WINDY CITY TIMES

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VP Debate Fallout page 4



Ladies' Night page 7



Lauper's View page 10



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Two Icons, Two Stories



Nate Berkus.

Nate Berkus talks life and love

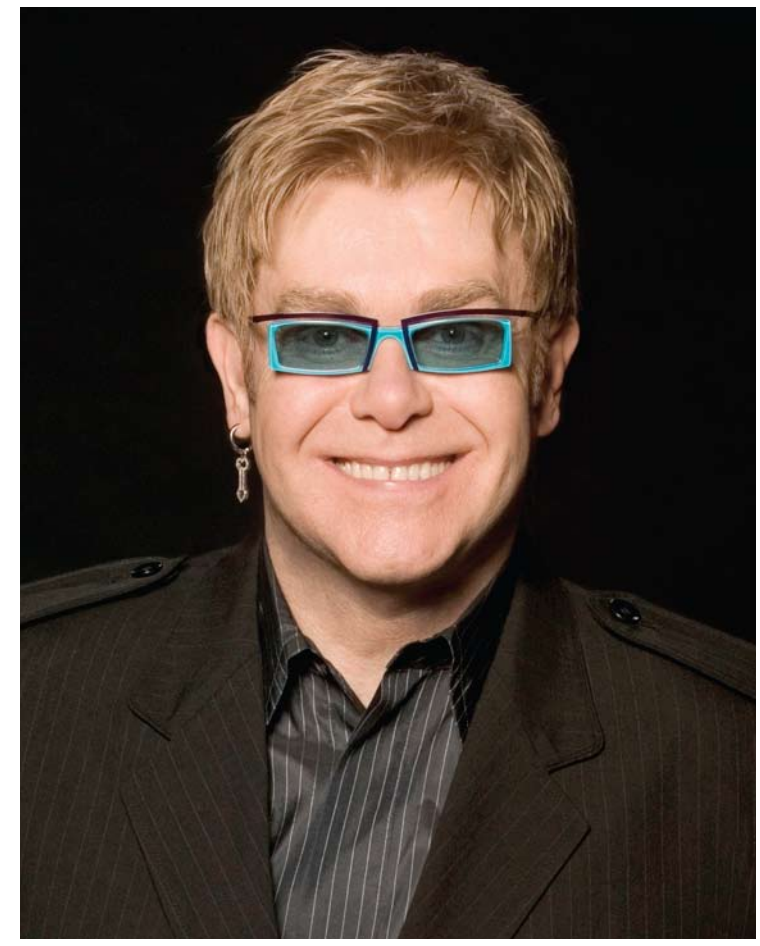
BY ROSS FORMAN

Nate Berkus has gone to a lot of sports-memorabilia conventions over the years. But he's not a collector or a dealer, and doesn't even like sports: He's just a loving, supportive son.

You see, his dad, Mike, is a lifelong sports-memorabilia collector, dealer and card-show promoter. He is a co-founder and current co-executive director of the annual National Sports Collectors Convention, set for its 30th annual gala next summer in Cleveland.

"Growing up, I spent a lot of time behind tables at [trading] card and memorabilia conventions," Nate Berkus said. "I was always interested in

Turn to page 22



Elton John. Photo courtesy of Joseph Carozza.

Elton John: He's still standing

EXCLUSIVE TO WINDY CITY TIMES

BY MARK SEGAL, GAY HISTORY PROJECT

As part of GLBT History Month, Philadelphia Gay News Publisher Mark Segal talked with gay icon Elton John, who discussed everything from his own foundation to his personal take on the phrase "gay history."

Mark Segal: Oscar Wilde wrote "Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it." Your new musical Billy Elliott certainly fits that realm, and at the same time takes on homophobia. Was that one of the issues that brought you to this project?

Elton John: The main attraction to me for Billy Elliott was the deep connection I felt with the film. Billy's artistic and social journey had parallels with my own life and wanting to be a musician. Having said that, I find

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index

NEWS

VP debate fallout	4
McCain talks with gay paper	5
Nat'l roundup	5
Tackling gay elder issues	6
Latino/a LGBT confab	7
Equality IL women's party	7
Chicago House gala pics	7
Lynch, 'Sweet Tea'	8
DP event, Center's auction	8
World roundup	9
Quotelines	9
Views: Lauper, Day	10

ENTERTAINMENT

Levi Kreis interview	11
Dancin' Feats; theater	12
Bent Nights: Tina Turner	17
Elton John interview	17
Books: The Black Tower	18
Knight at the Movies	20
Nate Berkus & his life	22

OUTLINES

Pets	18
Real estate; classifieds	19
Calendar	21
Sports briefs	22



A puppy was among the items at the Center on Halsted's auction on Oct. 5. See more on page 8.

Photo by Yasmin Nair



Evette Cardona (left) and Mona Noriega were among the couples at a party to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Cook County's domestic-partnership registry. See more on page 8.

Photo by Yasmin Nair

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Web-only features include:
–Media Watch
–Janet Jackson concert pic/roundup
–Bent Nights: Lindsey Buckingham profile (right)

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Photos by Kirk Williamson





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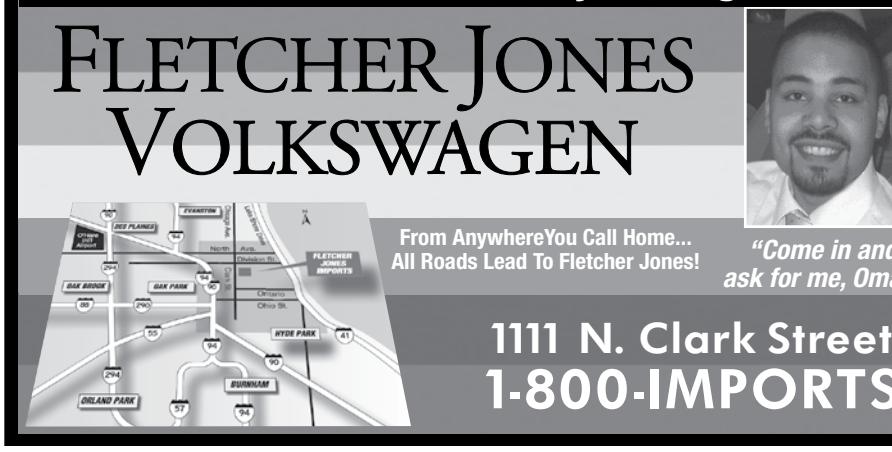


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The veep debate: Did they agree on marriage?

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

To hear debate moderator Gwen Ifill sum it up, the two vice-presidential candidates "agree" on gay marriage. But that's not what all LGBT viewers concluded during Thursday night's nationally televised debate at Washington University in St. Louis, Mo.

After getting six questions on the economy and three questions on the environment, the vice-presidential nominees were asked about legal rights for same-sex couples. The question was awkwardly worded, but in the end, most LGBT viewers seemed impressed with the strength of Democrat Sen. Joe Biden's answer and underimpressed with that of Republican Gov. Sarah Palin.

PBS Moderator Ifill asked the two candidates: "Do you support, as they do in Alaska, granting same-sex benefits to couples?" She probably meant "benefits to same-sex couples," and she should have noted that those benefits are available only to state employees in Alaska and are available only because the state supreme court ordered the state to provide them.

She tossed the question first to Biden, who answered as if the moderator had asked about equal protection for gay and straight couples.

"Do I support granting same-sex benefits?" repeated Biden. "Absolutely, positively."

"In an Obama-Biden administration," he said, "there will be absolutely no distinction from a constitutional standpoint or a legal standpoint between a same-sex and a heterosexual…"

Interestingly, at this point, C-SPAN provided a split screen, and viewers could see Palin raising her eyebrows briefly.



Sen. Joe Biden

"Fact of the matter is, under the constitution, we should be granted —same-sex couples should be able to have visitation rights in the hospitals, joint ownership of property, life insurance policies, etc.," Biden continued. "That's only fair. It's what the constitution calls for."

"And so we do support, we do support making sure that committed couples in a same-sex marriage are guaranteed the same constitutional benefits as it relates to their property rights, their rights of visitation, their rights to insurance, their rights of ownership as heterosexual couples do."

Ifill then directed the question to Palin, with a slight tweak: "Governor, would you support expanding that beyond Alaska to the rest of the nation?"

"Well, not if it goes closer and closer towards redefining the traditional definition of marriage between one man and one woman," said Palin, "and, unfortunately that's sometimes where those steps lead."

"But I also want to clarify," continued Palin. "If there's any kind of suggestion at all from my answer that I would be anything but tolerant of adults in America choosing their partners, choosing relationships they deem best for themselves, you know—I am tolerant." However, her body language—a brief shaking of the head with her eyes closed each time she pronounced what "they" chose as best for "themselves"—seemed to signal a level of discomfort or disagreement with those choices.

"I have a very diverse family and group of friends," said Palin, suddenly smiling and appearing more comfortable. "And even within that group, you would see some who may not agree with me on this issue, some very dear friends who don't agree with me on this issue.

"But in that tolerance also, no one would ever propose, not in a McCain-Palin administration, to do anything to prohibit, say, visitations in a hospital or contracts being signed, negotiated between parties.

"But, I will tell Americans straight up that I don't support defining marriage as anything but between one man and one woman, and I think through nuances we can go round and round about what that actually means.

But I'm being as straight up with Americans as I can in my non-support for anything but a traditional definition of marriage."

In one of her rare attempts during the debate to pin the candidates down on a position, moderator Ifill followed up: "Let's try to avoid nuance," she said to Biden. "Do you support gay marriage?"

"No," said Biden. "Barack Obama nor I support redefining from a civil side what constitutes marriage. We do not support that." He then made a somewhat muddled statement about leaving "the decision" to "faiths and people who practice their faiths" to decide "what you call it."

Biden then said that his interpretation of Palin's remarks indicated that "she thinks there should be no civil-rights distinction, none whatsoever, between a committed gay couple and a committed heterosexual couple."

"If that's the case," said Biden, "we really don't have a difference."

Ifill asked Palin if that was, in fact, what she said.

"Your question to him was whether he supported gay marriage," said Palin, "and my answer is the same as his, and it is that I do not."

"Wonderful," concluded Ifill. "You agree."

Do they agree?

Some LGBT viewers saw the answers much as Ifill did.

Michael Stara, chairman of the Pennsylvania Log Cabin Republican chapter, said he was delighted to see that both candidates appeared to be supportive of civil unions.

Others felt the distinctions were at least muddled.

Political blogger Pam Spaulding said Biden "hit it out of the park," given, she said, that the political bar on gay marriage this year has been set at marriages is between a man and a woman but gay couples should have the same rights and benefits. Spaulding said she thinks Palin's answer "probably left her supporters on the far right unhappy—she holds the same position on marriage as Obama/Biden, so that was off the table."

Jimmy LaSalvia, director of program and policy for national Log Cabin, said, "They agreed to agree."

Evan Wolfson, head of the national Freedom to Marry group, applauded Biden for his support that gay couples be treated equally under the law but dinged him, too.

"His comments garbled the distinction between religious rites of marriage, properly left to religions to decide, and the legal right to marry, regulated by the government, which should not discriminate," said Wolfson. And Wolfson chided Biden for "using the anti-gay forces' false talking point—introduced by Gov. Palin—that ending gay couples' exclusion from marriage is 'redefining' marriage; marriage is not 'defined' by who is denied it."

And while Palin, said Wolfson, apparently "felt obliged to go out of her way to proclaim herself 'tolerant,' her position against gay marriage "raises the question of why the law should then discriminate against those Americans."

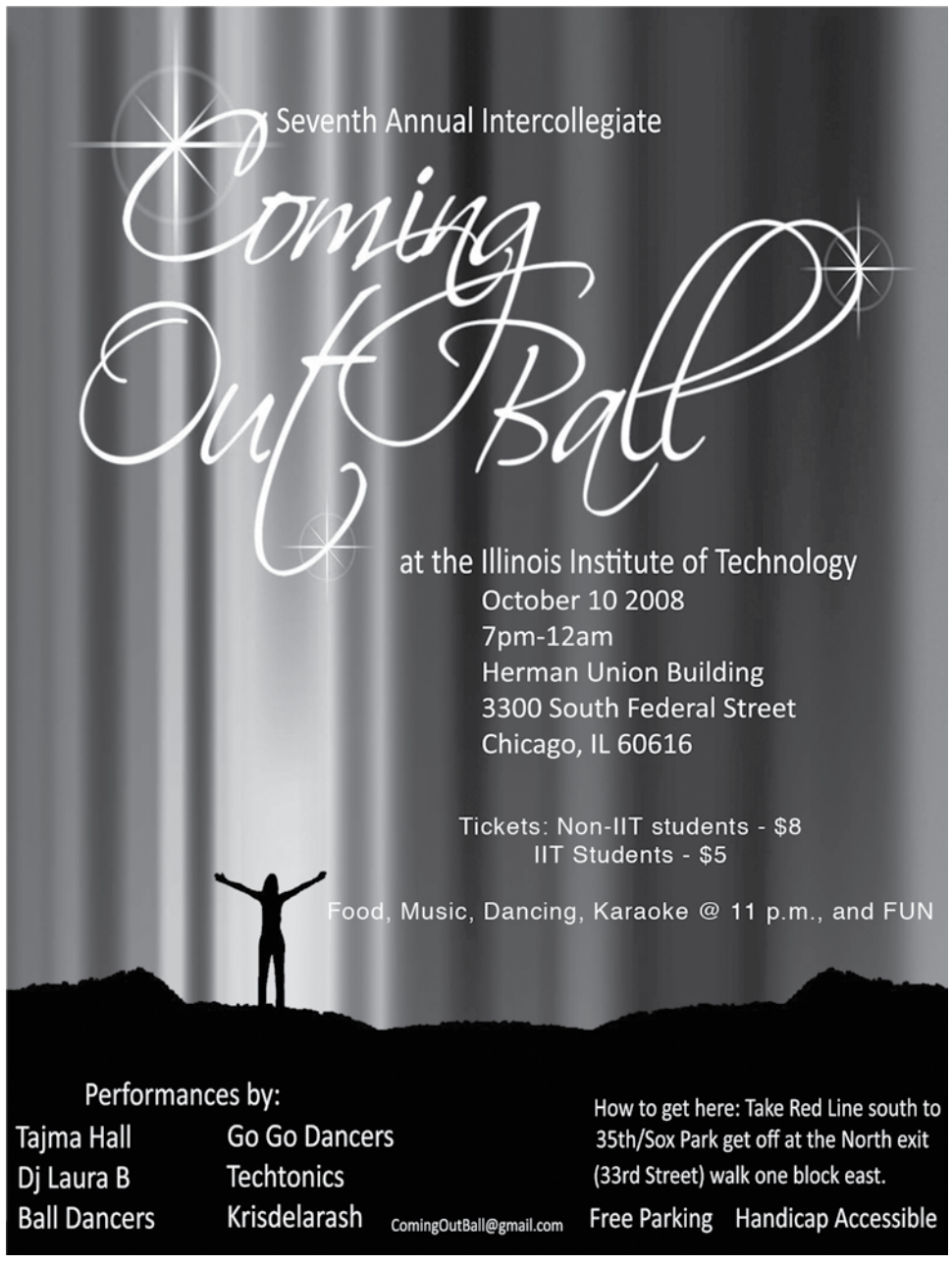
Final score?

Various focus groups and polls conducted by CNN, CBS and other mainstream broadcast media immediately after the debate all indicated that a majority of viewers felt Biden had "won" the debate but that Palin had gone a long way toward repairing some of the damage to her reputation that she had inflicted during the previous week's interview with CBS News anchor Katie Couric. In that interview, Palin seemed ill-prepared to answer even simple questions, like what newspapers she reads. She seemed to have no familiarity with Supreme Court decisions beyond *Roe v. Wade*, and appeared to get lost while answering more complex questions. The $700 billion "bailout" bill, she said, helps healthcare reform. Then, looking down frequently, she started rattling off "job creation," "reduces taxes," "reining in spending" and "trade as opportunity."

About gay people, the Republican vice-presidential nominee reiterated that she has gay friends and doesn't judge gay people.

"As for homosexuality," said Palin to Couric, "I am not going to judge Americans and the decisions that they make in their adult personal relationships. I have … one of my absolute best friends for the last 30 years who happens to be gay, and I love her dearly. And she's not my gay friend—she is one of my best friends who happens to have made a choice that isn't a choice that I would have made but I am not going to judge people."

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McCain talks with D.C. gay paper

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Republican presidential nominee John McCain told the Washington Blade this week that he appreciates the Log Cabin Republicans' endorsement and hopes that gay voters will consider voting for him. But he also implied that he is skeptical about supporting the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act, and he dodged a question about anti-gay nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Human Rights Campaign issued a statement soon after the interview appeared on the newspaper's Web site, saying McCain's responses "do nothing but insult the intelligence of the LGBT community."

The interview between the Washington Blade and McCain took place on paper—just as did an earlier Blade "interview" with Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama. News Editor Kevin Naff said the questions were submitted to the campaign Sept. 15 and were returned Oct. 1. He also acknowledged there was no way to be absolutely sure the answers came from McCain himself.

In fact, an Obama staffer later clarified that the Democrat's answers, published Sept. 10, had been prepared by someone in the campaign authorized to respond for the senator.

The Blade asked McCain all but one of the same questions as it did Obama but, noted Naff, got back more responses from McCain. For instance, McCain said he supports the U.S. Supreme Court decision that the Boy Scouts can bar openly gay leaders. (The paper did not ask McCain if he would support a move by the D.C. City Council to approve same-sex marriages. The district's legislation is subject to Congressional approval.)

Concerning his controversial campaign statements against gays adopting children, McCain suggested he thinks his remarks have been "misinterpreted" and said he respects gay people who are raising adopted children. But he repeated his belief that a heterosexual couple is "best."

"I hope my comments are not misinterpreted," wrote McCain. "I respect the hundreds of thousands of gay and lesbian people who are doing their best to raise the children they have adopted. As someone who adopted a child, Cindy and I know better than most couples the amazing satisfaction that comes from providing love to an unwanted child. I believe a child is best raised by a mother and father because of the unique contributions that they make together to the development of a child."

McCain dodged some questions, too. Asked whether he would nominate a Supreme Court justice who had issued anti-gay rulings, McCain said only that he would nominate judges who interpret the Constitution, not legislate from the bench.

Like Obama, he called for a national strategy to combat HIV in the United States, but unlike Obama, seemed to put greater emphasis on abstinence. He repeated his understanding that military commanders still believe "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is working but said he is "willing to have the policy reviewed to make sure that's the case."

He said he continues to oppose an amendment to the federal constitution to ban same-sex marriage but emphasized clearly this time that he does so because "this should be a state matter, and not one for the federal government." And he reiterated an earlier campaign statement that indicated he would continue to oppose a federal amendment "as long as no state is forced to adopt some other state's standard."

McCain said he supports the "concept" of ENDA but expressed concern the legislation could "lead to a flood of frivolous lawsuits or infringe on religious institutions.

