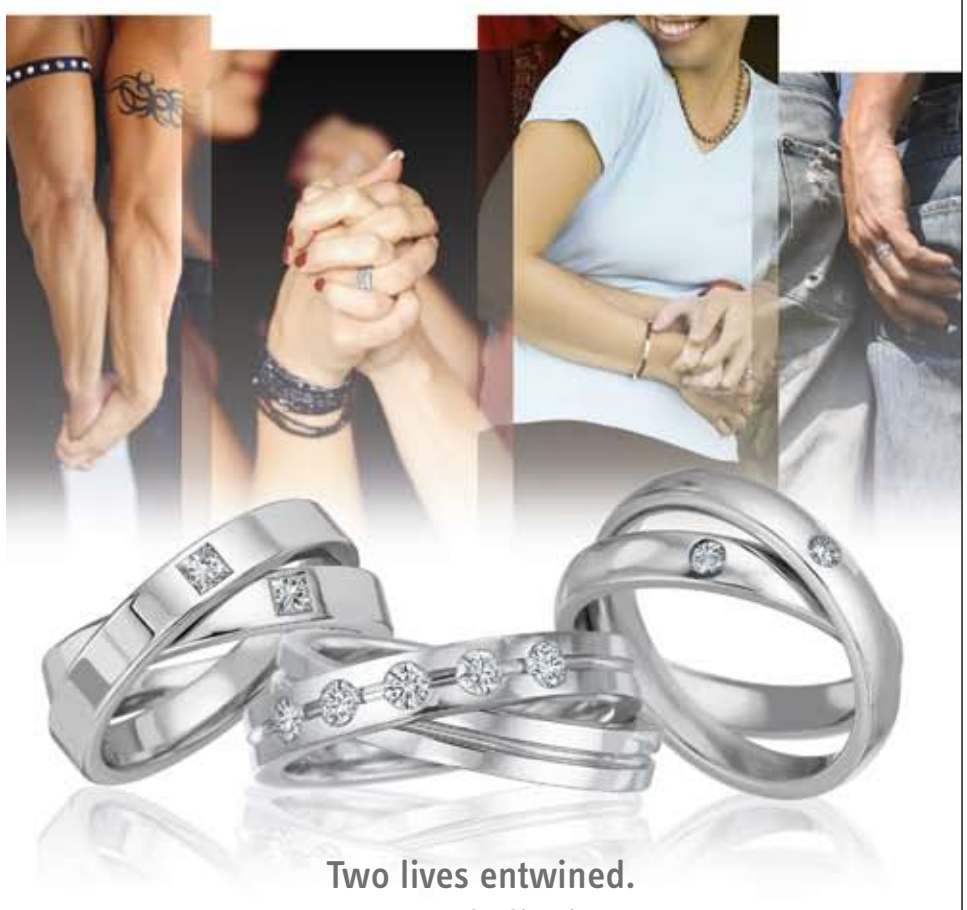
Claiming that her mind was a safer place than her body, she eschewed demonstrations and political activism. While asserting she chose "not

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There were lots of goodies to eat (as well as see, hear and buy) at AIDS Foundation of Chicago's World of Chocolate. See page 6.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald



Richard Knight, Jr., talked with actor Dennis Christopher (above) about Broadway, Breaking Away and the gay film Nine Lives. See page 32.

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This week's online-only features include:

–Theater reviews of Dog Sees God and C.S. Lewis on Stage

–A take on World AIDS Day and cannabis

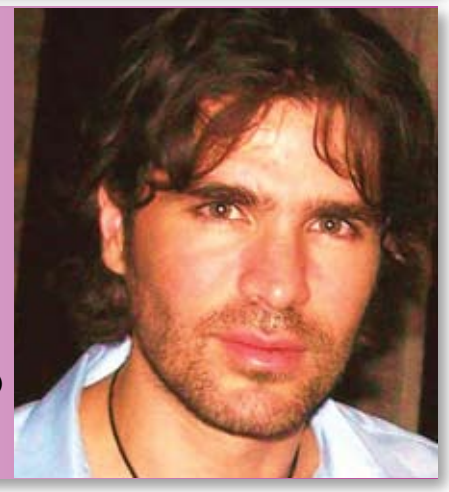
–TPAN's ManAlive event

–Media Watch

–Deep Inside Hollywood

–Starrlight, featuring Eduardo Verastegui (right)

Photo by Steve Starr



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GEISHA, GEISHA, GAYSHA!

Cabaret performer Kyle Hustedt on his new show Geisha & Gaysha, each Sunday at Mary's Attic.

photo by Matt Leyes



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Report Reveals Same-Sex Population Trends

BY LISA KEEN

The number of same-sex couples in Illinois in 2006 was almost five times greater than the number counted in 1990 when the U.S. Census Bureau first collected data on same-sex partner households. That increase is similar to a national trend. But the number in Chicago has grown at only about half that pace.

These are just some of the conclusions found in "Geographic Trends Among Same-Sex Couples in the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey," a study released Nov. 2. The study was prepared by Gary Gates, a senior research fellow at the Williams Institute, a research center at UCLA for sexual orientation, law and policy studies. Gates examined data from the 1990 and 2000 decennial surveys of every household in the United States and data from the annual "American Community Surveys" for the years 2002 through the latest, 2006.

His report shows that the most recent Census Bureau data, from 2006, estimates there are 779,867 same-sex couples in the United States—up from 145,130 who self-identified in the 1990 decennial census.

In Illinois, the number of same-sex couples jumped from 6,220 in 1990 to 22,887 in 2000. The number increased again and peaked in 2004 at 30,088. It has remained steady since then, numbering 30,432 in 2006. In Chicago, which accounted for more than half the state's total in 1990, same-sex couples numbered 3,842 during that first tally. The number jumped to 9,412 in 2000 and has been roller-coastering in the years since. The peak count thus far came in 2005 with 10,001 same-sex couples. In 2006, the number had dropped to 8,983.

Examining how that data stacks up to the overall number of households, the number of same-sex couple households per thousand in Illinois has grown from 1.48 in 1990 to 6.43 in 2006, putting the state squarely in the middle of all 50 states in terms of the concentration of gay couples. In Chicago, there were 3.76 same-sex couple households per every 1,000 in 1990, but 9.5 per thousand in the last three years. That ranks Chicago 18th among the nation's 50 most populous cities in terms of same-sex couple concentration.

Gates says his analysis "allows us to measure the closet"—that is, the number of people who were unwilling to self-identify as gay—between 1990 and 2006.

"And it gives us a clue about what states might be turning a little more purple," he said, referring to the identification of state voting records as trending toward Democratic (blue) or Republican (red).

Utah, he said, was the most dramatic in both respects. In regard to the concentration of same-sex couples, Utah ranked number 38 in 1990. But in 2006, it ranked number 14.

"It's now one of the gayest states in the country," said Gates. That finding stands in stark contrast, of course, to what most people think of Utah —as a Mormon-dominated population that is generally hostile to gays.

Other interesting data which Gates teased out in his analysis include:

- Among states, Vermont has the highest concentration of same-sex couple households (9.71 per 1,000 households); followed by New Mexico (9.03), Massachusetts (8.99), Washington (8.94), and Oregon (8.83);
- Among cities, San Francisco continues to reign as the gayest city in the United States, based on its concentration of same-sex households (28.72 per 1,000). Seattle comes second (21.27), followed by Minneapolis (18.68), Portland, Ore., (16.94) and Sacramento (16.36).
- Of the 779,867 same-sex couples in 2006, the data estimates that 53.5 percent of male couples and 46.5 percent are female couples;
- Comparing population trends of the public at large and those of same-sex couple households, Gates said he found evidence suggesting more same-sex couples are moving from the city to the suburbs.

The greatest surge in the number of reported same-sex couple households occurred between the 1990 census, when the census form first provided an option for same-sex couples to identify themselves, and 2000. In 2000, the 594,391 same-sex couples were more than three times the 145,130 identified in 1990. The increase between 2000 and 2006 was 185,476 couples, or a 31 percent increase.

The concentration of same-sex couples to all households grew from 1.56 per 1,000 in 1990 to 5.61 per 1,000 in 2000, and 6.79 per 1,000 for 2004-2006.

While the decennial survey numbers are based on a questionnaire that the Census Bureau tries to have every household in the country fill out, the American Community Survey is an annual questionnaire sent out to only about three million households nationwide—about 250,000 each month. At the end of the year, the data is put all together and a calculation provides an estimate of the national total for that year. Gates said he used an average from the years 2004-2006 because the community survey samples are "still relatively small compared to the Census," and, thus, a single-year ranking of a city or state can vary substantially.

Gates said the questions asked on each of the surveys were "exactly the same," but noted that the Census Bureau has made improvements in how it counts same-sex couples. He also said that, while the annual community survey is an estimate –compared to the actual head count of the decennial census— the jump in numbers between 2000 and 2006 is still statistically significant.

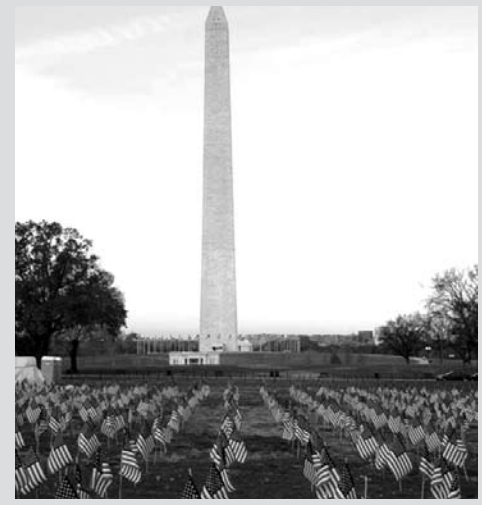
And politically significant, too.

Gates said his analysis indicates that the largest increases in the number of same-sex couple households occurred in the most politically conservative areas. For instance, states where the public voted on constitutional amendments to ban same-sex marriage saw, on average, a 41 percent increase in the number of same-sex couple households between 2000 and 2006. States which did not consider constitutional bans saw only a 27 percent increase.

States which have some form of legal recognition of same-sex relationships saw an increase of 23 percent in the number of same-sex households, compared to states which provided no recognition, which rose by 32 percent.

"If this many people are coming out and being more visible," said Gates, "over the next couple of years, gay issues aren't going to have the sort of political resonance they've had in the past."





Eric Alva at ceremony (above); flags near the Washington Monument. Photos by Bob Roehr (above) and Patsy Lynch

12,000 American Flags Mark DADT Anniversary

BY BOB ROEHR

They fluttered in the crisp morning breeze, 12,000 American flags aligned on the Mall between the Capitol and the White House, looking a bit like a cemetery. Each one stood for a gay man or woman who has been discharged in the fourteen years that the antigay policy known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) has been in place.

They were small and on a stick, the kind of flag that a kid might wave from the sidewalk in the summer heat as a Fourth of July parade passed by; the kind left standing in the ground by a tombstone on Memorial Day. This was fitting because each flag marked the end of a proud career of service to their country. Each was a blot on the national ideals of liberty and justice for all.

"As we look across the field this morning at the flags honoring men and women who were willing to sacrifice their lives for this great country, one thing is clear, it is time to repeal the failed policy of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'" It is time to allow all qualified men and women to serve openly and proudly," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

"Yes, we are here to call attention to this discriminatory policy, but more importantly, we are here to thank those 12,000 gays and lesbians and their families for the great sacrifices they have made for our country," he said on November 30, at the start of three days of events focusing on the policy.

Marine sergeant Eric Alva was the first person wounded in the Iraq War, in 2003. He lost his right leg. "I served my country proudly for 13 years, and I shed blood for my country on the sands of Iraq. I have sacrificed for the rights and freedoms of people in this country. Not just some of them, all of them—no matter who they are."

"'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is the only law in this country that forces people to be dishonest about who they are." Alva said, "It is time for us to allow people to be who they are."

Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said the policy "stands against every principle of equity and fairness that this country claims to stand for. It is time for 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' to go."

He said, it is about more than the gays and lesbians who have served and continue to serve in the military, "it is also, in a very real and fundamental way, about citizenship, civil rights, military readiness, and simple fairness for each and every one of us."

Retired Major General Dennis Laich released a letter signed by 27 other generals and admirals. It urged Congress to repeal DADT "in the name of truth, justice, and espoused military values."

All of the Democratic presidential candidates have said the policy should be changed, but when HRC has pressed them as to what actions they would take as President to make that change, they have not been forthcoming with details. All of the major Republican candidates support the ban.

A poll in May by CNN found that 79 percent of Americans thought that gays should be allowed to serve openly, while a survey of returning Iraqi vets, who presumably are more conservative, found only slightly lower support.

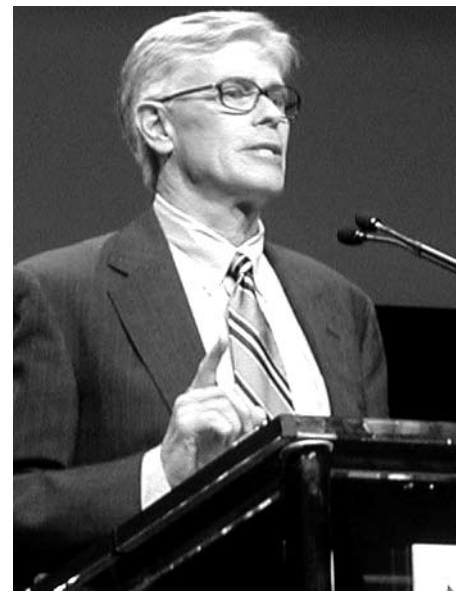
CDC from cover

sity of California Los Angeles, said, "What we need to do is roll out what we know works" in preventing HIV infections in both the domestic and international settings.

Coates urged AIDS services organizations (ASOs) to adapt to new conditions with new strategies, expertise, and delivery methods. In addition to educating and counseling people, "we may need new kinds of motivations, like economic motivations." He cited the example of New York City that is experimenting with financial incentives for kids to finish high school, and it has worked well with methadone users. "We need to incorporate these strategies into our public health response."

ASOs need to acquire medical skills or partner with organizations that have them, "Because we now have male circumcision; we may have pre-exposure prophylaxis [the use of antiretroviral drugs to prevent infection]; we may have provision of acyclovir [to repress herpes and reduce the risk of HIV transmission]; we may have microbicides."

"And we need organizations with on the ground experience to partner with clinical groups so that when these strategies come along they can be disseminated quickly to the communities that need them the most," Coates said.



Dr. Thomas J. Coates. Photo by Bob Roehr

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Former Rep. Henry Hyde Dies

BY AMY WOOTEN

Former Republican U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde, 83, known for leading the impeachment proceedings against former President Bill Clinton, as well as his conservative stance on controversial issues such as gay rights and abortion, died Nov. 29. He passed away due to complications from heart surgery.

Hyde served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1975 to 2007. He represented Illinois' 6th District, which covers a large portion of DuPage County in the northwestern suburbs, for 32 years. He retired from Congress last session. In November, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor.

The former representative is best known for leading the House impeachment hearings of President Bill Clinton, and the ironic revelation by Salon.com right before the trial began that Hyde had an affair with a woman during the '60s. He is also known as being one of the most persistent and vocal opponents of abortion.

Shortly after news of his death, the gay political organization Log Cabin Republicans Illinois released a statement mourning the loss. "Hyde has served his country with honor and dedication," said Log Cabin Illinois President David Valkema in the release.

The local group cited Hyde's co-authoring of the U.S.'s global response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in 2003, but does not mention the former representative's anti-gay and -woman legacy.

In both 2004 and 2006, Hyde voted in favor of the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment.

Over the years, Hyde did not receive favorable scores from Human Rights Campaign (HRC). Every two years, HRC ranks members of Congress in its Congressional Scorecard. Hyde received an all-time high of 17 (the highest is 100) for the 107th Congress in 2002, when the organization first started its record-keeping. Hyde received a 0 for both the 108th and 109th congresses in 2004 and 2006.

The former Congressman was also well-known for his anti-abortion stance. He led the fight against publicly funded and "partial birth" abortion.

In 1976—while still new to office—he attached an amendment (later known as the Hyde Amendment) to a spending bill that banned abortions funded by Medicaid. Passed in 1976, the Hyde Amendment excludes abortion from the healthcare services the federal government provides to low-income individuals through Medicaid. The current Medicaid program allows it in cases of rape, incest and when the woman's life is endangered.

"Henry Hyde is the national symbol of a right-wing movement that has caused the suffering of countless poor women who have been forced into horrible circumstances because they are denied access to abortion services," said Terry Cosgrove of Personal PAC, a bipartisan political action committee dedicated to electing pro-choice candidates to state and local office in Illinois. "The Hyde Amendment forces countless poor women to make the 'choice' of feeding their existing children, resorting to prostitution and drug dealing, or a dangerous self-induced abortion from which many women have died over the past 30 years.

"Hyde's legacy is a horrible stain on this nation's commitment to fairness and decency—all brought about by a man who carried the 'family values' banner so boldly while at the very same time having an 'extra marital affair' that was brought to public light just days before he lead the House impeachment hearings against President Clinton."



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A Dreamy Evening at the Hilton

Guests crammed the ballroom at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan, on Thurs., Nov. 29, as AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) held its sixth annual World of Chocolate, which had "Sweet Dreams" as its theme this year. The is event allowed guests to sample sweet concoctions from over 30 of Chicagoland's top chocolatiers and restaurants while contributing funds needed to fight HIV/AIDS. (The gala was one of many World AIDS Day-related events that took place around Chicago.)

This year's vendors/contestants included Delightful Pastries, Translucent Chocolates, Hotel Orrington, Chocolate Manor, Das Food LLC, Blommer Chocolate Store, Terry's Toffee and the host hotel, to name a few. Celebrity judges such as local TV news personalities Dean Richards, Robin Robinson and Kathy Brock selected winners, and Calihan Catering (Hot Chocolate Award), Palmer House Hilton (Chocoholic's Dream Award) and Cook Au Vin and Sweet Endeavours (Sweet Tooth Award) were among the top choices.

AFC Executive Director Mark Ishaug told Windy City Times that this gala—now the organization's main annual fundraiser, considering the next spring benefit will not occur until 2010 (the foundation's 25th anniversary)—was the most successful yet, bringing in 1,600 attendees. (He was hoping it would bring in over $200,000.) "This is really huge," he said. "This morphed from a small event called All the Trimmings; we made about $50,000. It continues to grew. People love it [and] the Hilton has just outdone itself."

The event also featured entertainment, meat-and-potatoes fare (for those who wanted an alternative to chocolate), a silent auction and a holiday bazaar. Also, artist Eric Sosa submitted his paintings, and painted live at the benefit. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com for many more.









A Spirited Brunch

Vital Bridges—which helps HIV/AIDS-affected people throughout metropolitan Chicago impacted by providing food, nutrition, housing, case management and educational services—held its 18th annual Holiday Brunch: Feed the Spirit on Dec. 2 at the Four Seasons Hotel, 120 E. Delaware. Among the highlights were live and silent auctions; musical entertainment; and the bestowing of awards upon Walgreens (corporate) and Alice Rapoport and Michael Sachs (individual leadership). Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com for more





A Party for 'Justice'

Equality Illinois held its women's holiday party and table captain reception for its upcoming "Justice for All" gala on Dec. 1 at La Tache, 1475 W. Balmoral. The gala will take place Feb. 2, 2008 at Chicago Hilton & Towers, 720 S. Michigan. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY AMY WOOTEN

An Oklahoma man police describe as **a white supremacist was recently arrested for the October murder of a gay man**, Steven Domer. According to 365gay.com, police believe the murder was part of a gang initiation. Darrell Lynn Madden, 37, is already facing charges in connection with the murder of his friend.

Controversy erupted after it was discovered that openly gay retired Gen. Keith Kerr, who asked presidential candidates about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy during the recent CNN/YouTube Republican debate, has ties to the Hillary Clinton campaign. However, Kerr had simply signed onto a list of gay and lesbian supporters of Clinton, according to the Associated Press. CNN later apologized for allowing Kerr to ask his question.

A recent Hunter College poll found that **among LGB folks, Sen. Hillary Clinton is the overwhelming favorite for the 2008 presidential election.** The survey found that 63 percent of LGB people would likely vote for Clinton in the Democratic primaries, followed by Sen. Barack Obama at 22 percent. Also, the study found that "coming out" leads to more political involvement.

The FBI recently reported **an 8 percent increase in hate crimes in 2006**, according to Human Rights Campaign. The FBI also reported that hate crimes based on sexual orientation are the third most common. Hate crimes based on race are the most common, followed by religion. Sixteen percent of all hate crimes in 2006 were based on sexual orientation (up from 14 percent in 2005), the report said.

Two transgender Human Rights Campaign members, in a joint letter, announced their resignation from the organization's business council recently, citing HRC's "broken promises, the lack of credibility that HRC has with the transgender community at large, and HRC's apparent lack of commitment to healing the breach it has caused," the letter said. Jamison Green and Donna Rose wrote that they find it "impossible to maintain an effective working relationship" with HRC.

Lott to Leave Senate

BY BOB ROEHR

Senator Trent Lott, R-Miss., shocked Capitol Hill with an announcement on Nov. 26 that he will step down by the end of the session. The minority whip, and former majority leader, is one of the most powerful members of that chamber.

Lott, 66, said he was leaving while there was still time to do other things, though he indicated no firm plans at this moment. He cited frustration with "the great difficulty in passing needed legislation." His frustration was likely to grow as a handful of other retirements make it inevitable that Republicans will sink even further into minority status in the Senate.

He said he had considered not running for re-election last year, but Hurricane Katrina had devastated Mississippi in 2005. He used his seniority to bring federal resources to the state to help it rebuild.

Observers have noted that new Senate ethics rules kick in at the beginning of next year. They double the waiting period for lobbying for a retiring Senator, from one to two years. That might have influenced the timing of Lott's decision.

Lott had a solidly anti-gay voting record, consistently earning zeros from the Human Rights Campaign. He blocked the confirmation of James Hormel to be the first openly gay U.S. ambassador. The issue was resolved only when President Bill Clinton made a "recess appointment" while the Senate was not in session, and Hormel served with distinction.

