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a Success**

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Shoppers**

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**nightspots
pick it up
take it home**

Calif. Nixes Gay Marriage

18,000 existing marriages allowed to stand



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Marriage-equality supporters stand outside the California Supreme Court in San Francisco. Wockner News Photo by Steve Silberman

LGBTs upset over possible new alderman

BY ANDREW DAVIS

LGBT-rights activists have issued their concerns about a minister with an anti-gay reputation who 26th Ward Alderman Billy Ocasio has recommended to replace him.

After Ocasio announced that he will leave Chicago's city council to become a senior advisor to Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, he asked Mayor Richard Daley that the Rev. Wilfredo De Jesús replace him.

De Jesús is pastor of New Life Covenant Church, 1147 N. Western (office: 2704 W. North)—an institution that has taken a hard

Turn to page 6

Read about
the new
Supreme
Court
nominee,
Judge
Sonia
Sotomayor,
on page 5
and online at
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com.](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com)

SUMMER THEATER PREVIEW



page 11

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ROSCOE'S
THURSDAY, MAY 24

See page 19 for more details

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Cover photos and credits (from top): IML2009 attendees by Steve Starr; 2009 Toyota Corolla courtesy of Toyota; and Adam Lambert from AdamLambert.org (Copyright © 2009 Adam Lambert from American Idol)



Jessica Biel (above) stars in the film Easy Virtue. Read what movie critic Richard Knight, Jr., thinks on page 20.



The North American Gay Volleyball Association (NAGVA) held a tournament at Navy Pier this past weekend. Read more about it on page 26.

Photo by Ross Forman

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ONLINE INDEX

NINA PERSSON OF A CAMP

The singer who was with The Cardigans ("Lovefool") talks with Jerry Nunn about her band A Camp.



BENT NIGHTS

Vern Hester reviews two recent concerts in Chicago by OK Go and Will Hoge (left)



Photo by Vern Hester

ALCC HONORS ADVOCATES

AIDS Legal Council of Chicago recently honored its Advocates of the Year. See exclusive photos online.



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Court upholds Prop 8

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

In one of the most anticipated court decision in the past five years, the California Supreme Court ruled May 26 that the state's anti-same-sex marriage constitutional amendment Proposition 8 was valid law, but that the 18,000-plus marriage certificates issued to gay couples prior to its passage last November remain valid.

"In sum, although Proposition 8 changes the state Constitution," said the 6-1 majority, "... to provide that restricting the family designation of 'marriage' to opposite-sex couples only, and withholding that designation from same-sex couples, no longer violates the state Constitution, in all other respects same-sex couples retain the same substantive protections embodied in the state constitutional rights of privacy and due process as those accorded to opposite-sex couples...."

The result is what many had expected—the anti-gay initiative stands but those gay couples who married between May and November of last year would continue to have valid marriage licenses.

"Prop 8 was a sad, knee-jerk response to the sight of couples in love celebrating their happiness with family and friends," said Jennifer Pizer, head of the Marriage Project for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "It badly damaged the Constitution's equality guarantees. With today's deeply disappointing court decision, it is up to us as a caring, moral people to repair our constitution at the ballot box."

"It's a deeply disappointing to see the court fail to strike down Proposition 8 which was improperly adopted," said Evan Wolfson, head of the national Freedom to Marry group, and one of the first attorneys to litigate a gay marriage case. "We shouldn't be making the rights of any minority vulnerable to a casual majority vote."

But the majority opinion, written by Chief Justice Ronald George, said opponents of Proposition 8 "drastically" overstate the effect of the initiative.

"Proposition 8 does not eliminate the substantial substantive protections afforded to same-sex couples by the state constitutional rights of privacy and due process as interpreted in the majority opinion in the Marriage Cases," wrote George in the 135-page opinion. He was referring to the decision of the court last May, declaring that the refusal of the state to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples violated the state's constitution at that time. George wrote that decision, too.

But Proposition 8, passed by voters last November, changed the constitution, adding 14 words: "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

George said that, despite that amendment, "same-sex couples continue to enjoy the same substantive core benefits afforded by those state constitutional rights as those enjoyed by opposite-sex couples—including the constitutional right to enter into an officially recognized and protected family relationship with the person of one's choice and to raise children in that family if the couple so chooses—with the sole, albeit significant, exception that the designation of "marriage" is, by virtue of the new state constitutional provision, now reserved for opposite-sex couples."

But many in the LGBT community see that as equivalent to treating gays as second-class citizens, as did the lone dissent from the seven-member bench's sole Democratic appointee, Carlos Moreno.

"Denying same-sex couples the right to call

their relationships marriages treats them as 'second-class citizens,'" wrote Moreno.

Equality California, one of the key groups fighting for equal rights in marriage in California, issued a statement on its Web site saying, of the decision, "Our worst fears have come to pass."

"The California Supreme Court just ruled that a slim majority of voters could eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry," said the statement. "This unjust decision flies in the face of our constitution's promise of equal protection. Although we are relieved that the Court did not forcibly divorce the estimated 18,000 couples who married before Prop 8 passed, our community and our allies will not allow this on-going discrimination to stand." The organization vowed to get a new initiative on the ballot in California to repeal Proposition 8.

The majority on the California Supreme Court said that "[a] retroactive application of the initiative would disrupt thousands of actions taken in reliance on" its original pro-marriage decision last year.

Plans by LGBT groups for either protests or



A couple talks with media while participating in an anti-Prop 8 protest May 26 in San Francisco. Photo by Joshua Klipp

celebrations were poised in almost 100 cities across California and the nation, including Boston, Chicago, Dallas and Washington, D.C. LGBT activists were also expected to picket outside the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles May 27 during a speech by President Barack Obama.

The key legal dispute before the court was whether Proposition 8 simply amended the state constitution or whether it significantly revised it. If the initiative only amended the constitution—as the majority agreed—then the initiative would survive. If it revised the constitution, then it would have run afoul of other constitutional provisions, requiring that the issue receive two-thirds approval by the legislature before going to voters.

All six of the judges in the majority were Republican appointees.

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More groups weigh in on ruling

As Windy City Times went to press, more individuals and organizations responded to the May 26 Prop 8 decision.

Wayne Besen, executive director of Truth Wins Out, said in a statement that "This was a shameful day that will live in infamy. It was a heartbreaking loss that established the tyranny of the majority as the law of the land in California."

Rea Carey, who heads the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, was conflicted: "We are profoundly disappointed the court has upheld Proposition 8. ... We are pleased, however, for the more than 18,000 same-sex couples who legally married before the ban took effect and will see those marriages remain intact."

For more on Prop 8—including the May 26 protest at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, and the demonstrations (and arrests) taking place around the nation—go online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



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Obama nominates Latina for Supreme Court

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

At a May 26 press conference, President Obama nominated federal appeals court judge Sonia Sotomayor to fill the seat being vacated by U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Souter.

Sotomayor (pronounced *soh-toh-my-YOR*), 54, is widely seen as a "liberal." President Bill Clinton appointed her to serve on the 2nd Circuit—which includes New York, Vermont and Connecticut. Prior to that, President George H.W. Bush appointed her to serve as a federal district court judge for the Southern District of New York.

If confirmed, she will become the first Hispanic member of the U.S. Supreme Court, the second woman on the current high court bench and the third woman ever to have served there.

Early reaction from gay legal activists is positive.

Longtime gay legal activist Paula Ettelbrick said she met Sotomayor in about 1991 when they both served on then New York Gov. Mario Cuomo's advisory committee on fighting bias.

"Nobody wanted to talk to the queer person at that time," said Ettelbrick, who represented Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "She was the only one [on the advisory committee] who made a point to come over and introduce herself. She was totally interested [in gay civil rights issues] and supportive."

"From everything I know, Judge Sotomayor is an outstanding choice— fair and aware, open and judicious," said Evan Wolfson, head of the national Freedom to Marry organization. "I believe she has the demonstrated commitment to principles of equal protection and inclusion that defines a good nominee to the Supreme Court. In choosing Judge Sotomayor, the first Latino candidate for the Supreme Court, President

Obama has made a strong and appealing nomination that should and will receive the support of those committed to equality for lesbians and gay men."

The National LGBT Bar Association issued a statement saying it was pleased with the choice, noting that it represents "more diversity on the bench." In a press release issued May 25, the organization said that its executive director, D'Arcy Kemnitz, met with White House officials last week to "discuss potential nominees and the concerns of LGBT community."

The release continued, "Sonia Sotomayor, who has shown empathy and fearlessness on the U.S. Court of Appeals, not only meets, but exceeds" the organization's criteria for a nominee—a "respect for the Constitutional right to privacy and a proven record supporting the right of Congress to promote civil rights."

Kevin Cathcart, executive director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, said the organization was pleased that the nominee is a woman of color.

"While women, people of color, and self-identified gay people continue to be woefully underrepresented in the federal judiciary," said Cathcart, "Judge Sotomayor's nomination represents a step in the right direction."

Even before Obama nominated Sotomayor, much was being made in the media that, at a 2005 Duke University panel discussion about judicial clerkships, she said "court of appeals is where policy is made." She immediately acknowledged the controversial nature of her statement.

"I should never say that because we don't make law—I know, I know. I'm not promoting it; I'm not advocating it."

New Yorker Sotomayor was born in the South Bronx and raised in a housing project near Yankee Stadium. Her parents immigrated to the state from Puerto Rico. Her mother was part of the Women's Army Corps and her father, now deceased, was a factory worker.

Her interest in the law began as a child read-

ing the Nancy Drew series. She divorced at age 28, and has no children.

There were rumors early on that the president was considering, on his short list for the nomination, two open lesbians who are both Stanford Law School professors—Pam Karlan and Kathleen Sullivan.

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OMB urged to include same-sex couples in census

United States Reps. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis.; Barney Frank, D-Mass.; Steven Israel, D-N.Y.; Jared Polis, D-Colo.; and nearly 50 other colleagues recently sent a letter to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Peter Orszag, asking that the 2010 census count same-sex married couples, according to a Congressional press release.

The landscape has changed greatly since the 2000 census, when no same-sex marriages were allowed in the U.S. Now, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, Maine and Iowa allow gay marriage, while other states seem to be on the verge of doing so.

The members of Congress said that they want the census to reflect reality. "We are deeply concerned about the implications of this policy for same-sex couples and for the integrity of the census as a whole and firmly believe the (Census) Bureau's primary objective should be to collect data and report it, not collect data and alter it," the members said in their letter.

Quigley gets assignments

New U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., has received his committee assignments: He will serve on the House Judiciary and the House Oversight and Government Reform committees, according to a press release.

The House Judiciary Committee is charged with overseeing the administration of justice within the federal courts, administrative agencies and federal law-enforcement entities. The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the main investigative body in the U.S. House of Representatives; this group can look into any matter within its legislative jurisdiction as well as any situation within the control of the other standing House committees.

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY ANDREW DAVIS

A diverse group of 24 gay-rights activists, Democratic Party organizers and fundraisers has come up with a manifesto called The Dallas Principles, named after the city where they convened, according to the Washington Post. The document is a call to arms, and lists principles and goals of the LGBT community. The group has also started a Web site, TheDallasPrinciples.org, where people can sign on and endorse the principles.

Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter has signed a measure that gives **same-sex domestic partners of state employees the same benefits as spouses of heterosexual workers**, according to Advocate.com. "It's an important piece of legislation that will help make sure the state can attract and retain good employees and compete with the private sector," said one of the bill's sponsors, Rep. Mark Ferrandino.

Read a lot more national news online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com. Features include:

—A Texas mayor who relinquished his job for his same-sex love; and

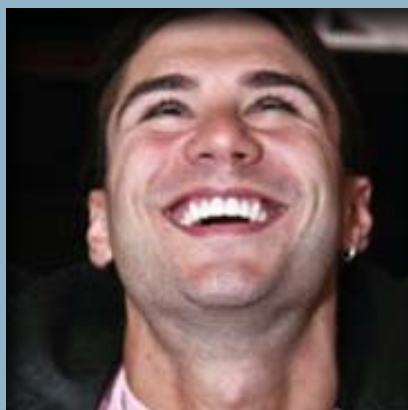
—"Harvey Milk Day" in San Diego, Calif.

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Civil unions possibly on state's slate

BY ANDREW DAVIS

The civil-union bill is on the Illinois General Assembly's slate this week, but the House sponsor is cautious about the measure's chances.

Under House Bill 2234, the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act, same-sex couples, widows and widowers would receive the same fundamental legal rights to care for their loved ones and the same protections and freedoms that other citizens enjoy.

An article in the Washington Blade quoted Equality Illinois Political Director Rick Garcia as "absolutely" anticipating the measure to pass this week. Garcia added that the measure will be attached to a "shell bill" that the Illinois Senate has already approved.

When Windy City Times talked with Garcia May 25, he said, "I hope it would pass this week; we're working and putting it all together. I'm increasingly confident but I can't guarantee anything because I don't have a magic wand. We put all the pieces in place, and we'll see what happens."

For his part, State Rep. Greg Harris—the bill's sponsor—told Windy City Times that he "will continue to work on my roll call and my vote count." He added that "because of timing considerations of things running through the House and the Senate—we could adjourn abruptly [this] week—it may be put on another vehicle bill." Harris said that he could not be sure if HB2234 would be up for a vote "until I see how many 'yes' and 'no' votes there are."

Roscoe's battery trial next month

BY SAMUEL WORLEY

An arrest made following a recent incident at Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted, will end up in court next month, with a trial expected to begin June 16.

In the early morning on April 22, according to the Chicago Sun-Times News Service, Jessica Crosswhite was asked to leave the bar; she was eventually arrested after having brought a man into the women's restroom with her. Crosswhite, who was said to have been intoxicated, allegedly slapped a bouncer and kicked a bar manager.

She was charged with one count of battery. After her arrest, Crosswhite alleged that she had been raped by one of the bar's bouncers; a subsequent visit to a hospital did not confirm her allegation.

A friend of Crosswhite was also arrested; that friend, Elizabeth Richards, is alleged to have attempted to block the police car that held Crosswhite from leaving the area. Richards was charged with one count of disorderly conduct.

Roscoe's owner Jim Ludwig, who was not present for the incident, said that he learned the details of it through police reports and from the routine reports of the bar's managers. Based on his managers' reports, Ludwig confirmed the details initially reported by the news service. He said that his bouncers found Crosswhite and a friend in the bathroom with their "clothes off"—"They were ready," he said—and, after asking them to leave and seeing the incident turn violent, called the police.

He said that as bouncers attempted to remove Crosswhite from the bar, the melee escalated in the several minutes it took the police to arrive.

Ludwig, who said that he could not comment exhaustively on the incident due to the upcoming trial, suggested that Crosswhite was already intoxicated by the time she arrived at Roscoe's.

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Above: Locker Room, by Steve Becker.

Left: Hatshepsut's Daughters, by Jorjet Harper.



From left: Strength, by Kat Fitzgerald. The Girl Who Cried Gold, by Erik R. Sosa. Phoenix, by David Johnson. Clos'et'ed, by Carol James.

ALDERMAN from cover

line against same-sex relationships. According to a position paper on gays and lesbians by the Assemblies of God—with which the church is affiliated—"[h]omosexual behavior is sin because it is disobedient to scriptural teachings" and "[h]omosexual behavior is sin because it is contrary to God's created order for the family and human relationships," among other beliefs. In addition, De Jesús commented in an October 2008 Christianity Today article that "opposing abortion and homosexuality [had] been the paramount moral issues for him" until the treatment of illegal immigrants captured his attention.

In addition, Jessica Pupovac (of the site Pupovac Reports) reported that some local LGBT-rights activists named De Jesús as the main reason the plans involving a proposed Pride Campus—a school that would have been populated by LGBT students—did not develop. When asked by Pupovac about the accusation, De Jesús responded, "What about that girl who is a virgin, who is being harassed by lesbians and guys to have sex, and yet you're going to build a gay school? It's not fair."

Not surprisingly, many gay-rights advocates are against De Jesús' possible appointment to city council. Kit Duffy—a liaison to the LGBT community under former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington—stated in a letter to Windy City Times that De Jesús "is an extreme homophobe, one who opposed ANY city efforts to fund/sponsor anti-AIDS efforts in the past and who currently has declared as his primary objectives rescinding GLBT rights and doing away with a woman's right to choose. If appointed to the [c]ouncil he will undoubtedly seek to reopen civil rights and other legislation currently in effect, which we fought long and hard to pass."

In an e-mail, the board of the Association of Latino Men for Action (ALMA)—a group for gay, bisexual and questioning Latinos—stated, in part, that the organization "has concerns with [De Jesús'] appointment, given what we have heard to be his public views on LGBTQ issues" and that "[w]e would welcome any opportunity to hear directly from any candidates being considered or considering being the next Alderman of the 26th Ward."

Equality Illinois Political Director Rick Garcia said that De Jesús contacted him to meet a couple of months ago; however, scheduling conflicts have prevented them from setting up a meeting. Garcia added, though, that the two are going to meet within days. "I have some questions about him, so I intend on meeting with him sooner than later," Garcia said.

Windy City Times attempted to contact Ocasio, De Jesús and Daley's office, but no one responded before Windy City Times' deadline.

Thayer talks about his arrest in Moscow

BY YASMIN NAIR

Chicago gay activist Andy Thayer, of Gay Liberation Network, was in Moscow recently, for a May 16 event that Russian gay-rights activists planned as Moscow Pride. In Russia, gay-related events have been stalled by repressive state policies that do not permit citizens to rally in public, and by what many consider to be a climate of widespread social and political homophobia.

Nikolai Alexeyev, a Russian gay activist had appeared in Chicago's October 2007 Mathew Shepard rally. This year, he invited Thayer and the British gay activist Peter Tatchell to support Moscow Pride efforts. Windy City Times spoke to Thayer for his version of the events that transpired that day, and his thoughts on the road ahead for Russian gay activists.

Asked why he chose to go to Moscow, Thayer said that he felt the need to express "solidarity with our Russian friends." According to him, Nikolai Alexeyev, the primary organizer of the event and a gay-rights activist, extended an invitation to "international folks he knew would help raise the profile of the event for the international press." According to Thayer, the organizers also felt that having activists from abroad would provide a measure of protection, since the Russian government might potentially be embarrassed about the news of any repression of foreign nationals from the U.K. and U.S.

Thayer said that he was impressed with the Russians' methods of demanding rights because "they engage in the kind of direct action we don't engage in here. In the West, we LGBTs are complacent about what we've achieved. Our activists tend to be self-satisfied, and busy collecting salaries in NGOs, instead of doing what we need to do. We feel that our rights will come about by working with or asking politicians for our rights. But unless you put their feet to the fire, we're not going to get anything."

Thayer pointed out that Russian gay- and human-rights activists are facing the lack of the basic right to assemble. In terms of gay rights, there is a lack of support for AIDS, and a lack of LGBT-affirming education in schools.

On the day of the action, according to Thayer, "We knew something was up when we saw an abrupt change of plans. Instead of going into the city via commuter train, we piled into a van to avoid the police cordon we heard was waiting for us. This was a message that the organizers of



Andy Thayer in Moscow. Photo by Nikolai Alexeyev

gay pride in Russian live in a semi-police state." Thayer said that the ability to change plans so quickly and still perform the action was a testament to the tactical prowess of the Russian gay organizers.

Once there, a group performed a rolling action "with different activists revealing themselves en route to news media." The AP reported approximately 30 protestors, as did Al-Jazeera. Thayer says that, by his estimation, there were about 70, and that over 30 were eventually arrested. Thayer was initially stopped by Russian police, who asked him for identification. When he showed them his U.S. passport, according to him, they let him go since they "did not want to deal with me" (as the holder of a U.S. passport). Thayer then returned to the demonstration, and was arrested.

Thayer, Tatchell and a group of Belarusians and Russians were held in a large police processing room, but people (key organizers) like Alexeyev "were grilled for nine hours without attorneys, faced slurs, treated badly, and detained overnight with no sleep." Thayer said that "[i]t speaks to the courage of Russian LGBT organizers that they braved the violence and political repression."

What was the public response to the action? Thayer acknowledged the context in which the Pride action came about: "Many Russians are just trying to survive. They're not upset about LGBT rights. You are not going to get support from non-LGBT citizenry in Russia. Over time the bigots will be forced to acknowledge the courage of LGBT citizens, especially with the weight of international attention."

According to Thayer, the next Slavic Pride event is to be held in Minsk, Belarus, in May 2010. As for Nikolai Alexeyev, a court date has been set for May 26. Thayer said that even Alexeyev's attorney had been barred from the hearing on the day after his arrest.

BEHIV's drive to raise money

Better Existence with HIV (BEHIV) will kick off a 60-day fundraising drive to support its programs and help to bridge the gap in decreased and delayed, funding.

BEHIV's drive is being put together by the organization's staff, board of directors and volunteers. The drive officially begins in early June and runs into early August. Multiple fundraising events and projects are being planned, including a kick-off event at Saluté Wine Bar; house parties; and a drag-show grand finale.

"The State of Illinois has not made a single payment toward a grant that began last October—that's seven months of BEHIV carrying expenses without reimbursement," Executive Director Eric Nelson said in a statement. "These delays and cuts mean that organizations like BEHIV have to do more with less, and we are. We

are consolidating our offices to reduce administrative costs and some of our staff members are occupying more than one position to save on salary expense.

To make a donation, volunteer with an event or obtain additional information, contact Eric Nelson (ericnelson@behiv.org) or Rita Lewis (ritalewis@behiv.org), or visit www.behiv.org.

LGBT group to sit in at Holy Name

Rainbow Sash Movement (RSM)—a local LGBT Catholic organization—will again take part in its annual challenge to Cardinal Francis George for him to engage in a dialogue with the group.

RSM will sit in at the 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday, May 31, in the auditorium of Holy Name Cathedral, 735 N. State. All participants are welcome to don rainbow sashes. RSVP to 312-266-0182.