"What I can say now," said McCain, "is I will give careful consideration to any legislation that reaches my desk, and confer with Congress before making decisions."

"It's interesting that John McCain thinks that being civil is going to win us over," said a statement from HRC President Joe Solmonese, "but it doesn't make up for the fact that he is against every single policy that would protect and promote equality for the LGBT community.

"It's 2008," said Solmonese, and "'some of my best friends are gay' doesn't work anymore. Sorry, we've already had one 'compassionate conservative' in the White House for eight years, we aren't interested in another."

Naff acknowledged that he can't be certain McCain answered the questions himself. Some responses reflect his language and tendency toward terse replies. Others—such as when he provided a Web link to the full eulogy he delivered at gay 9/11 hero Mark Bingham's funeral—suggest he had help, given that his campaign has acknowledged he's unfamiliar with the use of Google, if not internet technology.

Interestingly, the Obama interview included a disclaimer that said Window Media Co-Publisher William Kapfer—who submitted the questions to both campaigns on behalf of the Blade and the company's several other papers—"is not affiliated with any campaign and has not donated money to anyone running for president." There was no similar disclaimer included with the McCain interview. But Naff said Kapfer has not given money to the campaign and is not affiliated with it.

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NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY AMY WOOTEN

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Rep. Jerrold Nadler recently announced **a resolution that urges recognition of the need for stable housing for those living with HIV/AIDS.** The concurrent resolution, which is supported by other congressional leaders such as Reps Henry Waxman, Barbara Lee, Joseph Crowley and Christopher Shays, stresses that nationwide HIV/AIDS housing is necessary in order to keep those living with HIV/AIDS safe, healthy and off the streets.

California Gov. Arnold **Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill that would have honored gay civil riots pioneer Harvey Milk.** The bill would have marked the activist's birthday, May 22, as Harvey Milk Day. Milk was assassinated, along with then San Francisco Mayor George Moscone, in 1977. Schwarzenegger said that he vetoed the bill because Milk's contributions "should continue to be recognized at the local level."

A Presbyterian pastor who was in danger of being defrocked for performing a marriage ceremony for two women in 2005 has been cleared of all charges. During her second church trial in two years, **the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) found Rev. Janet Edwards not guilty of violating its constitution.** Under its constitution, pastors can't perform same-sex marriages, but can bless other "holy unions."

One of the world's largest airlines, **American Airlines, wrote Congress a letter of support for the passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).** ENDA is currently under consideration. American Airlines, which employs over 80,000 people, was the first major airline to implement domestic partner benefits and to include both sexual orientation and gender identity in its non-discrimination policy.

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NY confab to confront gay elder issues

BY AMY WOOTEN

In the next 20 or so years, the nation's senior population is expected to grow substantially. By 2030, elder advocates anticipate that the number of LGBT seniors will jump from 2.5 million to roughly 4.7 million.

While the mainstream aging community has overlooked this special segment of the senior population for decades, the times are changing. In less than a week, the national organization Services & Advocacy for GLBT Seniors (SAGE) will hold its 4th National Conference on LGBT Aging in New York. This year is special for two reasons. First, it will help mark SAGE's 30th anniversary. But more importantly, it is also the first time a mainstream aging organization is sponsoring the event. AARP is sponsoring the conference, titled "It's About Time: LGBT Aging in a Changing World," which will take place Oct. 12-14.

Although seniors, both straight and LGBT, deal with many similar issues, there are several unique issues that LGBT elders face. According to SAGE, LGBT seniors are twice as likely to live alone; half as likely to have life partners or significant others; half as likely to not have close relatives to call for help; and four times less likely to have children to help them than their heterosexual counterparts.

Many senior services assume that elders have ongoing caregivers and family members on hand to help, which impacts both LGBT and heterosexual seniors who don't have such a support system. Additionally, because a large number of LGBT seniors might not have anybody to help care for them, they are less likely to go to the doctor or seek medical attention. They are also more likely to be unnecessarily institutionalized.



One of SAGE's advertisements.

"These aren't even necessarily unique needs, but the needs we have are at much higher rates," said SAGE's director of advocacy and training, Karen Taylor. "They aren't so foreign that they can't be applied across the board in aging services."

For decades, the needs of LGBT elders have been overlooked by the mainstream aging community (and often times, the larger LGBT community). In recent years, the mainstream community started paying attention to the needs of the gay and lesbian community. While AARP has been quietly reaching out to the LGBT community for a number of years now, their sponsorship of the upcoming event sends a powerful public message.

One of the reasons for this shift, according to Taylor, is that people can't help but pay attention to the astronomical growth of the senior population. Because of baby boomers, in the next 20 years, seniors will make up 20 percent of the total population. They currently make up 12 percent of the population.

"And one thing we know about baby boomers are that they are not a silent generation," Taylor added. "This is a generation that has worked hard to make a difference and has become very interested in civil rights and continuing to pursue those rights. They aren't planning to age quietly."

Within that population are leaders of the LGBT community as we know it today, or as Taylor put it, the first generation of the Post-Stonewall generation. These are people that helped create our local organizations and centers. As they age, they remind the LGBT community that we can't leave our seniors behind.

Taylor added that as the mainstream aging community faces unique challenges, they have become more interested in the LGBT aging community because "We've been very good at creating unique ways to address those challenges." Mainstream agencies can borrow from the lessons learned by the gay and lesbian community in order to create more innovative, inclusive programming.

Taylor applauds the innovative work that AARP has been doing for populations "on the edge" and populations that don't follow the norm. "We have to become creative and flexible, and the reality is it's the creativity and flexibility that's really going to have the most effect on people," she said.

A number of Chicagoans will be presenting at and attending this year's conference. According to Taylor, Chicago is a model city when it comes to the work being done to help protect LGBT seniors. In Chicago, there is a real collaborative effort between traditional agencies and the LGBT community to ensure there are ongoing dialogue and program services. New York is also "ahead of the curve," as well, Taylor said. The voices of gay and lesbian elders are regularly included in the state's ongoing planning.

Terri Worman of AARP Illinois and the Chicago Task Force on LGBT Aging has been a key leader over the years in building collaborative relationships between mainstream and traditional aging service agencies and the LGBT community.

Worman feels that in addition to nationwide shifting attitudes about LGBT issues, the Chicago Task Force on LGBT Aging has really helped Illinois make a large amount of progress. Many involved have been able to bring ideas back to their own agencies in order to create change. The task force has also helped those involved build connections and relationships with other local agencies, enabling them to create innovative programming.

"I think a lot of people are starting to look at these issues, not just within their own agency's perspective, but also knowing that we need to create a community where we can all age with dignity," Worman said.

But it hasn't always been easy. Not all current seniors feel safe utilizing programs out there for LGBT elders. Funding is always a hurdle. Also, while being ignored by the mainstream for years, LGBT seniors have also had to battle ageist thinking within their own community.

"The real challenge that our community has not looked at is the ageist thinking, like 'I'm not going to end up like that,'" Taylor said. "Well, we don't know that. I'd like to think I won't end up like that, too, but truth is, I don't have kids, either."

Having programs like SAGE—which build bridges within the LGBT community to help eradicate the isolation many gay and lesbian seniors feel—is important.

"To really be advocates to raise that visibility is crucial," Taylor said.

Worman feels that the LGBT community is starting to be a little more realistic about aging. However, many Americans, both gay and straight, aren't keen on thinking about growing older.

"When you watch TV and see ads, you see we very much have a youth culture," Worman said.

Many people, Worman added, still react negatively when they turn 50 and start receiving AARP magazine in the mail.

But when Worman sees the programming done by Center on Halsted, Howard Brown, Affinity, Amigas Latinas and others in terms of LGBT seniors, it's a sign that we are taking steps in the right direction.

"It shows we are willing to at least start having these conversations," Worman said.

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Daily Herald

1994 murder of Chicago activist still unsolved

BY AMY WOOTEN

The mid-'90s murder of Chicago gay rights activist Jon Simmons remains an unsolved cold case, according to Los Angeles' City News Service.

In October 1994, Simmons' naked body was found in Beverly Hills. He was vacationing in Southern California. He was killed by a single bullet wound to the head, and his rental car was found burned 20 miles away.

In 1989, Simmons became former Chicago Mayor Eugene Sawyer's liaison to the gay and lesbian community. When Sawyer lost his election to Mayor Richard M. Daley, Simmons stayed on as liaison until June 1991.

Police told City News Services that they have been pursuing new leads, but haven't found any new, significant evidence.

LGBT-crime victim advocate and former police officer Bob Zuley told Windy City Times, "The Simmons homicide investigation in Los Angeles reminds us of the many unsolved LGBT-victim murders across the U.S., including here in Chicago."

Zuley added that periodic reminders of these crimes are a useful tool to the community and help ensure that such crimes are not forgotten and are successfully concluded.



Julio Rodriguez at the "Nuestras Raices" conference. Photo by Emmanuel Garcia

Latino/a LGBT conference stresses history

BY EMMANUEL GARCIA

The "Nuestras Raices/Our Roots" conference was held Saturday, Oct. 4, at DePaul University's Student Center, 2250 N. Sheffield, with one of the highlights being a keynote address by Center on Halsted's Latino Services Coordinator Karen Rothstein-Pineda.

The meeting introduced and highlighted the history of four Latino LGBT organizations. Rothstein-Pineda expressed the need to create dialogue about past organizations, such as LLEGÓ, the national Latina/o LGBT organization that dissolved in 2004: "I think it's important to ask why [past organizations] don't exist any more, figuring out where we are as a community and being able to ask for support." Alicia Tellez-Vega addressed the issue of creating separate organiations within the LGBT community in order to meet unique needs. "I always felt like I had to leave a part of me at the door. The female of me, the lesbian of me, the Latina in me," she said. Tellez-Vega was able to find her niche at Amigas Latinas, where she currently serves as treasurer.

A recurring message throughout the four presentations was the importance of preserving local gay Latino history. In a moving speech, Association of Latino Men for Action President Julio Rodriguez talked about his experience marching in this year's Puerto Rican Parade: "We were scared, we didn't know how the crowd was going to react. It was great to see the face of the kids and all the people we passed by. Friends who we knew couldn't or didn't have the courage to march alongside with us." Organizers of the conference are planning on inviting other Latino/a organizations to participate in future panels.

The four organizations highlighted at this years conference were Amigas Latinas, Association of Latino Men for Action, Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network and Orgullo en Accion.

YPC to host 'Our View' in Lakeview

Youth Pride Center, along with several supporting community groups, will host "Our View: Young, Black and Gay in Chicago" Thursday, Oct. 9, at 7 p.m. at Lakeview Lutheran Church, 835 W. Addison.

Invited guests include Joe Hollendoner of Broadway Youth Center, Lora Branch of the Chicago Department of Public Health and 44th Ward Alderman Tom Tunney.

'Coming Out Ball' Oct. 10 at IIT

The "Coming Out Ball" will be held Friday, Oct. 10, in the Illinois Institute of Technology's (IIT's) Herman Union Building, 3300 S. Federal, 7 p.m.-12 a.m.

Among the scheduled performers are Tajma Hall, DJ Laura B and go-go dancers. Tickets are $5 for IIT students and $8 for everyone else.

E-mail ComingOutBall@gmail.com for more information.







Saluting LBT women

Equality Illinois hosted "Women for Equality: An Event for LBT Women and Friends" Oct. 4, at Flourish Studios, 3020 N. Lincoln. Attendees at the fundraiser noshed on hors d'oeuvres Cook County State's Attorney candidate Anita Alvarez and Equality Illinois Executive Director Amy Bloom were among those making speeches. In addition to funds raised by ticket prices, Flourish, which doubles as a store, donated a portion of that night's proceeds to Equality Illinois. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com.

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Jane Lynch.

Jane Lynch gets back to her roots

BY AMY WOOTEN

Celebrated Chicago actress and comedian Jane Lynch recently stopped by the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark, for an intimate chat Sept. 30 with Chicago Tribune columnist Mark Caro about her Chicago roots and her experience in Hollywood.

Lynch is best known for her roles in various Christopher Guest comedies such as Best in Show and For Your Consideration, as well as her regular appearances on Showtime's The L Word. Other films she has done include the comedies Talladega Nights and The 40 Year Old Virgin. She was also host of the recent PBS documentary Out & Proud in Chicago.

Lynch was born and raised in Dolton, Ill. She revealed to Caro and the audience that when she was growing up, she loved Shakespearean theater and The Sound of Music, and aspired to become "a diva-type theater person." She quickly quipped, "But there is no money in that, so I went in the total opposite direction."

The actress discussed her Second City experience, where she cut her theatrical teeth. Although her roles in the Guest films required a large amount of improvisation, Lynch said those two life experiences were "very different."

With Guest's movies, there is no script and no rehearsal. "They are the longest takes you've ever imagined," she said. "You've thought about it for three or four months, and in 25 minutes, you are done."

During the interview, Lynch said that she felt her real "breakthrough" was playing the role of a lesbian dog trainer in Guest's 2000 mockumentary Best in Show. It wasn't until then that she started to receive recurring roles on national television shows.

Caro asked Lynch about her continued success, which started late in her career, and how difficult Hollywood makes it for older women to get work.

"I really started to work when I turned 40," Lynch said. "I think a lot of actresses peak when they are younger, and either they won't let themselves grow older or Hollywood won't let them grow older."

She added that if one loves what they are doing, he or she will just keep at it.

The actress attributes most of her success to being in the right place at the right time. "Everything is a happy accident," Lynch said. "Nothing was planned."

She later added, "The best thing I did was to take my hands off my own life."

Lynch also spoke about working with actress Meryl Streep in the upcoming film Julie & Julie, where Lynch plays Julia Child's sister, Dorothy. Lynch described Streep as being "spontaneous and odd" and "not of this world."

During a portion of the evening when the audience was able to ask Lynch questions, one individual asked the actress how difficult it is being openly lesbian in Hollywood.

Lynch said that she has never encountered any problems, and doesn't believe she was ever turned down a role because of her sexuality—at least not to her face.

"I've had people before me—trailblazers—so I haven't had to think about it," she said. "Thank you, Ellen. Thank you, Rosie. Thank you, Melissa."

Johnson's 'Sweet' message about southern Black gays

BY YASMIN NAIR

E. Patrick Johnson's recently published book, Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South, is an oral history of people who, according to popular wisdom, only live where they do because they have nowhere else to go even though they'd much rather much be somewhere else. In Sweet Tea, Johnson provides evidence to the contrary, showing that Black gay men who live in the South often choose to do so and that they have a complex relationship with the region of their birth despite its racial history.

Johnson is a professor of African-American studies at Northwestern; chair and director of graduate studies; and a professor in the Department of Performance Studies. His first book was Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity, and he's also a performing artist. He brings this background to the publication of Sweet Tea: His book tour is accompanied by performances of some of the oral histories of the book. Sweet Tea was officially launched Oct. 2 at Northwestern University with such a performance and book-signing.



Dwight McBride (left) and E. Patrick Johnson. Photo by Yasmin Nair

Dwight McBride, dean of liberal arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago, introduced Johnson. According to McBride, Sweet Tea "takes on the myriad assumptions about Black gay men in the south and the all-too-facile characterizations of the south as anti-gay" and provides us with "an incredible new archive." With no props other than the chair he sat on, a lectern and a nearby table for his water, Johnson re-enacted the narratives of six of his subjects, whose ages ranged from 24-93. They included Chaz/Chastity, a trans individual; Stephen, a student at the University of Alabama; and Duncan Teague, a "southern diva" who proudly proclaimed to the author: "I am Black. I am the South. MISS South."

Event marks five years of DP registry

BY YASMIN NAIR

Five years ago, the Cook County Clerk's Office established a domestic-partnership registry, with John Pennycuff and Robert Castillo being the first to register. Since then, 1,500 couples have registered for domestic partnership benefits, with the most recent (as of Oct. 1) being Jim Konold and Tim Hackett.

Both couples were present at a fifth-anniversary celebration hosted by Cook County Clerk David Orr Oct. 1 at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington. Among the attendees were dozens of invited couples and various city and state officials, including Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commisioner Debra Shore (an out lesbian whose partnership is among those registered); Bill Greaves, LGBT liaison to the mayor's office; and State Rep. Greg Harris, the House's sponsor of HB1826, the civil-union bill.

The event was largely a social reception, with brief speeches to mark the occasion. Orr thanked his supporters for making the registry possible and made a point of commending former Cook County Deputy Clerk Brandon Neese for getting the ball rolling in the first place. Neese was honored with a plaque honoring him for "his dedication to gay rights and his leadership in creating the Cook County Domestic Partnership Registry."

Center's auction goes to the dogs

BY YASMIN NAIR

The Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, recently hosted a silent and live auction-events that had previously been part of its annual Human First Gala. This year, according to Leslie DeMonte, director of special events and volunteer services, the decision was made to separate the two functions so that the gala could draw more focus to itself.

The live auction was facilitated by Michael Davis and included an eight-week-old female beagle puppy (putting the "live" in "live auction"), donated by Let's Pet and Critter Central, which remained the center of attention throughout the three-hour Oct. 5 event. The beagle was sold to Brett Locascio for $450.

According to DeMonte, the auction's "greatest accomplishment is that we reached out to many different businesses and donators that had never been connected with the Center … 80 percent of our donations came from people who had never even heard about the Center before and want to be more involved." Silent-auction items included a Basil Hayden-inspired gown by Nick Verreos; a painting titled "The Italian" by Dan Gentle; and an obedience-training course for dogs.

Proceeds are slated to go towards the Center's various programs and services, including the AIDS hotline, the youth center and the cyber center.

Friday, October 10
7:30 p.m.
Claudia Guadalupe Martinez
The Smell of Old Lady Perfume

Wednesday, October 15
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Matt Miller
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WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

Larry King quizzes Ahmadinejad on gays in Iran

U.S. TV interviewer Larry King quizzed Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on his nation's treatment of gays Sept. 23.

There have been persistent, though unconfirmed, reports for years that Iran hangs men for the crime of engaging in gay sex.

King said: "People (are) protesting that they don't have the same rights as other people. Homosexuals—you said last year, you denied there were homosexuals (in Iran). There's homosexuals everywhere."

Ahmadinejad replied: "I said it's not the way it is here (in the U.S.). In Iran this is considered a very—obviously most people dislike it. And we have actually a law regarding it and the law is enforced. It is a law that was passed. It was legislated. And it is an act that is against human principles. A lot of things can happen. It can cause psychological problems, social problems that affect the whole society. Remember that God's rules are to improve human life. In our religion, this act is forbidden and the Parliament has legislated about it. Not now, 70 years ago. This is something that happened 70 years ago, before the Islamic Republic became --"

King interjected, "So what happens to gay people?"

Ahmadinejad replied: "Well, of course, nobody has held protests. You are—are you concerned for 70 million Iranian people or a few homosexuals? Let's assume in Iran—let's assume in the United States that 200 million people drive cars and a million violators are rounded up and they just basically violate driving laws. Should we be worried for the 199 million people whose safety we must be concerned about or the one million violators? The law is the law and it's law. And it must be enforced. Of course, we do pay attention that in Iran nobody interferes in the private lives of individuals. We have nothing to do with the private realm of people. This is at the (level of) not-private, public morality. In their own house, nobody ever interferes with people."