The Senator earlier had earned the wrath of the gay community with comments made in 1998 in an interview with conservative radio talk show host Armstrong Williams. He compared homosexuality to alcoholism and kleptomania.

Williams had his own brushes with homosexuality, having been sued by a male personal trainer for same-sex sexual harassment. The matter was later resolved without going to trial.

Lott had been forced to step down as majority leader in 2002 after remarks at Sen. Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday party were taken to mean support for the segregationist ideals that Thurmond championed in his 1948 bid for the presidency. But he was able to rehabilitate himself, winning back the number two position in the Senate leadership by one vote, after the last election.

This being Washington, there are rumors that sex in behind Lott's resignation. Lott being Republican, the prefix "homo-" has been attached to those rumors.

The blog "Big Head DC" alleged that the male escort working as "Benjamin Nicholas" had liaisons with Lott on at least two occasions. "Nicholas" would later deny such contact. Two years ago an individual using that name had written an article offering advice on how to be a male escort, chief of which was the need for discretion.

That prompted on poster to ask whether "Nicholas" was initially was lying about having had sex with Lott, or was lying now in denying ever having had such activity, in an attempt to maintain "professional standards."

Hustler magazine purchased a full page ad in the Washington Post last June offering a "$1 million reward" to anyone who could provide evidence of improper sexual activity by high government officials. Publisher Larry Flynt is playing coy with the Lott situation.



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Gay Christian singers Jason and deMarco.

WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

U.S. gay singers allowed to perform in Singapore

U.S. Christian singers Jason and deMarco, who are a gay couple, have received permission to perform in Singapore on Dec. 13.

The decision was a surprise given that the government has been on a gay-ban spree this year, prohibiting a gay photo exhibition, a gay story-reading event, a forum on gay legal issues, and a speech by Metropolitan Community Churches founder Troy Perry.

Gay sex is illegal in Singapore and punishable with two years in prison.

But Jason and deMarco, who were banned as recently as 2005, got a green light this time after organizers convinced the Media Development Authority that "the aim of the concert is AIDS education and HIV prevention ... targeted at the high-risk groups," an MDA spokesperson said.

Uruguay passes civil-union law

Uruguay's House of Representatives passed a civil-union law for gay and straight couples Nov. 29.

The measure had passed the Senate in September. It is expected to become law before year's end.

Uruguay will be the first Latin American country to grant same-sex couples access to civil unions on the national level.

Couples must live together for five years before they can take advantage of the law.

Spousal rights will be granted in areas such as health care, pensions, parenting and inheritance.

Other Latin American localities with civil-union laws include the city of Buenos Aires, the Argentine province of Río Negro, the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, Mexico City, and the Mexican state of Coahuila, which borders Texas.

Aussie activists are pleased Howard lost

Australian gay activists expressed satisfaction with the Nov. 24 election defeat of anti-gay longtime Liberal Prime Minister John Howard.

In 2004, Howard successfully pushed for a national ban on same-sex marriage and, in 2006, he squashed a civil-union law passed by the Australian Capital Territory, a jurisdiction similar to Washington, D.C.

Losing both his PM job and his longtime seat in Parliament, Howard was replaced by Kevin Rudd of the Labor Party, which has pledged to end financial and legal discrimination against same-sex couples by modifying 58 federal statutes.

Activists said they will hold Rudd's feet to the fire on that promise and other gay-friendly Labor pledges, including the party's stated support for the ACT civil-union law.

ILGA to hold Asia confab

The International Lesbian and Gay Association will stage its third Asia Regional Conference Jan. 24-27 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Titled Equality in Diversity Now!, the gathering aims to recognize "the diverse ways by which genders and sexualities are experienced and defined in Asia and appreciate the different areas of activism LGBT groups focus on in their respective countries."

"This conference will further advance the struggle for visibility, social acceptance, and decriminalization of LGBT persons in Asian societies," the organization said. "A most significant part of this conference will be the creation of a clear organizational structure and action agenda through an ILGA-Asia regional board and secretariat."

Local organizers include Chiang Mai GLBT groups and the Committee on Lesbigay Rights in Burma. Sponsors include the Dutch organization HIVOS (Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation), the Dutch organization Oxfam Novib and the Global Fund for Women. Additional sponsors are needed.

ILGA is a 30-year-old federation of more than 600 GLBT organizations and associated members, such as city governments, from 90 countries. It has played a key role over the years in developments such as Amnesty International's decision to adopt persecuted homosexuals as prisoners of conscience and the World Health Organization's decision to remove homosexuality from its list of illnesses.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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Medical students protest at the rally. Photo by Amy Wooten

Med Students Rally for World AIDS Day

BY AMY WOOTEN

A sea of white lab coats dotted the plaza in front of the downtown building that houses U.S. Sen. Barack Obama's office as members of the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) rallied for global AIDS reform as part of a World AIDS Day effort.

Joined by the Chicago Women's AIDS Project, medical students from Chicago and Wisconsin rallied in a tri-city effort to address the presidential candidates' stance on PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) reform and made three demands. The protest began near Obama's office in the John C. Kluczynski Building and ended in a march towards the Illinois Republican Party offices.

PEPFAR is President Bush's plan to fight global AIDS, and comes up for reauthorization in 2008. AMSA and the Chicago Women's AIDS Project said that the president's proposal for the next five years is inadequately funded.

First, AMSA wants presidential candidates to commit to PEPFAR reform.

Jing Luo, a second-year medical student and one of the event's organizers, told Windy City Times that it's time for presidential candidates to voice their support for PEPFAR reform. Congress is currently drafting the second version of PEPFAR, which will determine the United States' fight against global AIDS for the next five years.

"We want all presidential candidates to commit to an actual dollar amount," Luo said.

Second, AMSA has three demands for PEPFAR reform: to commit at least $50 billion over the next five years; to remove PEPFAR's abstinence-until-marriage earmark on prevention funding; and to target $8 billion of PEPFAR funds to address the shortage of healthcare staff in developing countries.

During the event, Catherine Christeller, executive director of Chicago Women's AIDS Project, spoke about how women are increasingly carrying the burden of the AIDS epidemic on their shoulders. Funds are needed for effective prevention practices such as condoms and perinatal testing and treatment, she said. "Do what works," Christeller stressed.

"Putting money into global AIDS can turn the tide of terror," said Test Positive Aware Network's Matt Sharpe during the rally. Sharpe, a 20-year survivor, said it's time presidential candidates, particularly Republicans, "listen to the majority of Americans" about global AIDS reform.

During the event, a representative of Obama's office spoke on the presidential candidate's behalf, informing the crowd that Obama plans to support AMSA's vision and its goal of increasing PEPFAR to $50 billion.

AMSA rallies also took place in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Center's Vigil Full of Emotion

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Center on Halsted held a World AIDS Day vigil on Sat., Dec. 1, that was abbreviated because of the inclement weather—but was nonetheless an emotional experience for many of the attendees.

Audience members then engaged in a spoken-word response that read, in part: "We know the face of HIV, for we are here, in this place/We are friends, partners, lovers, family, co-workers, neighbors/We know the life of AIDS; still/We are caregivers, justice workers, health care professionals, social workers and ministers/ ... Truly AIDS is in our midst and together we are strong. We are a people who must live, side by side in courage and strength. And in hope."

Greg Sanchez, an outreach coordinator with Better Existence through HIV (BEHIV), was grateful to be alive. "I thank God, first of all," he said. "I'm 42 now, and I thought I was going to die when I was 19, when I was first infected [with HIV]"

The most moving part of the ceremony came when people hung red, gold and/or white ribbons on a small pine tree as Sarah McLachlan's song I Will Remember You played. (Sanchez explained that the tree was an evergreen "in the hope that, maybe, a cure would come." He also said that the red ribbons stood "for those infected and affected," the gold ones were "for those who have passed on" and the white ones "for the hope that one day there will be a cure or vaccine against this virus.") Attendees wept as people stated their reasons for placing a particular ribbon; one man hung two—one for himself and one for the HIV-affected people he will be visiting in the African country of Lesotho.

Organizers had planned to walk around the neighborhood to remember those who have passed away because of the pandemic. However, the weather resulted in the walk being cancelled.





Vigil speakers Greg Sanchez (left) and Robert "RJ" Hadley; an attendee hangs a ribbon on the tree. Photos by Andrew Davis

PASSAGES

Anthony Hollins

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Anthony Hollins, a Hazel Crest resident who did everything from starting the New Life Performance Company (a dance troupe for young people) to studying pastry-making to helping lead the HIV/AIDS support ministry at Trinity United Church of Christ, passed away Nov. 25 in Stroger Hospital, the Chicago Tribune reported. He was 42.

A lifelong resident of the Chicagoland area, Hollins was raised in Chicago's South Side. The family later moved to Matteson; in high school, he was active in the theater department.

At Trinity, 400 W. 95th, Hollins—who received a master of divinity degree from Chicago Theological Seminary last year—was going to be an ordained minister. He also led a dance ministry at the church, as well as started New Life.

Ronald Wadley, an LGBT-rights activist and secretary of the Same Gender Loving Ministry at Trintity, e-mailed Windy City Times that "Anthony was first and foremost a Christian and an activist. While he was also a dancer, many of us will remember his graceful nature through which hearts were touched; he was a voice for change."

Wadley added that "[i]t is also important for all of us to know that Anthony accepted his call into ministry and allowed God to use him to make and set forth a path and lay a foundation for us to continue to make a difference in the lives of those that feel left out or displaced. He spoke loudly about HIV/AIDS within the African-American community. It is with sadness that I think of his passing but I rejoice for I know that he is currently in heaven dancing up a storm.

"It is a very rare occasion that someone is willing to be vocal in a Christian setting about their sexuality and HIV/AIDS in the African-American community. He was truly doing Jesus' work. He touched the lives of so many youth through his dance instruction and leadership. Through his many gifts, talents and ability to stand tall in all that God created him to be none of us who knew and met him will be the same nor will we forget him. When you met Anthony, you walked away saying 'God is up to something.'"

The Reverend Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., pastor of Trinity, e-mailed Windy City Times from Germany that "Anthony Hollins was a gifted dancer a phenomenal choreographer, a seminary graduate and a surrogate father for dozens of the young people in our church. He served as the Chairperson for our congregation's HIV/AIDS Ministry and he made HIV awareness come alive in the church as no chairperson before or after him. He will be missed tremendously!"

Hollins is surived by his father, Arthur, and mother, Bertha; three brothers, Andrel, Arthur, Jr., and Aaron; and two sisters, Sasha and Kasie. Services took place at Trinity on Dec. 1.

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...VIEWPOINTS...



MARK SEGAL

Mark My Words

Sometimes the national leadership of our community makes me shake my head in wonder. The last big suggestion to come from some of our national leaders is to boycott Wal-Mart. What? There are a couple of problems with this idea.

This holiday season, Wal-Mart is expected to outpace other retailers thanks to its low prices, which appeal to Americans suffering under President Bush's "for rich men" economic policies. Second, how can we effect this boycott if we believe our own publicity about the affluent gay market? If we're all fashionistas, shopping at Bloomingdale's and Neiman Marcus, we wouldn't be seen in a Wal-Mart anyway.

Wal-Mart does not seem to be a great target to bring the community together or ask allies to join us. (This is not to say that Wal-Mart isn't a good boycott target in general.) On the other hand, there is an event happening in April that, if handled well, could unite the GLBT community and our allies. Pope Benedict XVI is making his first official trip to the U.S. in April. Like Wal-Mart, his organization does not offer domestic-partner benefits. But unlike Wal-Mart, Benedict has a few choice words about our community.

As a young man, Benedict served in Hitler Youth. He's offended Muslims and Jews as well. We know his positions on women's rights, condoms and homosexuality, and on homosexuality, let's let him speak for himself: "Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered to an intrinsic moral evil, and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder." On same-sex couple adoption: "Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children."

Benedict also led a witch-hunt in seminaries looking for priests with evidence of homosexuality, calling homosexuality "objectively disordered" and a "grave sin."

A 2005 document on homosexual priests stated: " ... the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, may not admit to the seminary and Holy Orders those who practice homosexuality, show profoundly deep-rooted homosexual tendencies, or support the so-called gay culture."

This man, who speaks of morals, runs an organization that is ostensibly the largest pedophilia organization in the world, despite a 1961 church document that stated: "Ordination should be barred to those who are afflicted with evil tendencies to homosexuality or pederasty."

How dare this man speak of morals.

This April, the Pope will visit New York City and Washington, D.C. This is a time for action, for mass demonstrations. We should make his visit a statement that his behavior and language is not acceptable in a civilized world.

At a recent "gay wedding," Christian protesters reminded me of the hate of the KKK toward African Americans and the hateful words of Nazi-era Germans toward Jews.

Jews learned to never forget and this is why they speak up at any time someone says anything slightly anti-Semitic. Let the GLBT community take a lesson from them: This April is a time for us to speak up and speak out!

Mark Segal is publisher of Philadelphia Gay News. He can be reached at mark@epgn.com.

Many refer to Mark Segal as the dean of American gay journalism. As a pioneer of the local gay press movement, he was one of the founders and former president of both The National Gay Press Association and the National Gay Newspaper Guild. He also is the founder and publisher of the award winning Philadelphia Gay News which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protesting HRC

NOTE: The first letter was sent just prior to Illinois Gender Advocates' scheduled Dec. 2 protest of the Human Rights Campaign-sponsored appearance of transwoman Susan Stanton in Oak Park.

Unlike every other lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) organization, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) was the only LGBT group to support the recently passed Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)(H.R. 3685) that did not provide employment protection based on gender identity. Such policy position appeared to be based on misinformed notions of incremental civil rights protections for some—but not all—of the LGBT community. Illinois Gender Advocates (IGA) believes that HRC actively lobbied for a non-inclusive ENDA in Congress while making public statements to the contrary during October and early November of this year.

Contrary to these actions, at both the national and local level, here in Chicago HRC continues to make public statements regarding its support of the transgendered within the LGBT community. Susan Stanton (who was the city manager for Largo, Fla., and who gained national media attention when she was fired after her planned transition from male to female gender was discovered) has been engaged by HRC Chicago for an undisclosed honorarium to speak at an HRC Chicago Transgender Outreach-hosted event at the Unity Temple, 875 Lake Street, Oak Park on Sun., Dec. 2. (For more information on Susan, her media group or to contact her for other paid speaking engagements, just search the Internet.)

IGA intends to peacefully protest HRC's event featuring Susan Stanton. We intend to send a clear message that education initiatives and paid public appearances do not compensate for national HRC policies and local HRC Chicago complicity in failing to stand up for all of the LGBT community when legislative proposals and protections are at stake. We find it particularly hypocritical that HRC supported the passage of ENDA legislation that would not have provided any protection against her own job loss to its featured speaker, Ms. Stanton, although we are happy that Susan, unlike the vast majority of unemployed and underemployed transgendered persons, will hopefully receive something for her appearance.

LGBT groups almost universally seem to understand that gender identity is intertwined with sexual orientation, which led to the rapid growth of United ENDA to over 360 organizations. None of those groups thought ENDA without gender identity protection was acceptable. We sincerely hope that HRC will change its policies and reach the same conclusion. Our protest of HRC-sponsored events is intended to encourage such change. We understand that HRC may contend that actions other than protest could be more effective. Unfortunately, we note several troubling recent developments that suggest HRC is actually unwilling to work together with anyone from the LGBT community on these concerns—namely the recent resignation of transgendered HRC board and council members and reversal of prior HRC board action supporting only a gender identity inclusive ENDA. These recent disturbing developments, coupled with our understanding that even now HRC works to advance non-gender identity inclusive ENDA in the future, have caused us to believe that the LGBT community must continue to be made aware of HRC's failures. HRC's conduct has given us grave reservations regarding both its actual treatment of the transgendered and whether it in fact even perceives the LGBT community as a single community, where all of its members are truly equal.

***

Dear Editor:

I struggled to contain both my composure and anger while reading the letter from the HRC Chicago Steering Committee telling members of the LGBT community that they shouldn't waste energy protesting them (HRC) and instead focus their energy on educating legislators about the need for transgender protections.

Last time I checked, one of the roles of HRC was to educate and lobby legislators.

It seems as if HRC, locally, is trying to deflect well-deserved criticism for the role the national HRC had in leaving my transgender brothers and sisters (and non-gender-conforming LGBs) out of ENDA. The LGBT community has every right to call out national groups (and their local steering committee members) if that organization betrays a constituency it purports to serve and breaks past promises to include them in ENDA.

And, yes, we outside the beltway are well aware that the spin being put on the passage of a non-inclusive ENDA is that a trans-inclusive bill wouldn't pass in today's political climate in Washington.

If you aren't changing that climate and continue to pass the buck, then you are wasting the very limited resources you are taking from Chicago that could be spent on an organization that can actually create change and make a difference, not excuses.

—Robert Castillo, Chicago

Conventional wisdom

Dear Editor:

In November 2008, voters can exercise one of the most fundamental cornerstones of our democracy by voting for a constitutional convention. A "Con-Con" would provide the people of Illinois the opportunity to review how our state works and why, at times, it doesn't. The convention allows for elected delegates from each legislative district to assemble for the purpose of proposing amendments to the current state constitution.

Critics from both the left and the right say that holding such a convention will open a 'Pandora's Box.' It is, however, important to realize that a Con-Con does not equate to a rewriting of the constitution of our state. To the contrary, the convention would be borne out of the document itself, which by its very content states that there shall be at least one opportunity every 20 years for the voters of Illinois to choose to review our state's blueprint.

A Con-Con could bring the kind of government Illinoisans deserve and should demand. Ideals could reign over agendas, and meaningful discussions could replace political posturing.

—State Rep. John Fritchey, 11th District, D-Chicago

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Jane Addams Day at Chicago History Museum

BY MARIE J. KUDA

On December 8, 2007, the Chicago History Museum will host a lecture, play and film on Jane Addams (1860-1935), Hull House maven and pioneer founder of what has become known as the Chicago School of Social Work. December 8, 2007 is an auspicious day for many reasons—a Catholic Feast day (the Immaculate Conception of the BVM) and activist Vernita Gray's birthday among others. Though this is the marking of what will become an annual affair, the official Jane Addams Day is, and will henceforth be, December 10th. Chicago has previously honored Addams with a hunk of expressway, and a lakefront park, dedicated on Women's Equality Day in 1996 with a poem composed and read by laureate Gwendolyn Brooks.

Addams, widely held to be a lesbian, received many honors in her lifetime. In 1931 she became the first American woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Peace. She had been a pacifist well before WW I, and was outspoken against Republican President William McKinley's (1843-1901) instigation of war after an explosion that sank the battleship Maine was (questionably) laid at the feet of Spain. In 1899, Addams joined with others, notably Mark Twain and Chicagoans attorney Clarence Darrow and the gay novelist Henry Blake Fuller (1857-1929), in an Anti-Imperialist League to protest the war in Cuba and the Phillipines, which they saw as a "murderous extension of American Capitalism." Addams would go on to found the Women's Peace Party that morphed into the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Henry B. Fuller, who frequently traveled to the south of Italy and spoke the language fluently, also worked with immigrants as part of Hull House's Saturday evening meetings of the "Sons of Italy." Addams spoke glowingly of him in a memorial volume published after his death.

Addams was deeply concerned with the welfare of women and children in Chicago, and in securing legislation for their protection. She was involved in private clubs and public committees agitating for social change. She publically supported the candidacy of attorney Pearl Hart, long active in junvenile and women's court cases, when she ran for Associate Judge of the Municipal Court in 1928. Hart (1890-1975) would later become a well-known civil rights attorney in the McCarthy era, and supporter of gay rights (Chicago's Gerber-Hart Library bears her name).

Addams and Ellen Gates Starr had founded Hull House together in 1898, with much of its early financial support coming from Addams' intimate friend Marie Rozet Smith, one of the richest women in America at the time. Marie and Jane traveled together frequently; a letter preserves their demand of a hotel for a double bed to be shared, instead of two singles. Smith maintained a summer home they shared in Bar Harbor, Maine. Their "loving partnership" ended with Smith's death in 1933. Addams died in 1935, just days after attending a celebratory dinner hosted by another woman-loving woman, former first lady and UN delegate, Eleanor Roosevelt.

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The lecture, scheduled for Dec. 8, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., at Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark, will feature Charles J. Masters, author of Governor Henry Horner, Chicago Politics, and The Great Depression, describing the Chicago that Jane Addams found when she moved here in 1889, as well as the reform activities that helped make Chicago what it is today.

There will also be a special performance of The Halsted Street Play in the tradition of Reader's Theatre as well as a screening of Dinner at Jane's, a 50-minute documentary by Suzanne Lacy made at Hull-House in 1993.

The cost is free with museum admission ($12, $10 for seniors). For more information, call 312-799-2012 or see www.chicagohistory.org.

AAUW-Illinois and Chicago History Museum are co-sponsoring the event.

Local Events

Free to be: Scott Free and Kurt Heintz will be featured during Dudes Who Dig Dykes at the Dec. 5 DykeMic 2.0 at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St. The event starts at 8 p.m. See www.scottfree.net.

Pretty in pink: Cake Chicago presents The Pink Party on Dec. 7 at 9 p.m. The event features Chelsea Z, Ripley Caine, Plaid on Plaid and Scott Free & His Closest Friends, and will take place at The Redline Tap, 7006 N. Glenwood. See www.myspace.com/cakechicago.

Karaoke for a cause: Bailiwick's Second Sex Series will hold a Karaoke fundraiser on Dec. 9 at Joey's Brickhouse, 1258 W. Belmont. The party starts at 8 p.m., and Karaoke begins at 9 p.m.

Exchange ideas: Center on Halsted will hold a town hall meeting to discuss issues and concerns of LGBT immigrants on Dec. 13, from 6:30-8:30 p.m., at 3656 N. Halsted St. RSVP to culture@centeronhalsted.org.

Up late: On Dec. 13, Andersonville Chamber of Commere presents the St. Lucia Festival of Lights and Late Night Andersonville. Andersonville shops and restaurants stay open extra late for holiday shoppers. See www.andersonville.org for participants and information.