Paying tribute to veterans



Congressman Mike Quigley joined a contingent of gay veterans in Chicago's May 23 Memorial Day parade. Members of the Chicago chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights carried the rainbow flag along with the Red, White and Blue and flags representing the branches of military service in which they had served. Quigley spoke with the veterans at length on his support for repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Pictured are: Patrick Bova (former ROTC), Jim Darby (former U.S. Navy), Ed Wosylus (former U.S. Air Force), Cong. Quigley, Marquell Smith (U.S. Marine discharged under DADT), Ed Zasadil (WWII veteran) and Randy Williamson (former U. S. Navy). Blocked from view, Mary Ellen Burns (former U.S. Navy), Louis Kalafut (former U. S. Army) and Larry Simpson (former U.S. Army National Guard). Photo by Jean Albright; see more images at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

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CDPH releases HIV data on MSM

BY WES LAWSON

The Chicago Department of Public Health's (CDPH's) board held its monthly meeting May 19 and, for the first time, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) released data describing the rates of HIV infection among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Chicago. Nikhil Prachand, an epidemiologist in the CDPH's STD/HIV/AIDS division, prefaced the results by calling them "sobering," and his comment was echoed by several others members of the board.

The data collected between August and December of last year sampled 570 MSM at various locations around the city. Of the respondents, 91 of them, or 17.4 percent, tested positive for HIV. Moreover, HIV prevalence was 30.1 percent among Blacks, 12 percent among Hispanics and 11.3 percent among whites. Also worth noting is that Black MSM under the age of 35 were seven times more likely to be infected than white MSM in the same age group (30 percent versus 4.2 percent).

Of the men who tested HIV positive, over 50 percent were unaware of their HIV infections, including two-thirds of Black MSM (67 percent); half of the Hispanic MSM and less than a quarter of the white MSM participants did not know. Among the men unaware of their infection, 50 percent reported not having an HIV test in the past year. In addition, 39 percent of the men surveyed stated that the primary reason for not getting tested was a fear of the results. However, many of the men surveyed had been recently tested, suggesting that the infections had only been recently acquired. Also worth noting is that none of the men who tested positive did not know where to get an HIV test.

The survey also sought to explain some of the racial disparity in the results and the various risk factors for HIV infection. Among the risk behaviors were multiple/concurrent partners, unprotected anal sex with men, drug/alcohol use prior to sex and lack of knowledge of a partner's HIV status prior to sexual activity. Concurrent sexual relationships were more common among Black MSM, with 37 percent of the men surveyed admitting to the practice, compared with 30 percent for white MSM and 28 percent of Hispanic MSM. By contrast, drug/alcohol use prior to sex was a larger factor for white and Hispanic MSM, with 40 and 43 percent admitting to drug/alcohol use before or after sex, respectively, compared to 39 percent among Black MSM.

Although these results were shocking to some, Prachand emphasized that the findings mirrored

national data from other large cities, and that programs are already working to close the gaps between the racial disparities in the surveys. Among those programs is the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, which works to stop the spread of HIV among Black MSM and promotes their general well-being.

Assistant Commissioner for the STD/HIV Division Christopher Brown stated, "These baseline data will be used to increase HIV awareness among all MSM and, by working with our community-based partners, to strengthen and expand our community efforts."

Kink tank: Center hosts sexuality confab

BY YASMIN NAIR

A recent conference at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, looked at provocative issues like leather, kink and polyamory. But rather than provide merely scintillating glimpses into our sexual lives, the event sought to present clinical therapists and the public with a range of analytic and practical tools with which to approach what are often termed "alternative" sexual practices.

The 2009 Alternative Sexualities Conference was a one-day national conference organized by the Center's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Institute (SOGI) and the Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS), based in San Francisco. In his welcoming speech, Conference Director Braden Barkey addressed a packed room at the Hoover-Leppen Theater and spoke about the need for such events, noting that while there were many broadly focused community events about alternative sexual practices, "there's nothing that addresses clinical issues."

Given our widespread cultural obsession with sex, we might assume that practices like polyamory are easily considered matters for therapists who work with individuals and families on matters of intimacy and sexuality. But Richard Sprott of CARAS, who gave the plenary speech, "Polyamory: The Question of Consensual Non-Monogamy," said that, in fact, clinicians had to unpack popular cultural assumptions and negative perceptions of the practice. Polyamory, according to Sprott, is a "broad category containing several specific forms of multiple partnering/relationships." It is distinguished from swinging, where two people in a relationship agree on sexual connections with others but without forming emotional connections with

those outside the relationship. In contrast, polyamorous relationships involve intentional networks of desire and care that can develop into long-standing connections, and the people involved might even form non-traditional family units where they share childcare responsibilities. Sprott joked that polyamory is sometimes referred to as "swinging with breakfast."

For therapists working with polyamorous clients, Sprott said, it was necessary to clearly understand that concepts like jealousy and intimacy are constantly discussed and negotiated within polyamorous relationships. He added that many people are puzzled by the idea that someone might form intimate and romantic-sexual relationships with more than one person. Yet, they have no trouble understanding that parents might want and love more than one child: "Why don't we say, 'How can you think of having another child? Is there something wrong with your first child that you'd want another?'" He said that the mistake was to think that intimacy could only come about within monogamous relationships.

Sprott went on to detail the different ways in which people negotiate their polyamorous relationships, and also discussed the thornier issues of childcare (polyamory can become a lightning rod in some child custody cases) and the "impact of prejudice, stigma, and heteronormativity" that can affect the well-being of people in polyamorous relationships. He also said it was important for therapists to make sure that no one in such cases was being coerced, however subtly, into arrangements they might not really want.

Afternoon sessions of the conference approached a range of issues, including the prevalence of internet sex sub-cultures, and aging in the BDSM (bondage/discipline/sadism/masochism) world. A presentation by David Moskowitz discussed HIV in the leather community while another, by Benjamin Graham and Clarisse Thorn, considered the role of supportive social groups in the BDSM experience. Poster presentations included one entitled "Ultra-Vanilla: Non-Penetrative Gay Male Sex as a Healthy and Hot Alternative Practice." Conference participants ranged from those who had some to a great deal of experience with alternative sexual lifestyles, and the question-and-answer sessions appeared lively and engaged.

Affinity hires executive director

Affinity Community Services—a non-profit organization that serves Chicago's Black lesbian and bisexual women's community—has announced the hiring of its first executive director, Kim L. Hunt, a former board member.

Hunt is co-founder of O-H Community Partners, a management consulting firm. In addition, she assisted with the development of the bid book for Gay Games VII and served as board president for the Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture.

Affinity's major initiatives include the development of a Youth Leadership Institute, expansion of health advocacy work and hosting its annual fundraiser, Jazz N July, July 25 at the DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 E. 56th.

See www.affinity95.org for more information about the organization.

Gay divinity student wins fellowship

Openly gay University of Chicago Divinity School student Matt Richards has been awarded a summer fellowship by The Beatitudes Society, according to an organizational press release. Richards will be serving at Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good in Washington, D.C.

Richards is part of the 2009 class of 20 summer fellows who will serve as interns at social-change organizations in Washington D.C.; the San Francisco Bay Area and Chicago.

The Beatitudes Society's goal is to create a new generation of progressive Christian leaders who can counteract the Christian right. To find out more about the society, visit www.BeatitudesSociety.org.

Local events:

Prom-enade: Homofrecuencia's 5th Annual Queer Prom will take place at the National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th, on Friday, May 29, 6-11 p.m. The prom's theme is "Amor Sin Fronteras" ("Love Without Borders"). Tickets are \$10-\$25; contact Tania Unzueta at homofrecuencia@radioarte.org or call 312-455-9455, ext. 203.

Viral video: Beyondmedia Education will host two screenings of "HIV: Hey, It's Viral" Friday, May 29, at 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. at the Chicago Teacher's Center, 770 N. Halsted, #420. E-mail beyond@beyondmedia.org.

Grape expectations: A "Welcome Pride" wine tasting will take place Saturday, May 30, at 4 p.m. at KAFKA Wine Co., 3325 N. Halsted. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased by visiting www.PayPal.com, by calling Gerber/Hart Library at 773-381-8030 or by stopping by the library, 1127 W. Granville.

You better work: Dignity/Chicago will host a free seminar on work and working from a Christian perspective Saturday, May 30, 10-11:30 a.m. at Broadway United Methodist Church, 3344 N. Broadway. Kevin Buckley, a member of the part-time faculty of DePaul University's School for New Learning, will present. To register, call 312-458-9438 or e-mail DignityChicago@aol.com.

Getting together: Men's and women's socials will take place at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. Men on Mondays will be June 1, 6-9 p.m. while Women on Wednesdays will be June 3, 6-9 p.m. E-mail culture@centeronhalsted.org or call 773-661-0763.

Art-felt: Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, will host an opening-night reception for two exhibitions, "Love=Love: Protesting Prop 8" (by Christa Lohman) and "Coming Out Online" (by Doug Smithery) Friday, June 5, 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m., in the second- and third-floor art galleries. There is a \$5 suggested donation. E-mail culture@centeronhalsted.org or call 773-661-0763.

Career view: "Career Impact Day" will take place Friday, June 5, at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, at 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. and 12:30-2 p.m. Volunteers from the international accounting/consulting firm Deloitte will lead the trainings. E-mail culture@centeronhalsted.org or call 773-661-0763.

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WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

Police smash Moscow pride for 4th year

For the fourth year in a row, riot police broke up an attempt to stage a gay pride parade in Moscow on May 16, arresting up to 80 participants, including local gay leader Nikolai Alekseev, British gay leader Peter Tatchell and Chicago gay activist Andy Thayer.

The city had again banned any public pride activities. Mayor Yuri Luzhkov has called gay pride parades "satanic" and "weapons of mass destruction."

This year's effort to march came just hours before the finals of the übercampy Eurovision Song Contest, held in Moscow this year because Russia won it last year. The competition has a huge gay following across the Continent.

Some of the people arrested, including Tatchell and Thayer, were seized in the middle of interviews with reporters. Cameramen were knocked around as police plowed through to get at various activists. Officers managed to tear off one activist's shirt and bra. Alekseev was seized and held down by no fewer than five policemen.

As he was being hauled off, Tatchell shouted, "This shows the Russian people are not free."

"The Russian government is using this year's Eurovision in Moscow as a gala showpiece to show the world how far the country has improved since the early 1990s," Alekseev said. "However, what was witnessed this afternoon on the streets of Moscow shows the world just how little Russia has traveled when it comes to supporting fundamental human rights. ... This episode has shamed the Russian government and Moscow authorities before the world."

Several cases stemming from the bans on previous Moscow pride parades are pending at the European Court of Human Rights, which has a huge backlog of cases from Russia.

Meanwhile, the day after the pride debacle, a much-less-publicized march to mark the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) went off without a hitch.

In an event called "Rainbow Flashmob," about 35 people marched from the Bolshoi Theater to Pushkin Square, distributing anti-homophobia leaflets and, at the end, releasing rainbow balloons.

"Riot police observed the event and did not detain anybody," said "Maxim G." of the Russian LGBT Network.

The network reported that similar events were staged in 40 Russian cities, with the largest in St. Petersburg, where 250 people participated.

Asked why the pride parade was broken up by police but the Rainbow Flashmob wasn't, chief pride organizer Nikolai Alekseev said: "If I go on the streets now with the balloons, no one will

give a shit. As soon as it is not known to any media and police, and as soon as you don't make an official request according to the law for the demonstration, you can do what you want. No one cares, as it is not known in the society and in the media."

Council of Europe supports IDAHO

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe issued a strongly supportive statement in conjunction with the May 17 International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO).

"Today, being a homosexual will no longer, at least not in a member state of the Council of Europe, result in being put in prison, but discrimination and homophobia still exist and not only on the margins of society," wrote Terry Davis. "I condemn the homophobic violence perpetrated by skinheads, but it is heads of some political parties that I am really worried about."