Last year, during a speech at Columbia University in New York City, Ahmadinejad also was asked about the nation's treatment of gay people.

He responded: "We in Iran ... don't have hamjensbaz (a derogatory term for homosexuals) like you have in your country. In our country, there is no such a thing. In Iran, such a thing does not—in Iran, in Iran, absolutely such a thing does not exist as a phenomenon. I don't know who told you otherwise."

Iran is known to have executed several teens and men accused of engaging in sodomy, although in nearly all the cases that have been publicized in recent years the individuals were accused of other crimes as well, such as rape.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission has said it suspects that other charges often are tacked onto sodomy cases to prevent the public outrage that would accompany executions carried out solely for the crime of consensual adult gay sex. The group also has said it believes executions solely for gay sex are taking place out of the public eye.

"Our suspicions (are) that their current practice really is to rid society of lesbians and gay men," the organization said last year.

Human Rights Watch, on the other hand, has said it cannot fully document any executions in Iran in recent years carried out solely for the crime of consensual adult gay sex.

Read more world news at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"OH, I DON'T—I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M NOT ONE TO JUDGE and, you know, I'm from a family and from a community with many, many members of many diverse backgrounds and I'm not going to judge someone on whether they believe that homosexuality is a choice or genetic. I'm not going to judge them." — Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin to ABC News, Sept. 12. Interviewer Charles Gibson asked, "Homosexuality: genetic or learned?"

"I BELIEVE THAT MARRIAGE IS THE UNION BETWEEN a man and a woman. Now, for me, as a Christian ... it's also a sacred union. God's in the mix. ... I would not (support a constitutional amendment with that definition) because historically ... we have not defined marriage in our Constitution. It's been a matter of state law that has been our tradition. Let's break it down. The reason that people think there needs to be a constitutional amendment, some people believe, is because of the concern that about same-sex marriage. I am not somebody who promotes same-sex marriage but I do believe in civil unions. I do believe that we should not—that for gay partners to want to visit each other in the hospital, for the state to say: 'You know what? That's all right' I don't think in any way inhibits my core beliefs about what marriage are (sic). I think my faith is strong enough and my marriage is strong enough that I can afford those civil rights to others even if I have a different perspective or a different view." — *Barack Obama, speaking at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., Aug. 16.*

"I am not somebody who promotes same-sex marriage but I do believe in civil unions.
—Sen. Barack Obama



"IF ELECTED, I WOULD CALL ON CONGRESS TO ENACT legislation that would repeal DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act) and ensure that the over 1,100 federal legal rights and benefits currently provided on the basis of marital status are extended to same-sex couples in civil unions and other legally recognized unions." — *Barack Obama to the Washington Blade, Sept. 10.*

"THIS MAY SURPRISE PEOPLE, BUT I find Barney Frank to be very accessible and Tammy Baldwin not." — *Veteran gay press journalist Lisa Keen, former editor of the Washington Blade, as quoted in the September issue of the gay press newsletter Press Pass Q. Frank, D-Mass., and Baldwin, D-Wis., are Congress' two openly gay members. The comment was made at the recent convention of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.*

"I HAVE TO AGREE. (WHILE) VERY BRIGHT, articulate and knowledgeable, for whatever reason she (Baldwin) does not seem to like press interviews." — *Veteran Washington Blade reporter Lou Chibbaro Jr. responding to Keen.*

"I THINK THERE'S A REALLY GOOD CHANCE THAT SARAH PALIN could be president, and I think that's a really scary thing. ... I think the pick was made for political purposes, but in terms of governance, it's a disaster. You do the actuary tables, you know, there's a one out of three chance, if not more, that McCain doesn't survive his first term and it'll be President Palin. ... It's like a really bad Disney movie. The hockey mom, you know, 'Oh, I'm just a hockey mom from Alaska' ... and it's like she's facing down Vladimir Putin and using the folksy stuff she learned at the hockey rink. It's absurd. It's totally absurd and I don't understand why more people aren't talking about how absurd it is. It's a really terrifying possibility. The fact that we've gotten this far, and we're that close to this being a reality is crazy. Crazy. I need to know if she really thinks dinosaurs were here 4,000 years ago. That's an important—I want to know that, I really do. Because she's going to have the nuclear codes. I want to know if she thinks dinosaurs were here 4,000 years ago, or if she banned books, or tried to ban books. I mean, you know, we can't have that." — *Actor Matt Damon on Sarah Palin to the Associated Press, Sept. 10.*

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VIEWPOINTS



CYNDI LAUPER

Hope

As I toured all over the country this summer with True Colors, I saw something in the eyes of the audience I have not seen in a very long time; it was *hope*. Each night as I talked about the power of voting, it was evident through their reactions that the crowd wanted to change how this country is run. That is the one good thing that President Bush has done in the past seven years—he has created a movement within the country to change how things are done in Washington, D.C. But, what mattered to me the most is that everyone cared enough about their own lives and the future to register and vote.

I believe we are at a crossroads, and the next 10 years will determine the future of this country. Like I said from the stage, this is not voting for the American Idol; it is much more important—this is voting for the United States president. And now that I'm home again, and off-stage, I wonder: Will we become the country that respects the diversity that is our backbone, or will we continue down this path of the few ruling the many? I wonder to myself if we are gonna make that change in a big way—and when I think about it, I believe that the change can happen in the form of Sen. Barack Obama.

Because, America is a quilt of many fabulous fabrics and we have a sorted history that has not always respected that. And because, for far too long groups of people have been singled out and discriminated against simply because of such things as the color of their skin, their religious beliefs or whom they love. And, that these very acts undermine the basic principles this country was founded on, the time has come to finally break down the barriers that keep America from fulfilling its destiny.

In particular, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community is closer than ever to gaining full equality. We are teetering back and forth right now, and we need to act together to push us in the right direction. What we are asking for is only fair and right. We, as a society—LGBT or straight—can show that civil rights are important and discrimination is wrong across the board through our vote. I believe by voting for Barack Obama we will do just that.

Like Obama, I grew up with a loving, hard-working single mom, in a neighborhood mixed with all races and different backgrounds. And like Obama, I knew that was our strength and not our weakness.

I see in Barack Obama a real fighter for fairness and inclusion, a person who overcame every obstacle growing up to achieve an education and to become the leader he is today. He battles against discrimination of all kinds, from race and gender to sexual orientation and gender identity. He is the most inclusive candidate who has a real chance at the White House that we ever have had. He is a true American who commands respect and more importantly respects Americans—all of us.

I believe that a President Obama would deliver on the promises that have been made to the LGBT community for so long, like inclusive workplace non-discrimination legislation, the end of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and finally the passage of hate crimes legislation that includes everyone, not just some. It saddens me in ways I cannot begin to describe just to know that hate crimes still occur in our society. Under President Obama, the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act will finally become law.

When I talk to young people I believe the time has come. It reminds me of my generation in the 1960s who made a promise to make the world better. The young people today have dedicated themselves as well to this goal and have truly embraced change. They are working harder than ever to elect Barack Obama president because he is a voice of a new and more imaginative generation. They are hungry for new ways of thinking, and to put away old labels, fears, prejudices and bigotries. They believe you can change the world one person at a time. And so do I.

Simply look around, and talk to every young voter you meet. Then vote because you care what happens to them and you care what happens to the world and this country. We all deserve better.

Lastly, I implore you to share your lives with the people you love and care about. Your vote is powerful, but the work cannot end there. Americans are mostly fair-minded people, but are disconnected from the everyday struggles of your life. We are one society and if we are disconnected we fall—but connected we stand tall. If you want people to understand the reality of being LGBT in society today, you need to share your story.

If you are LGBT, share with them the discrimination you still face in America, and if you are a straight ally, share with them the discrimination you have seen inflicted upon your friends and family. Explain that discrimination not only affects the one it is directed towards, but it affects us all. Show through your example what LGBT people truly are like and break down the misconceptions and stereotypes that fuel the prejudices that have plagued our community and society for far too long.

I am an example of what can happen when you share your story. When my sister Elen came out to me and told me about her life, my eyes were opened to the fact that I needed to be a part of changing this country for the LGBT community and have taken that responsibility very seriously.

So, the time has come to stand up and use your voice. It is time that we push ourselves over the edge towards full equality. It is time that we have a President who will work for us and not against us.

Cyndi Lauper is a champion for human and LGBT rights, as well as a Grammy and Emmy award-winning singer, songwriter and actress in film, television and theater. Lauper has sold more than 25 million albums worldwide and just finished the second annual True Colors Tour in support of LGBT equality.



SUSIE DAY

Sappho wore a 'right on' hat

Hey, lady—you got a problem with my hat? I mean, look. I was just walking down the street, minding my own business on my way to the A Train, and you—an ordinary, middle-aged white lady in a blue plaid housedress—stop to glare at my hat. How friendly is that?

This is a good hat, lady, a cool hat. My girlfriend got it for me. Yeah, my girlfriend, see? She got me this tough, proletarian, newsboy's cap. Says to the world, "I may be cute, but I'm still a dyke." You got a problem with that? You don't like that I am wearing a lesbian hat?

Oh, I see I'm scaring your little pug dog. Yap, yap, yap—well, so what? Maybe little puggie, here, is afraid I'll tear off your blue plaid frock, afraid I'll sweep you into my arms and rain ardent kisses upon your upturned, horrified face. That would teach her to support gay marriage, wouldn't it, little puggie?

I'm sure you are aware that homosexuality is not a disease, lady. We queers may be going to hell, but we're going there with a certificate of mental health from the American Psychiatric Association. For what that may be worth. Plus, I have very good personal hygiene. There's nothing wrong with me, other than the fact that you don't like my hat.

It's too "mannish," isn't it, lady? Too "unfeminine"? My hat subtly tells you that, if my girlfriend and I were to get married, I would be the groom. That the night before, there would be a lesbo stag party with whips and spike heels and hairy, tattooed bulldykes throwing their babes over Harley-Davidsons—and everybody would be wearing these hats. Isn't that what you think, lady? Oh, SHUT UP, little puggie.

All I'm doing is wearing this hat, lady. Big ordinary deal. But I can see it bugs you. You hate my hat. I mean, hat hatred is a terrible thing. So many hats suffer needlessly. Compared to the war on Iraq or the acquittal of those cops for the murder of Sean Bell, my hat, for you, is real pain. I'm trying to empathize, here, lady, how'm I doing?

It's hard being a middle-aged lady in a blue plaid housedress, with no hat and a yappy dog, isn't it? There are no blue plaid Pride Marches for your kind, no special bookstores, no blue-plaid-pug-dog issues to defend on The O'Reilly Factor. You face ever-increasing food prices, your Medicare won't pay for your mammogram, and you carry, deep within your subconscious, the chronic awareness that the Indian Point nuclear power plant supplying our city's electricity could, any day, send out radioactive plumes that would kill us all within a week. Yet you, for some reason, decide to fixate your existential malaise on my hat.

I suppose, because you are relatively powerless, I enjoy venting at you. I should be grateful that you are not a gang of frat jocks who would do more than merely sneer at my hat. And I admit that, while I have nothing against your housedress, I do see you as a stereotype. It's hard for me not to think of you as "one of them." Because I am so sick of all the snide little glances "you people" give off when I pass.

But I have a large soul. I can forgive. I forgive you, lady. My hat gives me this power.

So, if you have a problem with my hat, if my choice of chapeau oppresses you, please tell me. Go for it, lady. Share. It will bring peace.

Our time on this planet is limited and shortens, even as you glare. And yet, would your life improve if I actually took off my demented Sapphic headgear? I think not. That's the whole point, isn't it?

I can't explain it, but your life, would, in fact, be somehow diminished if I removed this hat. And so I shall wear my hat—for you, lady. I shall wear my hat as I walk past you and your yappy dog.

For you, I shall wear this hat as I ride the A Train downtown to a demonstration against the war on Iraq. Perhaps I will not be taken seriously because of my hat—but that will be the fault of homophobia. Perhaps the US will remain in Iraq and even bomb Iran—but that will be the fault of greed, George Bush, and late capitalism; not the fault of my hat. So I shall wear this hat, lady. I shall wear it in the wind and the rain and in paddy wagons and on sunny days at the beach. And someday, lady, someday—I shall maybe even wear this hat at my own wedding.

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NNG nothing average about it national gay newspaper guild

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GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION

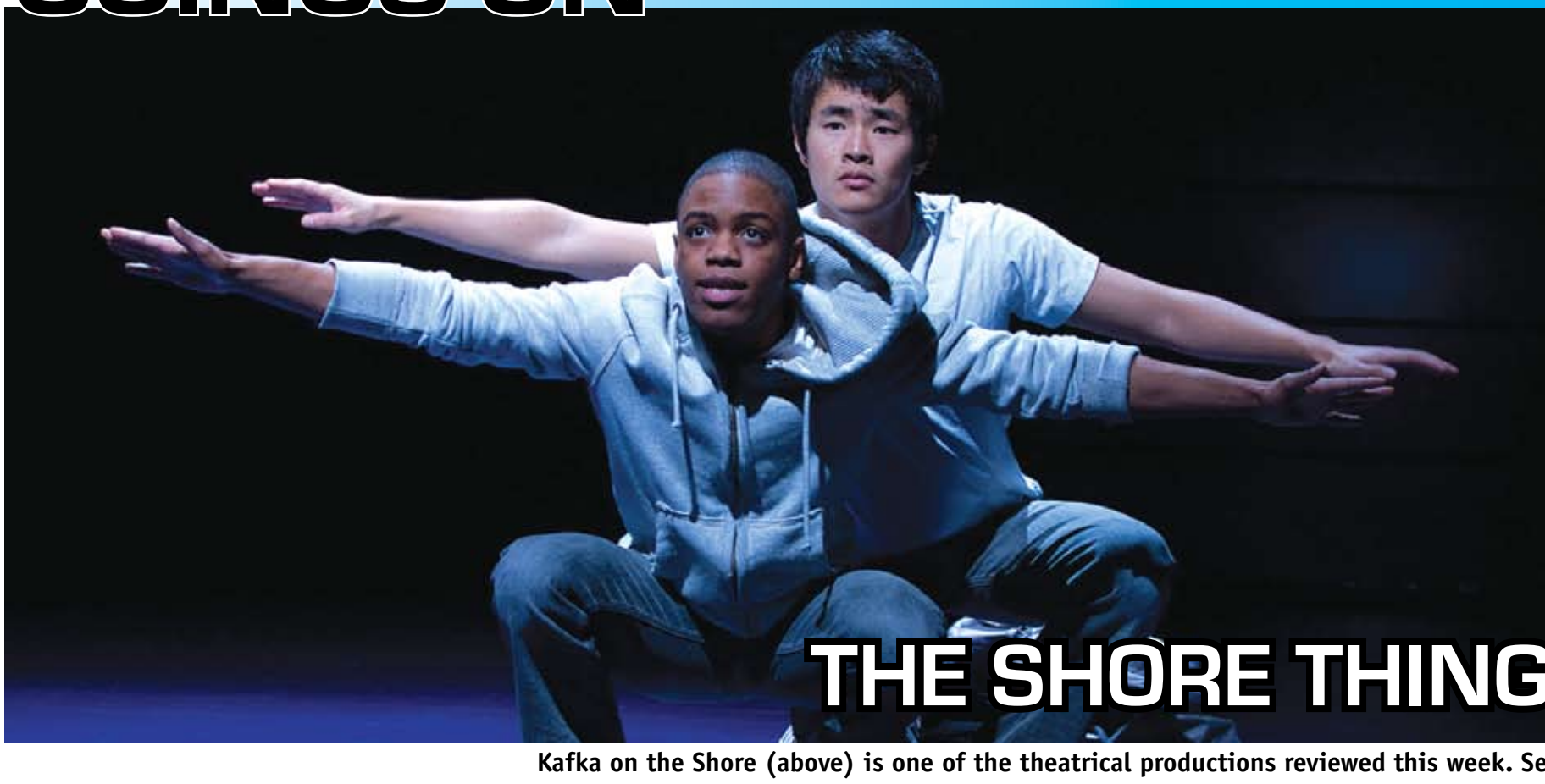


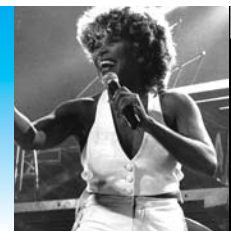
Photo by Michael Brosilow

THE SHORE THING

Kafka on the Shore (above) is one of the theatrical productions reviewed this week. See page 12.

MUSIC

Simply the best?
Page 17.



MOVIES

Chad, bad and dangerous to know.
Page 20.



THEATER

Their 'Turn.'
Page 14.

Photo by Liz Lauren





Levi Kreis.

Levi Kreis steps back in time

BY AMY WOOTEN

Award-winning, independent musician and actor Levi Kreis will be spending some time in the Windy City, helping Chicagoans relive a legendary moment in rock 'n' roll history.

The openly gay singer-songwriter, who just finished a tour promoting his last two albums (One of the Ones and The Gospel According to Levi), is starring in the Chicago production of the new musical Million Dollar Quartet. Million Dollar Quartet is about Sam Phillips' 1956 legendary jam session featuring Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley. This spur-of-the-moment recording session embodied the birth of rock 'n' roll. The musical, inspired by this historical moment, brings the audience back to that December night through memorable '50s tunes such as "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Great Balls of Fire."

Kreis, who starred in the original Seattle production, plays the role of Jerry Lee Lewis in this limited engagement and Midwest debut, which runs through Sunday, Oct. 26, in Goodman's Owen Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn.

Kreis sat down with Windy City Times after a rehearsal to chat about the show, being true to himself and more.

Windy City Times: I can imagine how it's a lot of fun to be involved in this production.

Levi Kreis: Oh, yeah! There are less fun jobs. [*Laughs*]

WCT: What is your favorite song to perform during Million Dollar Quartet?

LK: "Peace in the Valley," which is a group number. We all perform that together. It's one of those few moments in the play where everyone gets to reflect on their past. The great thing about these four characters is they come from that religious background, so there's a still sacredness that they all know from growing up with this reverence for family who is God-fearing, going to church. It's one of those reflective moments where I think they all had an inner conflict about rock 'n' roll and what that means, versus [slips into a thick Southern drawl] what the Bible says about rock 'n' roll. It's a really nice, tender moment that happens, where we all can come together and have that moment. Plus, it's my granddaddy's favorite song.

WCT: That, right there, seems like something you can relate to so much, given your background. [Kreis grew up in Eastern Tennessee and was raised by a deeply religious family. He got his start as a Christian singer-songwriter, and even put himself through six years of reparative therapy before becoming true to himself and moving to Los Angeles].

LK: My background is the background of these characters. I was one of a graduating class of five people. I was actually a singing Evangelist by the time I was 12 years old, and touring different churches every weekend and having altar calls—that whole thing. I stayed in that world until evil rock 'n' roll got a hold of me! [*Laughs*] My parents are fundamentalists, and being back in the country like that, I had a very similar upbringing to these guys.