To die for: Author Markus Larsen will sign copies of his new book, The Sex Club Murders and Other Kinky Tales, 7-10 p.m., at Rubin's Chicago Room Gallery, 3318 N. Halsted St., on Dec. 13.

B-I-N-G-O: Catch Dick O' Day's Big, Lovely Holiday Bingo on Dec. 19 at 8 p.m. The $10 event takes place at Annoyance Theatre. See http://dickoday.com for more info.

Feeling girlie: Girlie-Q Live, a new incarnation of the former Girlie-Q Variety Hour, will perform at the Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western Ave., on Jan. 5 at 10 p.m. The event will be hosted by Tamale.

Panty raid: Estrojam presents the Chicago Artists Underwear Auction on Dec. 20. Underwear designed by local artists will be modeled and auctioned at Crew, 4804 N. Broadway. See www.estrojam.org.

Local Events

TPAN awarded grant

Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) was recently awarded a $2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The grant will enable the organization to launch a holistic health recovery program for high-risk African American men called POWER (Positive Outcomes for Wellness, Education and Recovery) in 2008.

Local Named Mr. Congeniality

Shar DeVon, Chicago's entry in this years U.S. Mr. Gay Pageant, held Oct. 25-28 in Los Angeles, was named Mr. Congeniality, an honor voted on by the contestants themselves. Jonathan "JT" Taylor of San Francisco won the title of U.S. Mr. Gay 2008, edging 19 other contestants. Taylor will now represent the United States at the International Mr. Gay Competition Grand Finale, which will be held in January.

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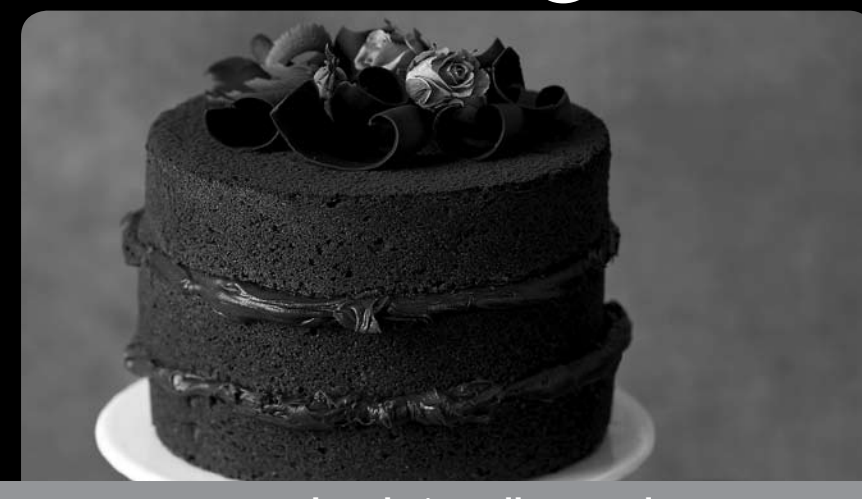
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RULE from cover

to be a crusader for a cause," because of her outspokenness she was trashed by the establishment for gay content, and by lesbian feminist separatists of the 1970s who wanted her to be more "politically correct." Later LGBT generations would support her fiery and open rage against censorship, while denouncing her stand against gay marriage. When her books were confiscated by Customs at the Canadian border, she railed against lesbianism being equated with pornography. She joined Little Sister's Bookstore of Vancouver in a fifteen-year court battle against state censorship. Years before Canada passed the Civil Marriage Act which has U.S. gays scurrying across the border to marry, Rule wrote that allowing the state to regulate adult human relationships was trading our freedom to invent our own lives for state imposed coupledom at the cost of our right to remain private and independent. "Over the years when we have been left to live lawless, a great many of us have learned to take responsibility for ourselves and each other, for richer or poorer . . ." She went so far as to question the heterosexually married, suggesting we should help free them from "state defined prisons, not [be] volunteering to join them there." Even after her partner Helen's death she was consistent in refusing to apply for survivor's benefits.

Though her last new novel was published in 1989, she continued to write brief pieces for several venues and a regular column for the "The Body Politic" into the 1990s. In a contribution to the "Index on Censorship: International Magazine for Free Expression" she wrote that she chose to place reprint rights to her body of work with small feminist and gay presses in the United States and England because of their commitment "to keep books in print long enough for them to sell by word of mouth." Bella Books in the US still distributes eight of her titles and Arsenal Pulp Press in Vancouver has recently reissued one in its Little Sister's Classics series. A book of her last essays is scheduled for 2008 publication by Hedgerow Press.



Jane Rule.

As obituaries and tributes pour out across the press and internet we will universally begin to fully appreciate Jane Rule's contributions to literature and our lives. Most of the recent crop of GLBT history and reference books show facets of her, and a Canadian documentary film was made of her life some years ago; we can but await a good full-scale biography. She left some autobiographical material among the forty-or-so boxes in her archives at the University of British Columbia. Uncompromising, independent, erudite, lightening rod and meteor, her influence will endure.

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Diane Schroer. Photo by Bob Roehr

Trans Veteran Can Sue Library of Congress

BY BOB ROEHR

A federal judge has rejected arguments to throw out an employment lawsuit brought by a decorated transgender veteran against the Library of Congress. The Nov. 28 ruling means that Diane Schroer's case will move forward.

Schroer had a 25-year career in the Army. The last third was in special operations, eventually leading a top secret 120-person group charged with tracking and targeting high-threat international terrorist targets. Upon retirement, the Congressional Research Service (CRS), a part of the Library of Congress, was seeking to hire a research analyst on terrorism. Schroer seemed to be a perfect fit.

The Library coveted the mix of boots on the ground and command-level experience that the it seldom can hire, and it made a job offer to Schroer at the end of 2004. Over lunch with Library official Charlotte Preece, Schroer said he was under a doctor's care for gender dysphoria, was in the process of transitioning and would begin work presenting as a woman, Diane.

The next day, "after a long, restless night," Preece called Schroer to withdraw the offer of employment. She said Diane would not be a "good fit" with the Library of Congress.

"Did I want to just give it up and walk away? Turn tail and run, or fight it?" Schroer weighed the options for about three hours and decided to fight it.

"After risking my life for more than 25 years for my country, I'd been told I'm not worthy of the freedoms I worked so hard to protect," she said during an extended interview in the summer of 2005. "All I'm asking is to be judged by my abilities rather than my gender."

Schroer sought legal assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). They first tried internal administrative appeals at the Library and when those failed, filed suit in federal court in Washington, D.C.

Schroer claimed that she was discriminated against because, when presenting herself as a woman, she did not conform to Preece's sex stereotypes. In this latest round of legal arguments, Judge James Robertson agreed that her claim fits within the definition of discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

He also rejected the Library's claim that "sex" is simple a matter of chromosomes. Citing case law he said, the Supreme Court has made clear that "'sex' encompasses both the biological differences between men and women, and gender discrimination, that is, discrimination based on a failure to conform to stereotypical gender norms."

The court deferred ruling on the broader question of whether Title VII's prohibition of sex discrimination also includes discrimination based on gender identity.

Schroer was pleased by the opinion. She said, "Today's decision makes me proud that I served a country that values equality an fairness."

ACLU staff attorney Sharon McGowan, who argued the case, said, "The court sent a very clear message that employers can be held liable when they make decisions about whom to hire based on stereotypical views about gender as opposed to merit."

The legal proceedings will continue to grind on, unless the Library decides to acknowledge its error and hire Schroer.

QUOTELINES

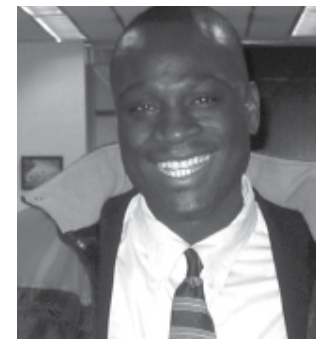
BY REX WOCKNER

"WHEN I TOLD MY PARENTS THAT I WAS STARTING MY TRANSITION [IN MY EARLY 20S], my dad said, 'Well, that makes so much more sense 'cause I never saw you any other way and now it totally works.' It was unbelievable. The second I told them they flew to New York and wanted to make sure I was OK. And they found out I was happier." — *Transgender actress Candis Cayne, who plays the transgender character Carmelita on TV's Dirty Sexy Money, to ABC News, Nov. 13.*

"I SUPPORT ENTHUSIASTICALLY THE RIGHT OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE TO LIVE their lives as they wish and to be free from government discrimination. But that question is logically separate from gay rights, and always has been. Many transgender people are heterosexual; most gay people have no internal conflict with their own gender. It remains important to insist that, just because so many in the gay world have been browbeaten into repeating the concept of an 'LGBT community', that doesn't mean it exists. I don't really believe there is even a 'gay and lesbian community' as such. There are common interests in violating heterosexual norms, but the experience of being a gay man and being a lesbian are often experientially more different than the contrast between many straight women and lesbians or between many straight men and gay men." — *Gay writer Andrew Sullivan on his blog, Nov. 9.*

My life in Jamaica was constantly in danger.

—Gay Jamaican Ven Messam, who was granted asylum by the U.S. government Nov. 8.



"I AM GRATEFUL TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR SAVING MY LIFE. My life in Jamaica was constantly in danger, with angry mobs carrying machetes, stones, knives and guns threatening to kill me because I am gay. When I tried to contact the police for help, the police instead threatened to arrest me and told me to leave the country if I wanted to stay safe." — *Gay Jamaican Ven Messam, who was granted asylum in the U.S. Nov. 8 by the Department of Homeland Security because he had been threatened by anti-gay mobs that run rampant on the island. Messam was represented by Columbia University Law School's new Sexuality and Gender Law Clinic.*

"SEXUAL DISPOSITION PARALLELS RACE—I was born black and had no choice. I couldn't and wouldn't change if I could. Like race, our sexuality isn't a preference—it is immutable, unchangeable, and the Constitution protects us all against prejudices and discrimination based on immutable differences. ... Opponents of homosexuality have the right to their opinion: they do not have the right to use their beliefs to denigrate and marginalize others." — *Julian Bond, board chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in a Sept. 18 letter to the organization's chapter in Fort Lauderdale, which has an anti-gay mayor.*

"I WAS SUPPOSED TO PLAY THE [SEX AND THE CITY] ROLE OF MIRANDA ORIGINALLY. I can't imagine that showing up every week to play a character who is bitter, bitchy, eating cake out of trash cans, could have been in any way satisfying. I've never seen women relate to each other the way these four women talk to each other. It's absurd and the number one problem is that those ladies are all too old to be running around doing what they are doing." — *Lesbian comic and actress Sandra Bernhard to London's The Independent, Oct. 21.*

"WE WERE A VERY EXTREME EXAMPLE OF BEING MEGA-OUT. But for folks who aren't on television shows, who are gay, who haven't gone through that process yet, our experience just goes to show how much more relaxed and happy and comfortable you can be when you're living an honest life. I wish people like Larry Craig could have had that experience as well. I guess it's not too late [for Craig], or maybe it is. You can't say it enough, how important it is for gay people to be out and open. And when you are, even if it hasn't been broadcast in 98 countries, you can check into a hotel with your partner and say 'Yeah, we want a king bed.' And you get to a point where that isn't difficult anymore." — *Queer Eye's Ted Allen to AfterElton.com, Oct. 9.*

"OBVIOUSLY I'M IN A RELATIONSHIP THAT'S NOT MONOGAMOUS, and it really works for us. You have to choose what works in any given relationship. I'd be horrified if George wasn't emotionally faithful to me, but we're not sexually monogamous. If you're in a relationship that isn't monogamous, you have to negotiate another set of rules." — *Kenny Goss, singer George Michael's partner, to Britain's Gay Times, October issue.*

"I ONLY OFFICIALLY CAME OUT TO MY FRIENDS WHEN GEORGE WAS ARRESTED [in a men's room] in 1998. We'd been together for a couple of years at that point, and my friends at home in Texas were beginning to wonder. I was never able to discuss it with my parents. They died without us ever talking about it. After George was arrested, it was on the cover of every paper. My parents had reporters on their doorstep, but we still never discussed it. I'd go home for Christmas with my brother, and it was like this big, pink elephant in the middle of the room that nobody mentioned." — *Kenny Goss, singer George Michael's partner, to Britain's Gay Times, October issue.*

"I DOUBT THAT ANYTHING COULD GET PAST THAT THICK SKULL AND GARGANTUAN EGO. I think he [George W. Bush] should be renamed 'The Duper,' along with his close friend Mr. [Tony] Blair. On their tombstones should be engraved, 'I duped millions, created carnage, made millions, and slept very soundly at night.'" — *Singer Annie Lennox to the Carolinas gay newspaper Q-Notes, Nov. 3.*

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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holiday gift guide 2007

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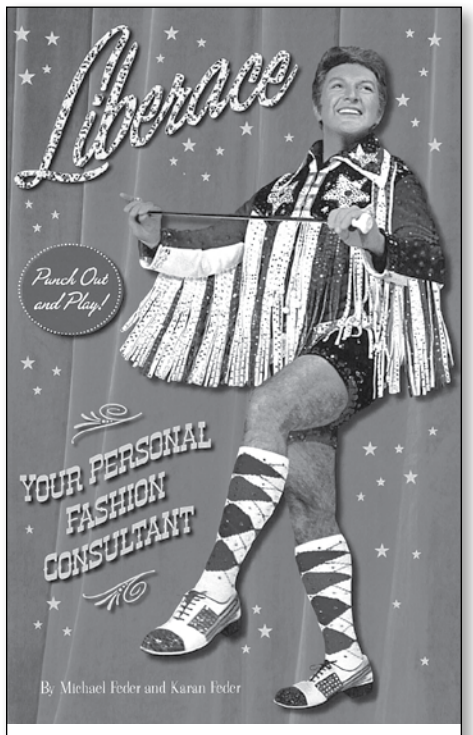


windy city times' holiday gift guide 2007



GUARDED CONDITION

For those better-safe-than-sorry types, NLU Products, the developer of scratch-proof, transparent skins for mobile devices under the ScreenGuardz and BodyGuardz brand names, has released a **BodyGuardz** product for the Apple iPhone. Moreover, the BodyGuardz protectors are made from the same material that is used to protect the front of automobiles from stones and other abrasive elements. Considering how cherished these phones are, the guards could prove to be a very wise investment. ($24.95; www.bodyguardz.com)



LOUD AND PROUD

Liberace was a revered pianist and showman—and now he can become your own personal fashion consultant! The book **Liberace: Your Personal Fashion Consultant** features punch-out-and-play photographs of the personality in all of his sequined glory. And who wouldn't want to wear hot pants and argyle socks? ($12.95; www.hnabooks.com)

BASSET NOVA

Your landlord may not allow actual dogs, but you (or a child) can still have a canine in the house. **I-Dog Amp'd Interactive Music Companion** features stereo sound and has all the right moves including bopping its head and tapping its paw to the beat of your favorite tunes. Users simply plug the I-Dog Amp'd into the headphone jack of any hand-held music player and music will broadcast through the built-in speakers located in its back and belly. Listen to everyone from Three Dog Night to, um, Cat Power. ($34.99; www.www.hasbrotoyshop.com)



WATCH IT

There was a time when **Casio** was simply known for its synthesizers. Now, it's known for a whole lot more—including camera and watches, with such timepieces as Pathfinder and Oceanus in the latter category. (www.casio.com)





THAT'S A MORAY

Give that nature/science buff something to appreciate with gift passes to Chicago's museums, such as the Field Museum and **the Shedd Aquarium**. Who wouldn't want to see dolphins—and a couple of moray eels? (www.sheddaquarium.org)

SMELLS LIKE PRE-TEEN SPIRIT

Jellybeanies are the only candy-colored plush animals with a patent-pending scent release feature that lasts up to 20 months. Each character has a personality, unique story and a secret Jellycode to access customized online content on www.jellybeanies.com where kids can unlock their toy and make new friends. There are such characters as Vanilla Armadillo Hilda, Orange Owl Ollie, Banana Beagle Bowie and Rum Raccoon Randy. OK—I made that last one up. ($13.99; www.jellybeanies.com)





SPECIAL DELIVERY

The holidays are typically a time of happiness. Unfortunately, there can also be headaches—such as shipping that discount grill to Uncle Mike. UPS stores, such as the one on 1055 W. Bryn Mawr (phone: 773-561-3280) expertly handle shipping-related problems, making the whole shopping-and-sending process a whole lot smoother.

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., recently stopped by the Edgewater store mentioned above and toured the facility. Here, she poses with that store's owner, Scott Weddle. Photo courtesy of Weddle

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and *Alternatives@SimpleLiving.org*



ART-FELT

The **MCA Store** has a very intriguing selection of items ranging from offerings for kids to things for the kitchen and office, such as the ultra-chic staple-free stapler. (www.mcachicagostore.org)



GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

For those who can't get enough of **Will & Grace** (although some still argue it should've been called Jack & Karen), the seventh season is now out on DVD in a four-disc set. View the episodes that have such guest stars as Janet Jackson, Lily Tomlin, Alec Baldwin and Edward Burns. Outtake reels and featurettes are also included. ($44.98; www.amazon.com)

FORE-PLAY

If your golf score is closer to a bowling score, you might want to consider the **Segway x2 Golf**, which has a scorecard holder, bag carrier and special low-pressure tires for gentle travel on fairways, features breakthrough LeanSteer technology that makes the ride even more intuitive, and a wireless InfoKey controller that provides added convenience and security. Who knows? You may become the next Tiger Woods or Annika Sorenstam. (www.segway.com)



HI-DEF JAM

Make the leap from videotapes with Sony's next-generation DV-Direct—**the VRD-MC5**—which can quickly transfer high-definition home videos (as well as standard-definition home videos) and digital photos to DVD discs without using a computer. Now, you'll be able to view your childhood pratfalls forever. ($230; www.sonystyle.com)





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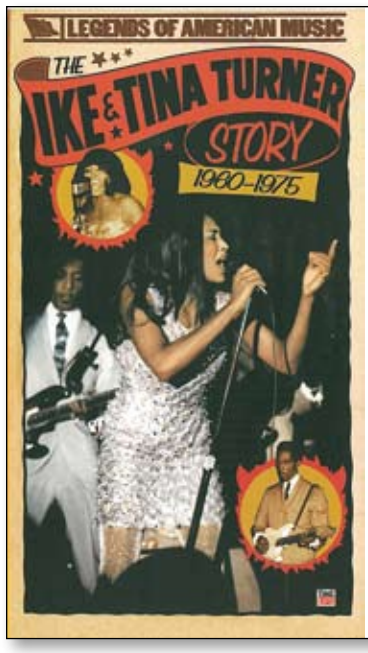
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PROUD TINA

Take a stroll back in time with **The Ike and Tina Turner Story: 1960-1975**, a three-CD set featuring 49 songs by the dynamic, volatile couple. Included are recordings of Proud Mary, Nutbush City Limits and The Ikettes' I'm Blue (Gong Gong Song) as well as a disc featuring nothing but live performances. See if you can shimmy like Tina did—and still does. ($39.98; www.amazon.com and www.timelifeentertainment.com)

HISTORY LESSON

If the names Edmund White, Audre Lorde, Barbara Gittings or Andrew Holleran don't ring any bells—or even if they do—the **Lambda Literary LGBT Pioneers 2008 Calendar** makes the perfect gift. Learn about a few of the groundbreaking writers who helped paved the way for the ongoing journey toward equality. ($20; www.lambdaliterary.org)



DRESS YOU UP

The **Coco Myles** Web site allows women to design their own celebrity-style dresses—and at a fraction of what Halle's and Angelina's clothes cost. Plus, you don't have to be supermodel-thin to wear these items; Coco Myles dresses go all the way up to size 32. (www.cocomyles.com)



SEX IN EFFECT

Chicago's **Early to Bed** has a plethora of sex-related products for they gal (or guy) in your life, including stocking stuffers that cost no more than $10. Vibrators? No problem. Harnesses? No problem. Edible body treats? Again, no problem—and there are even vegan-friendly items. (866-585-2BED; www.Early2Bed.com)



A WHOLE PRADA FUN

Even a lot of technophiles probably don't have what **Dynamism.com** has to offer. The web-based importer of cutting-edge consumer electronics carries such items as the new Star Wars USB drives ($69 for those of you so obsessed), the Blackberry Curve ($599) and the LG Prada Phone ($579). (www.dynamism.com)

FRAME ON!

Addressing the needs of photo, music and movie buffs, Mustek has launched today its **PF-i700**, a color 7-inch digital photo frame with an integrated Apple iPod docking station that can display and play iPod files, in addition to those stored on popular memory card formats. At the rate features are being added, it'll soon come with a coffee maker. ($129.99; www.mustek.com)







...AND THE HITS KEEP COMING

OhMiBod puts a whole different spin on mood music. Simply plug the vibrator into your iPod or any music player and it automatically vibrates to the rhythm and intensity of the music. Talk about your good vibrations! ($69 [of course]; www.ohmibod.com)



AAAHHH...