"It is unacceptable that some people in positions of official or moral authority in Europe still behave as if the European Convention on Human Rights does not apply to homosexuals," Davis said. "People who discriminate often invoke morality to justify their attitude. They are making a relevant point, but they are getting it wrong. It is not the homosexuals who are immoral. It is the homophobes."

Peru bans gay cops

Peru's Interior Ministry announced May 13 that it is banning gays from being police officers.

It said cops who have sex with people of the same sex "cause scandal" and "denigrate" the police's "image."

The ministry also said it will suspend officers who commit adultery.

Anti-gays attack police in Krakow

Anti-gay protesters attacked police at the gay pride parade in Krakow, Poland, May 16. One person was injured and 20 counterdemonstrators were arrested.

The anti-gays threw eggs, bottles and chairs at the officers.

The parade itself, the city's fifth pride march, was not disrupted.

Singapore gays stage first rally

Singaporean gays held their first-ever public rally May 16.

Some 2,500 people took part in the event at "Speaker's Corner," a new free-speech zone in a local park.

The zone allows residents of the tightly controlled island to speak out on various matters, but not on religion, language or race.

Gay sex remains illegal in Singapore.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"RUSH LIMBAUGH, ONE OF YOUR BIG CRITICS. Boy, Rush Limbaugh said he hopes this administration fails. So you're saying, 'I hope America fails.' ... He just wants the country to fail. To me, that's treason. He's not saying anything differently than what Osama bin Laden is saying." — *Openly lesbian comedian Wanda Sykes to President Obama at the White House Correspondents' Association Annual Dinner, May 9.*

"I THINK MAYBE RUSH LIMBAUGH WAS THE 20TH HIJACKER but he was just so strung out on OxyContin he missed his flight. ... Rush Limbaugh. 'I hope the country fails.' I hope his kidneys fail. How 'bout that? He needs a good waterboarding, that's what he needs." — *Openly lesbian comedian Wanda Sykes to President Obama at the White House Correspondents' Association Annual Dinner, May 9.*

"(FOX NEWS') SEAN HANNITY SAID HE WAS GOING to get waterboarded for charity. ... He can't take a waterboarding. I could break Sean Hannity just by giving him a middle seat in coach." — *Openly lesbian comedian Wanda Sykes at the White House Correspondents' Association Annual Dinner, May 9.*

"(INSTEAD OF AN IPOD) YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN the queen (of England) something, you know, like a memento of our country, something that says America. Give her Texas." — *Openly lesbian comedian Wanda Sykes to President Obama at the White House Correspondents' Association Annual Dinner, May 9.*

"(SENIOR ADVISER) DAVID (AXELROD) AND I HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME. ... I think back to that day that I called Ax so many years ago and said, 'You and I can do wonderful things together,' and he said to me the same thing that partners all across America are saying to one another right now: 'Let's go to Iowa and make it official.'" — *President Barack Obama at the White House Correspondents' Association Annual Dinner, May 9.*

"AT A STATE LEVEL, IT'S (SAME-SEX MARRIAGE) UP TO THEM. I don't want it to be a federal thing. I personally still think it's wrong. People don't understand the dictionary—it's called queer. Queer means strange and un-

usual. It's not like a slur, like you would call a white person a honky or something like that. You know, God is pretty explicit in what we're supposed to do—what man and woman are for. Now, at the same time, we're supposed to love everybody and accept people, and preach against the sins. I've had some friends that are actually homosexual. And, I mean, they know where I stand, and they know that I wouldn't have them anywhere near my children. But at the same time, they're people, and they're going to do their thing." — *Samuel "Joe the Plumber" Wurzelbacher to Christianity Today, May 4.*



Photo by Renee Brown

I could break Sean Hannity just by giving him a middle seat in coach.

—Wanda Sykes

"(NATIONWIDE LEGALIZATION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IS) A SURE THING. Clearly, the momentum is on our side. It's just a matter of time." — *Openly gay American Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Anthony Romero to The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 11.*

"THEY (MY PARENTS) WERE ANGRY AND DISAPPOINTED (when I came out to them). I was the star son, the golden boy. For them, it was like they were meeting the first homosexual in their lives, and it was their son." — *Openly gay American Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Anthony Romero to The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 11.*

"WE STILL DO LARGELY DO WHAT WE WANT TO DO. We write music for pleasure, as much as anything else. I think Chris and I managed not to lose that childish sense of play, like, I don't know, making a sandcastle." — *Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys to Idolator.com, April 4.*

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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Idol, marriage and symbolism

Does American Idol matter?

There are wars, an economic depression, disease, global warming and much more ailing our country and the planet.

But when it comes down to it, quality of life day-to-day for people also involves having dreams and hopes, and being allowed life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Whole groups of people have been denied those rights. Anti-LGBT behavior takes many forms, and sometimes that behavior is actually from within: internalized homophobia. This manifests in substance abuse and other self-destructive behaviors, but also in trying to drag others down with a group. Attacking drag queens as bad images for our movement, saying lesbians should not be too butch, or attacking leaders for not following an exact party line. Or even using loaded words against an American Idol contestant like Adam Lambert.

But most anti-LGBT actions come from outside the movement. It can be institutionalized homophobia, as evidenced by marriage laws or the military's government-sanctioned bias against LGBTs. Like racism and sexism, it can also be behavior that is so subtle as to be questionable. Some people don't even recognize it in them-

selves. There are code words for "gay," such as flamboyant, theatrical, etc. And gays and non-gays often value "straight-acting" LGBTs over those who more easily cross gender boundaries.

All this leads us to American Idol. The media, blogs, Facebook and Twitter were blazing for weeks about Adam Lambert's sexuality, with Entertainment Weekly even devoting a cover story to the Idol favorite. Bill O'Reilly questioned whether America was ready for such an Idol. We all know what he meant, because O'Reilly is far from subtle. Last week, when Lambert lost to Kris Allen, there were online battles about whether Adam's losing was homophobia or not.

But if you look at the raw numbers, allegedly less than one million votes separated Lambert from winner Allen. There were 100 million votes cast. That means Lambert maybe received more than 49 million votes. [To give perspective: John McCain got 59 million in the presidential election, while Barack Obama received 69 million.] The difference for Allen? Reportedly there were 38 million votes for Allen from his home state of Arkansas—far more than the number of people who live there. If you take out those 38 million votes, that leaves 62 million votes, and Lambert would easily have won; he was the American Idol for the rest of the states.

What does this mean? That Idol continues to be a popularity contest, and the best singer does not always win. We know this from past Idol winners: Ask Jennifer Hudson. Stacking the votes clearly happens—some people may have voted dozens or even hundreds of times. While Chicago is known for its cemetery-based votes, American Idol takes that to a way higher level.

Allen himself was very gracious, even saying he thought Lambert had just as much right to win as he did. He probably didn't even OK the massive Christian vote that was launched in his

favor. He just benefited from it. Lambert, too, was a pro, congratulating Allen.

Lambert said "you know, probably," and laughed when asked if the talk about his sexual orientation had any impact on the voting. But he said not to dwell on the negative, "we should look forward." During the competition he never denied or confirmed being gay, preferring to focus on his music.

Ultimately, it does not matter if Adam won or lost, his career will be fine. Hopefully, LGBT youth will not view this as a setback, but as a success, to have someone get 49 million votes despite the sometimes-subtle homophobia of the judges and the media, and despite a Christian push for votes to Kris.

The bigger picture for the LGBT movement is the mainstreaming of our debates and dialogue. Years ago, when it came to discussions of celebrity sexuality, it was don't ask, don't tell, except in the LGBT media. Now, it's OK for major newspapers and magazines to run articles on someone like Adam, just assuming he is gay. Treating it as just another facet of this talented young man. And Adam has the courage to stay above the attacks, and be comfortable in his own skin (and skin-tight outfits).

So symbols do mean something. Millions of straight people voting for a (probably) gay man means something. Ellen DeGeneres coming out on the cover of Time magazine did mean something. It all helps add up to a more progressive country, one person at a time. Just as marriage laws are important to change, it is also very important to win the hearts and minds of people across America. That means even American Idol does matter.

Tracy Baim is publisher and executive editor of Windy City Times.



LETTERS

Ministerial misstep?

Dear Editor:

I am deeply dismayed by the reported recommendation of Wilfredo DeJesus as a possible replacement for Alderman Billy Ocasio. This appointment would effectively abrogate every advance Mayor Richard Daley has made toward achieving greater LGBT acceptance and equality in Chicago.

Wilfredo DeJesus' shameful measure of notoriety stems from his unabashed desire to deny basic rights to both women and LGBT people through dogmatic zealotry which he exercises through the control and denigration of others. The actions and statements of Mr. DeJesus in his crusade against women and gays render the premise of him equitably and responsibly serving the people of the 26th Ward as unlikely. Mr. DeJesus openly promotes exclusion and intolerance while embracing bigotry and subjugation under the cloak of religious respectability. His actions ultimately serve to plant the seeds of hatred and violence against marginalized and at-risk populations.

The presence of Wilfredo DeJesus in an official municipal capacity undermines our embrace of 'human rights' as a worthy ideal. His record strongly suggests he is unworthy of this position of public trust. We should no more countenance a dedicated homophobe as a prospective alderman than we would an avowed anti-Semite or racist.

Bob Zuley
Chicago

A debacle with De Jesús

As you all know, 26th Ward Alderman Billy Ocasio has resigned his post and is now serving Gov. Pat Quinn. Mr. Ocasio has suggested to Mayor

Daley that he should be replaced by Rev. Wilfredo De Jesús.

According to an article in Christianity Today, "Wilfredo De Jesús, 44-year-old senior pastor of New Life Covenant, and Assemblies of God Church in Chicago with an attendance of 4,000, says Obama is the first Democratic candidate he has ever supported. Until now, De Jesús says, opposing abortion and homosexuality have been the paramount moral issues for him. But De Jesús says Obama's comments about the mistreatment of illegal immigrants have led him to put more emphasis on immigration in terms of advocacy and ministry."

As member of the Equality Illinois Board, as a Latino who will be celebrating LGBT Pride on the 26th Ward proper, Saturday, June 13, at Humboldt Park, 12-6 p.m., I am appalled and completely oppose that such person could represent me in any city business. I encourage every pro-choice and pro-gay member of the 26th Ward to write to Mayor Daley and complain.

Carlos Mock
Chicago

The wrong replacement

I am writing as a former liaison to the LGBT communities under former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, as a Hall of Fame friend of the community and as someone who cares deeply about the advancement of civil rights.

Apparently, Rev. Wilfredo De Jesús is under consideration to replace Alderman Billy Ocasio in the 26th Ward. I very strongly oppose his appointment. De Jesús is an extreme homophobe, one who opposed any city efforts to fund/sponsor anti-AIDS efforts in the past and who currently has declared as his primary objectives rescinding LGBT rights and doing away with a woman's right to choose. If appointed to the council, he will undoubtedly seek to reopen civil

rights and other legislation currently in effect, which we fought long and hard to pass.

The city can ill afford either the dissent this would cause, or the expensive law suits which would arise from his efforts. I can think of no good reason for appointing this man: if whoever's pushing this believes it would simply be reaching out to evangelicals they must realize this man is much closer to a Fred Phelps than he is to a Rick Warren, and that such a move will do nothing to further understanding and civility.