WCT: Of these four legends, which musician do you think you relate to the most?

LK: Musically, I relate to Jerry Lee more, because I grew up playing him. One of the 45's I remember hearing as a kid was "Great Balls of Fire." When I was 12 years old, I was already playing that song, so that is very much a part of my story. As far as personally, I guess who I can relate to the most is maybe Johnny Cash, only because he ... had a conviction about going back to gospel music. Coming from the church, and also being a singer-songwriter in my own right, it's very important to me—having cut my teeth on gospel music—to make music that makes a difference and inspires people. I can see a little bit of that, at least in the story line they created.

WCT: Is it hard to relate to Jerry Lee Lewis at times because of his fall from grace? He was a great musician, but his career was really marred by this one thing [marrying his 13-year-old cousin].

LK: There's a lot of enjoyment playing him during this period in time.

WCT: Because it is before all that?

LK: Yes. I don't have to factor that stuff in. He's a new guy, and just playing the piano during this session. He auditioned that day, and all of that blossomed from there. It's fortunate I get to keep him light and cocky, and not too intense.

WCT: Does this show make you miss back home a little bit, because it's touching on your roots?

LK: It does make me miss back home, but my mom and dad come often to see the show. They'll be coming from Tennessee, and it's even closer than Seattle, which was where last year's run was. Yeah, it does, it does. When you get to a certain age, you start to see that your family is growing older and you really should be there more often, but you can't. It is a definite connection to home, and I think it's actually influenced my own music. I spent all last summer working on a new album, which is coming out in January. I found during the last run of the show that all this roots and stuff was finding its way in my own music, which was probably the most important bleed over from doing this role into my own life.

WCT: Where do you find the time to be writing new material and doing this show? It has to be crazy!

LK: Yeah, I sort of feel like I just don't stop! I did actually, for the first time, got to spend some time at home this summer. I got a good three or four months where I got to chill out. I had just finished over 300 cities in 16 months, so I needed a break.

WCT: What made you first consider acting, because I know music is your thing?

LK: I never considered acting. It absolutely just happened. I had a friend in Los Angeles, who happened to be Southern, which is probably why we were friends, because I needed some Southern friends there. She ended being a manager for some actors, and got a great job for this independent film Rockabilly, strangely enough. It was the lead in an independent film, and I randomly auditioned for fun. I ended up getting the role, and the film won some awards. Shortly after, I was like, "Wow, I kind of dig this." Then, I ended up doing Roger in Rent for a little while. Then I got an agent, and landed a role as Matthew McConaughey's brother in Frailty. It's not like I've really done a lot of acting, but it's something that sort of keeps coming back to me, and I'm grateful for that, because over time, I've fallen very much in love with it.

WCT: Would you say music is still your first love, or have they evened out?

LK: They are sort of getting even. They are getting equal at this point, even though music is what pays my bills and keeps me on the road. The love is pretty equal.

It's been nothing but a positive experience.

WCT: We are an LGBT publication, so we think it's really cool that you are out and open. At this point, do you think it's more difficult to be out and completely yourself in the music scene or in Hollywood?

LK: Undoubtably, acting. This is where I could launch into having lived in Los Angeles for eight or nine years. I've seen, not only casting directors, not only producers of films, but actors,

Turn to page 20

Dancin' Feats

BY ZACHARY WHITTENBURG

In looking over this fall's dance harvest, a trend of globalism emerges. (Granted, there's little these days that doesn't underline how it's more the rule than the exception.) Dance forms from Southeast Asia, Japan, France, Africa, Iran, Mexico and India are all on the calendar this month. Seeing an indigenous dance style for the first time is to relearn everything about the body and how it relates to music—the way the knowledge of generations coalesces in simple moments of logic and beauty can take your breath away. This experience is possible in the most casual of introductions to world dance, but becomes even more powerful when the practitioner brings talent and experience of the highest order. NAMAH, led by Iranian-American Banafsheh Sayyad, is one such expert, as are Priya Govind of India—presented here by local Indian dance company Natya—and Evidence, an American African dance company. As ambassadors from time-honored techniques, you couldn't do better than these ensembles, as well as many others appearing around town in the coming weeks. Read on for details on these and other performances.

—In the proto-feminist Victorian short story The Yellow Wallpaper, a physician's wife is sequestered after childbirth, her mental state devolving as she stares, hallucinating, at the wall. **Chicago Danztheatre Ensemble** adapts the story for the stage, and each night welcomes a guest performer for a second act aimed at expanding the conversation. Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee, Oct. 3-12 at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 7 p.m. Sundays; $15.

—**Blushing Poppy Productions** is the butoh brainchild of Nicole LeGette. Her latest work, Landscapes of Uncertainty, enlists the help of guests Carol McCurdy and David Danyluk in investigating experiences of the visually impaired. Rooms Gallery, 645 W. 18th, Oct. 8-11 at 8 p.m.; $15 cash.



Banafsheh Sayyad of NAMAH with ZARBANG. Photo by Andre Elbing

—**Bellyqueen** is to belly dancing what Burn the Floor was to ballroom, and stops here for one night only at St. Patrick's Performing Arts Centre, 5900 W. Belmont, Oct. 8, 8:30 p.m.; $25 presale, $30 door.

—For this month's About Dance, critic Lucia Mauro hosts **Same Planet Different World** for a preview and discussion about works on their November program. Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, Oct. 9, 6 p.m.; free.

—**Hubbard Street Dance Chicago** is going quarterly—their first of four series this season includes Alejandro Cerrudo's Extremely Close and Ohad Naharin's Minus 16. Fold, by Japanese choreographer Toru Shimazaki, receives its world premiere. Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph, Oct. 9-12. More info at www.hubbardstreetdance.com

—A casual atmosphere welcomes audiences to meet or revisit pieces shown at Winifred Haun's Circle in the Square series since 2006. **Circle in the Square: New Works in Dance Theatre** at Voice of the City, 3429 W. Diversey, Ste. 308, Oct. 11 at 7:30 p.m. and Oct. 12 at 3 p.m.; $12/$10 students and seniors.

—Asimina Chremos and Fred Lonberg-Holm started **Microgig** with the intent to take their cello/dance duets to spaces not intended for performance. It's a good thing, too, because they're both artists with whom you want to get up close and personal, and there's nothing to stop you at Pilsen hangout Skylark. Killer comfort food only sweetens the deal. Skylark, 2149 S. Halsted, Oct. 12 at 9 p.m.; free. See www.myspace.com/microgig.

—**DanceWorks Chicago** bookends a week with another Dance Chance choreographer showcase Oct. 13 and a lunchtime work-in-progress showing of San Francisco-based Alex Ketley's latest on Oct. 17. More information at www.danceworkschicago.org

—Long an exemplary technician with New York City Ballet, expect Edwaard Liang to contemporize Austen's period restraint with the unexpected for world-premiere ballet The Age of Innocence. **The Joffrey Ballet**, at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 20 E. Congress Pkwy., Oct. 15-26. More info at www.joffrey.com

—Toulouse, France-based **Cie Heddy Maalem** brings contemporary and African dance to Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps. Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago; Oct. 17-19.

—**NAMAH & ZARBANG** are a dance and percussion collaboration steeped in the traditions of Iran, spinning them out to touch on current concerns. Dance Center at Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan; Oct. 16-18.

—**Ronald K. Brown/Evidence** is African dance so pristine and passionate it's like a massage for the eyes. McAninch Arts Center at the College of DuPage, 425 Fawell, Glen Ellyn; Oct. 18.

—The program that **Trisha Brown** brings here is as thoughtfully constructed as her dances, giving audiences a chance to look for throughlines in her choreography through the evolution of her style over decades. The show includes 1971's Accumulation and 2003's PRESENT TENSE; two works from the '90s bridge the gap. Dance Center at Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan Ave.; Oct. 23-25.

—**Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago** presents Celebrate Life at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph; Oct. 24-25.

—**Thodos Dance Chicago** debuts a slew of brand-new pieces in their fall program at the Athenaeum Theater, 2936 N. Southport; Oct. 24-26.

—For ESENCIAS, The Essence of Mexico, the **Mexican Folkloric Dance Company of Chicago** will team up with both Sones de Mexico Ensemble and the Chicago Mariachi Real Guadalajara. Olympic Theater, 6134 W. Cermak, Cicero, Oct. 25, 7 p.m.; $20-25.

—FOURS: Quartets & Solos lets Rachel Thorne Germond celebrate the fourth anniversary of her company, **RTG Dance**, with new works sharing a relationship with the number four. Link's Hall, 3435 N. Sheffield, Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 at 8 p.m., Nov. 7 at 7 p.m.; $12-15.

—November opens in the western suburbs with a diverse pair of performances: The Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa performs Nov. 2 at 7 p.m., and **The New Philharmonic and Hubbard Street 2** share the stage Nov. 7 at 8 p.m. McAninch Arts Center at the College of DuPage, 425 Fawell, Glen Ellyn; $25-38.

—Natya hosts storied Indian solo dancer **Priya Govind** at Triton College for the Performing Arts, 2000 N. Fifth, River Grove, Nov. 8 at 7 p.m.; $25/$25 students and seniors. Call 312-212-1240 or e-mail bill@natya.com.

THEATER REVIEW

Kafka on the Shore

Playwright: Adapted by Frank Galati from the book by Haruki Murakami
Where: Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted
Telephone: 312-335-1650; $20-$70
Runs through: Nov. 16

BY CATEY SULLIVAN



Kafka on the Shore. Photo by Michael Brosilow

At first read, Haruki Murakami's novels are pure, prose delirium—beautiful, baffling fantasias layered with riddles and teasing puzzles. Talking cats, skies that rain fish, wrinkles in time where the lives of plain-spoken truck drivers and ghostly soldiers merge and diverge—Murakami creates places and entities that are both instantly recognizable and seemingly unknowable.

So it goes in Steppenwolf Theatre's alternately maddening and gratifying Kafka on the Shore. Adapted for the stage and directed by Frank Galati, Kafka is gorgeous, poetic and enigmatic. Like James Joyce's equally challenging Ulysses, every action, character, place and object within Murakami's densely, double-plotted story symbolizes something else. Scratch the surface and you find your peering down endless, twisting rabbit holes of myth, legend and subtext.

And like Joyce, Kafka requires that you succumb to what you don't understand. You'll never get it all. So rather than fretting and frowning because you won't, it's best to just let Galati's searing stage pictures and the dreamy elegance of his adaptation just wash over you.

It's fitting that there are two plots in Kafka, since early on, the piece invokes Plato's Symposium. In that bit of ancient storytelling, Plato describes how humans were once male and female in the same body, both sexes joined in one being in perfect unity. Eventually, the gods grew angry and used lightning bolts to split everyone in two. The result was a race composed of individuals destined to roam the world seeking their lost other half.

There are two seekers in Kafka on the Shore. The first is the 15-year-old title character (Christopher Larkin, a perfect mix of vulnerability and head-strong determination), a runaway who takes flight in an attempt to escape a prophecy that he will kill his father and sleep with his mother. On his Oedipal wanderings, young Kafka is mirrored by Crow (Jonathan Michael Hill), a manifestation of his inner self, whose stream-of-consciousness contemplation provides some of the production's most sexually graphic prose.

The second story centers on Nakata (David Rhee), an elderly, manchild left mentally impaired by an inexplicable childhood accident. In addition to leaving his mind damaged, the accident left Nakata with the ability to talk to cats, and so he spends his days seeking out lost felines—and secret stones that will allow him entry to vast, unknown worlds.

By the time Colonel Sanders shows up (a walking, talking replica of the chicken-bucket icon) and reveals that in real life he's a pimp, one thing is confoundedly clear: In Murakami's worlds, there are more things than you may have dreamt of in your philosophy.

Lighting designer James F. Ingalls bathes the story in shades of aquamarine and white rain, giving even a brutal cat killer shadings of ethereal beauty. And James Schuette's minimalist sets complete the mood of abstract, whimsical grace.

CRITICS' PICS

Chiaroscuro (A Study In Shadow), Bailiwick Repertory, through Oct. 19. You can sit back and enjoy the nudity in this "erotic thriller" (inspired by 17th-century Italian artist Caravaggio), but the experience will be much more satisfying if you don't leave your brains at the door. MSB

Odin's Horse, Infamous Commonwealth Theatre at Raven Theatre, through Oct. 19. Playwright Robert Koon finds lovely poetry in his even-handedly exploration of the conflict between tree-sitting environmentalists and blue collar loggers in this award-winning premiere. SCM

The Picture of Dorian Gray, Lifeline Theatre, through Nov. 2. Nick Vidal is pure youthful beauty and stone-cold soulless as Dorian, while an ensemble that includes Don Bender and Sean Sinitski capture both the sublime and scary elements of Oscar Wilde's gorgeously grotesque fable. CS

The Threepenny Opera, The Hypocrites at Steppenwolf Garage, through Oct. 12. It's the final week to see this not-quite-successful but adventurous and visually rich version of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's classic 1927 socialist musical, the Mack the Knife show. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan





R.U.R. Photo by Chris Ocken

THEATER REVIEW

R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)

Playwright: Karel Capek
At: Strawdog Theatre, 3829 N. Broadway
Phone: 773-528-9696; $20
Runs through: Oct. 25

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Any science fiction aficionado worth his or her salt must pay an immediate pilgrimage to Strawdog Theatre's Rossum's Universal Robots (or R.U.R., for short). After all, it's not too often that anyone produces the play that introduced the word "Robot" to the world.

Don't be surprised if R.U.R.'s 1921 plot of altered robots revolting against their human masters to take over the world feels cliché. The reason for that is because so many other sci-fi writers have stolen their ideas from pioneering Czech playwright Karel Capek.

You realize what a futuristic visionary Capek was in R.U.R. from the arguments he puts forth regarding mankind's relationship with technology. Capek's writing remains very relevant for today, from Rebekah Ward-Hays' religiously fanatic Nanna condemning scientific advances (sounding a lot like those who rail against stem cell research) to Ryan Bollettino's extremely droll mogul manufacturer Henry Domin, who just shrugs when his technological advances put millions of workers out of jobs.

Where Capek isn't advanced is the sexism in the way men treat women (both human and robot) and how Capek portrays his lead heroine, Helena (played by an entrancing and excitable Michaela Petro). Initially as fiery as a die-hard Peta activist from today, she later becomes an easily swayed and materialistic airhead (yet the easy and inordinate wealth and luxury offered up to Helena would be hard for anyone to refuse).

The folks at Strawdog are well aware of sexist undercurrent, and director Shade Murray encourages his actors to present the material with more than a self-conscious wink at the behaviors of a bygone era. Strawdog also gets plenty of laughs in the way they present the socially awkward scientists comically played by Brennan Buhl, Carmine Grisolia, Noah Simon and John Henry Roberts, who each resemble male sci-fi-loving geeks of today in more ways than one.

Director Murray also manages to steer R.U.R. and its large cast on a course that encompasses rolled-eye camp at outmoded thinking to true terror as the robots start closing in for attack. Though there is a glimmer of hope at the end, R.U.R. remains as bleak and disturbing as it should be.

The Strawdog production team has even more fun fleshing out the look of this historic artifact, incorporating lots of art deco looks to Dan Stratton's elegant sets to Alison Greaves' period costumes. Underscoring the mood as it switches from comic to tense is Mikhail Fiskel and Miles Polaski's eclectic sound design, much of it performed live on odd items like wine glasses or a gutted piano.

R.U.R. may be creaky for most sci-fi fanatics, but its importance and relevance to the genre are monumental. Strawdog does everyone a favor by producing such a fun and timely reminder.

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Turn of the Century. Photo by Liz Lauren

THEATER REVIEW

Turn of the Century

Playwrights: Marshall Brickman, Rick Elice
At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn
Phone: 312-443-3800; $25-$82
Runs through: Nov. 2

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Turn of the Century—conceived and written by the creators of Jersey Boys—gives a new spin to the jukebox musical comedy. At midnight on Dec. 31, 1999, pianist Billy Clark and singer Dixie Wilson are transported back to Jan. 1, 1900, their heads stuffed with all the pop, rock and Broadway music yet to come. They quickly become Tin Pan Alley musical sensations, miraculously "writing" hit after hit. But Billy and Dixie's personal relationship causes complications, as does their friendship with 12-year -old Irving Berlin. Do they regret stealing songs he hasn't written yet? Does Billy feel anything for Dixie? Will Harry Van Deusen, composer of sentimental ballads, discover their time warp secret?

When the 100-minute show ends, Dixie and Billy are ready for marriage, but it's an emotional resolution tacked on late in the show. Character development needs to start earlier and go deeper. Turn of the Century feels truncated, with little attention to secondary characters and subplots, or how Billy and Dixie return to the present. The clever and sound basic premise needs filling out.

The show offers songs by four dozen writers, from Stephen Foster to Phil Spector. The opening improbably pairs Rodgers and Hart's Where or When with Prince's 1999. But for all the quantity of music, there are few complete numbers intrinsic to character and story. Instead, song snatches make merry musical anachronisms: a vaudeville quartet does "As Time Goes By" and scantily-clad chorus girls sing "I Am Woman," etc.

Turn of the Century is headlined by dazzling flexible-voiced Rachel York as Dixie and Jeff Daniels, in a good song-and-dance turn, as mercurial Billy. The supporting ensemble features Chicagoan Kevin Gudahl as Van Deusen, bringing down the house with a vaudeville expose of Billy and Dixie (a original purpose-written number by Daryl Waters). Talented Rachel de Benedet and Chicagoan Rebecca Finnegan lack opportunity in supporting female roles. Their characters need musical numbers.

Dona Granata's varied costumes offer silky 1999 party clothes and 1900 homages to Edwardian black-and-white and beaded red gowns. Scenic designer Walt Spangler's deceptively simple raked stage and seamless cyclorama provide an asymmetrical playing space that defers to Natasha Katz's animated high-tech lighting that moves, dissolves and replaces traditional flown scenery.

Noah Racey borrows cakewalks, kick lines, soft-shoe, ballroom and boogaloo in choreography that pleases rather than surprises, and often seems sculptural. One wonders what director Tommy Tune's over-all influence might be. Tune always has strong ideas about shaping shows, so one assumes Turn of the Century is as he wants it right now, and that he knows precisely where he wants to take it next. This world premiere is entertaining, but it's a high concept that needs more depth.