Anyone who suffers from aches and pains (and, frankly, who doesn't?) will appreciate items like the HoMedics Shiatsu Massaging Cushion with Heat, Quad-Roller Massaging Cushion with Heat and Shiatsu Pillow with Heat (pictured). The relievers add breakthrough technology to the moving "hands," further soothing tired muscles and melting away tension and fatigue. It'll almost make that long day at work worthwhile. ($39.99 for pictured item; www.homedics.com)

LOST AND FOUND

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, an average of 2,185 children under the age of 18 are reported missing daily. That daunting statistic alone would seemingly make an item like the **Loc8tor** extremely handy. Loc8tor uses patent-pending technology to help find misplaced possessions while also providing important child safety features; the Loc8tor Plus allows users to set an invisible safety zone, protecting children, pets or any other valuable people/things. (Starting at $99.99; www.loc8tor.com)





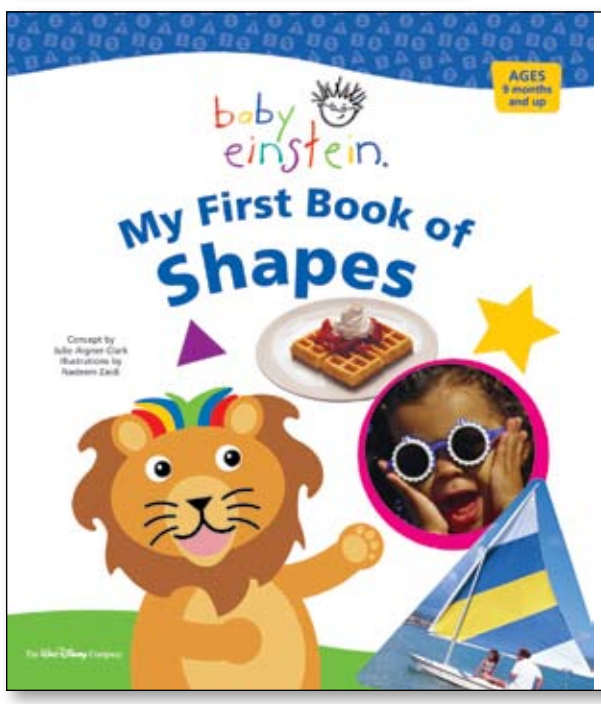
CURIOUS GORGE

As you might guess from the company's name, **Curious Cookie** specializes in all types of the delectable dessert that you'll want to gorge on, including ginger-cranberry, snickerdoodles and that standby, chocolate chip. However, in addition to the premium treats, Curious Cookie specializes in muffin-top (fruit-based) cookies and event gluten-free treats. (www.curiouscookie.com)

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BABY GENIUSES

Parents have been relying on **Baby Einstein** products to educate their little ones, and the company has a whole line of items that aim to put toddlers at the heads of their classes. Baby Santa's Music Box DVD brings to life the sights of the holiday season—coupled with sounds of traditional melodies from England, Ireland, France, Germany, Israel, Japan and the United States. ($129.99; www.babyeinstein.com)



VARSITY BLUES (AND REDS AND GREENS)

For years, college students have been going crazy for the items sold by **Varsity Couture**—but now everyone is jumping on the popular line's bandwagon. The fleece poncho is still popular, but the line has expanded to include sandals, scrunchies (called pomchies), swing capes and mittens. (847-291-6637 or www.VarsityCouture.com)



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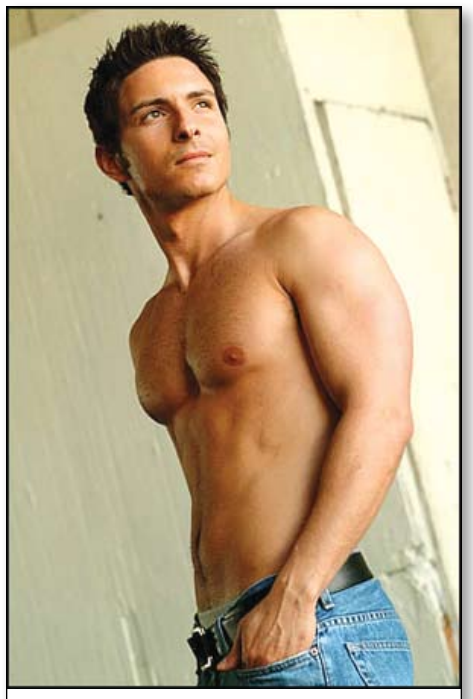
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WHATTA GUY!

Just because you haven't heard of **Guy B** doesn't mean you shouldn't give him a listen. The openly gay (and very handsome) musician's latest CD, Within Me, is full of R&B-lite tunes that may recall Justin Timberlake—and that's all to be said on that subject. ($9.99; cdbaby.com/cd/guyb)



SHOW AND TILE

Local openly gay artist **Jason Messinger** is best known for his tile murals, but he actually makes sculptures and other forms of art as well. He has said of his art, "I want to express an idea of a symbol, but I don't want to make it explicit. The viewer can make a narrative of it. ... I want to bring the viewer in. ... I think that art is like a dialogue between the culture and the artist." Check out his wares. (www.JasonMessinger.com)

TIME WILL REVEAL

Philip Stein Teslar watches are not only gorgeous—they're reportedly good for you. Invented in 1986, the Teslar technology was designed to emit a signal that strengthens your body's own elecromagnetic energy field, resulting in improved concentration and more restful sleep. If that's not enough, Oprah recently selected the watch as one of her favorite things. (www.PhilipSteinTeslar.com)



SAM I AM

The terms "rock star" and "alcohol" usually conjure images of excess, trashed hotel rooms and rehab. However, singer Sammy Hagar has a different connection to alcohol—he concocted **Cabo Wabo Tequila** to serve to his friends and in his Cabo Wabo Cantina in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Cabo Wabo comes in four different types: Reposado, Blanco, Anejo and Cabo UNO. For the holidays, Cabo Wabo is also offering a bottle of the Cabo Wabo Reposado Tequila with a limited-edition margarita lime press shaker. (www.cabowabo.com)



HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

Trendy women will appreciate the "**Hope Faith Miracles**" jewelry line, created by actress Kristian Alfonso, who plays—coincidence alert!—Hope Brady on the TV daytime serial Days of Our Lives. Several celebrities, including—second coincidence alert!—some of her co-stars, regularly sport Kristian's items. (www.hopefaithmiracles.com)





IT DON'T MEAN A THING IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SLING

Mamma's Milk slings and carriers will help you carry your baby in a natural fetal position, soothed by your heartbeat, movement and familiar scent. Moreover, according to the Web site, carrying your baby in a baby sling has been scientifically proven to reduce baby's crying by 51 percent. And don't think they're just for women—Gavin Rossdale, Gwen Stefani's husband, has been photographed carrying their kid in one. ($45-$85; www.mammasmilk.com)

SKIN GAME

Add a little happiness to your year, courtesy of the calendars available at **OnDisplayMen.com**. Among the models with their own calendars are the beguiling Michael Biserta (the controversial firefighter featured in a Guys Gone Wild video, right) and Chicago heartthrob Donovan. (www.OnDisplayMen.com)





A FREAK FOR MYSTIQUE

Who wouldn't want a ready-to-go martini so they can get their drink on? **Mystique Brands** is launching three new spirits brands: Tomintoul Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Los Arango Tequila and the aforementioned Metropolitan Martinis, which come in varieties such Cosmopolitan, Green Apple, Chocolate and the Classic Vodka Martini. (www.mystiquebrands.com)

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Gay 'Bible' Film Opens in Chicago

BY WILLIAM BURKS



Filmmaker Daniel Karslake, Virginia Keene (whose husband is in the film), Randy and Phil Reitan, Rev. Dr. Larry Keene, and Rev. David Poteat. Photos by Steve Becker, www.beckermedia.com



Filmmaker Daniel Karslake with the panel after the screening at Center on Halsted. More photos online at www.windycitymediagroup.com.

Daniel Karslake, producer and director of For the Bible Tells Me So, was in Chicago Nov. 26 with some of his cast members to promote the Nov. 30 opening at the Music Box Theatre. The film traces the stories of five deeply religious families, their reactions to—and transformations by—having a child come out as lesbian or gay.

One or more members of each of Karslake's families attended an event at the Center on Halsted Nov. 26, watched a screening of the film and talked about the experiences, their faith journeys and the transformations that are still taking place in their lives.

Karslake described one of his goals in making the film as wanting "to elevate the conversation about religion and homosexuality, nationally, to a higher level. I have watched this conversation for years and years sort of get darker and darker and more separated and angrier. People on my side of the argument—the gay and lesbian community—very rightly so, feeling very angry and rejected, and conservative Christians getting more and more defensive, and kind of going off further to the right."

He hopes that "non-gays would be able to see themselves on the screen in one of these five sets of parents and understand their negative first reactions, but also watch their transformations, watch them ultimately, in some way or another, embrace their gay child."

Most of the five families come from conservative and traditional religious backgrounds. Mary Lou and Bob Wallner were evangelical fundamentalists, and Mary Lou said her own rejection of lesbian daughter Anna was in part responsible for Anna committing suicide nine years after she came out. As a fundamentalist Christian, she had held the belief that being lesbian or gay was "a sin."

After Anna took her own life, "we had to come up with some answers. And so, we began to search and study, read, and talk to people on both sides of the issue, and study the scriptures, and ultimately came to the belief that it's not a sin, that it's not a choice, and that we had judged her in our hearts and sometimes to her face for that reason. So we came to our new belief, and have not wavered since. We tell our story wherever anybody will listen, trying to save lives. The bottom line—our only goal is to keep somebody else from doing what our daughter did."

Brenda and David Poteat, African-Americans whose daughter, Tonia, came out after moving to Yale, are pastors of their church in North Carolina. David Poteat said he and his wife have come a long way in their understanding: "We really struggled, and at first I couldn't understand, because you have to go back to how I was raised. In the area that I was raised in, there were maybe two gay guys that were out of the closet, and no gay women, I didn't know what a gay woman was. And it was always a guy, and not a girl."

Coming from that environment, he felt that if Tonia had gone to college back home in North Carolina and not at Yale, she might not have become a lesbian. Now he laughs about it: "I told her, if she hadn't of went up there, she wouldn't have caught this cold, this gay cold." In the film, he and wife Brenda renew their relationship with Tonia, but they have not reached the closeness with Tonia and her partner that some of the other families have with their gay children.

Participating in the film and further consideration of its issues have brought the Poteats further along in acceptance since actual filming was completed, however. "It's been a wonderful experience for me," he said "It started me to think more broadly about these things. My mind is not as closed as it was two years ago," he told a Chicago audience which applauded his statement.

Jane and Dick Gephardt, the former House Minority Leader and his wife, came from different church backgrounds—one Baptist and one Roman Catholic—and raised daughter Chrissy in the Catholic Church. Chrissy said she learned in church that "two things that were an abomination—homosexuality and suicide." She followed the path of getting married and trying to be heterosexual before realizing that it wasn't going to work for her. Eventually divorcing, she says she "broke her husband's heart," but she had found a relationship with a woman in which she felt fulfilled.

When she met with her parents to come out, they "were pretty open about it, but I grew up in a family where it was taboo. I mean, I don't think anybody grew up in a family where it was like, 'Oh honey, I hope you turn out to be gay.' It doesn't happen." Nonetheless, her mother intuited what their meeting in a restaurant was all about: "She said, I think I know what you're going to tell us; that you're a lesbian and that you're involved in a relationship." Chrissy said her mother told her she'd seen the transformation in her life, how happy she was, especially when she was around her partner, so she understood how much they must love each other.

Randi and Phil Reitan, Minnesota Lutherans for three generations, initially rejected their son Jake when he came out at age 17. Later, they would lead protests of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's policies against gays at national meetings and get arrested trying to deliver a letter to Focus on the Family's James Dobson protesting his anti-gay positions. Now Randi says she lists her occupation as "retired teacher/gay rights activist." She's been arrested at protests eight times.

Imogene and Victor Robinson, parents of Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson, live in rural Kentucky, where they regularly attended a small, conservative church. Growing up, Gene had a perfect attendance record in the Disciples of Christ Sunday school for 13 years. Their Southern reserve and understatement are evident in their filmed conversations, but tears began to form in his mother's eyes as she worried about her son's safety once he'd received death threats before his Episcopal consecration. "There's a reason God saved him" from dying right after birth—which is what doctors told her would happen—"and I believe this ministry of his is it," she said. "If anyone's going to heaven, Gene is."

Robinson sees his role as an openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church and its global reverberations as comparable to "what a family goes through when a child comes out. And so in some sense, I'm the gay child that the Anglican Communion now has to deal with. And what we're seeing is the same kind of chaos that a family goes through—there's grieving, there's anger, there's disappointment, there's fear in a family because everything changes when a kid comes out as gay or lesbian. And in some ways, I think, the worldwide Anglican Communion is now struggling with, 'Oh my God, what do we do now? One of our own is gay!' And, you know, it's a very humbling privilege to have been called into that role. It's a very awesome thing."

Karslake hopes the film will influence the "moveable middle" of American religious families who may not have closed their minds on the issue of homosexuality. With interviews from Harvard theologians and a maverick young rabbi to Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, theologians reiterate the point that the Bible must be read in historical context, and that separating six supposedly anti-gay verses and taking them for literally applicable truth today, while ignoring hundreds of similarly bald but inconvenient verses, is hypocritical or disingenuous, at the least.

As for the crisis in Bishop Robinson's Anglican Communion, he said that during the debate over his election another bishop said, "not since the civil rights movement in the '60s had he seen the church risk its life for something."

"And I think that's what you're seeing right now," Robinson added. The church is "about to declare who it really is and who it means to be. And if that has ramifications beyond the United States, then so be it, but my sense it that we're not going to go back. And I guess the reason I stay hopeful and can do all of this is, that in my heart, I know where this is going to end. And I think most people know where it's going to end, even the conservatives: it's going to end with the full inclusion of all of God's children in God's church."

Premiering at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and presented at 10 other festivals, where it won nine audience awards for best documentary, For the Bible Tells Me So opened Fri., Nov. 30, at the Music Box Theatre.

[Editor's note: For the Bible Tells Me So is slated to come out on DVD Feb. 19, 2008. Pre-order at www.forthebibletellsmeso.org.]

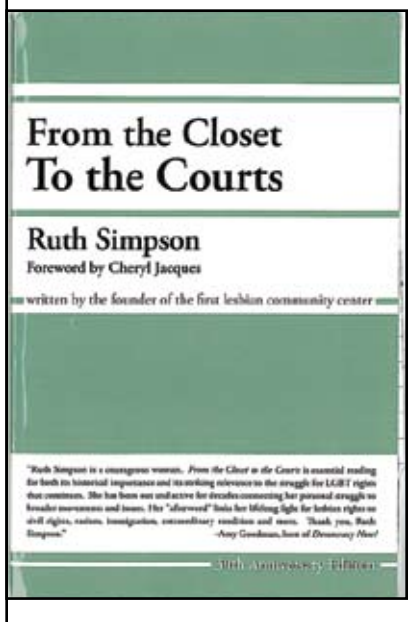
Internet resources:

—For the Bible Tells Me So: www.forthebibletellsmeso.org

—Mary Lou Wallner: www.teach-ministries.org

—Randi and Phil Reitan, Jake Reitan, theologian Rev. Dr. Mel White: www.soulforce.org

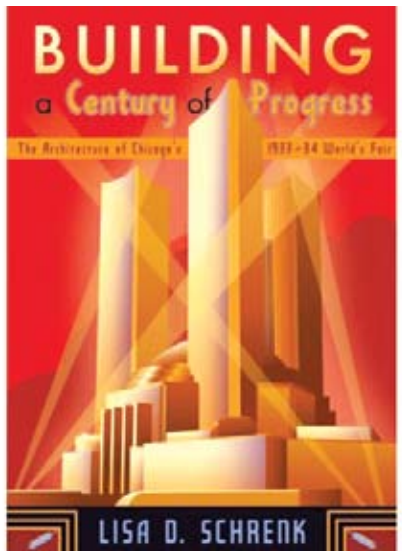
William Burks was involved in the startup days of Windy City Times and Outlines, having served as a writer, photographer and assistant editor before moving into corporate public relations. He currently does public relations consulting, writing and editing. A lifelong Episcopalian whose faith and church were supportive of his coming out at college, he spent four years as an Anglican Benedictine monk and continues his interests in religion, spirituality and gay/lesbian issues.





Courts Book Still Needed

Thirty years ago, Ruth Simpson published a groundbreaking book, From the Closet to the Courts, documenting not just legal barriers for lesbians, but also religion, police, media, government, and other institutions which discriminate. Simpson's credentials include founding the first lesbian community center and she was is a former president of the New York chapter of the nation's first lesbian group, Daughters of Bilitis. Take Root Consulting has reissued this classic, now available with a new afterword by Simpson documenting the progress the GLBT movement has seen in three decades. It's not all roses for the community, as Simpson's keen eye notes.



BOOK REVIEW

1933 Century of Progress Exposition

BY MARIE J. KUDA

Two of the four stars on the City of Chicago flag represent two world fairs. The 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition was filled with statuary and featured the neo-classical buildings that earned its nickname "White City". Louis Sullivan felt that the architecture of that Fair set the art back fifty years. On the other hand, the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition was a paean to the future. While both were trade fairs in the broadest sense bringing the goods of the world to the marketplace of the American mid-West, the 1933 Fair was a showplace not only for what was, but for what was to be in homes of the next generation of consumers. For a country still in the throes of the Great Depression the image of the future offered by the Fair was a carrot of hope, an escape into a dream world of possibilities. Its popularity extended the Fair for a second year. 38,000,000 fairgoers paid not only for a glimpse of the future, but saw the towering Skyride, Sally Rand's fan dance, the Silver Chalice of Antioch, and rows of premature babies in incubators.

Lisa D. Schrenk in her new book, **Building A Century Of Progress: The Architecture of Chicago's 1933-34 World's Fair** (University of Minnesota Press), catches the excitement generated by that promise of the future, compares and contrasts the 1933-34 Fair with other great commercial fairs and expositions from London in 1851 to New York in 1939, but focuses extensively on the architects and architecture of the Fair. Coverage is given each structure and its designers; but those in absentia whose influence was unmistakable like Norman Bel Geddes, Buckminster Fuller and Frank Lloyd Wright are given ample treatment. The book is an invaluable resource with 158 black and white illustrations, 26 color plates, a 16-page bibliography of over 400 entries, 50 pages of notes, two appendices: one listing the architects of each major building at the Century of Progress, and the second, the color schemes the Fair used in various buildings, the Avenue of Flags, the Skyride, and the exhibition halls (noting where they differed between 1933 and 1934).

The 1933-34 Fair, with its Art Deco imagery, has long captured the fancy of enthusiasts and collectors. The Burlington Zephyr locomotive that made its first appearance at the Fair in 1934 reflected the streamlined design that would set the tone in appliances, automobiles and furniture in succeeding decades. The Fair touted the new gadgets that would soon be in every home. Labor saving and environmental devices like air conditioning, vacuum cleaners, television, dishwashers; electricity and technology as the servant of man was one overriding theme. Travel was another; from the romance of the rails and steamships, the widening horizons for automobile trips, to the shrinking world of air travel. These themes were explored in the Travel and Transport building with its radical design: the Railroad Hall had a huge rotunda ceiling supported by cables from the outside like a suspension bridge. One highlight of the Fair was the non-stop trans-Atlantic flight from Italy of Balboa's bevy of seaplanes, landing on Lake Michigan in July 1933. [The Roman column erected to commemorate this feat was recently moved from the Fair site after complaints about it being a monument to Facism.]

Ms. Schrenk, formerly with the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation in Oak Park, offers some interesting asides on why Wright was passed over by the organizers for a seat on the planning commission (does not play well with others), then refused an invitation to design a house for exhibit. She also tells us his son, John Lloyd Wright inventor of Lincoln Logs, made a killing selling the popular toy at the Fair.

Schrenk explores many other aspects of the fair: its creative funding and creative advertising, its aim to encourage public consumption of mass produced products, the concepts of prefabricated and disposable architecture as a solution to obsolescence, how the Fair stimulated design and influenced corporate consumer culture, why there were no skyscrapers, the "major icon of modern American architecture" at the Fair, and more. This book can well grace any coffee table, but is much more than just a pretty face.

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Sidebar:

Two Women at the Fair, 1933-34

BY MARIE J. KUDA

Two young women in their mid-twenties walked arm-in-arm through the Century of Progress Exhibition grounds. Even to casual eyes, the women were intensely interested in each other. Georgia recollected as they crossed a bridge at the Fair, a man disapprovingly approached them and told them to "break it up." Georgia, a year older, met Jeannie through a gay cousin who studied at the Art Institute with one of Jeannie's roommates. They met at the Art Institute and were courting at the Fair.

Georgia Cole graduated with honors from Rockford College (alma mater of Jane Addams and Jeannette Howard Foster) and came to Chicago with a scholarship to study History and English at the University of Chicago. Jeannie Begg Dixon had a degree in Journalism and was studying for her Master's in English at Northwestern. (Some of her writing was published in Harriet Monroe's legendary Poetry : A Magazine of Verse.) She had come to Evanston when her father, a railroad executive, was transferred to Chicago. He was adamant that she not work, but rather, concentrate on her studies. As an exception, he let her work at the Railroad Hall in the Transportation Building during the 1933-34 Fair. Jeannie got free passes for Georgia; they would meet at the exhibition hall then wander the fairgrounds together.

In 1934 they were in the audience when Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thompson's opera Four Saints in Three Acts premiered at the Auditorium Theatre. Gertrude, Alice B. Toklas and Carl Van Vetchen sat in the mezzanine near the stage. "We were fairly close to where they were sitting. It was well known, general knowledge, that they were gay." After the death of her father in 1936 Jeannie and Georgia drove their little Ford from Chicago to New York, then took a one- class ship to Europe. Returning in late-1937, they moved to Montana for an adventuresome twenty years, then retired to Oregon, where they died in the 1990s.

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Homo for the Holidays

COMPILED BY MIKEY ROX

Hollywood may be on strike. But the holidays are not.

So—as our gift to you—here's a list of a few festive favorites and new classics to make your season merry and bright. [Editors' note: Several of these selections are also out on DVD.]

We hope it keeps you caroling all the way to New Year's night.

FROSTY THE SNOWMAN

Jimmy Durante narrates this 1969 fave, in which a discarded silk top hat ignites a fight between a washed-up stage magician and a group of schoolchildren after it magically brings a snowman (voiced by Jackie Vernon) to life. (CBS; Fri., Dec. 7, at 8 p.m.)

FROSTY RETURNS

There's still magic in that old silk hat as Frosty (voiced by John Goodman) continues his adventures and skates on the edge of danger in this 1992 animated musical special, narrated by Jonathan Winters. (CBS; Fri., Dec. 7, at 8:30 p.m.)

DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS

Every Who down in Whoville likes Christmas a lot. … But the Grinch, who lived just north of Whoville, did not! Jim Carrey plays the dastardly do-badder in this 2000 live-action adaptation of Dr. Suess' popular 1966 book. Also starring are Christine Baranski, Jeffrey Tambor, Molly Shannon and Taylor Momsen. (ABC; Sat., Dec. 8, at 8 p.m.)