I am hoping decision-makers will also recognize the political implications of such an appointment. Throughout the 26th Ward, and the 4th Congressional District which encompasses it, there is a large LGBT population and, if energized by this man's hatred, they will most certainly organize in 2010 against anyone who has advocated for this misguided appointment. I will absolutely and determinedly join in those efforts.

I urge everyone to contact the mayor, their ward committeemen and aldermen to express their opposition to this appointment.

Kit Duffy
Chicago

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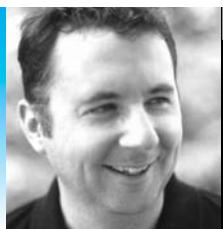
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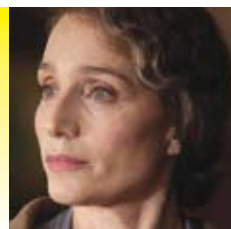
HOT FUN IN THE SUMMER TIME

Windy City Times' summer theater issue should satisfy people of various tastes. The preview starts below.

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Leather station.
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Photo by Steve Starr

Jerry Mitchell:
A legend
goes 'Legal'

BY ANDREW DAVIS

When one thinks of legendary Broadway choreographers, Jerry Mitchell ranks up there with Champion, Robbins and Fosse, thanks to a slew of successful musicals and a cache of awards (including a Tony for *La Cage Aux Folles*). Now, Mitchell has taken on an additional title—director—for the first time as he helms *Legally Blonde the Musical*. Mitchell talked with Windy City Times about that award-winning production, theater in general and Broadway Bares for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, which will unveil its 19th show next month—and which he started.

Windy City Times: How have you been?

Jerry Mitchell: I've been doing very well. I've been in Vegas with my show, PEEPSHOW, which is up and running; [it has] Mel B and Kelly Monaco. And I'm in London casting *Legally Blonde* and *Love Never Dies*, the new *Phantom of the Opera* sequel written by Andrew Lloyd Webber—I'm the most blessed choreographer in the world. I'm also working on a new musical based on the movie *Kinky Boots*; it's such an emotional film and wonderful story.

WCT: I have to thank you because you've expanded my knowledge; I now know things about Paw Paw, Mich. [Mitchell's hometown].

JM: [Laughs] Well, Paw Paw's just a couple hours away from Chicago. So many people in Chicago have lake houses in Michigan. My grandparents lived near this lake, and we had this cottage—and so many people from Chicago had cottages there.

WCT: I understand that *Legally Blonde* recently received three touring Broadway awards.

JM: It's five, actually. It won Best Musical,



Jerry Mitchell. Photo courtesy of Ginger Tidwell

I got Best Choreography and all the designers won—[but in the press release] they may have lumped the designers together. The response to the show on the road has been so rewarding.

My job as a director and choreographer is basically over the day the show opens, and it's now the producers and marketing team who have to take whatever they get that night into, "How do I sell tickets?" But as I always say, word of mouth will sell a show more than anything else.

With *Legally Blonde*, I tried to [instill] this feeling of hope to young people—especially young ladies. I want them to know that they don't have to dumb themselves down to get the guy; they can actually be smart and pretty. And in a feminist world, that's a great message.

WCT: Is that what initially attracted you to *Legally Blonde*—the underlying message?

JM: No; I'm a great fan of film. I thought the movie and Reese [Witherspoon as Elle Woods were] so great, and the character was larger than life—and, usually, characters who are larger than life have a reason to sing and dance in a musical. When the producers asked me if I would choreograph and direct it, I thought, "This is

the perfect first show for me." I can tell this story backwards; I've lived this story.

WCT: As you mentioned, this is the first Broadway show you've directed. How hands-on are you?

JM: Oh, my God; you should ask someone else that question. [Interviewer laughs.] I don't let anything happen... Am I a control freak? I guess everyone in the theater is, to some extent. But more importantly, I'm a details kind of guy, and the people I work with—David Rockwell, Kenny Posner and Greg Barnes—are a team. Every single director or choreographer I know who has [achieved] any type of success has created a team. Michael Bennett did it. Jerome Robbins did it. You learn to work with a shorthand and trust each other to a level where you don't have to be there 24/7.

I don't want to work with a designer so I can control him. I want to work with [one] because, when I tell them my idea, it fuels them to bring something to the table that makes the idea better. But that's why you have to be involved in every aspect—to bring a clearer vision. Collaboration in the theater—there's nothing like it. And when it's right—there's nothing like it.

WCT: There's a school of thought that there's a lack of originality with Broadway productions because a good number of them is based on movies. What's your response to that argument?

JM: Well, to me it's not an argument; it's an observation. And my answer to that observation is that we live in an age of visual downloads and electronic media. Instead of picking up a book like *Pygmalion* and saying, "This would make a great musical—*My Fair Lady*," people are handing us the movie and saying, "This would make a great musical, like *Hairspray*."

You know, they never seem to have a problem when it's a success or when it's a movie that should be turned into a musical. But when they think it's an easy target... *Legally Blonde* was in that category—but people thought it should have been a musical. The musical had to do the same thing the movie did: It had to prove its

dumb, blonde self. [Laughs] That's why I'm so proud of the road production.

I have this theory that there's room for everybody. There's room for *Next to Normal* on Broadway, and there's room for *South Pacific*, *Nine to Five*, *Shrek*, *Wicked* and *Legally Blonde*. So I always question the person who walks into a show as a reviewer and wants to see something that isn't on the stage, as opposed to viewing what's actually on the stage. Then become a director and a choreographer!

WCT: Switching topics a little, there's a scene in [the movie] *Broadway: An American Musical* where you talk about seeing *A Chorus Line*...

JM: It started in Chicago at the Shubert Theatre. I saw it, and three weeks later I brought my dance teacher [and others] back; I said that there was this amazing step (turn, turn, out, in) that I had to learn so I could get in the show. So she saw the show, taught me and, two years later, I was in the show.

WCT: And you've always known you've wanted to dance, correct?

JM: Yes. It's odd, isn't it? When I was a kid, I knew I was going to dance and I knew I was going to be in the theater. It's such a strange thing for me when I think about how I got here from Paw Paw. No one in my family was really into theater. My dad was a musician—he played the accordion—and I remember the joy he gave to people in a little bar/restaurant. So I'm sure his musicianship and dancing [gave me] my desire to perform.

Legally Blonde the Musical is running at the Ford Center/Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph, through Sunday, June 7. Tickets are \$32-\$95; call 312-902-1400, or visit www.Ticketmaster.com or BroadwayInChicago.com.

Read the entire interview with Jerry Mitchell—including his reflections of *Broadway Bares*—online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

More than planks & passion: Urban excursions

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

In an ideal world, an evening at the theater would mean a stroll to the playhouse, dressed and fed, the children/pets bedded down for the night, the day's cares put aside, and nothing to occupy our minds for the next few hours but a playwright's vision made manifest.

Nowadays, however, a show is likely to be only one stop on the itinerary, escalating theater owners' awareness of their immediate surroundings. A building with limited lobby space needs, at minimum, a shelter from snow or rain where early arrivals can wait for the doors to open. More sites with favorable venues are flanked by a nearby restaurant/bar/coffeehouse providing patrons sustenance as well as refuge.

Luckiest of all are the theaters adjoining hotel concourses offering food, drink, shopping and comfortable chairs for napping. But though cozy bed-and-breakfasts can be found tucked away in many Chicago neighborhoods, you don't have to be a tourist on an expense account to enjoy a leisurely urban excursion that includes a play among its other activities. Check out some of these one-stop entertainment centers:

—**Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark:** This cabaret space in fashionable Andersonville, located upstairs from Hamburger Mary's, welcomes Bailiwick Repertory's Bombs Away!, opening June 4. The new musical revue by Larry Bortniker and Sally Deering (authors of the hit biomusical, Dr. Sex) is premised on a fictional collection of Broadway melodies that never made it to the stage—among them, A Chorus Line's discarded "Too Fat To Dance," Mamma Mia's rejected "See Ya In IKEA" and the title song, which you will not hear in The Sound of Music.

"Mary's Attic was my first choice," declared

Bailiwick Artistic Director David Zak. "It's an intimate space with a great reputation for hosting small productions and cabaret acts. The neighborhood is bustling, the restaurant is thriving, you can eat and drink during the show—I think it's the perfect combination of the right show in the right location."

—**The Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted:** Now in its 21st year, Bailiwick's Pride Series festival of plays addressing gay issues runs July 10-Aug. 23 at the Hoover-Leppen Auditorium in the Boystown community center. The 2009 lineup pairs The Cousins Grimm, a fractured fairytale musical from the award-winning team of Dan Martin and Michael Biello, with Two Spoons, Peter Mercurio's lighthearted exploration of same-sex marriage and the American Way. Do your grocery shopping at the Whole Foods on the ground floor, eat your deli-purchased supper in the lounge (or on the deck, with its panoramic vista of Homo Heights) and then take the elevator to the play.



Bombs Away. Photo courtesy of David Zak

Marking Tracy Baim's 25th anniversary in Chicago LGBT media

25 for
charity drive 25

An Economic Stimulus
for the Chicago
LGBT Community

People can write their check to any registered non-profit serving the Chicago-area LGBT or HIV/AIDS communities.

The suggested charity list is:

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- Amigas Latinas
- Asians and Friends/Chicago
- Association of Latin Men in Action
- BEHIV: Better Existence with HIV
- Center on Halsted
- Chicago House
- Equality Illinois
- Howard Brown Health Center
- Lambda Legal Defense
- Lesbian Community Care Project
- Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association
- PFLAG: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
- Test Positive Aware Network
- Vital Bridges

Simply fill out this form and send along with your check.

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I am enclosing checks to the following charities in the following amounts:

Please mail checks to: Tracy Baim, 1900 S. Prairie Avenue, Chicago, IL 60616. Only checks accepted. Please ensure that check is made out to the charity of your choice.

"I wanted to mark this 25th anniversary by showing my appreciation for the wide range of non-profits serving our community, many of them for decades. Right now, our community non-profits and businesses are hurting. It's time for us to create an economic stimulus package for our own community."

-- Tracy Baim, publisher and co-founder of Windy City Times, started in LGBT media in 1984 with GayLife newspaper

We're asking for you to donate some multiplier of 25 (\$2.50, \$25, \$250 ...) to your favorite charity or charities for our community. A few charities are suggested, but feel free to add another qualified non-profit in the Chicago area.

We could have done a pie toss, a roast, or any number of humiliating public displays of attention. But instead, we wanted to create an opportunity to support our community's LGBT and HIV groups in their time of need.



What to do: Write out a check to your favorite charity's name (Example: AIDS Foundation of Chicago), and send that check to:
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Chicago, IL 60616

We will bundle the checks into "buckets" of bucks and present the charities their funds during Pride Month.

DEADLINE: June 5, 2009

The charity with the most donations will receive a

BONUS \$250 DONATION
from an anonymous donor

For information on shows in both venues, phone 773-883-1090 or log onto www.bailiwick.org.