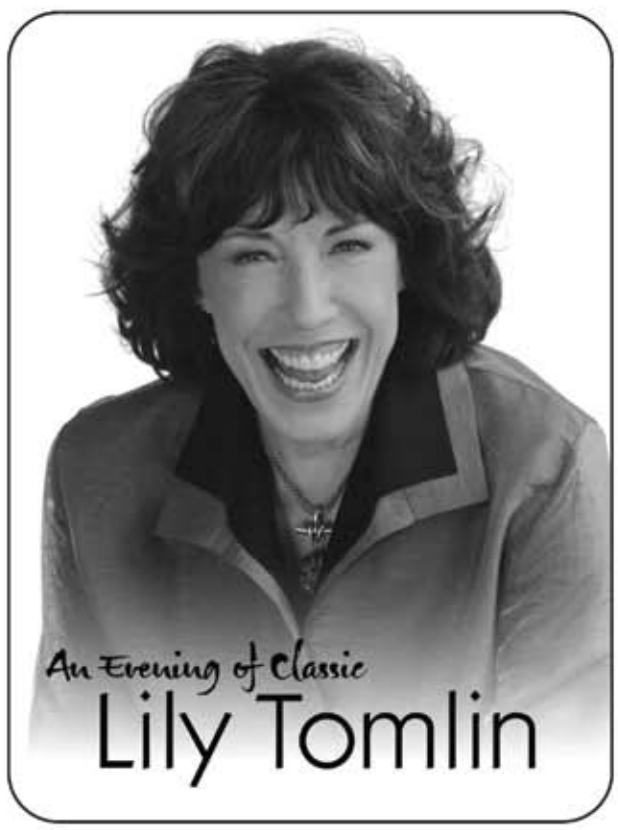
SPOTLIGHT



Cubs fans who blame their team's losing streak on the "Curse of the Goat" might want to catch **No, No, Nanette**. The 1925 musical comedy features classic song standards like "Tea for Two" and "I Want to Be Happy," but is more famous in baseball circles for bringing on the Boston Red Sox's 84-year "Curse of the Bambino." Since the reigning Red Sox were able to shake their curse in 2004, superstitious Cubs fans might want to catch North Riverside Players' production. Who knows? Maybe the theater gods will talk to the baseball gods next season. North Riverside Players' No, No, Nanette finishes its run Sunday, Oct. 12, at the North Riverside Village Commons, 2401 S. Des Plaines, North Riverside. Tickets are $13-$15; 708-447-1297 or nrrct.com.

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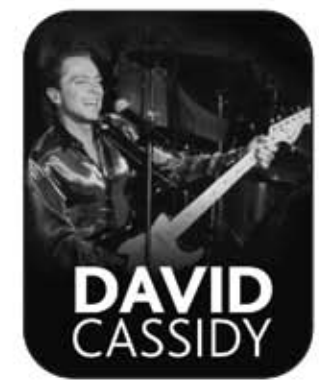
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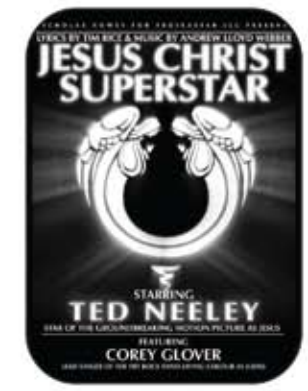
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THEATER REVIEW

Drip

Playwright: Gloria Bond Clunie
At: eta (sic) Creative Arts,
7558 S. South Chicago
Phone: 773-752-3955; $30
Runs through: Nov. 9

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

This world premiere is the first part of a trilogy about the central female character, Cora Burton, and Gloria Bond Clunie's elegantly simple storytelling makes me eager to see parts two and three. The basic premise of Drip isn't unique, but Clunie handles it with a good sense of theater and with heart. One of the better eta Creative Arts productions of the last few years, Drip is a universal story that doesn't rely on Afrocentrism for its appeal.

Drip is a marriage tale, told in the past and present by a gaggle of townsfolk as a Greek chorus. They introduce young Charlie Burton and Cora, his wife-to-be, and show how they met, courted, married, shared life, had three children and watched one die. Charlie and Cora are honest, likeable, caring and hard-working North Carolina farm folks. They aren't rich, but they employ a couple of farmhands and own a couple of cars, a fishing boat and Red Thunder, a motorcycle. But after 24 years of marriage, they take each other for granted, life has become a routine rut and Charlie—who is not a man of fancy words—still hasn't fixed the leaking faucet. So Cora leaves him, riding off on Red Thunder just as Charlie prepares to renew his attentions.

Drip has several theatrical precedents, such as The Fourposter and The Marriage of Bette and Boo, which follow married couples across the decades. Even Thornton Wilder's Our Town does so to some extent, and Drip matches the folksy feel of Our Town more than it matches the tone of the other plays. Clunie makes the commonplace situation her own by creating two people who are genuinely decent and in love, and by her simple but colorful turn-of-phrase. Who could resist a menu of "slay-me cole slaw" and "praise-Jesus pecan pie?" And who can argue with Cora's assertion that she and Charlie "lost kissin' and holdin' and seein' and words?" Clunie also succeeds in laying on the details—often about food—that make Cora and Charlie's daily life come alive.

A vehicle such as Drip could just lay there in—well—a puddle, but the eta Creative Arts production flourishes under the skilled directorial hand of Cheryl Lynn Bruce, who has assembled an engaging and ingratiating cast, most of whom also have been seen on the North Side. Wide-eyed Ebony Wimbs seems an ideal Cora, attractive but demure, as Kelvin Roston, Jr., as Charlie flashes a vulnerable smile but looks unbreakable. Together, they exude charm without any posing. Their five supporting players—the townsfolk—change hats and roles with ease as church ladies, a doctor, store clerks, a bank teller, and so on, all of them distinct personalities that help create the sense of a close-knit town.

THEATER REVIEW

Yohen

Playwright: Philip Kan Gotanda
At: Silk Road Theatre Project at
the Chicago Temple, 77 W. Washington
Phone: 866-811-4111; $30-$34
Runs through: Nov. 2

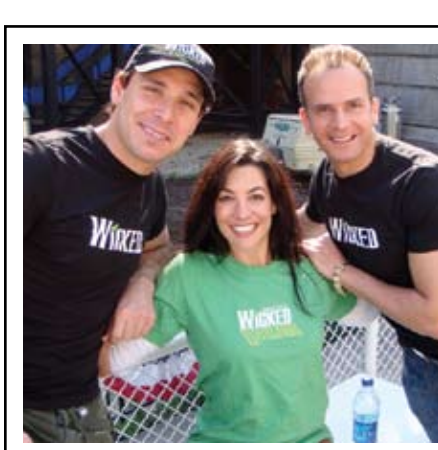
BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

In traditional marriages, after the breadwinning husband retires, it's not uncommon for his wife to look at her spouse lounging in front of the television with his beer in hand and wonder, "Where did the years go, and who *is* this man?" The phenomenon this time, however, is complicated by several factors: for one, Mrs. Washington is Japanese and Mr. Washington is African-American. Her parents were educated and affluent, his were industrial entrepreneurs. When their paths converged during the aftermath of World War II, Sumi was a divorcée, scorned by her kinfolk, and James was a GI stationed overseas.

Oh, doesn't romance always end with "they lived happily ever after"? And what could be more romantic than two young people from, literally, worlds apart, meeting and falling in love? But Philip Kan Gotanda's play reminds us that "happily ever after" is never as easy as the fairy tales would have us believe. Now both in their sixties, this couple must take stock of their accomplishments and reassess their goals. (Sumi wants to get her college degree, while James wants to coach athletics for underprivileged children.) Even more disquieting, they must determine whether they can still be a part of each other's lives.

Since the play's chronological setting is 1986, before the widespread popularity of introspection-fueled confessions, their self-examination takes several months, its progress narrated in slightly over an hour, divided into four scenes. But while the first three episodes proceed at a smoothly integrated pace, the last suddenly introduces provocative questions, only to leave them unexplored. The clumsiness engendered by the author's haste to wrap up his text leaves director Steve Scott and actors Cheryl Hamada and Ernest Perry, Jr. no recourse but to crank up the emotional intensity until the action stumbles to a soapy and disappointingly inconclusive ending.

"Yohen" is a term in pottery, referring to a "lucky accident" during the firing process that makes for a one-of-a-kind piece that may be discarded as ugly and useless, or treasured as a gift from the gods. Gotanda's play may be as imperfect as the marriage it portrays, but its theme is so universal as to raise the question of why its discussion within an inter-ethnic context is nowadays confined almost exclusively to "minority"-focused producing companies like the Silk Road Project. How different, after all, are Sumi and James' concerns from those of, say, a middle-aged Abie and his Irish Rose?



Wicked's Kristoffer Cusick, Jacqui Graziano and Peter Ermides (from left) on the cruise. Photo by Jerry Nunn

Wicked: The tour, the witch and the wardrobe

Tuesday evenings this September, the cast of Wicked sailed with fans on an architectural cruise in Chicago. Chicago First Lady Cruises described the history and cityscapes along the lakefront and even gave a sneak peak into the Trump Tower.

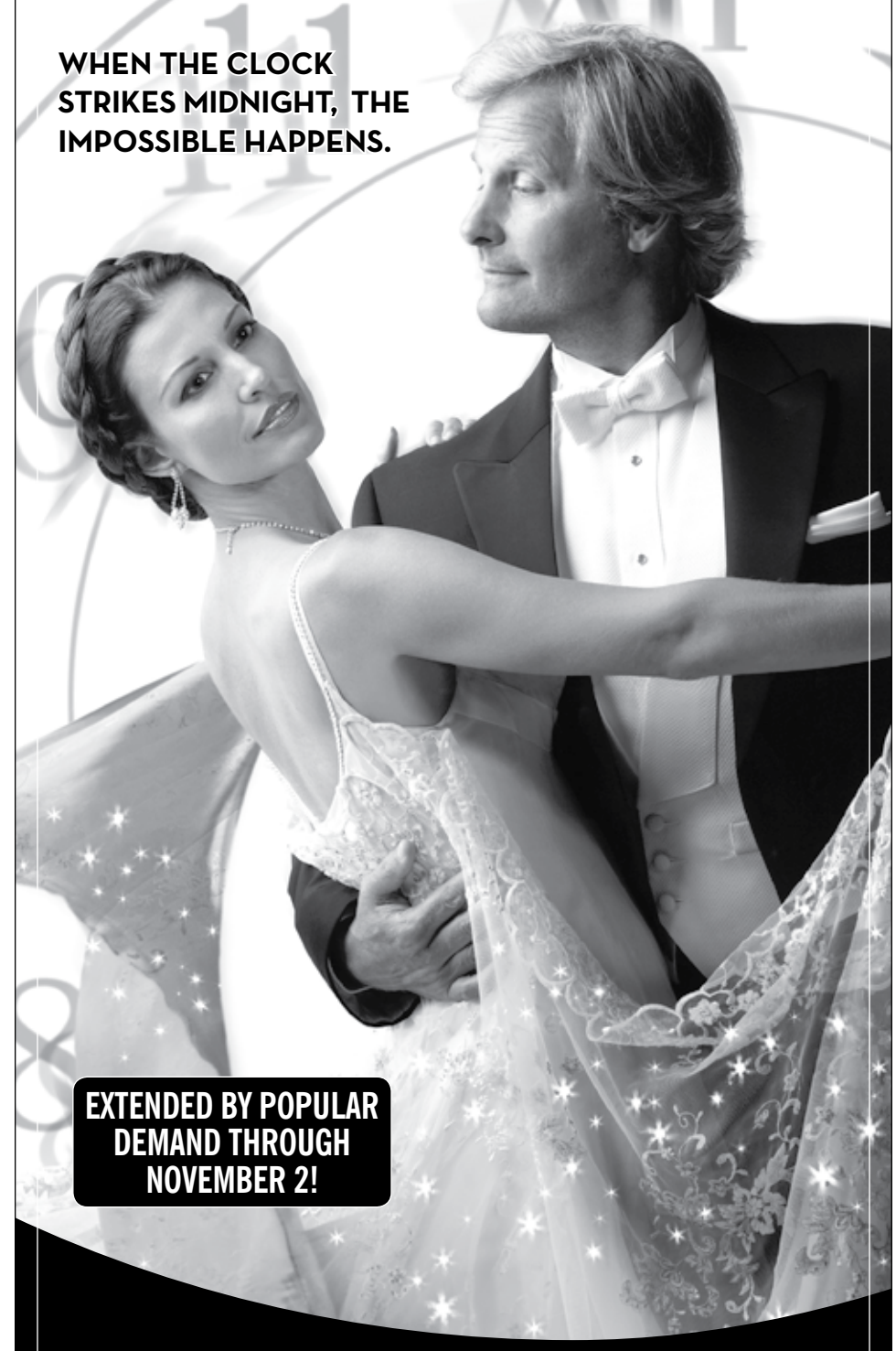
Afterwards, passengers eased on down the road to the Ford Center of the Performing Arts to take another journey back to Oz.

Sadly, Wicked will be closing its successful run on Jan. 25, 2009. They will have played exactly 1,500 times at that time and have grossed over $200 million with their box office. So, tap your ruby slippers and your keyboard before it's too late to www.wickedthemusical.com for tickets and information. Photos and text by Jerry Nunn

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THEATER REVIEW

Frankenstein in Love

Playwright: Clive Barker
At: Will Act For Food Productions at Chemically Imbalanced Theater, 1420 W. Irving Park
Phone: 773-327-9725; $18
Runs through: Nov. 1

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

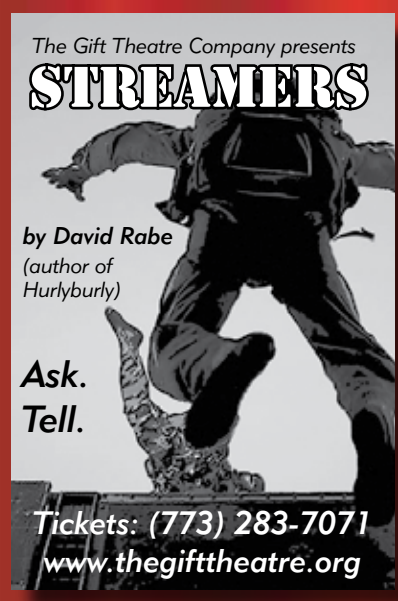
The aesthetic of British author Clive Barker has been likened to that of American artist Ivan Albright: death, disease, decay, body fluids, scabs, pimples—all the icky naturalshocks that flesh is heir to—are graphically represented in their depiction of this imperfect universe. But while Albright often hints at compassion for his all-too-human victims, Barker revels in misanthropy of the cruelest kind. Eventually, he would ration his shockers out to alternate with intervals of narrative calm, but in this literally "heart-wrenching romance," the horror and disgust come as fast and thick as one could ask of a novelist attempting his first play.

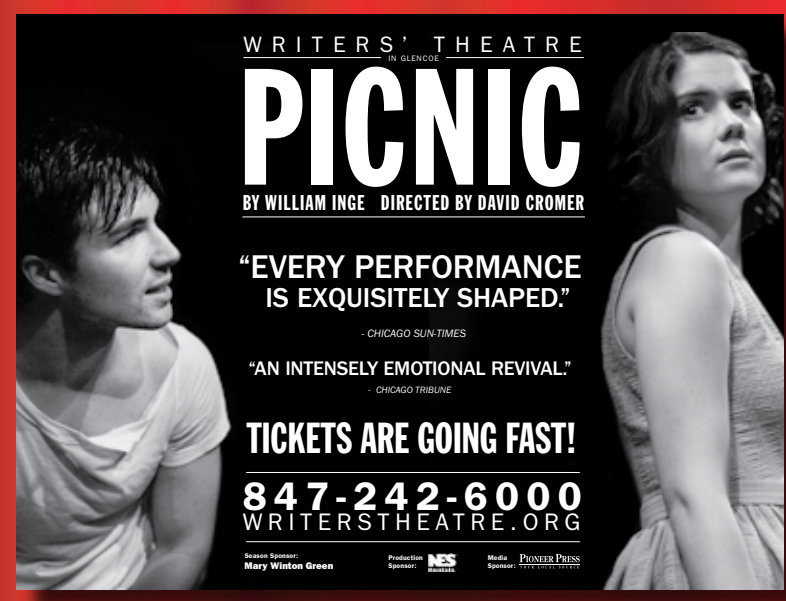
Our story is set in a South American country during—what else?—the overthrow of a totalitarian regime. One of the rebel leaders is Cesar Guerrero—called "El Coco," or "bogeyman"—a hideously scarred field officer said to walk through flaming infernos unharmed. His personal quarry is Dr. Joseph Frankenstein, in whose government-funded laboratories terrible experiments are conducted. Other characters include the beautiful (despite extensive surgical alteration) Veronique, the dashing mercenary Cockatoo, the usual gallery of corrupt public servants and our guide, the undead gypsy clairvoyant Maria.

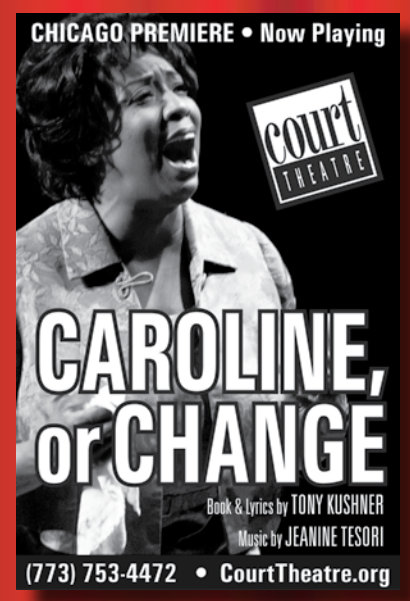
Even with the abridged text utilized by this Will Act For Food production, our orientation is hindered by the storefront auditorium's configuration into a sort of double-circle promenade (similar to that of the currently-running Threepenny Opera at the Steppenwolf Garage, but in much, much smaller quarters), with the physical action swarming around audience members isolated in small groups throughout the space. Lest this intimate visual proximity diminish the mystery, however, director Gregory Gerhard and "violence director" Greg Poljacik have located the more stomach-churning atrocities in the many shadowy corners and alcoves provided by C.W. Van Baale's serpentine scenery and Dan Tamarkin's noiresque lighting, their lurid menace heightened by Rachel Sypniewski's wardrobe of bloody bandages, Amanda Fox's vivid array of skin lesions and, of course, our imaginations.

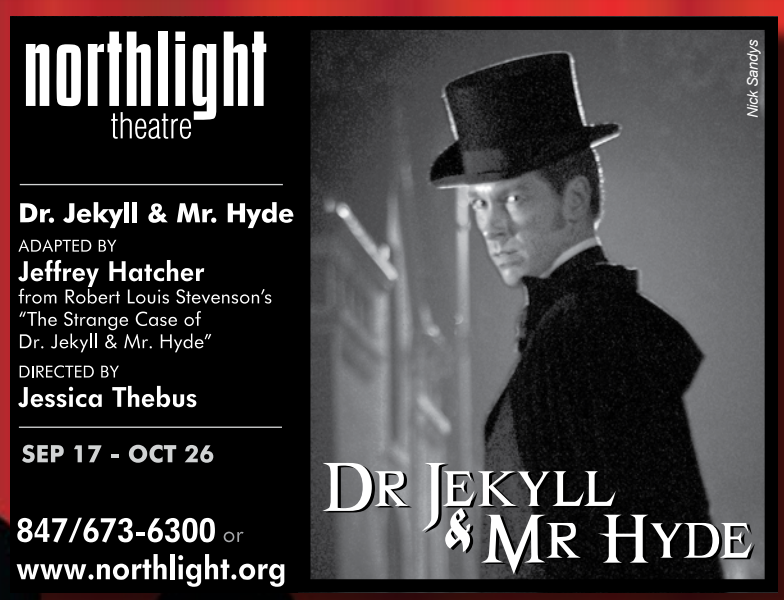
"Fasten your seat belts ... until the ride comes to a complete stop" warns a note in the playbill. This brand of neo-Grand Guignol spectacle is difficult to pull off, especially given Barker's affinity for schoolboy humor that could easily topple the suspension of disbelief into Mel Brooks farce. But though the plot doesn't kick in until the second-act entrance of the icy Doctor F, the play's grotesquely-upbeat ending justifies any vertigo we may have endured on our way there.