HOLIDAY IN HANDCUFFS

Holy Mario Lopez and Melissa Joan Hart! In this romantic comedy, Clarissa snaps and kidnaps A.C. Slater after a series of personal letdowns. At the very least, it'll bring back fond memories of 1991. (ABC Family; Sun., Dec. 9, at 8 p.m.)

I WANT A DOG FOR CHRISTMAS, CHARLIE BROWN!

Blockhead takes the backseat in this Peanuts Christmas special, allowing the often-overlooked ReRun—younger brother of Linus and Lucy—to take center stage. When Snoopy can't fit ReRun into his busy holiday schedule, he invites his brother Spike to help his human friend fill up on seasonal cheer. (ABC; Mon., Dec. 10, at 8 p.m.)

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER: RED HOT HOLIDAY STOMP

Live from Frederick P. Rose Hall, Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and special guests kick off PBS' holiday programming with an evening of joyous music and storytelling featuring jazz musicians who bring Big Easy-style holiday cheer to the Big Apple. (PBS; Mon., Dec. 10, at 8 p.m.)

WINNIE THE POOH AND CHRISTMAS TOO!

Pooh and Piglet retrieve a letter to Santa, but while trying to add some forgotten Christmas wishes, their plans go amiss. Honored by TV Guide as the "most lushly animated" holiday program of all time, this prime-time special was nominated for a 1992 Emmy Award in the Outstanding Children's Program category. (ABC; Tues., Dec. 11, at 8:30 p.m.)

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

An angel helps a compassionate but despairingly frustrated businessman—played by the late, great Jimmy Stewart—by showing him what life would've been like if he was never born. (NBC; Fri., Dec. 14, at 8 p.m.)

For a complete list of holiday TV movies, see www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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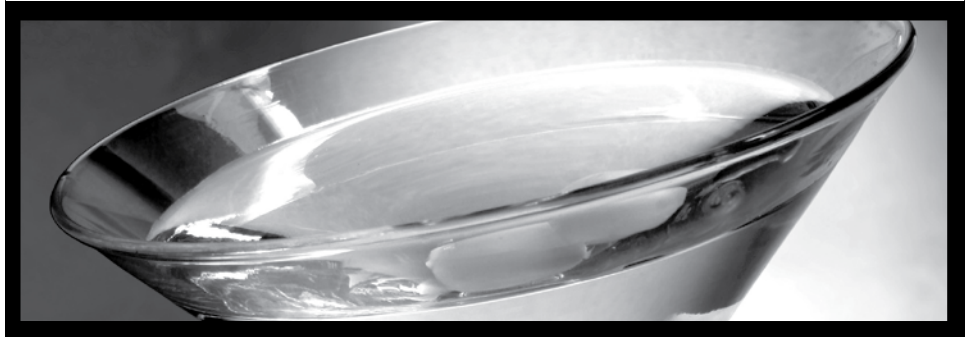
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How's your LGBTPCIQ?

BY LISA KEEN

How's your LGBT political consumer IQ?

Take a look at these competitors and pick which of each pair is the more LGBT-friendly:

—Lipton Tea or Celestial Seasonings?

—Barnes & Noble or Borders?

—Land's End or L.L. Bean?

—Federal Express or UPS?

—General Mills or Kellogg's?

Chances are, you've just made some wild guesses. But if you chose Lipton Tea, Borders, Land's End, UPS and General Mills, you guessed wisely.

The latest "Buying for Equality" guide from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), released at the start of this year's holiday spending craze, gave Lipton Tea a steaming score of 100 (perfect) compared to Celestial Seasonings (maker of Wild Berry Zinger and Sleepytime, to name just two) with a tepid 30. For the third year in a row—which is how long HRC has been publishing the guide— the Borders bookstore chain (with a score of 100) outstacked Barnes & Noble (with 63). Land's End earned a 100, well over L.L. Bean's 73. UPS this year hoisted its first perfect rating, besting the ever-lagging Fed Ex's 55. And General Mills' 100 score beat Kellogg's 35 with a crunch.

The new guide—available free online— outdid itself from previous years, too, rating 519 companies, compared to 446 last year.

A record number of companies—195—earned a perfect 100, compared to last year's 138. (And it's interesting to note that only 13 companies achieved a 100 score in 2002, when the group first began collecting data.)

The average rating of all companies rated this year was 81. And only three companies rated the worst score of zero: Exxon Mobil, Meijer grocers and Perot Systems, the technology firm former presidential candidate Ross Perot helped found.

The ratings are based on how well the companies adhere to 11 criteria, including whether they have a written policy of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, equal benefits for employees with domestic partners, no use of negative stereotypes in advertising and no policy of barring corporate contributions to LGBT charitable groups.

HRC sent its questionnaires out to 1,806 companies in all, receiving responses back from 23 percent of them (up slightly from 21 percent in the previous year). Ninety-eight percent of those responding said they had a written policy against sexual orientation discrimination, 58 percent included gender identity. (Only 46 percent of companies included gender identity the previous year.) Eighty-nine percent of the companies provided equal benefits to employees with domestic partners.

Some companies which have participated for the past three years have shown dramatic improvements in their scores, jumping from a "Red" category—which consumers are urged to avoid—to a "Yellow," which is considered to be making progress, or a "Green," which is recommended.

Haagen-Dazs ice cream rose from a Red category score of 15 last year to a Green 100 this year. The grocery chain Kroger jumped from a Red 35 to a Yellow 75 in one year. And Domino's Pizza rose from a Red 45 to a Yellow 60.

According to HRC, the buyers' guide for last year was downloaded more than 250,000 times, suggesting a sizeable number of LGBT consumers care where they spend their money. And, according to the Witeck-Combs research firm, LGBT consumer dollars amount to about $723 billion in spending each year.

As helpful as the guide is for LGBT consumers who prefer to take their business to an LGBT-friendly store, there are complications and limitations, some of which HRC attempted to address this year. Because not every company responded, the consumer is not always able to do comparison shopping. For instance, while McDonald's fast-food chain earned an 85, there is no score for Burger King, Burger Chef, Hardee's, Wendy's, KFC or Taco Bell. A footnote this year indicates that KFC and Taco Bell did not respond to the survey, but it says nothing of the other companies.

And, of course, the HRC guide does not consider other factors that may be of equal or greater importance to LGBT consumers. It does not consider whether the company's political action committee gives money to gay-friendly or gay-hostile political candidates. It does not consider whether the companies' practices may be unethical or its products offensive. For instance, Iams dog food earned an 85 percent from HRC, compared to Purina's 15. But according to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the Iams company keeps its research animals under cruel conditions. Abercrombie & Fitch clothing company earned a 100 percent from HRC, but the Ms. Foundation has urged a boycott of the company because it sells T-shirts for women with such slogans as "With These, Who Needs Brains..."

It doesn't take much brain power to put the Buying for Equality research into action, but it does take a lot of commitment—to go the extra mile to reach the store with the superior LGBT rating and, in some cases, to pay the extra dollar for a product at K-Mart instead of Wal-Mart. But, by "purchasing products from companies supporting GLBT equality," said HRC President Joe Solmonese, in a statement releasing the report, "shoppers are sending a clear message that will directly impact a company's bottom line."

To download a copy of Buying for Equality 2008, go to www.hrc.org.

SIDEBAR:

Green Companies

The following companies are among the 195 that earned a perfect 100 in the HRC Buying for Equality guide this year:

Vitaminwater
American Airlines
Tazo
Dasani
U.S. Airways
Betty Crocker
Aquafina
Marriott
Tylenol
Coors
Sheraton
Motrin
Budweiser
UPS
Borders
Häagen-Dazs
Best Buy
Starbucks
Pepsi
Sears
Levi Strauss
Coca-Cola
K-Mart
Liz Claiborne
Neutrogena
Land's End
REI
Sensodyne
General Mills
Banana Republic

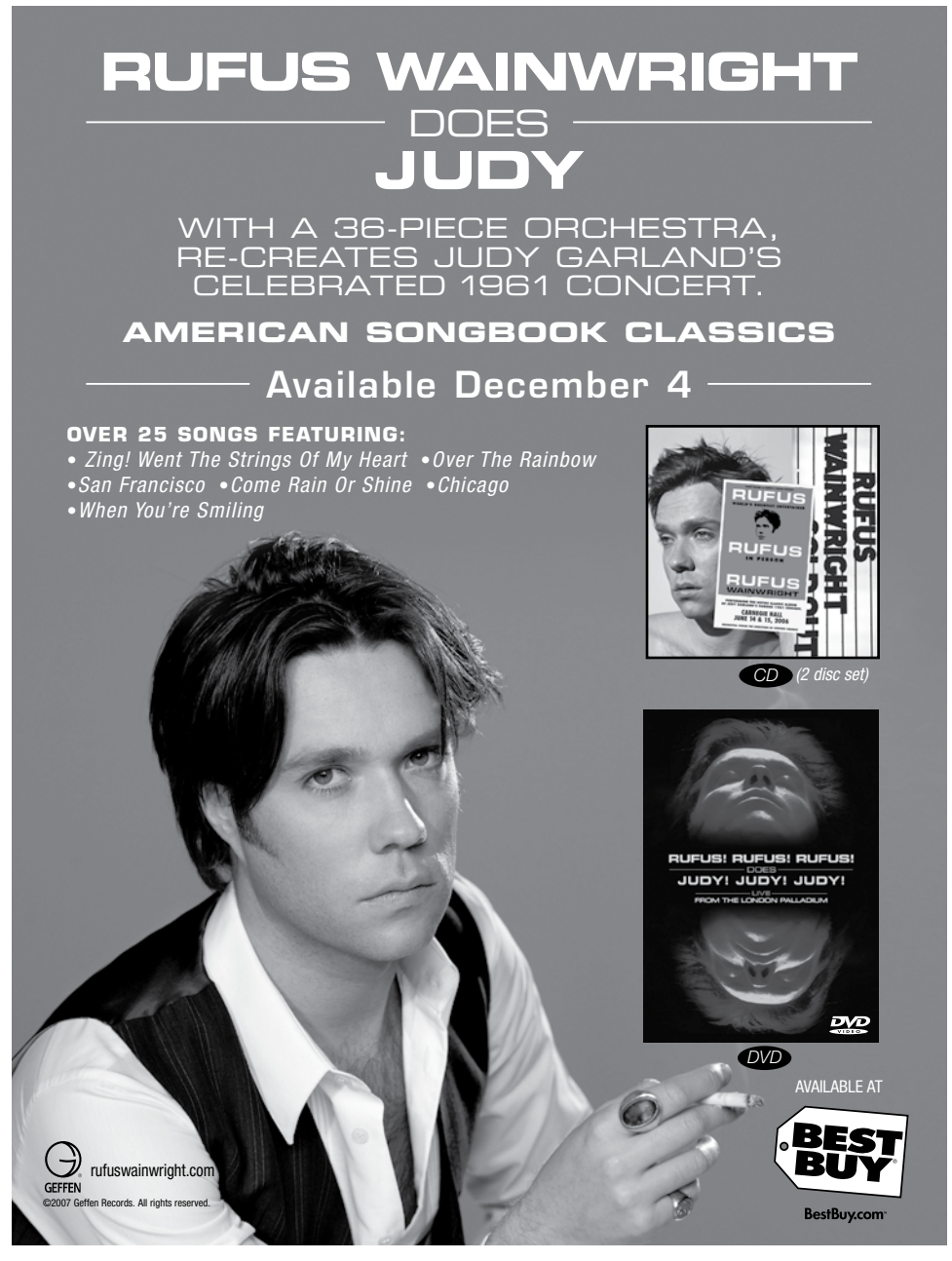
Red Companies

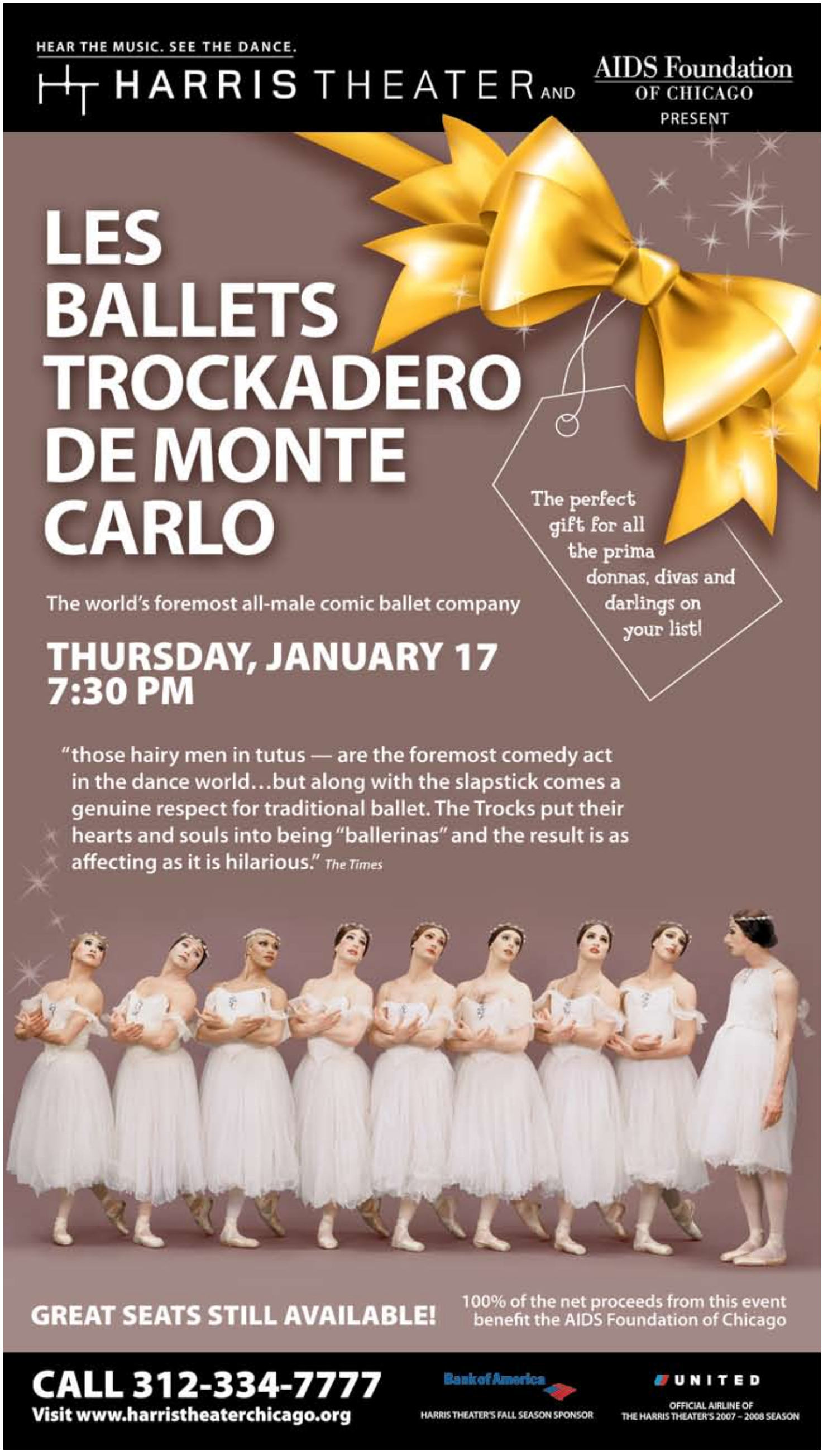
The following companies were among those whose scores were the lowest—between 45 and zero. HRC recommends that LGBT consumers avoid patronizing such businesses.

Kellogg's
Purina
Harry & David
Cracker Barrel
Vivendi
Radio Shack
Exxon Mobil
Bayer
Wal-Mart
Celestial Seasonings
Wall Street Journal
Dole
Autozone
Toys "R" Us
John Deere









Body and Sole!

Honorable Bandit: A Walk Across Corsica, by Brian Bouldrey

BY TIM MILLER

Brian Bouldrey's Honorable Bandit: A Walk Across Corsica (296 pages; $26.95) is a remarkable achievement. This deeply felt, humorous and wisdom-filled book takes us on a gay man's journey hiking across Corsica but, even more, takes the reader on a charged journey that explores nuanced corners of life, loss and love in our queer lives: our most intimate infernos, purgatories and paradises.

Tim Miller: What is it about queers and hitting the trail? Is there something that pulls gay people to slip into those hiking boots and rewrite our Boy Scout history?

Brian Bouldrey: It may be that walking helps make some fine distinctions you could never perceive while moving so quickly through a noisy world. I have discovered that the difference between being alone and being lonely is big, and only comes to you when walking, which one must do alone, even if you are with a dozen other people. The fact is, I never learned how to be alone until I grew older. There's something in our culture (and by our culture, I mean gay culture) that equates "alone" to "failure." And while gay men seem lonely, that's not the same as alone.

TM: In Honorable Bandit, the maquis—the elusive, haunting Proustian smell of the spiny scrub plants of your island—is really important. I suppose we all have to imagine our own personal maquis! What does the maquis mean for you in the book?

BB: Oh, that bigger-than-life maquis! I had read about it, talked about it, and studied it long before I actually smelled it or got scratched up by it. (The maquis, dear reader, is the general name for the idiosyncratic collection of wildflowers, plants, and brambles that cover up the island of Corsica. It makes the honey distinct and catches on fire every other Wednesday, at best.) There is something about encountering a thing in one's own imagination that makes it bigger than life you fill in all the blanks with your mind. Then it turns out to be something different for me, it's usually something less romantic, more annoying, and, well, smaller. But the maquis turned out to be a different thing that was better: better smelling, stranger, bigger.

TM: I love the deep current of the "meander" in the book—the Meander being a winding river in Turkey after all!—and having that wandering take us to places like the AIDS memoir section is so important. What psychic maps did you follow as you wrote the book?

BB: I have this whole tragicomic section about my impossibly bad sense of direction somewhere in Honorable Bandit. I build the act of getting lost into my itinerary. "Meander" is a word that suggests an orderly way of getting from one place to another, in my life. But there is something to be gained by meandering, and even by getting lostprovided, of course, you don't get too lost, and nobody is waiting for you at the other side. Any time I've taken a detour, any time I've taken the long way, or the crooked and wide way, it has always been the better thing I see more, I understand more, and I come away with one more story.

Read the entire interview with Brian Bouldrey at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Tim Miller is a performer and the author of the books Shirts & Skin, Body Blows and 1001 Beds. His Web site is hometown.aol.com/millertale.

Bouldrey will be at the Evanston Public Library, 1703 Orrington, on Mon., Dec. 10, at 7 p.m. See www.brianbouldrey.com.

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



STALL TALES

Richard Knight, Jr., interviews versatile actor Dennis Christopher (above), who co-stars in the gay film Nine Lives. Page 32.

PROFILE

'Tea' time.
page 28



MOVIES

Good as 'Golden.'
page 29



SPORTS

That's Italian!
page 34



Naughty Shows for the Holidays

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

This issue of Windy City Times is the first of two that focus on holiday season theater and dance events. December is, indeed, the sugar plums-and-treacle time of year, with some three dozen holiday-themed theater events. Just like girls and boys, some are naughty and some are nice. We figured the typical Windy City Times reader would want to know about the *naughty* stuff first. See next week's issue for nice shows and holiday dance events (in Eric Eatherly's Dancin' Feats column).

Prices quoted are for regular adult tickets. You can purchase tickets by phone, e-mail or at the theater box office or often at a discount through the League of Chicago Theatres Hot Tix program. Check www.chicagoplays.com.

ARFTCo's Soon-To-Have-A-Witty-Title Chicago Christmas Spectacular, A Reasonable Facsimile Theatre Company, through Dec. 29. This elaborately non-titled new holiday season show is a collection of new one-act plays by authors from around the country, inspired by personal Christmas photos of members of A Reasonable Facsimile's acting ensemble. They promise Marshall Field's, Obi-Wan Kenobi, zombies, pierogies, Jews, Gentiles and more. There are 14 plays altogether—not all performed each night—at the Cornservatory (sic), 4210 N. Lincoln; 773-282-9728; $15.

A City Lit Christmas, City Lit Theater Company, through Dec. 30. A new and improved version is promised in this second annual holiday revue for grownups, offering less familiar stories and songs. No Rudolph or Frosty here, but mature holiday tales by Edna Ferber, Mark Twain, Ben Hecht, etc. and songs from the 1400s to the present. Created and directed by City Lit artistic director Terry McCabe. At the Edgewater Presbyterian Church, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr; 773-293-3682; $25.

Dickens in America, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, Dec. 16-18 only (7 p.m. curtain). A special presentation of a new one-man show, based on the famous reading tours performed by Charles Dickens himself extensively throughout the United States (including Chicago, where Dickens' black sheep brother lived). It's not specifically a Christmas show, but one never has to dig very far in Dickens to come across Xmas. James Ridge portrays the famous British author and social reformer. At Victory Gardens Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln; 773-871-3000; $25-$40.

Every Christmas Story Ever Told!, Noble Fool Theatricals at Pheasant Run Resort (St. Charles) through Dec. 29. This new entry in the holiday show sweepstakes has three actors portraying as many holiday traditions and stories as they can remember in 90 minutes, from Marley and Scrooge to The Grinch. And if A Christmas Carol seems to blend with It's a Wonderful Life, and if you don't quite recall Gustav the Green-nosed Reingoat, well, who cares? 630-584-6342; $27-$38 (dinner show option also available).

How the Diva Stole Christmas, Lakeshore Theater, through Dec. 23. It's the triumphant return of Amy & Freddy with their new holiday revue, which promises to deliver more spice than your standard sugar plum. Naturally, vocalist and diva Amy Armstrong is in the spotlight except when talented pianist Freddy Allen is. Together: Jingle Bells, Santa Baby, The 12 Drinks of Christmas"and more. This secular seasonal show promises no cute children, singing Santas or nativity scenes. 773-472-3492; $25.