—**The Coach House, 6205 N. Sheridan:** Located right on the Granville Street beach behind the Berger Park mansion, the cozy Waterfront Café, formerly known as The Dawg House, has expanded its menu from sand-and-sports grub to encompass daintier fare, accompanied by beer or wine. Audiences will also appreciate the adjacent Coach House Theater's relaxed dress codes for Snoopy! The Musical—a sequel to the popular You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown, opening June 26. Produced by The Journeymen and featuring alumni of the Gallery 37 Advanced Theater Program, this 80-minute family-friendly show provides a quiet-down time for nephews and nieces after a busy day of sunshine and volleyball.

"An advantage to working with the Park District—besides keeping our ticket prices low—is that it provides a home for our classes with the After School Matters outreach program," said Frank Pullen, artistic director of the Journeymen. "There's also the community connections—the school across the street offers our patrons parking and the café offers us opportunities to host group events like birthday parties. Oh, and the view! Did I mention the view?"

For information, phone 773-857-5395 or log onto www.thejourneymen.org.

—**Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee:** Inaugurated in 2006, this Bucktown storefront is unique among Chicago theaters in that it houses no resident company, but instead is a purely rental facility. What this means is that its almost non-stop entertainment ranges from family fare on weekend afternoons, to classic dramas in the evenings, to raucous late-nite drinking-game comedies. Though its tiny vestibule boasts no in-house dining facility, you can eat or drink at the pub two doors north or the tea shop two doors south, and finish in time to make a curtain.

"We often have people call us and ask 'what's playing tonight?'" said Kelly Williams, Gorilla Tango's marketing co-ordinator, with a laugh. "Playgoers can choose from a variety of shows produced by a variety of companies, all in one space. You can't always have a single show draw big audiences for a long time, so we encourage shorter runs, which are more likely to sell out without our having to set ticket prices too high."

For information and listings, phone 773-598-4549 or log onto www.gorillatango.com.

In August, Theo Ubique's cabaret dinner-theater in the No Exit Café, cloistered in Rogers Park's picturesque Glenwood Avenue district, presents The Taming Of The Shrew. But meanwhile, leave your shopping bags and take-home trays with the box office personnel and take advantage of the long summer evenings to enjoy a play.

BROADWAY IN CHICAGO

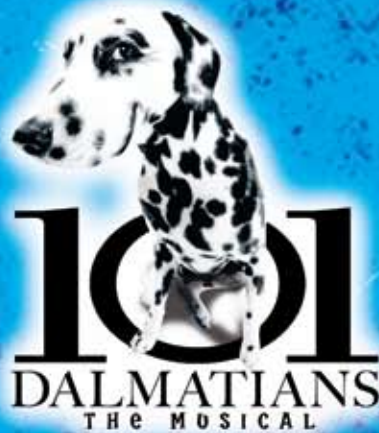
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Summer theater 'staycations'

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Times are tough and if your vacation funds are low, you may have to consider a "staycation" this summer. Oh sure, that phony buzzword has been ubiquitous across the media landscape lately, but hey, it makes fiscal sense.

For those of you stuck home, why not check out these suggested shows? You'll theatrically go to places both far and near, plus save a lot on travel expenses. All shows in Chicago unless otherwise noted.

Broadway in (and around) Chicago

Why visit New York City when Broadway stars and shows make stops in Chicago? We have our own sit-down production of *Jersey Boys*, while tours like *Mary Poppins* (through July 12) and *Legally Blonde The Musical* (through June 7) are currently playing. Check out these upcoming shows and concerts with impressive Broadway credentials:

—**Fiddler on the Roof**, Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre, June 10-28. This production (not based upon David Leveaux's controversial 2004 Broadway revival), is billed as Chaim Topol's farewell tour. Topol, of course, was the star of the original London production, the 1971 film version and the 1990 Broadway revival of *Fiddler on the Roof*. See him return to his iconic role of Tevye for one last time.

—**Spring Awakening**, Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre, Aug. 4-18. *Spring Awakening* may be set in the late-19th century, but the angst over teenage sexuality is up to date thanks to a rocking score by Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater. This show won a boatload of critical acclaim and eight Tony Awards when it bowed on Broadway in 2006. See for yourself if it lives up to all the hype.

—**Camelot in concert**, Ravinia Festival, Highland Park, June 5. Two-time Tony Award-winner George Hearn (*La Cage aux Folles*, *Sunset Blvd.*) headlines this concert staging of the beloved 1960 Lerner & Lowe musical set at the court of King Arthur. Soprano Sylvia McNair and baritone Rod Gilfry also star.

—**Patti LuPone with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra**, Ravinia Festival, Aug. 8. Two-time

Tony Award winner Patti LuPone (*Evita*, *Gypsy*) teams up again with conductor James Conlon and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in an all-Kurt Weill concert. On the bill is the sung Brecht ballet *The Seven Deadly Sins*, plus selections from Weill's Broadway shows like *One Touch of Venus*, *Lady in the Dark* and more.

—**Night & Day: A Cole Porter Evening featuring David Hyde Pierce and Victoria Clark**, Ravinia Festival, Sept. 6. Tony Award winners David Hyde Pierce (*Curtains*) and Victoria Clark (*The Light in the Piazza*) twist their tongues around Cole Porter's tricky wordplay and soaring jazz melodies in this concert featuring songs from shows like *Anything Goes*, *Kiss Me Kate* and more.

—**A Tribute to Rodgers & Hammerstein featuring Kelli O'Hara and Paulo Szot**, Ravinia Festival, Sept. 6. The stars of the hit 2008 Broadway revival of *South Pacific*, Tony Award-winning Brazilian baritone Paulo Szot and three-time Tony Award-nominee Kelli O'Hara, reunite for a special concert honoring Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II.

—**Debbie Reynolds**, Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace, Aug. 6-9. Debbie Reynolds is best known for being Hollywood royalty in films like *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*. But she, too, has been a big hit on Broadway (*Irene* in 1973).

Traveling abroad

If an overseas vacation isn't in the cards, consider these shows to whet your wish for far away places:

—**Cirque Shanghai: Bright Spirit**, Navy Pier's Pepsi Skyline Stage, June 3-Sept. 7. Chinese acrobats, contortionists and gymnasts come back to Chicago for the fourth annual stint of *Cirque Shanghai* at Navy Pier.

—**La Cage aux Folles**, Bohemian Theatre Ensemble at Theatre Building Chicago. Now to July 11. *St. Tropez* on the French Riviera is the setting for Jerry Herman and Harvey Fierstein's hit 1983 musical involving family values and high-kicking drag queens.

—**Greek**, Chicago Opera Vanguard at St. Paul Arts Center, June 2-13. The Oedipus myth gets updated to 1980s Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher in the Chicago premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's expletive-filled opera.

—**A Little Night Music**, Light Opera Works at Cahn Auditorium, Evanston, June 5-14. Sweden

in summer is where the mixed-up lovers of Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's 1973 musical wistfully play games of the heart.

—**Aladdin**, Chicago Shakespeare Theater at Navy Pier, July 1-Aug. 30. To lure in the tourist crowds, Chicago Shakespeare Theater turns to a stage adaptation of Disney's classic 1992 animated feature set in the mythical Middle East. Watch out for audiences singing along to "A Whole New World."

—**Cyrano de Bergerac**, Oak Park Festival Theatre, July 15-Aug. 15. Everyone knows why the dashing title hero of this classic French drama doesn't think he can be romantically loved. His long nose, of course.

—**The Light in the Piazza**, Marriott Theatre Lincolnshire, July 22-Sept. 20. Travel to 1950s Florence, Italy, with an overprotective mother and her daughter in Adam Guettel and Craig Lucas' critically acclaimed 2005 musical based upon Elizabeth Spencer's romantically complex novella.

—**Cabaret**, Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace, Aug. 13-Oct. 11. Weimar Republic Berlin was a swinging place to be for hedonists—that is, until the Nazis rose to power. See this classic Kander and Ebb musical which features such hit songs like "Wilkommen," "Maybe This Time" and "Cabaret."

Traveling stateside

No need to pile the kids into the station wagon and drive for hours on end. See these shows set in various states (and territories) around the U.S.A.

—**Pump Boys & Dinettes**, Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace, now through Aug. 2. If only real-life gas station attendants and waitresses were as talented at singing country music as the characters are in this hit 1980s musical. You'd never want to leave that roadside diner.

—**Bat Boy: The Musical**, Village Players Theatre, Oak Park, May 29-June 28. The tabloid headlines are true! A bat boy has been found in a West Virginia cave and now he's out looking for love!

—**Fifth of July**, Oak Park Festival Theatre, June 10-July 11. Rural Missouri in the 1970s is a place for ruefulness and disillusionment in this Lanford Wilson drama concerning the Talley family.

—**Up**, Steppenwolf Theatre, June 18-Aug. 23. This Chicago premiere play by Bridget Carpenter



Spring Awakening. Photo by Paul Kolnik

is not to be confused with that new Pixar film of the same name. Although the poster art shows a man being held aloft by balloons in a lawn chair, this comic drama is all about an American family trying to escape their many boundaries.

—**Boleros for the Disenchanted**, Goodman Theatre, June 20-July 26. Jose Rivera's magical realist drama concerns a Puerto Rican woman who gets swept off her feet to America, only to face some uncomfortable truth many years later from a visiting angel.

—**Tupperware: An American Fable**, The New Colony at La Costa Theatre, July 13-Aug. 9. Travel to 1950s Kissimmee, Fla., to visit Brownie Wise, the marketing genius behind Tupperware home party sales in this new musical by the creators of *Love is Dead: A Necromantic Musical*.

Staying at home

There are lots of things to explore at home. You fill the blanks with these two suggestions:

—**The Crowd You're in With**, Goodman Theatre, Now through June 21. What could be more relaxing than a backyard barbecue in Chicago? Well, it won't be comfortable in Rebecca Gilman's comic drama tackling three couples with very different approaches to parenting.

—**Clitoris Stories**, A Reasonable Facsimile Theatre Company at Conservatory, June 5-30. Tina Haglund takes a page from Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* to explore another vital part of the women's anatomy, located "down there."

Summer stakes for Chicago dance

BY ZACHARY WHITTENBURG

Sweeping conclusions about the state of performance in the era of *American Idol* have at this point all had their day in the sun. According to some, the integrity of the form is irreparably damaged: Put audiences put in charge of art and watch mediocrity rule. Others claim it's had no effect at all, that successes continue to be as unpredictable as ever despite an increased visibility of and ceremony surrounding their creation. Let's also note that few from either camp are saying the process and the argument aren't entertaining. Regardless, it's a format that's apparently here to stay and one that's being translated into nearly every vocation imaginable. Surely we're only months away from the premieres of *America's Next Top Trial Lawyer* or *So You Think You Can Pedicure*.

Outside the tailor-made arenas of ballroom dancing and flashy, commercial solo performance, dance hasn't been affected by this paradigm shift. If anything, the success of *Dancing With The Stars* and its ilk has instigated a bit of a reversal of the high- and low-cultural merge that's defined art of all kinds for the last 50 years. Choreographers and performers are self-segregating into those looking for a break via television and people who couldn't give a damn. Three years ago, though, a program was born that not only introduced friendly competition and cash prizes to the concert dance realm, but



Neta Pulvermacher.

did so in a way that preempted the concerns of those who would choose obscurity over even a whiff of selling out.