CULTURE CLUB

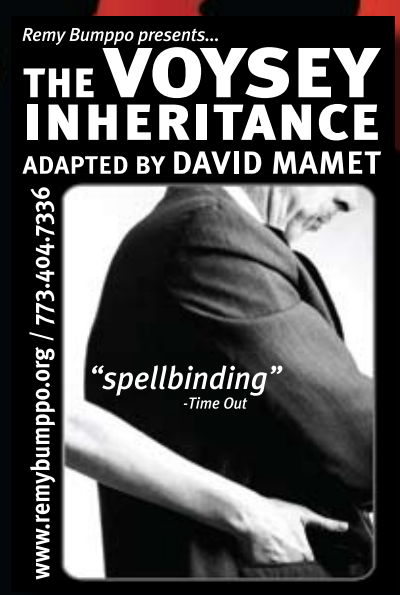




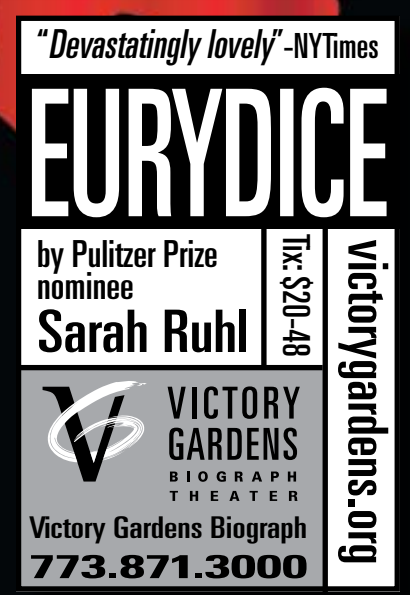












For more shows and listings, check out www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com



Tina Turner in 2000. Photo by Vern Hester

CONCERT REVIEW

Bent Nights: Tina Turner at the United Center

BY VERN HESTER

Everybody loves an underdog. Take Michael Phelps. The eight gold Olympic medals hanging around his neck have made the 6'4" swimmer with the protruding ears and drunken altar-boy grin the hottest dude-babe on the planet. But the all-time underdog title goes to Tina Turner, the ultimate hard-luck story with a happy ending. Nutbush Tenn., Ike Turner, the 60's chitlin circuit, the smash comeback, the multiple Grammys, the hit Oscar-nominated movie of her life, the tons of platinum records, the friendship with Oprah and the record-breaking concert attendences: It's a rags-to-riches cliché. But Turner is such a vivid personality and presence that she makes the cliché something entirely new.

Now, at age 67, she's at the start of her (supposed) final tour. With much of the U.S. half sold-out [they're adding dates where they can] and every seat on the Europeon leg long gone, Turner is hot all over again. With zero advertising, no new recordings, no renewed interest, no press build up, this last hoohah is one of the only arena shows this year that's already headed into the black. (Big-ticket acts like George Michael, R.E.M. and Janet Jackson couldn't sell out a single night at either the United Center or the Allstate Arena while Turner has nearly sold out both for three nights. With a higher ticket price, Madonna will top Tina's gross but Tina will play to a far larger audience].

The new show, held Oct. 4, was a blatant "greatest hits" bash: more polished, choreographed, glitzed up, blown up than anything I've ever seen her in. In fact, it was so polished that the sheen nearly cancelled out Tina's unique roughhouse charm. But the important questions: Did she look great? (Yes...) Did she burn down the house? (In spots...) Was it worth it? (Well...)

Read the entire Tina Turner concert review at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

JOHN from cover

Billy's friendship with his gay friend Michael to be genuinely touching, so that was a focus for me as well.

MS: Part of your history is the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF). Each year you tour a country where the EJAF has a program. What are your most memorable thoughts from those trips?

EJ: For the past few years, my partner, David Furnish, and I, along with friends and colleagues from the Elton John AIDS Foundation, have gone to South Africa every January. And, as you say, we make a point to visit projects and organizations that are supported by EJAF. These annual trips have become not only an activity to which I look forward but, in fact, give me much energy at the beginning of each year. I am always overwhelmed by the hopeful spirit that surrounds all the people with whom we come in contact—and these are people whose lives have been ravaged on so many levels by HIV/AIDS. They are children whose parents have died from AIDS. They are heads of households at 10. They are wives whose husbands have died. The stories go on and on and yet they carry on with such hope and dignity. It is a true inspiration and is something that helps focus my energy to continue to raise money for the Elton John AIDS Foundation to support such work all around the world.

Last year, I also traveled to the Ukraine, where EJAF supports a number of projects. In fact, during the summer of 2007 I played an outdoor concert in Kiev to raise money and awareness for our work and HIV/AIDS in general. It was so gratifying and energizing to play before such enormous and enthusiastic crowds. Earlier this year, David traveled to India with EJAF staff and other board members to view projects we support there. David and I are very proud of the work that we are supporting in that country. This year, we look forward to traveling to Cambodia to visit projects in that country.

MS: Are there any new projects in the pipeline for EJAF?

EJ: Well, I am happy to report that since 2005, EJAF has met with ever greater fundraising success and has increased its grant making here in the U.S. by 140 percent. We have expanded not only the amount of money given but also strategically targeted key regions and populations that are poorly served by current prevention efforts and [are] most at risk of infection, including: critically under-funded communities of the Southern United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America; highly marginalized populations such as injection drug users, men who have sex with men, and incarcerated individuals; and underserved populations such as African Americans and young people.

To use a specific example, many of the grants that EJAF has made over the last couple of years reinforce and enhance our commitment to HIV/AIDS awareness-raising, prevention and treatment access programs in the Caribbean, the second-most HIV/AIDS affected region in the world after sub-Saharan Africa. In 2007 alone, 17,000 people in the Caribbean were newly infected with the virus, and as many as 230,000 Caribbean residents are currently living with HIV. It is also a region where there is tremendous stigma around HIV/AIDS.

In 2007, EJAF invested more than $1.6 million in grants to this region and nearly $1.4 million so far in 2008, addressing the specific challenges of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on a variety of levels. To ameliorate prejudices and reduce stigma faced by people with HIV/AIDS, EJAF partnered with the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Ford Foundation to help establish the Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS (CBMP). Since its launch in May 2006, the CBMP has grown to include more than 80 leading broadcasters from 25 Caribbean countries and territories across the region in an unprecedented collaboration to develop a coordinated media response to AIDS. CBMP broadcast members have made HIV/AIDS a business priority, and they air HIV content across all programming genres, delivering important messages about tolerance and HIV prevention to an estimated audience of some 40 million people. With the new grant just awarded in early September, the CBMP will be expanding its efforts into Haiti, the country most affected by HIV/AIDS in the Western Hemisphere.

So, I am very pleased that EJAF can not only maintain its commitments to funding projects at the front lines here in the U.S., but can also expand to areas in desperate need such as the Caribbean region.

MS: If I'd ask someone from the U.S. about gay history, he or she most likely would mention the Stonewall riots in 1969. Many in Britain might think of Oscar Wilde's trials in 1895. When I say "gay history," what comes to your mind?

EJ: For me, I would have to say that when I think of gay history I immediately think of my own civil partnership with my partner, David. When civil partnerships became possible in the United Kingdom, it was very important for David and I to be able to do this on the first day it was possible. I really felt part of something genuinely progressive and groundbreaking, and we were also so totally overwhelmed and heartened by the positive support we received across the board from the press, my fans, the people of Great Britain and, literally, the world over!



From left: Congressman Barney Frank, Sir Elton John and Philadelphia Mayor John Street July 4, 2005. Photo courtesy of Mark Segal

MS: On a light note, how does it feel to be a married man?

EJ: Wonderful! As I said, David and I deliberately chose to have our civil partnership on the very first day that this became legal and possible in Great Britain; however, after all the excitement died down, we both felt incredibly content and secure in the knowledge that mainstream British society now supported our relationship.

Editor's note: Mark Segal is publisher of the Philadelphia Gay News and, in 2005, produced Philadelphia's official July 4th concert that starred Sir Elton John, Patti LaBelle and Bryan Adams. The concert raised $1000,000 for the Elton John AIDS Foundation and $100,000 for local HIV/AIDS organizations.

Read the entire Elton John interview at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.





BOOK REVIEW

The Black Tower

Written by Louis Bayard
$24.95; William Morrow;
352 pages

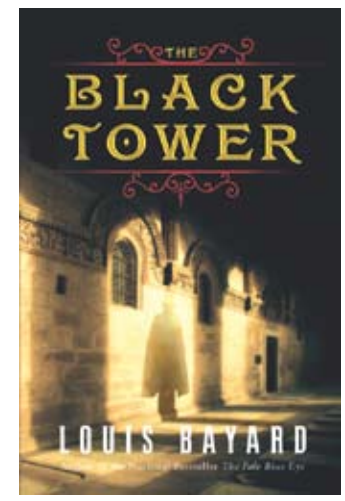
REVIEW BY YASMIN NAIR

In 2007, Russian forensic experts confirmed that the remains of bones found near a bonfire site near Yekaterinburg were indeed those of Anastasia, daughter of Czar Nicholas II of Russia. Despite such evidence, it's unlikely that the myth of Anastasia's survival will disappear any time soon. The idea that a royal heir might have survived and might eventually bring a lost dynasty to life resonates even in the most supposedly egalitarian societies.

Stories about lost royals allow us to navigate our uneasy feelings about royalty. We're distrustful of the unlimited power of monarchs, but we love the trappings and romance of monarchy. We're aware that kings and queens can be brutal and dictatorial, and that the tides of insurgents that rise against them may well do so with just cause. But many of us still find ourselves nostalgically sympathizing with overthrown royalty.

For years after his death, stories circulated that the dauphin Louis-Charles, son of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI, had survived his internment in Temple Prison. Louis Bayard's riveting new historical novel, The Black Tower, picks up the story at this point. Here, the dauphin plays a minor role in comparison to one of the central characters, the famous detective Vidocq, who is based on an actual historical character of the same name, a former galley slave-turned-sleuth.

Vidocq's reputation spawns numerous tales of his superhuman powers, but in Bayard's skillful hands he's not as much a heroic figure as he is a weathered man who's seen too much of the dark side of humankind. His sidekick of sorts, for the duration of the events related here, is Hector Carpentier, who stumbles upon an old family secret after being mistaken for his dead father—the physician entrusted with the care of the dauphin in prison. The two find themselves locked together in a series of adventures that take them outwards into the city's suburbs and



back again, and bodies literally fall by the wayside.

The tale gets murkier, and the two men must ascertain whether or not a young and mentally challenged gardener is, in fact, the lost dauphin. Bayard's recreation of 1818 Paris is devoid of sentimentality. This is not a pretty city; it's visible to us only through the dank fog of reality, and the smells of human and animal waste permeate the atmosphere. Vidocq interacts with the forgotten underbelly of society and life here is cheap, nasty, brutal and short. But there's also not much nostalgia for glorious times past. At one point, the Baroness de Préval turns to Vidocq with the words, "I wish I could tell you how beautiful it all was." To which he responds, "Not for everyone."

Bayard, who writes frequently on gay and other matters for publications like Salon and The New York Times, is also the author of The Pale Blue Eye, a historical novel featuring Edgar Allan Poe and set in West Point in the mid-19th century. This latest story comes vividly to life because he doesn't try to render it in archaic terms. The dialogue is effortlessly contemporary without seeming artificial, and without the needless curlicues and stilted cadences that often ruin historical novels. And the mystery of the dauphin remains riveting, with twists and turns that continue to take the reader by surprise till the very end.

Yasmin Nair may be contacted at welshzen@yahoo.com. She also blogs at www.bilerico.com.



BY TERRI KLINSKY

From Halloween events to benefits, the fall seems to have it all for pet lovers.

—Thursday, Oct. 16, 6:30 p.m.-10 p.m. **"It's Raining Cats & Dogs"** at The Anti-Cruelty Society, 510 N. LaSalle. The cost is $125 per person in advance and $140 at the door, with a reserved table for four with parking costing $600. There will be a variety of tastings from top Chicago chefs, along with wine, beer and other bar offerings. Live entertainment includes a jazz band; resident animal interaction; and a live and silent auction in a fun and festive setting. Call the hotline at 312-751-5507 or see www.anticruelty.org.

—Saturday, Oct. 18, 1-4 p.m. **The 8th Annual Puptown Howl-O-Ween Party & Costume Contest,** at Lawrence and Marine, is a benefit to raise funds for fencing and park maintenance. The raffle's grand prize is $300, with additional raffle prizes including gift certificates to area restaurants, dog stores and more. Judges will include Alderman Mary Ann Smith. There will be prizes for the top three for best homemade and store-bought costumes. See www.puptown.org.

—Saturday, Oct. 18, **Tree House Animal Foundation's 1st Annual Hair Ball** Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont, 7-10 p.m. It's a wild theatrical Cats in Space-themed hair fashion show, with tunes from DJ Demchuk, and it will be emceed by Miss Foozie. A $35 entrance fee includes a drink and door-prize ticket. See www.treehouse-animals.org.

—Saturday, Oct. 25, 12:30 p.m. The **4th Annual Howl-o-Ween Dog Parade and Costume Contest** will take place at Ravenswood and Carmen. Sponsored by the Andersonville South Neighborhood Association, there will be cash prizes. There is an entry fee of $5 per dog. Call 773-989-4514 or see www.howl-o-ween.org.

—Saturday, Oct. 25, **Anti-Cruelty's Howl-o-Ween** will happen 10 a.m.–7 p.m. at Festival Hall B at the east end of Navy Pier, 800 E. Grand. Pets are welcome. There will be goody bags for the first 500 participants, pet massage and CPR, with rows and rows of pet-related booths. See www.anticruelty.org.

—Friday, Oct. 31, **Bark Bark Club Annual Howl-o-ween Party**. This event will take place at Uncommon Ground, 1401 W. Devon, at 7 p.m. There will be a doggy costume party, a square-dance performance, music and more. Call 773-989-8807 or visit www.Barkbarkclub.com.





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Chester is a flat-coat retriever/border collie; he's a 1-year-old, 45-lb. altered male. He's housetrained and current on shots. Chester is a great big sweetheart of a guy who gets along well with other dogs and everybody he meets. He's playful and happy, and would make a good addition to any household. Chester is a real charmer! Contact ARFhouse Chicago NFP at 773-305-1960 or linda@arfchicago.org.



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ONE HOUR DRIVE FROM DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - LaPORTE, IN: Great home on quiet lake in Laporte. This house has been professionally painted through out, with the kitchen having its own unique decorative look. It includes one of a kind concrete counter top on cabinets. There is even a custom-made faux-patina copper top on bar area. Hardwood floors on main level were ones pulled from a 100 year old building in Chicago. New carpeting has also been installed during the last few months on second level. The great room includes a wood-burning fireplace surrounded by built-in book cases. The master bedroom area has oversized cedar-lined closets with fantastic views of the lake. The master bath is Travertine marble with a large jetted tub and the main bath is custom ceramic tile. The exterior of the home offers seclusion, custom made deck area and your own fire pit to enjoy on fall nights. Some of the other fine features of this home include hardwood French colonial doors on the interior, second floor laundry area, and slate foyer. **$249,900. Tommy Sunn, Century 21 1st Team, Inc. 219-575-0881 www.tommysunn21.com** *(3/12/08)*

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HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: $135,000 - below market for quick sale! Not your usual "English Garden" condo! This 1-bed loft-style unit in Rogers Park features chestnut hw fls, exp. brick in l/r and b/r, c/t bath w/terrazo fl, new granite/stainless kit, recessed lighting, 3 closets + storage**. For more info contact Nina Gaspich, C-21 Sussex & Reilly, 773-255-1294, ngaspich@srchicago.com.** *(09/17/08-1)*

EDGEWATER PENTHOUSE FOR SALE: 2BR/2BA 5855 N. Sheridan - Highly desirable 26th Floor penthouse unit, most exclusive tier in building "A" W/views of lake, beach, and skyline from 3 private balconies. SS Appl kitchen, braz cherry floors, granite bathrooms, custom paint and lighting - turn key condo - steps to beach! **Priced to move at $384,750, includes 1 parking spot and 1 year of free assessments! Please call 847-833-.4955 to set up a private showing...you will not be disappointed.** *(09/17/08-4)*

34TH-FLOOR EDGEWATER STUDIO: Spectacular west view, floor-to-ceiling windows. Hardwood floors. Front door access to Loop express bus. Short walk to L. Back door access to park, beaches. **$128,900. Call 312-206-9709** *(09/17/08-4)*

FOR RENT

STUDIO

1525 W. ESTES AVE. - EDGEWATER STUDIO: Sunny studio with HWF & heat included. Laundry in building. Close to lake & transportation. Credit check required. **$565/mo w/ no dep. Fall Special: 1 Month Free! 773-392-4550. www.landstarrealty.com.** *(10/29/08-4)*

ONE BEDROOM

GREAT FLAT TO RENT: 1 bdr, Roscoe Village, Brown Line, bus, double glazed windows, private deck, large storage/workspace, on-site washer/dryer, shared yard, A/C. **$900/mo. Available now. 312-307-9237 s.crean@comcast.net.** *(10/08/08-1)*

TWO BEDROOM

2 BR/ WICKER PARK: Sunny, heated, six room apt in West Wicker Park. Newly rehabbed. Walk to Blue Line, dining, nightlife. **$1250/mo. 773-772-5479 (if leaving message, please repeat name and number.** *(10/15/08-2)*

THREE BEDROOM

3 BR 2 BA EDGEWATER: 1279 West Early (Hollywood/Ridge), 2nd floor unit in Victorian 2 flat with own central air/heat, dishwasher, washer/dryer in unit. Tenant pays utilities. Walk to red line, bus, shopping, lakefront. **$1,500/ mo plus deposit. Call 773-944-9150. Owner-occupied licensed IL realtor.** *(10/22/08-4)*

CLASSIFIEDS

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ADVERTISE HERE: Want to advertise your product, service, etc. to thousands of readers? Place an ad in the Windy City Times! We offer affordable rates, convenient service, and as a bonus, your ad runs in our online section for free. **To place an ad, contact Cynthia at 773-871-7610, cynthia@windycitymediagroup.com, or go to our website www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.**

CLEANING SERVICES

CHESTNUT CLEANING SERVICES: We're a house cleaning service for homes, small businesses and small buildings. We also have fabulous organizational skills (a separate function at a separate cost that utilizes your assistance) for what hasn't been cleaned in many months or years due to long-term illness, depression, physical/mental challenges, for the elderly, if you have downsized and more. Depressed about going home to chaos? We can organize your chaos, straighten out your chaos, help you make sense of your chaos and finally clean what is no longer chaos. **Can we help you? Bonded and insured. Chestnut Cleaning Service: 312-332-5575** *(5/24/09-tk)*

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LICENSED PSYCHOTHERAPY: 20 years experience providing counseling and clinical hypnotherapy. I specialize in relationship issues, childhood trauma, and recurrent patterns that inhibit potential. Individuals and couples. **Starla Sholl, LCSW, PC, 773.878.5809, info@starlasholl.com www.starlasholl.com**.