No-El, or How the BlagojeGrinch Stole Christmas!, Shantz Theatre, through Dec. 23. How 'bout a little political satire with your Xmas? For its second holiday show, Shantz Theatre reveals the culprit behind the CTA crisis. Shoddy planning? Inept management? Failure to invest in infrastructure? Yeah those too, but the real reason is that somebody with a certain haircut lost that holiday spirit—The BlagojeGrinch! At Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee; 773-598-4549; $10.



(From left) Lori Lee, Corey L. Wells and Dan Hickey in Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer.

The Nutcracker, The House Theatre of Chicago, through Dec. 29. There's Clara, a nutcracker and a Rat King. But other than that, only the name is the same as the House offers an original dark, psychological take on the E.T.A. Hoffmann story. Since it's a House production, it certainly will have original music and since Tommy Rapley is the director, it's likely to dance a little, too. But *this* Nutcracker ain't no dang ballet! At Steppenwolf Upstairs, 1650 N. Halsted; 312-335-1650; $29.

Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer, Hell in a Handbag Productions, through Dec. 30. Can fey little Rudy, the cross-dressing reindeer who wears red stockings, really be 10 years old? Yes, but he claims he's only seven. This annual holiday musical by David Cerda and Scott Lamberty returns yet again with such characters as Herbie, Yukon Cornelia, the Abominable Drag-Beast and the Halsted Street party elves. At Bailiwick Arts Center, 1229 W. Belmont; 773-883-1090; $20.

Santa Claus and Other Lies, Hell in a Handbag Productions, Dec. 8, 22 and 29 only. Musical duo Trista Smith and Jason Grimm can't go home for the holidays, so they'll do their best to recreate a Missouri Christmas here in the city, complete with candied hams, a traditional Jesus piñata and an old-fashioned sing along. Jason and Trista will take you on a musical journey of love, laughter, life and various bodily functions. At Bailiwick Arts Center, 1229 W. Belmont; 773-883-1090; $12.

The Santaland Diaries, Theatre Wit, through Dec. 30. David Sedaris' wry and pointed tale of life as a department store elf quickly has become an adult holiday tradition. In years past there have been competing productions of it, but Theatre Wit alone has laid claim to it the last two years. Mitchell Fain—perhaps born to play an elf—repeats his performance in the one-person show. At Theatre Building Chicago, 1225 W. Belmont; 773-327-5252; $25.

Second City's Dysfunctional Holiday Revue, Metropolis Centre, through Dec. 31. Santa Claus is dyspeptic as, once again, this annual show returns to Arlington Heights, along with your uncle who eats with his mouth open, your aunt with a moustache, your sister's ex-con boyfriend and burnt turkey. You get the idea for this revue of songs, sketches and improvised scenes. 847-577-2121; $27-$32.

7 Santas, Bailiwick Arts Center, through Dec. 30. Scandal erupts at the North Pole when Santa is sentenced to rehab for a minor traffic violation. But when he finds himself in a detox program run by the estranged Mrs. Claus, Santa's desperate struggle to conceal the truth about his arrest uncovers another sordid secret that could mean the end of Christmas as we know it. Corn Productions Robert Bouwman directs this 75-minute show by Hollywood writer Jeff Goode. 773-883-1090; $25.

The 12 Steps of Christmas, Drinking and Writing, through Dec. 21, 10:30 p.m.. Rock Bottom Brewery dry-hopped holiday ale is $4 as this adult show proves that true Xmas spirit comes out when drunk. This is Volume IV of Drinking and Writing's continuing exploration of the links between creativity and alcohol, this time featuring holiday-related scribblings by Hemingway, Bukowski, Fitzgerald, Kerrouac, Capote and others. Expect to drink, participate or both. Lobby bar of Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln; 773-871-3000; $15.

Stage Door Jonny

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Thwack! Stage Door Jonny knows the sound of a good ruler striking bad flesh as well as anyone, with the probable exception of Sister, the presiding eminence of Sunday School Cinema. Good movie? Bad movie? Sister knows that even Christmas movies aren't above suspicion if not outright condemnation, and she will share her expertise in a special, one-time-only **Sunday School Cinema Holiday Movie Edition** on Sun., Dec. 16, at 3 p.m. at the Royal George Theatre. The holiday show begins with our lovely colleague Dick O' Day and a 30-minute version of his Big Lovely Bingo Show before all-knowing Sister reviews holiday flicks that you thought for years were safe, even sacrosanct. Think again. For example, in Sister's version of It's A Wonderful Life, Donald Trump has a chance to relive his life, this time as a do-gooder. Elaine Carlson continues to star as Sister, as directed by Cecilie D. Keenan. 312-988-9000; $30.

Jonny's old songstress friend June Shellene will be a special guest (along with Rafe Bradford) at a free holiday party and show by the always-entertaining **Sons of the Never Wrong**, Thurs., Dec. 13, 8 p.m. at the Abbey Pub, 3420 W. Grace. There are cookies, candy and presents for all, plus banjo king Michael Miles as the opening act. You think you're good with your hands? Wait 'til you see what Miles can do with his fingers! The Sons of the Never Wrong give three-part harmony a new meaning in a roster of witty, funny songs. There's good Irish pub grub at the Abbey, too.

Traveling to Aurora may seem like quite a hike, but it's just a hop, skip and jump if you can see a great movie for free. That's the deal this winter at the beautifully restored art deco Paramount Theatre, which is screening free, certified Hollywood hits on six consecutive Tuesday nights as a thank you to patrons. The series kicks off with Superman (Jan. 8) and continues with Dr. No (Jan. 15), The Godfather (Jan. 22), Dirty Harry (Jan. 29), Jaws (Feb. 5) and The Bourne Identity (Feb. 12). You may recognize the theme: Each film is the first in what became a series. Screenings are at 7:30 p.m. Popcorn is available and the theater's cafe has full bar service.



Forbidden Broadway: Special Victims Unit. Photo by Michael Brosilow

The folks at **Forbidden Broadway: Special Victims Unit** have not yet reported the return of the purloined Edna dress, stolen on Halloween either by a vicious drag queen or by a very sicko straight person, but they have announced that the show has been extended once again, this time through March 30 at the Royal George Theatre (312-988-9000; $45-$55).

An art exhibit has come to Jonny's attention about which Jonny wishes he'd know sooner, ... **"And Our Art Lives On: A Legacy of Survival from BEHIV,"** through Wed., Dec. 12, only at the Dittmar Memorial Gallery, Northwestern University Norris Center, 1999 Campus Drive, Evanston. Better Existence with HIV (BEHIV) is a local AIDS-service organization that uses art therapy among its programs. The exhibit is composed of artworks created by BEHIV clients, staff and volunteers. The exhibit is free, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. at the Norris Center.

Jonny knows the time rapidly is approaching when readers will be frantic with last-minute holiday shopping, and you'll certainly want to know what Jonny himself is buying for both his friends. Well, a great gift and easy stocking stuffer is **League of Chicago Theatre Play Money**. Available in denominations of $25, Play Money certificates may be exchanged for tickets to shows at the box offices of all participating League of Chicago Theatre members (and there are roughly 200 of them), or through the league's Hot Tix program (in person or online) where day-of-show tickets can be purchased at a substantial discount. Check details at www.chicagoplays.com.

Jonny also thinks there's some nifty stuff this year at the **Museum of Contemporary Art store**, which really is a global market with items such as stuff French-made Phillip Starck disposable dinnerware, Italian hand-poured Gartano Pesce flexible polyurethane bracelets, or the paper puff by Espirito Brasilis, a compressed block of recycled paper that may be used as a table or stool (and is an ecologically sustainable-design product). The MCA store offers other items from Australia, the United Kingdom and elsewhere at prices starting at $3.95.

Finally, a reminder about the upcoming two-hour TV profile of Angels in America author and social activist Tony Kushner. **Wrestling With Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner** airs next Wed., Dec. 12, 9-11 p.m., on Ch. 11.

Stage Door Jonny is about to become Sombrero Jose as Jonny leaves for an overdue 10-day rendezvous with a Mexican fishing village. As a consequence of Jonny's travels, this will be Jonny's last column of the year. Dear readers, Jonny wishes you happy and healthy holidays. Play safe, and stay as sober as the law requires while Jonny slips into another mojito on the beach.

CRITICS' PICS

Hunchback, Redmoon Theatre, through Jan. 20. After seven years, Redmoon revives its exquisite version of The Hunchback of Notre Dame, packing the great novel's emotional highlights into 90 minutes using puppetry, pop-ups, music, masks and miniatures. JA

The Nutcracker, the Joffrey Ballet, Dec. 9-20. No jazzy hipster revisionism here, just the grand, gorgeous ballet based on E.T.A. Hoffman's beloved story. A holiday tradition for years, the Joffrey Nutcracker features Tchaikovsky's evergreen score played live. CS

Old Wicked Songs, Signal Ensemble at the Chopin, through Dec. 15. A play about classical pianists finding fellowship through art benefits greatly if the actors do their own musical stuntwork. In this smart production by a small treasure of a troupe, they do. MSB

What the Butler Saw, Court Theatre, through Dec. 9. Sean Graney's modernized take on Joe Orton's classic 1967 sex farce is full of zany and naughty theatricality (and don't forget nudity!). SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

Cirque Dreams' Costume Design Contest

Theater meets Project Runway as Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy and Jam Theatricals are offering one person the chance to sketch the design of a costume and have it interpreted by the Cirque Dreams costume designers. The winning design will come to life in a performance of Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy as part of the over 150 amazing costumes in the show performing at The Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State, Dec. 26-31.

Costume designs *must* be submitted via e-mail to costumes@cirqueproductions.com no later than Fri., Dec 14. (In the subject line of the e-mail, please list the following: "Cirque Dreams Costume Design Contest in Chicago.") Contestants may submit no more than two designs each. Please list your full name, address and phone number in the body of the e-mail.

Individual tickets for Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy are $20-$57.50. Visit the Chicago Theatre box office, call 312-902-1500, go to Ticketmaster retail locations or log onto www.ticketmaster.com.

CULTURE CLUB

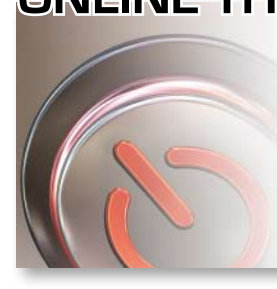






For more shows and listings,
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THEATER REVIEWS OF
—C.S. LEWIS ON STAGE
—DOG SEES GOD
www.windycitymediagroup.com

THEATER REVIEW

The Nutcracker

Playwright: Phillip C. Klapperich and Jake Minton
At: The House Theatre of Chicago at Steppenwolf Upstairs Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted
Phone: 312-355-1650; $29
Runs through: Dec. 29

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Perhaps it's the cadre of classical musicians cramped together on stage right. Or maybe the increased number of tiny tots in the audience. Or maybe it comes from playing the prestigious Steppenwolf Upstairs Theatre.

Whatever it is, there's an enforced respectability that saps the usual dynamism and energy out of The House Theatre of Chicago's new adaptation of E.T.A. Hoffmann's The Nutcracker. Compared to previous House Theatre works, there's more buttoned-up restraint to the much-heralded theatricality of the youthful theater company also known for its kick-ass production of The Sparrow.

Like all House Theatre adaptations of classics, The Nutcracker is shaded in darker tones as original plot threads get twisted and beloved characters get tragically killed off in Phillip C. Klapperich and Jake Minton's new adaptation.

All seems cheery in the opening pantomime that shows the Stahlbaum household preparing for and greeting guests for a holiday party welcoming home older brother Fritz. That atmosphere is shattered when a messenger announces that Fritz, here as an American marine, has been killed in combat.

Younger sister Clara is traumatized and now paranoid about imagined rats in the house. Turning away from her increasingly concerned parents, Clara enters into her own little world conversing with her toys.

As the following Christmas approaches, Uncle Eric Drosselmeyer gives Clara a nutcracker that looks just like Fritz. To Clara's delight, Fritz comes to life and rallies her motley band of toys to do battle with the Rat King.

The problem with Klapperich's adaptation is there's a lot of repetitive vamping before we get to that climactic and metaphorically cloudy Rat King battle (perhaps a symbol of impossible-to-stamp-out forces of terrorism?). Much time is spent with Fritz and Clara struggling to get her toys into shape as a viable military troop, raiding the refrigerator and finding weaponry.

One wishes that each of the toys could have been utilized better to highlight their own strengths in battle. And no doubt the little ones will be confused by the ambiguous Rat King ending while grown ones may question Clara's abrupt ability to cope at the end.

If the script doesn't fully satisfy, the staging ideas of director Tommy Rapley and costume designer Debbie Baer do hold some delights—particularly the Act II arrivals of a lively "GOT" (wonderfully played by Jake Minton) and that scary multi-headed Rat King.

The whole acting company throws themselves into their roles, particularly Laura Grey as a quite believable kid Clara. Shout-outs also go out to Ericka Ratcliff's loud soldier Jo and Seth Bockley as quizzical robot Hugo.

Though much of the usual House flair is there, I didn't feel the House cracked its Nutcracker to be as emotional as previous productions. Perhaps with a more adaptable space and a lesser air of "importance" will help if the Nutcracker gets another go round.

THEATER REVIEW

It's Only the End of the World

Playwright: Jean-Luc Lagarce (Augy Hayter, translator)
At: TUTA at Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division
Phone: 847-217-0691; $22
Runs through: Dec. 22

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

For the second time, TUTA offers the American premiere of a work by Jean-Luc Lagarce, the innovative French playwright who died of AIDS at 38. Once again, it's a remarkable and challenging event demanding discipline from audiences and artists alike.

Speaking directly to the house, 34-year-old Louis explains matter-of-factly that he's dying and is going to visit his family after a years-long absence to tell them, or at any rate to see what they're like. Louis' mother, sister, brother and sister-in-law (whom Louis hasn't met) react in different ways to his unexpected visit. Tension quickly rises between Louis, his sister Suzanne and—especially—his brother Anthony. Louis is essentially passive throughout, demanding nothing from his kin; but they require something from him. The sense surfaces that Louis was a spoiled child who selfishly abandoned his family, and Anthony explodes in anger. As his mother explains, they perceive Louis as having a free and adventurous life denied the rest of them, and they envy and resent it. After a reconciliation of sorts with Anthony, who at least lets it all out, Louis leaves without telling anyone of his impending death.

But It's Only the End of the World isn't as straightforward or linear as that. It's a language-based performance piece built on monologues and spoken arias rather than standard dialogue scenes. One must listen well to its circularities, repetitions, intentional clichés and exceedingly rich rhythms (the rhythms catch you up) to understand. And yet Lagarce's many words themselves are simple. His vocabulary is plain-spoken, not intellectual or flowery. Point is, it's not about what happens but how things are perceived. It's about the limits of language itself, the challenge merely to communicate a simple fact, let alone an emotion. As for expressing love or comprehending death and oblivion, well, they're nearly impossible, yet Lagarce and his characters take a stab.

TUTA works wonders with Lagarce's text, written without punctuation or stage directions. On the spacious Chopin stage they've fashioned a visual treat of mesmerizing cloudscapes and an airy facade of a home (John Dalton, designer), within which director Zeljko Djukich achieves intimacy through selective use of close-up video or by staging key monologues close to the audience. But the actors work greater wonders, mining the dense text for perfect sense, humor, emotional complexities and robust subtext. Kay Schmitt (Mother) and Jennifer Byers (Sister-in-Law) have fine scenes, but more is given to Alice Wedoff (Suzanne) and much more to Andy Hager (Anthony) and Chris Cantelmi (Louis), who rise to the occasion. Given the most to do, Hager delivers a performance of astonishing variety, emotional force and vocal dexterity. Anthony isn't easy to like, but Hager makes him fascinating to watch and utterly believable.

About Face to Present 'Little Dog'

About Face Theatre will present the Chicago premiere of The Little Dog Laughed, by Douglas Carter Beane. The production, directed by Eric Rosen, will run Jan.9-Feb. 17, 2008 in the Hoover/Leppen Theatre at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted.

Tickets start at $20. Call 866-811-4111 or see www.aboutfacetheatre.com.







Tovah Feldshuh.

Tovah Does Hepburn

BY AMY MATHENY

Tea at Five is the one-woman show about the life of Katharine Hepburn. Starring as the tomboy icon and beauty who led an unapologetic and independent life is four-time Tony award nominee Tovah Feldshuh. Feldshuh recently spoke with Windy City Queercast's Amy Matheny about playing the legendary actress.

Amy Matheny: On what particular time in Hepburn's life does the play focus?

Tovah Feldshuh: Tea at Five spans her life. It begins with her at 76 years old, but goes back to her at 31 years old right on the stage without an act break. I've got two quick changes. It goes from 76 to 31 to 76.

AM: What has been the biggest surprise that you've discovered about her?

TF: One of the biggest surprises is that she makes me cry because she is the prototype of American nobility. It's how we want to talk, it's the thin waist we want to have, it's the breeding and the grace that she has in her from her beginnings. And it's her tremendous relationship, [even] with all this breeding, with the earth … with gardening, with having dirty fingernails, with the manliness inside her woman's heart. She's a very at-home girl/boy or boy/girl. She's very at home being a tomboy. She was inseparable from her older brother Tom, who would commit suicide at a very tender age of 15 when she was 13. She left her birthday at that time, which was in May, and she took on Tom's birthday of Nov. 8. She wore his clothes. She cut her hair, and she tried to be both son and daughter to her bereft, stoic, elegant, brilliant parents. She makes me cry.

She's a very brave woman, and she really—in many respects—never disappoints. When you get down to her real human values and her actions for other people, they really are, without question, noble. Her behavior around Spencer Tracy was unbelievable. It was 27 years of devotion, and as Louise Tracy, Spencer's wife whom he never divorced because he was a Catholic, said to her, "I was his wife. You were just a rumor." Hepburn never attended the funeral so as not to embarrass Louise Tracy, and when she spoke on television after Louise's death, she said, "Mrs. Tracy really needed to be Mrs. Tracy in order to do all of her good work. I didn't need the moniker of Mrs. Spencer Tracy. I would never take it from her."

AM: You played Yentl on Broadway before Streisand played Yentl.

TF: It was a lot of fun. I've made some wonderful career choices in playing trouser parts, and that was one of the biggest breaks of my career. It was the first one that put me on a marquee. It was about a little girl who sacrificed her feminine identity to become a scholar, [which was] utterly forbidden to womankind. So she had to parade around as a boy. And there's a saying in the Talmut that, "if you don the clothes of the other sex, does the soul become perplexed?" And those were all the big questions that would be asked of me. It was my first break with the gay community. I don't think there's a decent career built in the United States without the support of the gay community, [which is] a very, very important element in the artistry of the United States. Or of any great democracy, really.

AM: There's been much talk about whether or not Hepburn slept with women. Was she bisexual?

TF: My gut says she did not sleep with women, *per se*. On the other hand, she had a very close alliance and a love for Laura Harding. Whether they made love or not, I don't know. Whether they slept in the same bed, I don't think Hepburn would have made a second thought. I don't know what her sexual practices were, but I do know she had wonderful, close and abiding feelings for Laura Harding that lasted the rest of their lives. They were, in many respects, inseparable. She said, "Oh, they thought we were lesbians. It didn't make our beaus very happy." I don't know. Did she ever kiss a girl? I don't know. I know I did for 10 months in public on Broadway, in front of a thousand people a night, in Yentl.

AM: Well, I hope she did at least once.

TF: If she had the impulse, I don't think that she would have stopped herself. I'm going to play Tallulah Bankhead as well in 2008, and she was definitely a practicing bisexual. She had women lovers. Now that woman was wild and, in many respects, debauched. [But] that doesn't have anything to do with her sexuality. It has to do with her use of drugs and alcohol. But Hepburn was highly disciplined, a cold shower-in-the-morning girl. You know, she took freezing baths and she swam almost every day of her life, rain or shine, freezing water or not. It didn't bother her a bit.

AM: You also starred in Golda's Balcony (about the late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir), which set a record as the longest-running one-woman play in Broadway history.

TF: And you know what the surprise is about her is? She was a practicing heterosexual but she had five lovers. So how about them apples? She wasn't a beautiful woman, but she attracted men all the time. Far out, huh?

AM: What is the challenge in playing real, [as opposed to] fictional, women?

TF: Whomever you play, fictional or not, you have to advocate for them. [Even] if you were writing a one-person play about Hitler, we wouldn't make him bad. We'd make him the best cleaning woman on the planet Earth. He's just a great scourer and cleaner, except he got rid of homosexuals, Jews, communists, anybody who wasn't like him. But you have to advocate for the character. You're in their bones, in their skin. They're talking about themselves.

AM: You have this enormous gift for being transparent on film—very difficult to do and, yet, you make it look easy. In Kissing Jessica Stein, you radiated such truth in that scene when telling your daughter to just let go and fall for the girl. What kind of a response did you get from that movie?

TF: That was a big response. I think my favorite call ever was from Barbra Streisand herself, saying she had just seen the film and … loved my work, and she needed to call and tell me. How did she even get my phone number? Even though she's Barbra Streisand, I said I thought that was an incredible thing to take time out of your day, and call a practical stranger. I mean we were connected through Yentl, but we were nothing more than acquaintances, and to call and tell somebody you believe in them? How kind-hearted that was!

AM: It's such an extraordinary performance I'm amazed that everybody who knew you didn't call.

TF: Well, I loved doing that movie. I loved the writers, both girls. I gained a lot of friends in the gay community [with that film], particularly the gay women's community. Which brings me to Rosie O'Donnell … with whom I had the pleasure of sharing Chita Rivera's act last night. We were both watching brilliant, extraordinary, very well-preserved and utterly capable Chita Rivera. And I have a real soft spot in my heart for Rosie. Rosie was there completely unadorned with Kelly and talking about getting chubby. It was so so funny, so cute. I'm opening June 7 in London and Rosie is coming to opening night. What a doll she is! She was talking to me about the women's movement, and it made me think of all the wonderful lucky roles that I've been able to play.

Tea at Five is playing at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts Dec. 19-23 only. For tickets, call 847-673-6300 or see www.northshorecenter.org. To listen to this entire interview, visit www.Windycityqueercast.com.