Israeli-born choreographer Neta Pulvermacher, briefly based out of Chicago, and the SoHo annex of revered New York City dance venue the Joyce Theater held the first A.W.A.R.D. Show! in 2006, inviting companies to compete in three heats for a \$10,000 grant for new work. Growing larger and more visible each year, Pulvermacher's brainchild hit the mother lode this spring when it was announced that the Boeing Company was going to underwrite the expansion of The A.W.A.R.D. Show! into Seattle, Philadelphia and Chicago (financier Scott G. Kasen will continue to provide the purse for New York's competition).

Key to its success is the idea that the audience-vote mechanism for advancing art isn't inherently

compromising at all. The acronym-loving Pulvermacher (the competition's name stands for Artists With Audiences Responding to Dance) came up with four things voters would be instructed to take into account: Potential, Originality, Execution and Merit (POEM), noting that "the way an audience views a work when it is empowered to vote is extremely different" than in a more traditionally-passive theater setting. Even to its most avid fans, dance can be oblique and hard to read. Pulvermacher elaborates: "The idea is that, by declaring out loud and upfront that audiences for The A.W.A.R.D. Show! are charged with the rights and the responsibility to make qualitative choices about what they see, the selection process becomes transparent and hopefully encourages honesty. Then, the audience and artists can get on with the task of really looking at the work before them for what it is and to try and see it deeply. For me, The A.W.A.R.D. Show! is about freedom—the freedom to see, respond, imagine, dream, create, make or even fail, and the freedom to speak your mind and heart."

With applications due barely a month after Boeing's grant was announced, Chicago's hopefuls had little time to prepare. The inaugural crop of contenders, though, are an impressively-varied collection of artists: Hubbard Street alumnus Francisco Aviña works in Mexico City, Las Vegas and Los Angeles as often as he does here, while Archana Kumar, who recently relocated from Seattle, uses Bharatanatyam (a classical Indian dance form) in tandem with improvisation and Western modern dance technique. Established companies jumped at the opportunity as well, including Lucky Plush Productions, The Seldoms

and Molly Shanahan/Mad Shak, as did upstarts like Rachel Bunting, Lizzie MacKenzie and Jessica Miller Tomlinson. Each of the the three programs will produce one winner; a fourth show brings them back and ends with two receiving one thousand dollars each and one netting the ten grand.

A panel of judges retains a good chunk of the final decision, but every participant will walk away with the kind of direct feedback and honest criticism only anonymity can provide. One of "the best features" of the series, Pulvermacher says, is the frank responses audience members write with their votes, which the choreographers get to take with them back to the studio whether they're victorious or not. She says people are "much more honest" in writing and that one of the main goals of The A.W.A.R.D. Show!—true discussion leading to more rigorous and vital work—is ensured by this unusual porousness between artists and observers.

Campaigning has already begun in earnest: Participating companies have been flooding their mailing lists with calls for votes and demonstrations of support. It will have to come down to what goes onstage, though, not only because of the overall quality of the 12 aspirants' work and talent but because the bills pit apples against oranges.

The A.W.A.R.D. Show! takes place June 24-28 at the Dance Center at Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan, at 8 p.m.; tickets are \$15 each. More information is available online at www.colum.edu/dance_center.

Destination theater: Summer festivals and summer stock

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

We've always been fond of summer-stock theater whether it's in an old barn, an old tent or out under the stars. Fortunately, there are plenty of summer theater options that readers can couple with a modestly-priced regional vacation, spiked with country cooking, quaint B&Bs or sleazy Bates Motels. (You pay your money, you take your choice.) The following venues all are within a few hours' drive of Chicago.

Illinois

Under new artistic leadership, the **Illinois Shakespeare Festival** (ISF) has jettisoned the roster of familiar Chicago actors and directors who peopled the ISF for years. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, although the Chicago-based artists were time-tested and capable veterans. In any case, the intimate and handsome ISF open-air theater at Ewing Manor in Bloomington, IL remains a splendid setting for a play, and the lovely Ewing Manor gardens are the welcoming and perfect setting for a pre-show picnic. Bloomington itself offers luxurious B&Bs, superb Victorian architecture and oodles of antiques. This year's June 25-Aug. 9 repertory season includes Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard III*, plus an update of Moliere's raucous farce, *Scapin*. There's also free pre-show jazz, 6:30-7:30 p.m. on Wed., Friday and Saturday nights; see www.thefestival.org.

Just about due south of the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, about 90 minutes further on, is the classic Illinois farming community of Sullivan, with its Victorian court house and Civil War memorial on the town square. Also on the square, a small former movie house has, since 1957, pro-

duced an annual season of summer stock, nurturing many name stars along the way. This year, the **Little Theatre on the Square** offers five shows June 10-Aug. 16, among them *The Wedding Singer*, *Funny Girl* and *Singin' in the Rain*. Sullivan is in the heart of Illinois Amish country, and is close to the Lincoln shrines of Springfield and New Salem, and to Lake Shelbyville recreation. FYI: The comfortable Little Theatre is air conditioned; visit www.thelittletheatre.org.

Wisconsin

Nestled in the rolling hills of the Wisconsin River Valley in Spring Green, **American Players Theatre** (APT) is going all-out for its 30th anniversary season, June 6-Oct. 4, with a rotating repertory of eight plays—five in the outdoor hillside theatre and three in the troupe's brand-new 200-seat indoor Touchstone Theatre. APT's core ensemble of veteran actors is mostly unknown to Chicago audiences but, increasingly, APT is using some of Chicago's finest directors, among them LGBT-community favorite William Brown, who will stage Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* and Coward's *Hay Fever* outdoors this summer. Also, Remy Bumppo Theatre Artistic Director James Bohnen will helm *Henry V* outdoors. About 50 miles west of Madison, Spring Green is a bucolic haven for theatregoers, canoeists, anglers, antiquers, campers, bikers and the like; see www.playinthewoods.org.

Further north in Wisconsin, in Door County's Fish Creek to be precise, there are plenty of familiar Chicago faces both onstage and backstage as the famous **Peninsula Players** has become "summer camp" for many of Chicago's best veteran performers, designers, directors and technicians. The beautiful gardens and weather-protected theater—all completely rebuilt just three years ago—are directly on the shores of Green Bay. Artistic director Greg Vinkler, well-known to Chicago audiences, is on hiatus this summer

(playing on Broadway in the successful new production of *West Side Story*) and has left operations in the hands of Tom Mula, another Chicago actor and director who's spent many summers at the Peninsula Players. This year's June 16-Oct. 18 season of five shows features *The Lady with All the Answers* (about Ann Landers), *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine* (about the Marx Brothers) and *Wait Until Dark* (about two hours) and two more shows. Visit www.peninsulaplayers.com.

Cheek-by-jowl with the Peninsula Players is the **American Folklore Theatre**, also in Fish Creek, presenting family-friendly, 90-minute original musicals under the stars in Peninsula State Park. As the company's name suggests, its work has some connection to American tall tales or history and to Wisconsin itself more often than not. This year's three-play season in rotating repertory, June 17-Aug. 29, includes *Cheeseheads: The Musical*, *Sunsets and S'mores* and *Muskie Love*, all three of which sound pretty dang Wisconsin (even though two of them were written by the Chicago team of Dave Hudson and Paul Libman). Oh, fer cry-eye, this is fun stuff, y'know? See www.folkloretheatre.com.

Things are far more serious on the eastern shore of Door County, in Bailey's Harbor, where the **Door Shakespeare Festival** has set up shop among the 425 splendid acres of Bjorklunden, once a private estate. There, in the garden, Door Shakes will serve up *The Merchant of Venice*, July 27-Aug. 16. Folks on the Eastern Shore describe it as "the quiet side" of the Door Peninsula, though it boasts plenty of shops, restaurants and activities. Visit www.doorshakespeare.com.

Michigan

Crossing Lake Michigan and curving downwards towards the southeastern tip, one encounters Saugatuck, Mich., an essential part of summer for many in the LGBT community, and the **Ma-**

son Street Warehouse (MSW) now is part of everyone's gay old time there. It's not the spot for Shakespeare or Shaw or even Noël Coward. No, this troupe's meat-and-potatoes is old-fashioned musical comedy, with this year's line-up including *The Full Monty* (so you can skip the nude beach), *Pump Boys and Dinettes* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. The June 26-August 30 season is as easy to take as a white wine spritzer and it's right downtown at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts (on Culver Street, not Mason Street). This is an indoor venue, so rain be damned! See www.masonstreet-warehouse.org.


Head east from Saugatuck on the I-94 and get off halfway between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, and you'll soon find yourself in the tiny rural town of Augusta, Mich., home to the **Barn Theatre**, a classic "straw hat" summer-stock operation in a big, ol' former dairy barn. There, for its 64th season, the Barnies will offer six shows, June 2-Aug. 23, including *The Who's Tommy*, *The Full Monty* and *Big River*. There's also a shed-turned-bar where you can sip a cool one and catch a nightly cabaret show after the main event in the Barn proper. And the Barn is air-conditioned. We say "moo" to that! There's a small state campground nearby, otherwise the closest accommodations are in K'mazoo (home of Gibson Guitars) or B'Creek (home of Kellogg's Corn Flakes). See www.barntheatre.com.

Correction

In a recent review of *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, it should have read that Steve Tolin (not Daniel Katz) was responsible for the bodies and special effects in the production.

Windy City Times regrets the error.

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The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Photo courtesy of Peter Coombs at The Marriott Theatre

THEATER REVIEW

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Playwright: Music and Lyrics by William Finn, book by Rachel Sheinkin, conceived by Rebecca Feldman
At: Marriott Lincolnshire Theatre, 10 Marriott, Lincolnshire
Phone: 847-634-0200; \$45
Runs through: July 19

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

Never mind the lackluster title. The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee is one of the most joy-inducing musicals around. To enter this irrationally high-stakes world of middle-school brainiacs and misfits is to be immediately infected with a giddy sense of irrational exuberance.

Directed by Rachel Rockwell, this is a production that's touching without being saccharine or precious. It's also as irreverently, scarily berserk as only adolescence can be. And, finally, it manages to be both good-natured and bizarrely, hilariously twisted as it sends up Stepford-smiling real-estate queens, juicebox-toting ex-cons and vice principals thisclose to unleashing their inner psychopaths. In all, it's a hoot. We've now seen Spelling Bee (when it ran for months at the Drury Lane, Water Tower Place) at least four times, and darn if the show doesn't still make us smile.

Lord knows one can fashion a musical around just about anything plot-wise, but even so, a spelling bee might seem like a stretch. But from the moment William Barfee (Eric Roediger) makes a square with his "magic foot" and belligerently claims his space by declaring, "I've marked this area with invisible tape," Spelling Bee pulls you in with its irresistible charms.

Barfee is one of 10 contestants in the bee (which includes four audience members, a set-up that allows for some of the funniest ad-libs this side of Second City), each one under the watchful gaze of long-ago champ Rona Lisa Peretti (Roberta Duchak, sporting a Crest-perfect smile that almost conceals something ever so crazed lurking just beneath the polished veneers) Vice Principal Douglas Panch (Michael Weber, gradually unraveling to reveal a mild-mannered man who could be Norman Bates long-lost, heavily medicated brother).