SUPPORTIVE COUNSELING FOR LGBTQ INDIVIDUALS: Supportive, insight-oriented counseling for LGBTQ individuals and couples. Treatment of depression, anxiety, relationship challenges, self-esteem issues, and substance abuse. Downtown loop location. **773-788-6151 www.dr-warner.com** *(12/03/08-12)*

SERVING THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY: Safe, supportive, affirming, psychotherapy for individuals, couples, and families dealing with depression, anxiety, relationship/family conflicts, trauma, abuse, and addictions. We can work together to help you achieve the satisfying relationships and better quality of life that you've been looking for. Andersonville/Rogers Park/Park Ridge. **Call Jackie or Linda at 773-275-7710. www.jacquelynsinger.com** *(8/05/09-52)*

FITNESS

PERSONAL TRAINER: Rachel Lavin, M. A. Realize your goals through 12 week success programs. Lose weight, get in shape and be the best you can be. **773-251-7874** *(PP1/08/09PP)*

FOR SALE

CUTE, AFFORDABLE SPORTS COUPE; GREAT MPG: Blk '99 Ford Escort ZX2 Cool Coupe w/ NEW TIRES, BATTERY & ALTERNATOR, OIL GASKETS, FRONT BRAKES and recent OIL CHANGE. $2,000! Great gas mileage! **Call Amy 630-650-2453. Car located on North Side.**

HELP WANTED

WEDNESDAY MORNING NEWSPAPER DELIVERY: Four hours, $56. Must have car and insurance. **Please call Jean at 773-871-7610.**

HOME BASE BUSINESS! MONEY! TRAVEL! AND FINANCIAL FREEDOM!: Over $ 15,000 in FREE Lifetime Luxury Vacations! Earn $ 1,000 to $ 3,000 commission per sale as a director. **For more information call 219-221-6264 Start today!** *(10/22/08-13)*

SEEKING A TALENTED FREELANCE WRITER AND/OR PHOTOJOURNALIST: Who is eager to write (and photograph) about gay-friendly and gay-related topics, issues, events, restaurants, bars, organizations, plays, nightclubs, cafes, etc for weekday, weekend and single assignments in and around the Chicago, IL area. **Email a short list of experience along with contact information to matt@meefers.com.** *(10/15/08-4)*

HOME HEALTH AGENCY DIRECTOR (FULL TIME) OPEN FOR HIRING: In Home Services is in need of a leader who is dedicated and has the passion to serve seniors in our community. **Please contact Iris Santiago, HR, at 847 551 9031 or visit our website: www.inhomeservicesinc.com.** *(10/15/08-4)*

INDEPENDENT SALES CONTRACTOR: Join our 100% commission sales team and earn income in your free time/make own hours. **buyEquality.com. More info? email us at info@buyEquality.com.** *(10/08/08-1)*

INTERPRETER

FOR YOUR AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE/ENGLISH INTERPRETING NEEDS: To consult with you or your company with your ADA needs. **Diana Thorpe CI/CT/NIC Master, Nationally Certified Interpreter, 773-401-1339, or e-mail thorpe2001@aol.com** *[P-TB]*

MASSAGE THERAPY

POWER MASSAGE: Deep, strong, and rejuvenating with lean muscular athlete. In calls and house calls with table. Late hours ok. Convenient location. Relocated practice from NYC. Treat yourself. **www.PowerMassageChicago.com. Marc, 312-440-1972.** *(PP4/15/09PP)*

YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF!: Experience the therapeutic benefits of deep tissue/wellness massage by a licensed GBM professional. Relieve stress, feel better! Non-sexual. South Shore Area. In, $65/hr. or $85/1.5 hrs.; out, add $20. **773-933-7219 or 773-576-4659.** *(PP2/19/09PP)*

MEN OF EDEN: A variety of young athletic licensed therapist who believe in fair pricing, unrushed session, great attitude and quality service, open late evening. **866-395-CALM** *(10/08/08-6)*

HEALING DANCE OF TOUCH! HEALING DANCE OF TOUCH!: Will give you a very relaxing, therapeutic, full-body massage. Take care of yourself. **Call Tim 773-368-9798 for appointment. $55/hr. Longer sessions available.** *(11/26/08-8)*

PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTOGRAPHER AVAILABLE: Portraits. Nudes. Figurative. Headshots. Personal. Color. B&W. 25 years experience. "I'll work with you to get the shots that are just right." **Info: 312-260-7935. Website: www.morrowphoto.com.** *(2/11/09-28)*

TRAVEL

GAY PUERTO VALLARTA: 1 of the top 10 gay vacation spots in the world. Gay owned, vacation rental Homes and Condos, just above the Gay Beach. **www.vacationinpuertovallarta.com and www.homerentalspv.com, MrJHill@aol.com.** *(10/15/08-4)*

NEW BUFFALO: Enjoy 2 or 3 bedroom cottages, 5 blocks from the lake. Full kitchens, central air, decks; all linens and dinnerware supplied. **Check out www.envoytravel.com/envoyresorts.htm, call Envoy Travel 312-787-2400 or 800-44-ENVOY.** *(S)*

WINDOW TREATMENTS

WONDERING WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE WINDOWS?: Call me! I take care of it all from design through installation, customizing to your needs. JOSEPH RICE Interiors, Inc. Full Decorating Services with a specialty in window treatments for over 24 years. **773-273-2361.** *(12/31/08-sk)*





Rachel Getting Married, Save Me, film notes

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Rehabilitation and its success and misuse are at the center of two illuminating, performance-driven indies opening this week. **Rachel Getting Married** is director Jonathan Demme's anticipated return to feature films after a series of documentaries. **Save Me**, from gay director Robert Cary, stars openly gay actors Chad Allen and Robert Gant as well as a longtime friend of the GLBT community, Judith Light of the TV show Ugly Betty.

In Rachel, Anne Hathaway of The Devil Wears Prada and The Princess Diaries plays Kym—and gives a career-altering performance. Kym's a struggling drug addict coming out of a five-month rehab stint to attend her sister's wedding. Kym is immediately introduced as a cranky bundle of nerves, quick with the biting retort while proclaiming her "Victim" status. Arriving at the Connecticut home of her father (Bill Irwin) and stepmother (Anna Deavere Smith), she's confronted with a houseful of indifferent family friends focused on the wedding at hand instead of her arrival. Old wounds are almost immediately trotted out: The father (Bill Irwin, in a masterful performance) fusses over her too much, Rachel (Mad Men's Rosemarie Dewitt, who is graceful and steely at the same time) is jealous of the attention Kym's addiction has gotten, etc. When Debra Winger (in a welcome return to the screen as the mother who keeps herself at a pleasant but icy distance) shows up, it's apparent from her first interaction with Kym that there's much more complicated stuff ahead.

Demme, working with a marvelously detailed script by first-time screenwriter Jenny Lumet, shot the movie with a handheld camera, like in TV's Cops or a cheesy reality show, and the jerkiness takes some getting used to. But slowly, the in-your-face style pays off, and the movie gets to such an intimate place you feel like another family member witnessing the emotional explosions and scabs being picked over. As in life, some of the problems get addressed while many go back underground to be revisited again at a later date. The improvisatory feel to many of the scenes brings out the best in the wonderful cast, a catch-as-catch-can approach that harkens back to Demme's pre-Silence of the Lambs pictures that electrifies material that, in other hands. would have been mundane. (A confrontation between Hathaway and Winger is unforgettable.) Like Demme's early pictures—Something Wild, Married to the Mob, etc.—Rachel Getting Married is interwoven with a seductive succession of diverse cultural touches involving music, dress, food and fashion. Demme's approach is that of a sensualist and, with this mixture of familial drama and embrace of cultural richness, Rachel at the Wedding captures what has to be one of the coolest and most emotionally enthralling wedding celebrations ever. It's simply a great movie.

Also great is Save Me, the story of Mark (Chad Allen) a drug- and sex-addicted party boy who is offered a last chance at redemption after an overdose by his brother—via an ex-gay halfway house run by the firm, no-nonsense but compassionate Gayle (Judith Light), a conservative Christian missionary, and her gentle mannered husband, Ted (Stephen Lang). "We specialize in 'sexual brokenness,'" Gayle tells Mark. Seeing a lifeline, Mark enters the program. The other "patients" espouse the party line, doing their best to rationalize the innate gayness out of their souls while watching each other for "inappropriate touching."

Nevertheless, Mark, who has never had a relationship, finds himself drawn to Scott (Queer As Folk's Robert Gant)—who is also attrated to Mark—but Gayle also sees the growing attraction and is determined to keep the two from regressing to their former sinful "lifestyle."

Save Me covers the same territory explored from the lesbian point of view in the darkly comic But I'm a Cheerleader! (with the two making a very entertaining double feature), but its nuanced approach and excellent, complex performances by the three leads (who also produced) help elevate the familiarity of the ex-gay movement material. Light is especially compelling as Gayle, so emotionally damaged by the loss of her gay son that she's channeled it all into this ex-gay halfway house and a constant flow of religious psychobabble. Save Me is a moving character drama that tackles a controversial subject with compassion and insight. Here, after a long dry spell, is an example of queer filmmaking at its best. Hallelujah, my gay brother!

Film notes:

—A sneak-peek preview party is being held for **Fish Out of Water**, a documentary by Chicagoan Ky Dickens that focuses on homosexuality and religion. The sneak peek, which includes complimentary cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, entertainment by cabaret performer Miki Greenberg and a meet-and-greet with Dickens will take place Saturday, Oct. 11 (National Coming Out Day), 6:30-9 p.m. at Mary's Attic (5400 N. Clark, above Hamburger Mary's). An after-party with DJ Stinky Pink follows from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. Tickets for the film preview party are $40 in advance and $50 at the door while a $5 suggested donation is asked for the post-party. Proceeds from the event will help finance postproduction on the documentary. Tickets and further information are at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/43642.

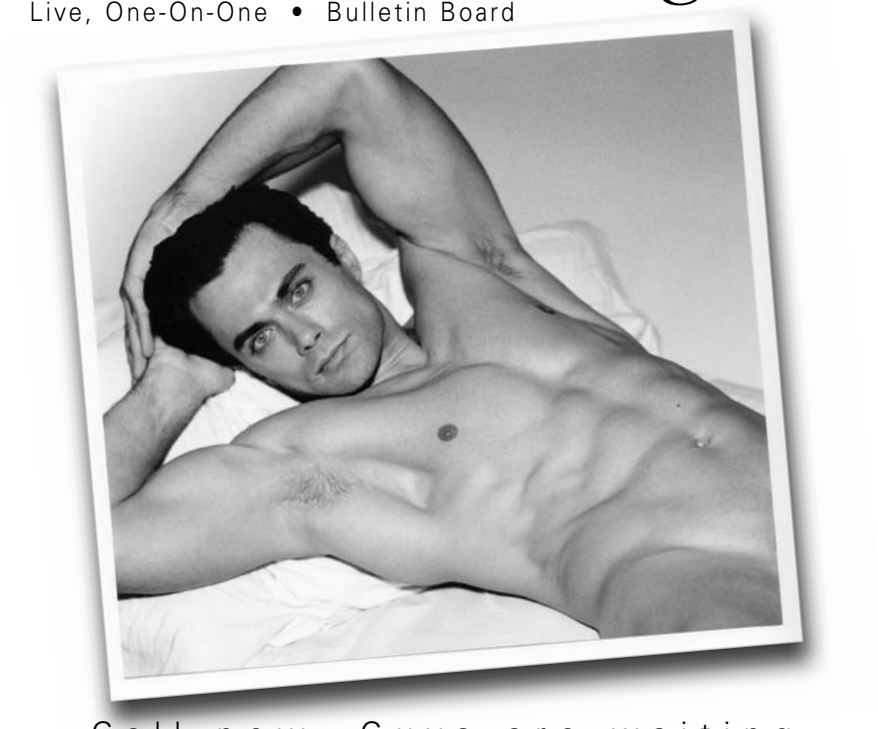


Anne Hathaway in Rachel Getting Married.

—Chicago-born jazz legend Anita O'Day—whose troubles with heroin and offstage hijinks earned her the nickname "The Jezebel of Jazz" and whose fiery rendition of Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby? provided the soundtrack for the memorable opening sequence in gay director John Cameron Mitchell's Shortbus—is now the subject of **Anita O'Day: The Life of a Jazz Singer**. The film, a walk on the wild side through O'Day's extraordinary life (which combines thrilling retro footage of O'Day in performance, and interviews and recording sessions with the legend shortly before her death in 2006) opens for an exclusive engagement at Chicago's Landmark Century Centre Friday, Oct. 10.

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 book of collected film reviews, Knight at the Movies 2004-2006.

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KREIS from page 11

as well, who, when it gets right down to it, there is still that wall. I know of actors who are successful in Hollywood right now, who unfortunately, except for three or four people in their lives, have to have a girl by their side for the paparazzi. But music, it seems, has really opened up a lot. It doesn't surprise me that's the case, because rock 'n' roll was birthed out of rebellion. So, it just seems like it would make sense to happen earlier in music, whereas movies have always had a reputation to uphold, at least in Hollywood.

WCT: You decided to go independent, which allows you be completely be yourself. What brought you to that decision? Was it your move to Los Angeles?

LK: I had just been released from Atlantic Records in early 2005. I had realized at that point, that the reason I had gone though so many record labels is they really didn't know what to do with me, which is because I wasn't letting them know who they were working with. I was guarding myself and presenting to them what I thought they wanted—and what they said they wanted, which was "Let's make this guy into a new MTV heartthrob singer-songwriter." In actuality, I wasn't being honest with anybody, so nobody knew what to really do with me. When I left Atlantic Records, I said to myself, "You know, I am never going to get anywhere and own my journey, unless I can say this is important. These experiences are here for a reason. I am who I am, and as an individual expression of God. Who am I to be shameful of that?" That's why I went back to cutting my teeth on gospel music. I had a passion to say something that makes a difference. I couldn't readily to that and pretend to be something else. That's why with $200 in my pocket and a favor from a friend, recording One of the Ones, and just sat down at a piano and played from beginning to end and hoped that it happened. And thousands of CDs later, it did! I think the reason it is because it was such an outburst of honesty from me. That had been bottled up for a while, waiting to come out. To just say, "This is who I am, and I finally embrace it."

We all want that for ourselves, so I think anyone in life who exhibits that, we are attracted to and inspired to do the same.

WCT: For young LGBT aspiring musicians and actors out there, what is your advice?

LK: If you hide your journey, you have nothing to say. That's number one. And two, it ain't about you. I believe we all have very specific gifts, whether it be music or like my mom, who is an amazing caregiver. That is what we are intended to do—to just serve the world around us. It is our service. When we approach our career from that way, we find that everything that we need begins to just be there and support us in that endeavor. If you really want to know the secret, it's not about us.

See www.levikreis.com. Million Dollar Quartet runs through Sunday, Oct. 26, in Goodman's Owen Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn; call 312-443-3800 or visit www.goodmantheatre.org.

WHAT TO DO?

Wednesday, Oct. 8

Uncommon Ground 4 Women Only series. Each Wednesday, four female performers showcase their talents. 1401 W. Devon, 773-465-9801

Thursday, Oct. 9

Center on Halsted Women on Wednesdays meets on Thursdays: Oktoberfest. 5:30-9:30 p.m., $20, 3656 N. Halsted St., www.centeronhalsted.org

Elmhurst College Second annual GLBT Lecture: "Remembering Matthew W. Shepard: The Necessity of Historical Memory and the Virtue of Ordinary, Everyday Courage." 4 p.m., Illinois Hall in the Schaible Science Center, corner of Prospect and Elm Park Avenues, www.elmhurst.edu, 630-617-3033

Lincoln Lodge Stand up comedy showcase features Jessica Halem and others. 9 p.m., $10, 4008 N. Lincoln, www.thelincolnlodge.com

Women and Children First Bookstore Reading of Lake Effect: Two Sisters and a Town's Toxic Legacy by Nancy Nichols. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Friday, Oct. 10

Access Living Gawking, Gaping, Staring: Living in Marked Bodies, An Evening of Words and Pictures with Eli Clare. 7-9 p.m., 115 W. Chicago Ave., free, RSVP with Riva at 312-640-2119

Association of Latino Men for Action Dancing with ALMA. 7-11 p.m., $30 includes open bar and more, National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th St., tickets at www.almachicago.org and at door

Congregation Or Chadash Shabbat Services every Friday at Chicago's GLBT synagogue. 8 p.m., 5959 N. Sheridan Rd. (Emanuel Congregation building), 773-271-2148 or office@OrChadash.org. See www.OrChadash.org for details and other programs.

University of Illinois at Chicago LGBT Heritage Month event: Kellogg Rainbow Merit Scholarships Luncheon. 1-3 p.m., Cardinal Rom, Student Center East, 750 S. Halsted St., www.glbc.uic.edu or 312-413-8619 for info, RSVP to lthomson@uic.edu by Oct. 7

Women and Children First Bookstore Reading of The Smell of Old Lady Perfume by Claudia Guadalupe Martinez. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Saturday, Oct. 11

Affinity First Annual Girls Weekend Retreat. Through Oct. 13 at Mystic Lake Casino Resort in Minneapolis. See www.affinity95.org.

Borders Signing of the new book Out & Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Movement, edited by Tracy Baim. Hear from many writers, including Marie Kuda. 2-4 p.m., 1144 Lake St. in Oak Park, 708-386-6927

Chicago Area Women's History Council Documenting the Women's Movement in Chicago: Preserving and Sharing the Sources. Keynote: Stephanie Gilmore, editor of Feminist Coalitions, Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States. 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m., The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St.

Chix Mix Chix That Rock women's music, artists and comedian event monthly. Features Kelsey Montanez, Crystal Bowersox and Julie Goldman. $10 cover, Kinetic Playground, 1113 W. Lawrence, 21+

Living Well Ministries "Choose Life" Coming Out Retreat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $90, 6554 N. Rockwell, www.livingwellministries.net to register

Mary's Attic The creators of the documentary Fish Out of Water host a preview party. 6:30 p.m. cabaret and cocktails followed by 20-minute sneak peek of the film and an after party hosted by Think Pink Radio's DJ Stinky Pinky at 9 p.m., $40 advance (www.brownpapertickets.com/event/43642), $50 at door, 5400 N. Clark St.