John Cudia in Phantom of the Opera. Photo by Joan Marcus

THEATER REVIEW

The Phantom of the Opera

Playwright: Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber; lyrics by Charles Hart; book by Richard Stilgoe, based on the novel by Gaston Leroux
At: Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph
Phone: 312-902-1500; $28-$85
Runs through: Jan. 5

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

Usually by the third time a touring production trundles through town, you can see the edges starting to fray where the corners have been cut. Not so with the still ultra-opulent, megawatt Phantom of the Opera, Andrew Lloyd Webber's ode to gothic excess.

With its one-ton tumbling light fixture, budget-busting sets and cartoon-thin adaptation of Gaston Leroux's turn-of-the-century romantic thriller, Phantom is a show critics—and plenty of others—love to hate. Mention Webber in an off-Loop storefront and you risk inciting a passionately righteous discourse how that crashing chandelier represents all that is pandering, stupid and soulless. The Phantom, as some tell it, is a leading the horsemen of the artistic apocalypse; the great Satan in the church of crass commercialism, a corruption of real art and a primary cause of the dumbing down if not downright decline of Western Civilization.

Call me three-chord shallow, but I've always loved the show. Haters probably won't believe that I also revel in Stoppard and the Shakespeare and have recklessly, joyously spent thousands of hard-earned dollars over the decades to bask in the glory of Shaw in Stratford and Beckett in Dublin and Moliere in the Phantom's hometown of Paris. But ding dang if I don't also thrill to bright, shiny objects that require minimal cerebral effort. I can live without Cats, and Starlight Express, but I digress.

Opening with a cadaverous auctioneer shilling Lot 666, (a chandelier in pieces) and closing in the echo of a thousand tri-note minor chords, The Phantom of the Opera is pure escapism, an opiate of hallucinatory spectacle. And say what you will about the subtle-as-an-acid-bath book, Webber's got a snappy shorthand when it comes to capturing certain universal elements of the Human Condition. Who among us, for example, has not had days that could only be defined by the hair-rending sentiment of "We are ruined Andre, ruined!" And who has not fallen into the sort of stupefyingly ill-advised relationship that can only lead one to conclude that "the Phantom of the Opera, he's there inside my mind"? No one, that's who.

John Cudia plays the tortured yet dashing Phantom in the current production. Sara Jean Ford is the looney-tunes ingénue Christine. D.C. Anderson is Andre, the clueless arts administrator. The chandelier still has 6,000 hypnotically sparkly beads. The masquerade ball that opens the second act still features a number of fantabulously costumed mannequins along side the real actors, but unless you're watching really closely, you can't tell which is which. The Phantom's is a gorgeous, indulgent world. Go ahead. Surrender to the infectious pop hooks of the music of the night.

THEATER REVIEW

Lost Love

Playwright: Peter Papadopoulos
At: Hypatia Theatre Company at Stage Left, 3408 N. Sheffield
Phone: 312-714-0571; $20
Runs through: Dec. 22

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

There's a simple explanation for why Mitzy, the distraught bride, and Tito, the unruffled parking attendant, do not flee each other's company: They are stranded atop a floating table, awaiting rescue from the terrible storm and subsequent flood that swamped the wedding. More curious is why lesbian couple Barb and Jan stay together, especially after the latter goes batty watching television news coverage of the disaster, combined with a documentary on the Discovery Channel, accompanied by narration in near-unintelligible French accents, dealing with social evolution.

The voiceover in that anthropological dissertation could very easily be that of playwright Peter Papadopoulos, whose affinity for the dramatic conventions of European Academe extends to dialogue composed in an idiom artificial enough to have been translated into English from another language. But back to the story: Jan first sells everything in the house she shares with Barb—except the bed and the TV, of course—and then volunteers to take in a pair of disaster refugees (guess who?), whose arrival conveniently forestalls the lovers' parting of the ways in the wake of an infidelity. We learn all this through several protracted internal monologues, interspersed with bouts of shrill tantrums and sitcom-shtick (deciding what goes on the pizza—not even apocalypse stops Domino's—or who sleeps next to whom in the single crowded bed.)

Hypatia Theatre Company founders Caitlin Montanye Parrish and Erica L. Weiss recount in a playbill note how they "cried from laughing so hard" while reading what Papadopoulos has described as his "edgy romantic comedy tragedy." Absorbing the various themes and subtexts purported to be encapsulated in this quasi-absurdist symposium—did I mention vegetarianism, American materialistic values and global warming?—at the leisurely pace afforded by a script might reveal insights hidden among the two hours of contradictory clutter comprising its performance. But if, as the playbill note further proclaims, Hypatia's goal is the promotion of "complex and dynamic roles for women, realism be damned," the bigger question confronting audiences is how a play featuring irrational females babbling, shrieking and otherwise indulging in petty, infantile behavior (while the men remain consistently cool and collected) fits into that mission.



The Golden Compass, Protagonist

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Lyra Belacqua is the unlikely name for the heroine of a wildly popular adventure-fantasy book series for tweens. Now 12-year-old Lyra (personified on screen by Dakota Blue Richards, sporting corkscrew red curls and plenty of sass) has come to the screen in an adaptation of the first of these three books, **The Golden Compass**. New Line Cinema, the studio that so successfully bet the house and won big time with the Lord of the Rings trilogy, is hoping to do so again. This time, however, they want both kids and adults in tow, hoping that plenty of that Harry Potter magic will rub off on them. It didn't quite work for Lemony Snicket, another fantasy adventure book series brought to cinematic life a few years back, but based on this first outing New Line should get its wish—as Compass certainly plays like a pint-sized version of Lord of the Rings.

Fantasy is one of my favorite movie genres, but the return of the fantasy film genre has coincided with the rise of special effects technology and the insistence by Hollywood on explaining how each and every effect is created. The advances in special effects are indeed dazzling but have become so familiar that, by now, we know that Nicole Kidman's vicious monkey (her character's familiar) in Compass isn't really there when it's attacking Lyra's little kitty cat familiar—and that the cat isn't there either. The awareness that the on-screen magic is being created by a horde of computer operators has had the unfortunate effect of dulling the magic integral to fantasy films. And Compass, with so many characters and effects utilizing the technique, suffers for it.

It also doesn't help that Compass plops us with a thud into a world with the metaphorical thickness of the Dune series—a parallel universe made up of words and cultures of many vowels and confusing subterfuge about the "dust" that connects all the different lands (Remember Kyle MacLachlan and his castmates musing about "the spice" in Dune? It's the same thing here.) You're still getting your bearings in this linguistic stew before the chase is afoot. Basically, the plot boils down to this: the bad characters—in allegiance to an all-controlling, pseudo-religious conservative institution called the Magisterium—want what Kyra the orphan has: the coveted compass or "alethiometer." The compass is dangerous because its power could bring down the fearmongering Magisterium and, naturally, these bad eggs will stop at nothing to get it.



Daniel Craig in The Golden Compass. Photo courtesy of New Line Production, Inc.

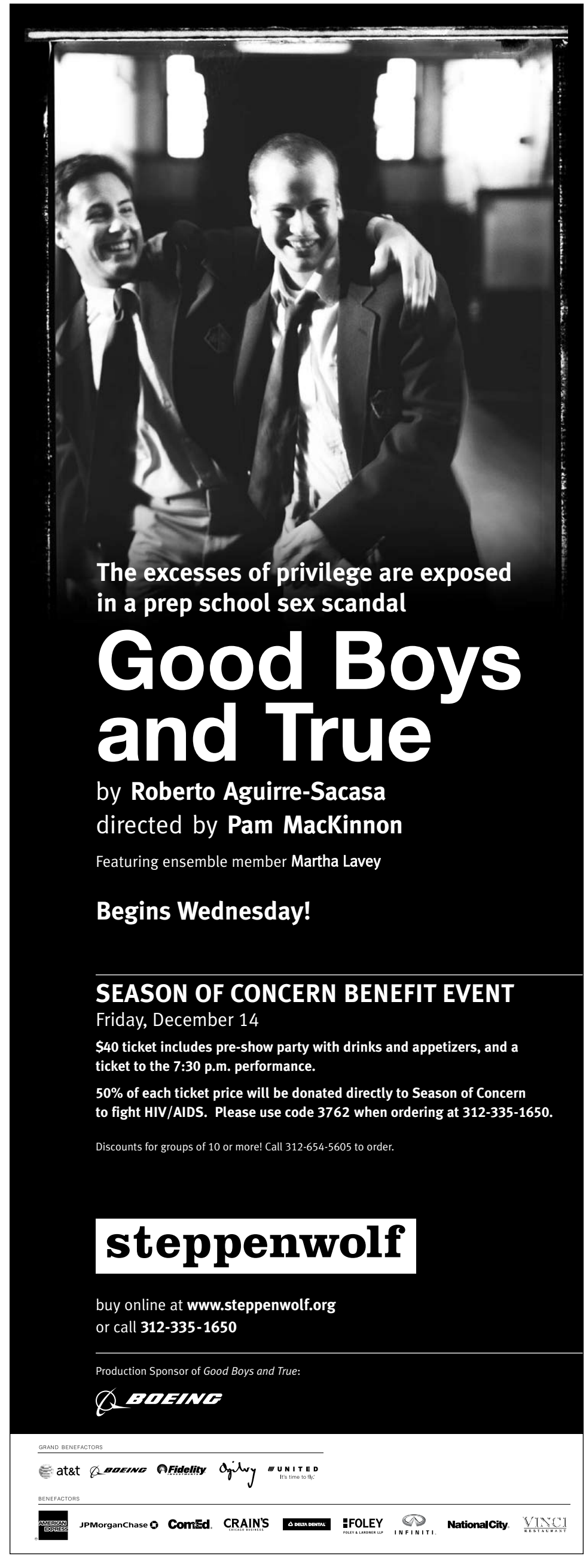
The baddies send out the beautiful but phony/nice Mrs. Coulter (Kidman) to take charge. (Was it on purpose that Kidman's character was named after the love goddess of conservatives, real-life witch Ann Coulter?) Mrs. Coulter, chic and authoritative, dazzles Lyra, whose protective adventurer uncle, Lord Asriel (Daniel Craig) has gone off to work on his experiments to prove that dust is real. Kidman uses the gasping-for-air voice that she utilized in The Others, looks stunning in the exquisite fashions and certainly relishes the part. Moreover, whatever she's done to her face works in tandem with the enormous vanity one would guess the character would have. (It was the opposite story in Margot at the Wedding, another movie that stars Kidman.)

Meanwhile, Lyra, as it turns out, has friends she doesn't know about who are also eager to protect her and to make sure the prophecy about "the child" (or "the one" or "the girl with the red corkscrew curls") is fulfilled. This resistance is made up of a group called the Gyptians, armored polar bears (one of whom is voiced by Sir Ian MacKellen, another by Ian McShane), a white-haired, bewhiskered Texan aeronaut (Sam Elliott) and flying witches, a group led by its queen, Eva Green. The bears are named Iorek Byrnison and Ragnar Sturlusson; Lyra's familiar Pantalaimon; the witch queen Serafina Pekkala; and your friendly movie reviewer Confusion Reigns.

It does eventually all sort of make sense as the picture moves towards the end of part one and little Lyra, a latter-day Dorothy, and her band of miscasts will surely be back for a second go-round, offering further clarification. I'm not really vested in the characters or their outcome yet (maybe part two will ensnare me) and don't care a whit about the controversy over the series' supposed anti-religious allegories. But the movie's starry cast, sumptuous design, gorgeous score (composed by Alexandre Desplat and topped off by Kate Bush singing Lyra, her new composition for the film over the end credits), lickety-split running time and love of fantasy, in general, pointed The Golden Compass toward the winner's circle for me.

Jessica Yu, who made the fascinating documentary In the Realm of the Senses (about Chicagoan outsider artist Henry Darger), is now two for two with her new film, **Protagonist**. It's about four men—a former ex-gay evangelist, a Mexican bank robber, a Kung Fu fanatic and a German political terrorist—whose only connection is their individual battles with extreme behavior. Yu uses excerpts from the ancient Greek plays of Euripides as her thematic template for the film and, using an interesting device, has dramatic moments from her subjects' lives reinterpreted with puppets in the style of ancient Greek theatre. The link between the puppets and the men—who are all forceful personalities—isn't clear at first but slowly comes into focus. The journey of these four individuals, who each represent how men (gay and straight) can easily be emotionally screwed up by society's rigid ideals of masculinity, is a fascinating one. Yu's little-explored subject matter and her offbeat, contemplative approach make Protagonist worth a look.

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitytimes.com or www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site, where there is also ordering information on my new book of collected film reviews, Knight at the Movies 2004-2006.



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The Flare Up There

Social Flare presented its premiere party Nov. 30 at Tizi Melloul, 531 N. Wells, in Chicago's River North neighborhood. DJ Kathy Valenti, courtesy of Club Skirts Los Angeles, kept the dance floor pulsing all night. A portion of the proceeds went to the Lesbian Community Care Project. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see www.MysticImagesPhotography.com for more



Voigt of Confidence

Deborah Voigt, one of the most revered operatic sopranos in the world, stopped by Center on Halsted Nov. 9 as part of a Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders (SAGE) event. Jason McVicker, LCSW—the Center's director of mental health services as well as a writer and lecturer on all aspects of opera—interviewed her. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald; see more images at www.MysticImagesPhotography.com

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Interior Motives

BY JOSEPH RICE



Dear Joe,

I want to paint the living room and kitchen area in my condo, but am afraid of making a big mistake. I have narrowed the choices down to a few colors but can't seem to make a decision. My favorite color is a bold yellow that looks good with my tan sofa and framed prints. The other colors are sort of beige or creme and much safer. Do you think that I will get tired of the yellow too fast? What would you do?

Sunny

Dear Sunny,

It's hard for me to say without seeing the space. I like to follow my first impulse in design because it is usually the right move. Since the yellow is your favorite, I would be inclined to try it. My suggestion is to buy a small can of the color (and any other color that you are considering) and paint it on different sections of the walls. Try it in areas that get both direct and indirect sunlight. Live with the color patches for whatever time it takes to observe how the tones change at different times of the day and night. This will give you the chance to see if you really like the color before investing a lot of time and money.

Please e-mail your questions to jos.riceinteriors@att.net. In the subject box, fill in "WCT Design." Also, check out his Web site at josephriceinteriors.com or call Joseph Rice Interiors, Inc., at 773-271-2361.

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Dennis Christopher in Nine Lives.

Dennis Christopher: Acting Chameleon

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Dennis Christopher has been at this "acting thing" for 40 years, beginning with his debut as a child on TV's sci-fi series Time Tunnel in 1967 and continuing through The Lost Room miniseries last year with Peter Krause and Margaret Cho and the final season of Deadwood in 2005. Christopher has had many notable movie roles as well—from Robert Altman's The Wedding to his memorable starring part in the 1979 classic Breaking Away. His Broadway debut found him playing scenes with Elizabeth Taylor and Maureen Stapleton in a revival of Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes, the first of many stage performances. Christopher's ability to essay a variety of parts has been a hallmark of his career and, with his role in the gay-themed drama **Nine Lives** (on DVD for $24.95), he does it again. In the film, a modern version of the French play *La Ronde*, Christopher plays a libidinous and complex crystal meth dealer who has a memorable (and very sexy) encounter with a gay hustler.

Windy City Times: How did you get involved with Nine Lives? Did you appear in the play version at one point?

Dennis Christopher: I saw the play Complications by Michael Kearns in L.A.; it was basically a collection of nine monologues. I thought the writing was wonderful. Our film is an adaptation of that by the director Dean Howell. No, I was not in the play.

WCT: You've acted in several gay-themed movies before, but this is the first time I can recall one with such an overt love theme. Any hesitation about that?

DC: I've done over 30 films and only three of them have had gay content. A short film called The Disco Years in a collection entitled A Boy's Life and It's My Party, a film by Randal Kleiser. The third was Skeletons, in it I am an innocent man imprisoned for the murder of his lover. Carol Baker played my Mother. Trapped is a movie I did for Regent, in the American version the part Alexandra Paul plays is having a relationship with a woman. It was shown on Here! TV. In the European version, Dangerous Isolation (shown in theaters) Alexandra is married to a man ... go figure. I play the evil Serbian mastermind.

WCT: Any hesitation about that full-frontal shot in Nine Lives?

DC: I'm not ashamed of my body; getting dressed after the sex scene just happened. I never tried to hide my cock because that would have been awkward. I've always hated it in other films when the actors look like they are more interested in hiding than being natural after a love scene. It was no big deal.

WCT: And the 10,000 new gay men that are suddenly your No. 1 fans?

DC: Funny!

WCT: Seriously ... your character elicited a lot of conflicting emotions—he's a sweet guy handling a difficult responsibility but he's also a drug dealer. What was he like to play? What did you draw on to make him come across so vividly?

DC: Thanks; I'm glad those conflicts came across. He is a sweet character and he handles his responsibility by selling crystal. He doesn't use it but you know none of these people take into consideration the full extent of the effect of their actions. They just live their lives moment by moment and without consciousness, that can be disastrous. I loved playing this man and it wasn't difficult. It was all in the writing and the fact that we almost always had only one take. I just focused on the fact that I loved my brother and would do anything for him. As a father figure he is always in control and the sex was a way for him to let go.

WCT: It's My Party is another significant movie in the queer canon with a wonderful cast. Anything stand out for you about working on that?

DC: It was great. We all had to show up every day and it was treated as an all-day party. We'd shoot the master and then Randal (Kleiser, the writer-director) would come in close to cover a particular scene. So much of what went on never made it into the final cut (including why I was there) as the movie would have been three hours long. I was Eric Roberts' childhood best friend, a straight man [who] didn't really understand what was happening.

WCT: What do you remember about working with Altman and some of that magnificent cast in A Wedding one of your great early parts; the film that was shot in the Chicago area as I recall?

DC: I loved Robert Altman. Working for him was one of the greatest things that could ever happen to a young actor. We were all responsible for creating our own dialogue and the circumstances of our characters. Structured improv. We shot it at the Armor mansion. Princess Grace came out to the set to hang with us for a couple of days. I used to write for Interview magazine and did an unpublished interview with the mother of cinema, Lillian Gish. God, what stories she told. It was an amazing time. An incredible group of actors that will never be matched again.

WCT: Can it really be almost 30 years since Breaking Away?! What stands out now most for you when you watch it?

DC: What a great movie it is. Every element of that film was perfect and came together so seamlessly. I'm very proud of that film. It stands the test of time.

WCT: You worked with Elizabeth Taylor and Maureen Stapleton in The Little Foxes onstage. What was that like? And the famously irascible playwright Lillian Hellman, any stories? Also, do you recall the night that Ronald and Nancy Reagan attended a performance that is detailed in Peter Feibleman's book about Hellman? It's sounds pretty funny.

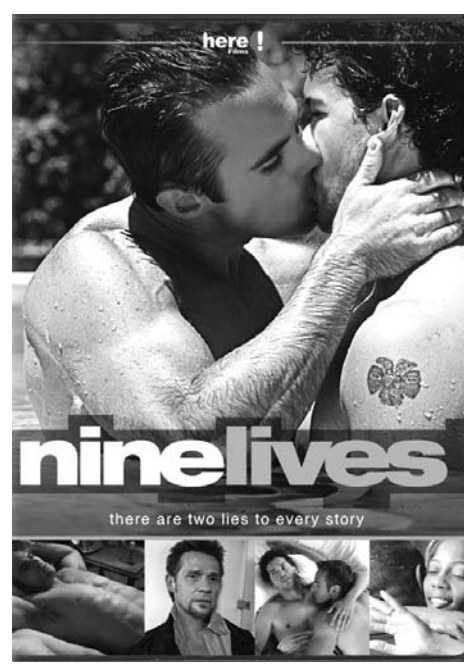
DC: My Broadway debut ... not bad. Maureen Stapleton and I were close; a real theater legend. I loved spending almost a year with these women—amazing actors and a couple of great broads. Elizabeth and I are buddies; we could always crack each other up. A fantastic time with many stories but I'll never tell, at least not till my book! Lillian Hellman and I had tea in her apartment in New York; she had to give her OK on all casting. She didn't want anyone to know she was blind. So to observe her pouring tea and lighting her cigarettes was a lesson for any actor. As for your question, yes, I do remember that night, I don't know what was in the Feibleman book but the girls, Elizabeth and Mo were very naughty about Nancy, it seems that allegedly the first lady had a bit of a reputation in Hollywood. That's all I'll say. It grew near impossible for us to keep a straight face as the President and Mrs. Reagan gave their regards. Elizabeth loves to laugh and her language can get a bit blue. Later, at the reception I was the only man to ask the little old lady in the big yellow hair and outdated dress to dance. It was Ginger Rogers, she was the sweetest. She didn't want to stop—still working those high heels.

WCT: You've had an interesting career filled with memorable film, television and theatre roles. Which medium do you prefer? I read an early interview with you that you travel with all your possessions to feel right at home—where and when do you feel most at home?

DC: Film is the first thing that drew me to the profession. I'm crazy about pictures and I'm in love with faces, the camera can get so close. I grew up in a different time and the actors I loved had the most amazing mugs. Naturally, theater is the first medium I tried. There is nothing like performing in front of an audience. The exchange across the footlights is powerful, exhilarating and actually quite healthy. The work is received immediately not months later after a final edit. You can feel a job well done (or not) and know it right away. It's something I'll never stop doing. TV is the best; the writing just gets better and better. The chance to play a character through a story arc is just not available anywhere else. If I had a TV, I'd hook up the Tivo and never stop watching—from black & white films on Turner Classics to FX and almost everything in between. As for traveling with all my possessions—don't believe everything you read in the papers. These days I travel light. I love New York and I feel most at home at work, wherever that might be. Oh ... and in bed Sun. morning with the New York Times, lox & bagels, good coffee and my dog. And ... if I get lucky, I'll be next to someone I love.

WCT: Who has been the most inspirational for you when it comes to acting?

DC: As far as actors, too many to name. Directors, both living and passed and of course my teachers. I can't wait to come back to Chicago. One last thing ... [and] it's the most important: Vote Democratic!



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WHAT TO DO?