Spina Bifida Association Sweet Chic benefit featuring fashions made out of candy. 7-9 p.m., Museum of Contemporary Art, 209 E. Chicago, 9:30-11:30 VIP after party at 22 E. Hubbard, 773-444-0305

Sunday, Oct. 12

Chicago Lesbian Brunch Group Sunday Social Ride: Skokie North Branch Channel Trail. 10:30 a.m., Totem Pole (3600 N. Recreational Dr.), pphd1226@yahoo.com, http://gaypros.meetup.com/283

Chicago Theatre Kathy Griffin performs; through Oct. 16 at various times. www.thechicagotheatre.com/tickets

Debbie Halvorson for Congress LGBT reception for Congressional candidate Debbie Halvorson. 4-6 p.m., The Hearty Boys Kitchen, 3819 N. Broadway, RSVP to Allison Osborne at 708-672-4130 or allison@debbiehalvorson.com or at www.debbiehalvorson.com/lgbt

POW-WOW "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf" LGBT community staged production. Pre-reception pays tribute to Renae Ogletree (3-4 p.m.), performance 4-6 p.m., $50 reception and performance, $25 general admission, DuSable Museum, 740 E. 56th, tickets at http://powwowsforcoloredgirls.eventbrite.com

TownHouse Books & Cafe Booksigning of Out & Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Movement, edited by Tracy Baim. 2-4 p.m., 105 N. 2nd, St. Charles, 630-584-8600

Velvet Rope House of Homopalooza and Elegant Touch Entertainment's Sunday weekly showcase. Showtime at 9 p.m., $5 cover, 728 W. Lake St. in Oak Park

Windy City Gay Naturists M2M Group Massage. 5:30 p.m., fee $12 members/$15 guests, BYO towel, RSVP 773-764-1204

Women and Children First Bookstore StepSister Press Nigh featuring contributors of Submerged: Tales of the Basin and Bitchin' Bodies: Young Women Talk About Body Dissatisfaction. 4:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Monday, Oct. 13

Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University An Evening with David Sedaris. 8 p.m., 50 E. Congress Pkwy., www.ticketmaster.com, 312-902-1500 or at the Auditorium Theatre box office

Baton Show Lounge 2008 Dream Girl Continental Plus. Featuring Tahjee Iman, Mercedes and more. Over $1,500 in cash and prizes. Contestant advance registration $75, $125 after Oct. 1. Call Antonio at 773-373-2686 or Tajma Hall at 773-885-4645 for more info

Tuesday, Oct. 14

Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce B2B Networking. 7-9 a.m., Ann Sather's, 909 W. Belmont, $10 members/$20 non-members

Gerber/Hart Library Lesbian Book Group: Cavedweller by Dorothy Allison. 7:30-9 p.m., 1127 W. Granville Ave., www.gerberhart.org

Wednesday, Oct. 15

Allstate Arena 2008 World Tour of Gymastics Superstars featuring Olympic champion Paul Hamm, world medalist Nastia Liukin and more. 7:30 p.m., $29.50-$79.50, 6920 N. Mannheim Rd. in Rosemont, 312-559-1212 or www.ticketmaster.com

Chicago NOW 2008 Women Who Dared, a cocktail reception and silent auction. This year honors Gail H. Morse. Newberry Library, Ruggles Hall, 60 W. Walton St., cnowweb@yahoo.com, www.chicagonow.org

Howard Brown Health Center "Our Latino Open House," a free workshop/mixer in recognition of Latino Heritage Month and National Latino AIDS Awareness Day. An open house for the LGBT Latino community. 5-8 p.m., 4025 N. Sheridan, www.howardbrown.org

Uncommon Ground 4 Women Only series. Each Wednesday, four female performers showcase their talents. 1401 W. Devon, 773-465-9801

Windy City Gay Naturists Club Night at Touche. 7:30 p.m., fee $12 members/$20 guests, RSVP 312-494-2654

Women and Children First Bookstore Reading of Maybe Baby: An Infertile Love Story by Matt Miller. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

Thursday, Oct. 9



PROFILE OF 'COURAGE'

The program "Remembering **Matthew Shepard:** The Necessity of Historical Memory and the Virtue of Ordinary, Everyday Courage" will take place at Elmhurst College.

Tuesday, Oct. 14



NONE BUT THE 'CAVE'

Gerber/Hart Library's Lesbian Book Club will discuss **Dorothy Allison's** book Cavedweller at 1127 W. Granville. (Note: Allison will not be present.)

Photo of Dorothy Allison by Andrew Davis

OUT and PROUD in CHICAGO

Come meet writers, photographers and editors from the groundbreaking new book, presenting an overview of more than 150 years of GLBT Chicago.

There are several events planned for the launch of the Chicago Gay History Project Web site (www.chicagogayhistory.org) and companion book, Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Movement (Agate/Surrey, 224 pages, $30).

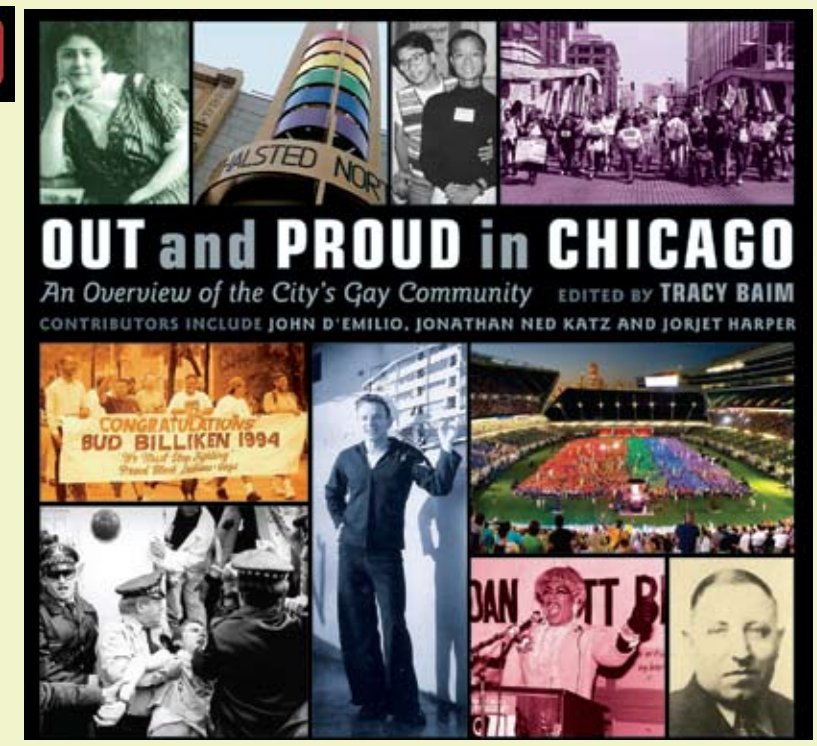
There will be co-authors at each of these events, depending on their own schedules. All events are free.

Oct. 11, 2008: National Coming Out Day is the occasion for this signing in Oak Park 2-4 p.m. at Borders, 1144 Lake Street, 708-386-6927. Hear from Oak Parker Marie J. Kuda, Tracy Baim and other writers about Coming Out Day, the 10th anniversary of the Matthew Shepard murder, and its impact on Chicago.

Oct. 12, 2008: A special far west suburban booksigning in St. Charles 2-4 p.m., at the TownHouse Books & Cafe, 105 North 2nd Avenue, St. Charles, Ill., 630-584-8600.

Oct. 16, 2008: A booksigning, 7 p.m. at Borders, 2817 N. Clark St., Chicago, 773-935-3909.

www.ChicagoGayHistory.org



Available now at:

Women and Children First Books
5233 N. Clark St.

Centuries & Sleuths Bookstore
7419 W. Madison St.
Forest Park, IL

Unabridged Books
3251 N. Broadway

And other area bookstores

SPORTS BRIEFS

Chicago Marathon set for Oct. 12

The Bank of America Chicago Marathon is set for Sunday, Oct. 12. Marathoners will start at 8 a.m. in Grant Park. (The elite runners will begin at 7:55 a.m.)

Runners from all 50 states and more than 100 countries will participate. Participants will compete in age groups, and engraved medals will be awarded to the top five finishers in each group.

The 26.2-mile course covers the North, West and South sides of the city, traveling through 29 neighborhoods.

For participants, The Bank of America Chicago Marathon/Hilton Pasta Dinner Buffet will take place on Saturday, Oct. 11, 4:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m., at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan.

See more at www.ChicagoMarathon.com.

Gymnastics stars at Rosemont Oct. 15

The 2008 World Tour of Gymnastics Superstars—featuring past and present Olympics champions Shawn Johnson, Paul Hamm and Nastia Liukin, plus the men and women of Team USA's gymnastics team—will be at the Allstate Arena, 6920 N. Mannheim, Rosemont, on Wed., Oct. 15, at 7:30 p.m.

Ticket prices are $29.50-$79.50. Call Ticketmaster at 312-559-1212 or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

Rollers to play Carolina

On Saturday, Oct. 25, Chicago's Windy City Rollers (WCR) All-Stars women's flat-track roller derby team will be playing a favorite rival in the Eastern Region—Carolina Rollergirls All-Stars, ranked #5 in the country. This game marks the WCR's debut at their new home, the UIC Pavilion, 235 S. Racine.

The Oct. 25 bout celebrates the WCR's growth as a league, and subsequent upgrade in venue and attendance capacity. WCR "alumni"—veteran skaters, referees, and league volunteers from the early days of the WCR—are invited to the bout as guests of honor.

Visit www.windycityrollers.com.

Memorial bike and walk Oct. 19

The fourth annual Dick Herron Memorial Bike and Walk, which honors fallen bicyclists and pedestrians, will take place Sunday, Oct. 19, at 9:30 a.m. in Lincoln Park at the North Avenue pedestrian bridge. The event is named for Herron, who was killed while riding his bike in 2004.

Donations will fund Herron-Chicagoland Bicycle Federation scholarships that will help young people pay for textbooks, tuition and educational costs through Herron-Chicagoland Bicycle Federation scholarships.

The ride portion of the event will extend 15 miles from North Avenue to Soldier Field and back. The walk will be a five-mile stretch through Lincoln Park.

For more, see www.biketraffic.org/content.php?id=1688_0_8_0.

Urbanathlon and festival Oct. 18

Men's Health magazine has announced that chef Rocco DiSpirito will host the Men's Health Urbanathlon & Festival in Chicago Saturday, Oct. 18, at 8 a.m. Registration is still open.

The Urbanathlon event combines traditional road-race elements with obstacle course components against the backdrop of city landmarks. See www.menshealthurbanathlon.com.

BERKUS from cover

the collectibility aspect of [memorabilia]; I was fascinated that somebody on a limited income would come and spend $1,000 on a baseball card because they had to have it.

"But I felt the same way about furniture, paintings and things for the home."

Mike Berkus talks knowingly about the T206 Honus Wagner baseball card from 1909 that has sold for more than $1 million. He knows about Mickey Mantle's rookie baseball card, prized Michael Jordan cards and also some of the valuable 2008 cards.

Nate Berkus knows none of that. He, instead, is attracted to interior decorating. While his dad can talk freely and knowledgeably about Hall of Famers from every sport, Nate can talk about furniture, textiles and bedding sheets.

"I never had any interest [in sports]," he said, laughing. "I can honestly say never."

And Nate still is not a trading card collector or autograph hound.

But Nate has been every bit as successful in his field as his Hall of Fame-caliber dad.

"[Sports memorabilia] is a fascinating industry. My dad used to sell sports memorabilia on HSN [the Home Shopping Network]. In some ways, [we've] sort of gone full-circle," Berkus said.

On Monday, Oct. 13, HSN will launch an exclusive new line of home décor and furniture from Berkus. Of course, that's famed designer Nate Berkus, known for the work he's done for both high-profile private clients and well-known public spaces. And, yes, that's the same Berkus of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" fame. (He first appeared on Winfrey's show in 2001 and, in 2008, he hosted a home-makeover show for ABC-TV called "Oprah's Big Give.")

Berkus will debut his new collection during the premiere of HSN Home Design Event Presented by ELLE DECOR, a five-week series of one-hour trend-driven shows running through Nov. 15. The show will combine ELLE DECOR's editorial authority with HSN's newest home designers and brands.

"I'm really looking forward to [the launch]. I have been flying all around the world over the past year or so with my creative team at HSN to develop what I think is a really exciting, new and fresh collection, things that have never [previously] been sold at this price, with this much quality, especially not on TV," Berkus said. "What's interesting about this opportunity for me is, with HSN, I'm able to actually be the voice of my own products and really be able to explain and talk on live television with the people who are facing different design issues and have questions for me. And, I can explain the inspiration for the first time behind this line, as opposed to designing something and sending it out onto store shelves somewhere and just hoping people like it."

Berkus said he is not nervous for the launch … at least not publicly.

"With any creative person, you put your heart and soul into a process and you want it to be as successful as possible," he said. "I think it will be a success if people respond to the designs, the color combinations, the textures, the ideas, plus the quality and pricing of the line.

"I think the [the new product line] is really geared for everybody. The nice thing about it is, the whole focus behind the line is very solution-oriented. The launch is going to start with two bedding collections, some furniture, mirrors [and] furniture as well as different accessories and things like that.

And aspects of Chicago also have had key roles in molding Berkus—including Lake Forest College in the northern suburbs, which he attended.

"Lake Forest [College] is a fantastic school and it really gave me a lot of opportunities that a larger college wouldn't have offered, such as the two semesters I spent in Paris as an intern," Berkus said. "My last year of college, I lived in Chicago and concentrated all of my classes into three days. There were small classes and some amazing professors, plus flexibility with curriculum, thus it was a perfect fit for me."

Chicago also is Oprah. Or, Oprah is Chicago. The daytime talk-show diva is as much Chicago as Michael Jordan, maybe more. And Berkus has been aboard the Oprah Express since 2001.

"It is an incredible experience [working with Oprah,]" Berkus said. "I don't think anybody just wakes up one day and thinks, 'Wow, today I'm going to be on Oprah.' It wasn't any different for me.

"One thing about the Oprah experience that I still really admire is how organic it is. A producer asked me to come on [the show] after she had seen my work. We did a small space makeup about six years ago, and Oprah really appreciated the design and my work-ethic, staying up all night with the producers to make sure everything was perfect. And the audience loved it, too. I just thought right then and there that I was doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing at that exact time.

"My relationship with the show is something that is as exciting to me now as it was when I started."

Berkus, 37, now runs the Chicago-based Nate Berkus Associates. He is the eldest of six siblings.

"One thing that's a personal philosophy of mine is, 'You have to figure out what you're really passionate about, what you really like to do,' That to me is how I feel about design. In my spare time, I do the same thing that I do in my work time," he said.

Life-changing moments

Berkus was vacationing in Sri Lanka on a fateful December day in 2004. He was with his partner, photographer Fernando Bengoechea, sleeping in a beachfront cottage at Arugam Bay on Sri Lanka's eastern coast when he heard a loud noise and the roof was ripped off.

A tsunami struck and the two were swept into the sea along with debris, animals and other people. The two grabbed a telephone pole, Berkus said, but lost their grips when a second large wave hit. Berkus climbed onto the roof of a home; Bengoechea was missing, presumed dead.

"I sort of have reached a stage with that [tragedy] where I do still reflect on it quite frequently, but I tend to reflect more on who I've become and what I've learned since that day," Berkus said. "I would never wish for that to happen; I would never wish for anyone to experience what I experienced, the personal loss I experienced with Fernando dying and also witnessing what I witnessed, including the deaths of so many. But the truth is, the lessons that I've learned from that changed me so profoundly as a person, thus I wouldn't recognize myself before the tsunami.

"When you go through a life-altering experience, you can come out [of it] in one of two ways. You can come out as a stronger version of the person you were before, or you can let it destroy you. Even through my grief, and truly for the first time ever understanding what grief was, I knew on some level that I would make myself a better person as a result of that, that it wouldn't be the one thing in my life that defined me. For me, a lot of things define [me]; I'm not just defined as being on TV. Nor am I just defined as being Jewish, or being gay or being the eldest son. Rather, I'm all of those things.

"I know I was given a second chance and with that chance, I have some choices, and the first choice I have to make is whether or not I'm going to let it take me out too. And I chose to not let that happen."

Berkus has been dating Brian Atwood, a shoe designer who lives in Milan, Italy, for about one and a half years. Their relationship, though strained by distance, is anchored by communication. They see each other every two weeks or so.

"I was very, very happy this [past] spring when non-stop flights from Chicago to Milan were added; that shaved about four and a half hours off the travel experience," he said, laughing. "Our long-term plan is not [to be living so far apart]. We eventually will be spending more time in the U.S., but for now he's based in Milan and I'm based in Chicago.

"We have a great relationship; it's completely worth it to me, the effort [of maintaining a long-distance relationship.]"

Berkus came out while a sophomore at Lake Forest College.

"I think there's a level of forced dishonesty when you don't come out of the closet, whether that's your decision or your circumstances that prevent you from doing so," he said. "That level of dishonesty can start to sort of seep into other areas of your life in time, where you can't feel like you genuinely have a relationship with your parents because you're hiding something. I believe that you have to live your life true to who you are. I don't define myself as strictly being gay, but I'm completely comfortable talking about it; it's an aspect of who I am.

"Like almost everyone, I went through [a difficult] phase of coming-out where, I didn't know what relationships in my life would survive. Knowing that you're about to take that risk [by coming out] is really a horrible situation to be in. To this day, gay teenagers are still driven to suicide at the thought [of coming out], and that's got to change."

Berkus said he considered not coming out.

"I think the fantasy was, I'll just hide [being gay], get married, have kids, and it'll just be the one thing that I have to deal with. But that's an intensely selfish reaction; it robs you of honest relationships with everyone who loves you and it also starts to affect other people's lives, such as the person you marry, your children. And I'm not a selfish guy," he said. "When I came out, both of my parents said to me, 'At the end of the day, we love you, and that's what you need to know. But we need to work through this on our own.' And they did.

"I think, for a parent, they want their kid to have the best of everything; they want their kid to have the easiest life possible," he added. "And even though that's unrealistic and can have nothing to do with sexuality, when you come out to your parents—even if they're the most liberal, most wonderful, warm people—they still have to be allowed a period to mourn the life that they thought you would have. Their little baby has gone on a different course from what they predicted, or hoped, for you. I was very respectful of my parents and acknowledged it was a surprise to them and very hard for them to accept. My father had no idea, for instance. But it didn't make me want to back down and not tell them this information. Instead, what I told them is, 'I'm going to give you guys time and be here to answer whatever questions you may have, no matter how crazy you think the question is.'"

Berkus will be speaking to college-aged students in Toronto this fall, detailing his tsunami experience and his business success, etc.

"After the tsunami segment aired on The Oprah Winfrey Show, I received literally thousands of letters and e-mails from gay teenagers from around the country, some of whom were moved to come out of the closet because they viewed a really open, honest, happy relationship [between me and Fernando], and it was the first time they ever witnessed it, and it happened on television," Berkus said. "And it was presented as two people in love, not just as two gay people."

Read the entire Nate Berkus interview—and find out some little-known items about him—at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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