Wednesday, Dec. 5

Center on Halsted Parent/Tot Play Group. A morning of play and conversation for parents and toddlers. 9:30-11 a.m., $3 per family, Billie Jean King Recreation Hall, 3656 N. Halsted St., www.centeronhalsted.org

Test Positive Aware Network Committed to Living panel discussion: Advocating for Our Brothers and Sisters in Our Own Back Yard. 7-9 p.m., 5537 N. Broadway, 773-989-9400, www.tpan.com

Women & Children First Bookstore Beth Finke & Hanni, Hanni & Beth: Safe and Sound. 10:30 a.m., 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Thursday, Dec. 6

Berlin The Kleavage Tour, featuring Tittsworth and Klever, with DJs Heather Doble and Zebo, $10 cover, $6 before 11 p.m., 954 W. Belmont Ave., www.BerlinChicago.com

Test Positive Aware Network Committed to Living panel discussion: Advocating for Our Brothers and Sisters in Our Own Back Yard. 7-9 p.m., 5537 N. Broadway, RSVP by Dec. 4 at 773-989-9400, www.tpan.com

Women & Children First Bookstore Beth Finke & Hanni, Hanni & Beth: Safe and Sound. 10:30 a.m., 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Friday, Dec. 7

Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago Contagious: A Disability Culture Cabaret. Features slide talks by artists, poetry and play readings, film shorts and discussions and more. 6-9 p.m., Access Living, 115 W. Chicago Ave., www.accessliving.org

Cake Chicago The Pink Party: Chelsea Z., Ripley Caine, Plaid on Plaid, Scott Free. Starts 9 p.m., Red Line Tap, www.myspace.com/cakechicago

Chicago Gay Men's Chorus Fruit Cake, a holiday show with holiday anthems and carols. Special appearance by art expert Sister Wendy. 8 p.m. (and Dec. 8 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.), info and tickets at www.cgmc.org or 773-296-0541

Chicago Hellfire Club Special bar night and demo. 11 p.m., The Hole bar inside of Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St., program@hellfire13.net for info

Chicago NOW Lesbian Rights Team holiday fundraiser. 9-11 p.m., Early to Bed, 5232 N. Sheridan, free and open to public

Gerber/Hart Library Holidaze Book Sale. Through Dec. 16. 1127 W. Granville Ave., 773-381-8030, www.gerberhart.org

Hydrate Lube wrestling at 11 p.m., followed by DJ Jeannette, 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com

Lincoln Park Lagooners Holly Trolley City Lights Tour. 6:30-11 p.m., $25 per person, meet at North End Bar, email Greg to register at leviwill@aol.com

Man's Country Alex, Geno, Kevin and Jimmy D., 5017 N. Clark St.

Spin $200 shower contest with Frida Lay, sign up by 11 p.m., contest at midnight, DJ Chris Eterno, no cover, 900 W. Belmont Ave., 773-327-7711, spin-nightclub.com

Windy City Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf Coffee social. 7 p.m., self pay, Caribou Coffee, 3500 N. Halsted St.

Women & Children First Bookstore Julia Bachrach & Jo Ann Nathan, Inspired by Nature: The Garfield Park Conservatory and Chicago's West Side. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Vital Bridges Harvest of Hope campaign party. Gameshow, raffle, entertainment, hosted by Miss Foozie. 8-11 p.m., Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St., www.vitalbridges.org

Saturday, Dec. 8

3160 "Grandma Got Run Over By a Reign, Dear" The Windy City Empire's investiture and annual holiday tradition, investiture at 9 p.m., show at 10 p.m., 3160 N. Clark St.

Chicago History Museum Jane Addams Day Celebration. Lecture followed by a reader's theater of The Halsted Street Play. 10 a.m.-12 p.m., free with admission, 312-799-2012, www.chicagohs.org

Hydrate DJ David Knapp, 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com

Lesbian Community Care Project Benefit presenting Suzanne Westenhoefer. Doors 6:30 p.m., Show 7:30 p.m., $30-$50, Park West, 322 W. Armitage Ave., tickets at www.lccp.org

Man's Country Peter, Kurtis, Stefan and Manuel, 5017 N. Clark St.

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders Sharing Our History, Living Our Legacy. Share stories with other LGBTQ youth and adults. RSVP by Dec. 5. 1-4 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., call 773-472-6469, ext. 160

Spin Fish Tank, presented by Dummy Corps, $5 cover, portion to benefit chicagowomenshealthcenter.org, 900 W. Belmont Ave., 773-327-7711, spin-nightclub.com

Vital Bridges Harvest of Hope campaign party. Chanel Exotique hosts a drag show and raffle. Canned food donations welcome. 10 p.m.-12 a.m., Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St., www.vitalbridges.org

Windy City Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf Brokesilent Mountain Costume Holiday Party. 3-8 p.m., 5 p.m. performance followed by costume contest, general admission $20/with costume $18/members $17/members with costume $15, Charlies, 3126 N. Broadway

Sunday, Dec. 9

Bailiwick's Second Sex Series Karaoke fundraiser. 8 p.m., Karaoke starts 9 p.m., Joey's Brickhouse, 1258 W. Belmont

Dogs for Disabilities Winter Gala & Silent Auction. 5-10 p.m., The Carlisle, 435 E. Butterfield, Oakbrook, $100 per person, www.dogsfordisabilities.com, 630-879-9561

Sidetrack Great Lakes Bears holiday party, 1-4 p.m., free to GLB members, $10 for non-members, food and prizes, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Windy City Gay Naturists M2M Massage Group. 4 p.m., RSVP by Dec. 7, 773-764-1204

Monday, Dec. 10

Theatre Building Chicago D.C. Anderson (The Phantom of the Opera), Claudia Anderson and Hope Nunnery with Steve Tarshis in concert. Cabaret songs, Celtic story songs and "Baptist by way of the juke joint" tunes. 7:30 p.m., $15 at door (cash only), 1225 W. Belmont, RSVP at dc@dcanderson.net

Tuesday, Dec. 11

Chicago House Champagne Wrapture. Silent auction features unique works of champagne bottle artistry. VIP reception ($150; limited space) 5:30-7 p.m., general event 6-9 p.m. ($65), The James Hotel, 55 E. Ontario, www.chicagohouse.org, 773-248-5200, ext. 303

Fulcam Point New Music Project 10th Annual Concert for Peace: Songs of Love and War. 7:30 p.m., $20, $10 for seniors and students, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph St., 312-334-7777 or madtchi.com for tickets

Gerber/Hart Library Lesbian Book Group: Rubyfruit Jungle by Rita Mae Brown. 7:30 p.m., 1127 W. Granville Ave., www.gerberhart.org

Threat Level An Evening of Queer Shorts, a new bi-monthly screening of queer short films. 8 p.m., Elastic Arts Center, 2830 N. Milwaukee Ave., 2nd floor, $5-$10 sliding scale, threatlevelqueershorts@gmail.com

Wednesday, Dec. 12

Center on Halsted Money Matters Seminar: Debt Management. 6-7 p.m., $10 (sliding scale applies), 3656 N. Halsted St., RSVP to culture@centeronhalsted.org

Howard Brown Legal presentations for LGBT community: Gay and Gray: Financial Planning and Related Issues. 6:30 p.m., 4025 N. Sheridan Rd., RSVP at rsvp@howardbrown.org or call Hope at 773-388-8906, www.howardbrown.org

Thursday, Dec. 13

Andersonville Chamber of Commerce St. Lucia Festival of Lights and Late Night Andersonville. Andersonville shops and restaurants stay open late. See www.andersonville.org.

Center on Halsted Exchange: A town hall meeting to discuss issues and concerns of LGBT immigrants. 6:30-8:30 p.m., 3656 N. Halsted St., RSVP to culture@centeronhalsted.org

Rubin's Chicago Room Gallery Markus Larsen signs his new book, The Sex Club Murders and Other Kinky Tales. 7-10 p.m., 3318 N. Halsted St.

Saturday, Dec. 15

Affinity Lez Chat. Every third Saturday. 5650 South Woodlawn Avenue, Garden Level, www.affinity95.org

Rainbow Cafe An opportunity for LGBT's and allies to socialize. Every third Saturday. 7-9:30 p.m., The Unitarian Universalist Community Church, 70 Sycamore Dr., Park Forest, 708-481-5339 for more info

Windy City Performing Arts Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria: Windy City Women's Ensemble in a holiday concert, "Home for the Holidays." 5 and 8 p.m., $20, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, 773-404-9242, www.windycitysings.org

Fri.-Sat., Dec. 7- 8



LET THEM EAT 'CAKE'

The Chicago Gay Men's Chorus (above) will present its holiday show, "Fruit Cake," at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport.

Photo by Emmanuel Garcia

Sat., Dec. 8



BEFORE AND LAUGHTER

Comedian **Suzanne Westenhoefer** (above) will perform at the Park West, 322 W. Armitage, at a benefit for the Lesbian Community Care Project (formerly the Lesbian Community Cancer Project).

See online calendar **www.windycitymediagroup.com/calendar**





Ross Forman after running in Florence. Photo by Bowdoin Su

SPORTS

A Writer's Journey to Florence: Looking Back

BY ROSS FORMAN

FLORENCE, ITALY—Well, it's over and, yes, I completed my first 26.2-mile marathon, held here on Sun., Nov. 25.

I couldn't be happier.

And that's just the start of emotions I experienced during the five-hour journey along the mostly flat course that was filled with cobblestone streets. Finishing the marathon brought pride, joy and honor, not to mention pain and a few tears.

I ran the first 90 minutes with Tim, a 45-year-old from San Francisco who I met and first ran with in California in September. We went at a four- or five-to-one ratio, mixing running and walking. Tim then broke away, opting to jog the rest of the race as opposed to the run-walk training method that we learned during the six-months of training with the National AIDS Marathon Training Program (NAMTP).

At the two-hour mark, the outside part of my left knee started aching, forcing me to slow down to ease the pain. About two and a half hours in, the knee was really hurting, forcing me, at times, to walk a little longer than I wanted to.

The rest of the marathon, I was slowed significantly by the injured knee, even though I had iced daily leading into the run.

Others, thus, passed me and I struggled. But no way was I gonna stop. Quitting was not an option. I trained too hard, for too long and too many supported me and the cause to say, "I'm done."

I ran the second half of the race, chatting occasionally with an Austrian couple, a girl from Georgia and others, including many of the 250 NAMTP runners who came here from Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

I saw Michelle, a Chicagoan in her 20s who I trained with extensively over the summer, struggling even more than me with, oh, about 10 miles to go. As I approached her, clearly seeing she was dealing with leg-related woes, I saw a man approach her from the right. As I later learned, Michelle's near-60-year-old angel spoke barely any English, yet was driven to make sure she finished. Michelle cried as she later told the story; I was honored and amazed I saw it materialize right before my eyes.

I saw Coach Katie with about four miles to go and that brought a huge smile to my face. She ran with me for a while, maybe 10 minutes, offering encouragement and jokes the whole way. She eventually broke away to ran back to other NAMTP runners behind me, but not before reminding me that, when—not if, but when—I finish, she'll have Rice Krispie treats waiting for me.

When Katie left, I knew I was on the home stretch, that the 42-kilometers was almost done. Tears were swelling, knowing I was about to do what so few others worldwide attempt, let alone accomplish. I thought about those who have supported and encouraged me since day one of my marathon journey, including Hector, Dell, Mandy, Lodi, Kevin Nash, Jeff Jarrett and the rest of the Total Nonstop Action (TNA) Wrestling family.

With about half a-mile to go, I caught up to Dan, a Chicago NAMTP runner in his 20s who also was struggling. I told him we had to kick it in with so little to go, that we couldn't walk anymore, that we had to run the rest of the way home, first passing fans on our left, including many who we knew and cheered for us by name, then a throng of fans on both sides as we approached the finish line—while running on a red carpet, fittingly. It was an awesome feeling.

We crossed the finish line together. Actually, I crossed a second before Dan—on purpose, which he and I joked about later. I got the medal draped around my neck, then a hug from a NAMTP runner from Los Angeles who, well, I don't even know her name.

All of my close friends and training partners finished the marathon, including Chuck, Rob, Dru, Bobby, Carrie, Michelle, Robert, Kevin, Janelle, Ray and, actually, everyone I can think of.

Six months ago, I never in my wildest dreams thought I could finish a marathon. Heck, I thought 10 miles would be an impossible task, let alone 26.2.

Now, though, my thinking is, where is my second marathon gonna be? The Chicago division of the National AIDS Marathon Training Program supposedly will be training runners for 2008 marathons in Chicago, Honolulu and Amsterdam. So, I guess I better get out the sunscreen and flip-flops for a few days in and around Waikiki next December.

Running a marathon? That's not a problem for me.

And it shouldn't be for anyone. As the saying goes … if I can do it, you too can do it.

Oh, yeah: There's the $1 that Chuck promised me last June if I finished the marathon. Well, he came through and presented it to me that Sunday night in between sips, er, swigs of Italy's finest red wine.

All of the running and the countless hours training was done to raise funds for AIDS Foundation of Chicago. I'm so grateful to all who sponsored me and, in the process, helped the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. You drove me to finish the marathon and, more important, helped me be Chicago's top fundraiser, at least as of race day. Donations are still taken for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago at www.firstgiving.com/rossruns.

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The OutField

BY DAN WOOG

Happy Holidays from The OutField

A new year is right around the corner. Pausing to look back and consider our blessings is a time-honored tradition, as much a part of the holidays as re-gifting fruitcakes and smirking at carols that command us to "don our gay apparel." As "The OutField" nears the end of its first year, let's look back at the men and women who make the gay sports world such an exciting, alluring, and fun place to be.

We'll start with out professional athletes. The list of big names, while still woefully short, is studded with men and women we can admire: Dave Kopay, Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova, Greg Louganis, Esera Tuaolo, Sheryl Swoopes, John Amaechi. Let's hope, a year from now, that we can rejoice in the first openly gay American male athlete currently playing on a professional sports team. And then the second, third, and fourth.

We honor, too, the hundreds—probably thousands—of less renowned, but equally important, young women and men who are quietly and courageously openly gay on their college and high school sports teams. Cross-country runners, soccer strikers, lacrosse middies, water polo goaltenders, football linemen, softball catchers—you name it, they're out there. Accepted by their teammates, these pioneers are altering their coaches' perceptions of them, while advancing their sports and all of American society. We don't know their names, but then again, we don't have to. Neon lights are not the only way to shine.

Let's not forget the out coaches among us—myself included. We know that while our sexuality is only a small part of who we are, it is important. Our impact on all the athletes we work with—straight, gay, and questioning; on and off the field, today and for the rest of their lives—is profound. The word "coach" has many meanings, and teaching young people how to block, kick, and dribble is a far less important one than helping them learn how to think, act, and contribute to the big, wide world.

We definitely appreciate our straight allies. In the sports world they take many forms: athletes who speak up in outrage over bigoted statements by ignorant teammates; readers who wrote encouraging e-mails to Los Angeles Times sportswriter Christine Daniels when she transitioned from male to female; former National Football League president Paul Tagliabue, who is not just the father of a gay son, but a passionate PFLAG dad; marketing executives who go beyond paying lip service to their gay fans, and actually celebrate them. Gay men and lesbians aren't the only folks who understand that "gay sports" is not an oxymoron; our straight allies get it, too.

Thankfully, amateur sports are alive and well. I'm thrilled to see so many gay sports teams—even entire leagues—providing healthy, safe, and fun recreational opportunities for runners, rowers, ruggers, flag footballers, cyclists, skiers, Ultimate Frisbee fanatics, and probably even Ultimate Fighting fools. Ball fields are the new bars—and you don't have to wait until midnight to go.

Every sport has its own governing body. I'm in awe of the time and effort so many gay men and lesbians put toward planning tournaments and events for the rest of us. It's reached the point that an umbrella organization—the Gay and Lesbian Athletes Association—can sponsor conferences, respond to media queries, and act as a clearinghouse for all the rest of our disparate groups. Sure, we're not always happy about the competing Gay Games and OutGames. But it's a lot better than having no games at all.

One thing that is very cool is that athletes are hot. Male swimmers, female bodybuilders, football players sweating in the hot sun, hockey players sweating on the ice—they're all eye candy. We are glad we can enjoy—and admit we enjoy—gazing at men and women who work hard to look good, who revel in their attractiveness, and who are winners on more than the scoreboard. Who needs the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue when we've got Outsports.com?

Finally, "The OutField" is grateful for you. If you're reading this, you're part of a vibrant, exciting community. You understand the importance of sports as part of our broader gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. You know the value of competition, the thrill of victory, and the agony of de feet after a hard day on the court, field, or diamond. You don't care whether your teammate, opponent, referee, favorite athlete, or most hated rival is gay, straight, polyamorous, or asexual. All you want is to run, jump, swim, throw or catch, or cheer for those who do.

You can have a seat at my holiday table any day of the year.

Dan Woog is a journalist, educator, soccer coach, gay activist and author of the "Jocks" series of books on gay male athletes. Visit his Web site at www.danwoog.com. He can be reached care of this publication or at OutField@qsyndicate.com.

BOWLING - CMSA Mixed Standings

Division A	W	L
Bowleros	59	32
Crew's Ball Busters	56	35
REMAX Edge	50	41
Cornelia's	49.5	41.5
GYOF	49	42
Bowlers-A-GO-GO	46	45
Jury's	42	49
North End	44.5	46.5
Marty's	41	50
Second to None	39	45
FVB Interiors	38	53
Hamburger Mary's	38	53
Gutter Fluffers	36	55
5 Pins 10 Balls	35	56
Funky Five	32	59
Division B	**W**	**L**
Castaways	61	30
Wicked	58	33
Salon Michael	57	34
Halsted Bar & Grill	56	35
Scot Shotz	54	37
Rough Trade	48	43
Looney Tunes	47	44
Bobby Love's	45	46
Lady & Her Tramps	45	46
Done More 5 Less	44	47
Windy City Sweets	43	48
Great Scots	39	52
Extremely Striking	38	53
Juana Bees	37	54
Wells Fargo ONYX 5	33	58



Hannema Receives Damski Award

Activist Phil Hannema was honored as the recipient of the 2007 Jon-Henri Damski Award at an event held at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, on Sun., Dec. 2. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the annual Jon-Henri, a memorial honoring Damski on the anniversary of his passing. The event was conceived by his good friend, veteran AIDS community activist and service provider Lori Cannon. Photos of Hannema and Cannon and the award (inset) by Tracy Baim

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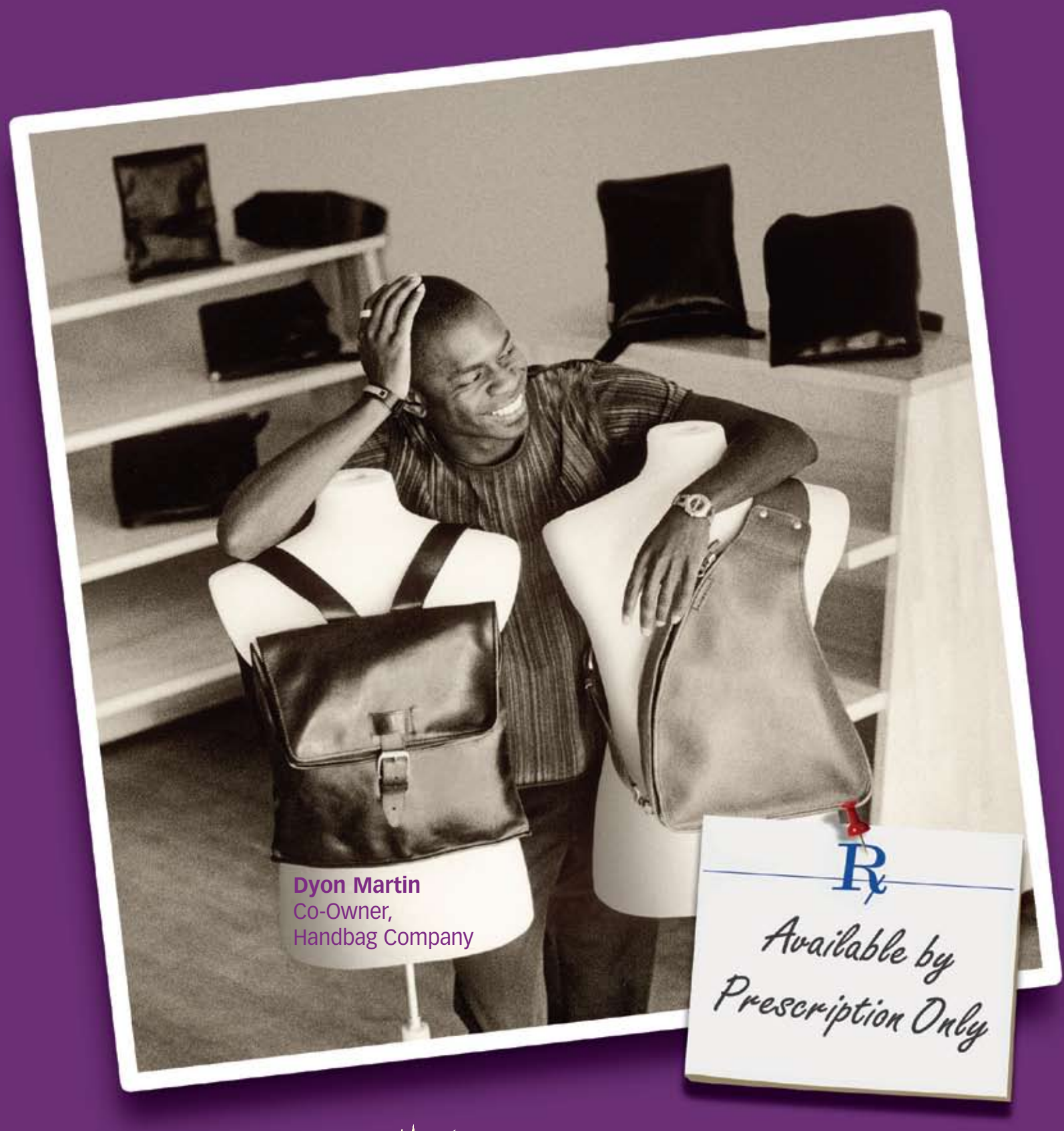
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