In addition to Barfee ("All my life I have been able to breathe through only one nostril. Today

is no exception."), the contestants include shy, lonely Olive Ostrovsky (Heidi Kettinger, in fine voice but not the best choice to portray a 12ish-year-old), stressed out Marcy (Kate Boren, nicely skewering all the stereotypes that surrounding overachieving Asian youngsters who master Mozart and speak six languages and make it to high school before hitting puberty), less than Mensa-material Leaf Conebear (Derrick Trumbly, a perfect spaz and utterly endearing as a kid whose family believes he's a total dumbbell) and the "stiffy"-impaired Eagle Scout Chip Barrington (Michael Maher, making the most of the money notes in "My Unfortunate Erection"). Finally, there's little Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre (Brandy McClendon), the "half-Jewish biracial daughter of two gay dads" who finds herself overwhelmed each year because Father's Day and Gay Pride Week fall within mere days of each other. (Listen for her oh-so perceptive take on Tom Cruise's alleged heterosexuality. It's a truthful hoot.)

The cast is charismatic even when the characters get weird (which is often), pulling the audience in at A keeping them wholly engaged to Z. And while William Finn's score isn't a masterpiece, it's charming, funny, and—in the deliriously perceptive "Pandemonium"—smart as a whip.

As Bee "Comfort Counselor" and recent parolee Mitch Mahoney (Kevin Smith Kirkwood) ushers the disqualified contestants from the Bee with a hug and a juice box, it's clear that everyone involved with this production is ultimately a winner.

THEATER REVIEW

Measure for Measure

Playwright: William Shakespeare
At: Promethean Theatre Ensemble at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr
Phone: 773-305-2897; \$20
Runs through: June 13

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Do you know what is meant by losing "at a game of tick-tack?" Are you unruffled by inverted syntax such as "a garden whose western side is with a vineyard backed?" Are you aware that "plucking down houses in the suburbs" refers to cracking down on brothels? Those who don't are advised to review the Cliff's Notes before attending this production, or heed closely the chortles

of an audience eager to show teacher that they did their homework. Because if your plan was to rely on the actors to apprise you of the story, you'll find yourself on your own.

What makes this situation especially unfortunate is that Measure For Measure is less about actions than about issues, with the *motives* of its personnel taking precedence over their deeds. In a culture of violence, *e.g.*, Macbeth or Titus Andronicus, murder and destruction of property make the plot's progress easy to follow, but in this case, our universe is a lawful one. The proliferation of vice in the Duke's domain is what spurs its ruler to embark incognito on a fact-finding tour, leaving the straightlaced Antonio to run the country in his absence. No sooner does this deputy pro tem set about cleaning up the town, however, than he himself succumbs to corruption, ordering the execution of a youthful swain for the crime of knocking up his girlfriend, and then demanding sex from the culprit's convent-dwelling sister in exchange for a reprieve.

When the topic of dramatic debate is the quality of mercy and humane enforcement thereof, we must consider carefully the different sides of the question. But while the mostly young thespians of the Promethean Theatre Ensemble exhibit impeccable enunciation and phrasing, director June Eubanks has allowed them to wholly ignore character and subtext, making for rote recitations bearing no resemblance to spontaneous utterances of recognizable personalities. (When Isabella chides Antonio, "You blaspheme the good by mocking me," we think, "So *that's* what he was doing!") And with no verbal cues to assist us in our comprehension, our interest in the arguments quickly flags.

Some of the minor characters succeed in convincing us that they are who Shakespeare says they are, and a provocative opening scene depicting a lascivious masked ball with couples dancing to a heavy-metal rendition of "The Expense of Spirit in a Waste of Shame" promises an original approach to a problematic classic. But then the principal players start to talk and we're right back in the classroom.

THEATER REVIEW

The Piano Lesson

Playwright: August Wilson
At: Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis
Phone: 773-753-4472; \$32-\$54
Runs through June 7

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Seeing August Wilson's 1990 drama The Piano Lesson serves as a vital reminder of how much the late playwright was a master of both American history and magical realism. Court Theatre's lovingly staged revival under director Ron OJ Parson is a must-see for anyone—particularly for those who love hearing cracking good dialogue that doubles as musical poetry.

As Wilson's 1920s entry in his 10-play cycle documenting African-American lives in the 20th century, The Piano Lesson shows members of the Charles family in Pittsburg in the midst of the Great Migration.

Causing much of the conflict is a debate over what to do with the family's slavery-era piano that is covered in historical carvings. Berniece wants to keep the piano so her daughter, though she silently resents the pain the piano has caused her family. But her loud-mouthed brother, Boy Willie, travels north so he can sell it and use the money to buy farm land.

Simmering beneath the surface of the family are loads of personal resentments and recriminations, not to mention superstitions about ghosts that also seem to take sides over the piano.

While some may be disappointed that Wilson leaves some plot threads dangling in The Piano Lesson, the play does provide a glorious window into lives of an African-American family still haunted by violence, yet hoping for a better future.

The Court Theatre's Piano Lesson is blessed

CRITICS' PICS

Crazy for You, Theater at the Center, through June 14. Shawn Johnson? Phooey! You want to see somebody who can really dance? Check out Richard Strimer getting tap-happy (on the roof of a car, no less!) to the Brothers Gershwin. Sure the plot's ridiculous, but the music is absolutely un-stoppable. CS

Macbeth, Babes With Blades at LaCosta Theatre, through May 30. We always knew they could swash buckle with the best, but thanks to Kevin Heckman's direction, the Babes With Blades also speak Shakespeare more eloquently than the high-paid swells at the Pier. You've got one weekend left to hear them do it. MSB

Once on This Island, Porchlight Music Theatre at Theatre Building Chicago, through June 28. Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty's Little Mermaid-inspired musical gets smartly transplanted from the Caribbean to New York City, giving a clever Sesame Street storytelling vibe to this charming tale. SCM

Rock 'n' Roll, Goodman Theatre, through June 7. The latest from uber-intellectual Tom Stoppard uses Marxist philosophy and rock music as a symbol of dissent to frame the collapse of Czech Communism, 1968-1992. It's didactic but splendidly performed. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

with a wonderful cast of Wilson veterans (and a few newcomers) who all clearly relish fleshing out their characters.

Any production of The Piano Lesson rises or falls on the actor playing Boy Willie, and we have a winner with Ronald Conner. He firmly takes charge and virtually steamrolls everyone with his character's single-minded determination.

Tyla Abercrombie's Berniece is powerfully reticent, showing a woman wrestling with life's disappointments (and one who must cope with Boy Willie's blustery routine).

In the roles of the uncles, both A.C. Smith and Alfred H. Wilson bring a wealth of experience to their respective roles of railway worker Doker and washed-up jazz recording artist "Winning Boy" (Wilson is particularly amazing as he tickles the ivories and sings along).

Brian Weddington gets the fresh-faced country boy Lymon just right as a first-time explorer of a big northern city, while Allan D. Edge brings all the humor and gravitas to the up-and-coming preacher Avery (who is also courting the widowed Berniece).

In the role of Grace, Alexis J. Rogers wrings every bit of humor out her good-time girl cameo.

After staging Fences and with Ma Rainey's Black Bottom on the horizon, Court Theatre is rapidly becoming the place to see Wilson's works. Catch The Piano Lesson while you can.



The Piano Lesson. Photo by Michael Brosilow

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THEATER REVIEW

A Couple of Poor, Polish-Speaking Romanians

Playwright: Dorota Maslowska
At: Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland
Tickets: 773-384-0494;
www.trapdoortheatre.com; \$20
Runs through: June 27

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Tiny Trap Door is Chicago's go-to playhouse for contemporary Eastern European theater, such as this 2006 work that ran for two years in Warsaw, Poland. With its bleak comedy, shifting perspectives and shifting identities of its two principal characters, *A Couple of Poor, Polish-Speaking Romanians* is rooted in European absurdism with just a pinch of surrealism. It concerns scruffy social outcasts—people you'd cross the street to avoid—and how our perceptions of them may differ from the reality of who they are.

Set in the Polish countryside near Warsaw, it portrays Dzina and Parcha, a young, punked-out, glue-sniffing and aggressive couple. They could be clowns as costumed by Beata Pilch and Sarah Walls Rosenberg, especially Parcha in mismatched half-pants and striped leggings. Parcha speaks too loudly, and he and Dzina invade people's personal space. They look—and are—unwashed yet complain about the scatological stench of others. In four independent vignettes, they interface with a frightened man who gives them a ride after they force themselves into his car, a waitress, a wealthy drunken woman and a diseased old man. These four characters seem to represent societal norms ranging from proper social behavior to religious belief.

But it's not as simple as that, for Dzina and Parcha may be more than the poor displaced Romanians they say they are, desperate to return to their country. Parcha may be a Polish TV star on a drug-fueled weekend fling with a casual pick-up. Now, having lost his money and his cell phone, he's unable to return to Warsaw in time for his 8 a.m. shoot. Both he and the pregnant Dzina are filled with self-disgust at lives that seem increasingly bizarre (as represented by the exaggerated "normal" people) and meaningless, with substance abuse and loveless sex as the only escapes.

It's a barebones production as directed by Max Truax and designed by Ewelina Dobiesz (set), Richard Norwood (lighting) and Aaron Covich (videos of a snowy forest and foundering ship). A dog-leg of gray walls with several shredded posters defines the empty stage, with four wooden chairs completing the scenery in a production that rarely wanders from black, white and gray. Acting must carry this production, and it certainly does with Tiffany Bedwell as Dzina and Kevin Cox as Parcha. Bedwell's appealing gamin look makes one wonder why this quietly-deep young woman has hooked with the creepy Parcha. Cox, fresh from outstanding work

in Bohemian Theatre Ensemble's *Playing With Fire*, conveys almost-out-of-control energy in Parcha's drug-fueled early scenes and desperation as the binge high wears off.

Something of the play's European context and theatrical style—that absurdist aesthetic—is lost on American audiences, but viewers will identify with its well-done contemporary distillation of existential angst, spiritual malaise and vague threat.

'Catechism' sisters reunite May 30

Six of the actresses who have played "Sister" in the long-running *Late Night Catechism*—currently celebrating its 17th anniversary in a new venue, the Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted—will reunite for a special performance Saturday, May 30, at 8 p.m.

Lisa Buscani, Mary Zentmyer, Rosie Newton, Liz Cloud, Lisa Braatz and Margaret Kustermann will all play "Sister"—three in Act One and three in Act Two.

Tickets are \$30 each; call 312-988-9000.

SPOTLIGHT



The *Weekly World News* may no longer grace supermarket tabloid shelves, but its spawn lives on and sings. That's right, the shocking headlines about a boy found in a West Virginia cave who is half man and half bat have inspired the hit off-Broadway show *Bat Boy: The Musical*. Village Players Theatre presents *Bat Boy: The Musical* at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays through June 28 at Village Players Performing Arts Center, 1010 W. Madison, Oak Park. Tickets are \$25; call 866-764-1010 or visit www.village-players.org. Photo courtesy of Village Players Theatre



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AUTOS

Battle of the boxes

BY JOE LAMURAGLIA

I remember countless hours spent as a child playing in a box. Yes, a standard-issue cardboard box. If it was raining or too cold outside, my mother would pull out a box from the closet and the fun ensued. To add context to this story, our TV was B&W, there were only three channels and computers and video games were things of the distant future. So if there was nothing suitable on TV and mother couldn't send us outside to play (or lock us in the dog pen—true story), we had to entertain ourselves and, gasp(!), we used our imaginations.

My favorite model of box was large enough for me to sit in with enough room for my legs to extend in front of me. I would modify said cardboard plaything with a old 45 from my brother's record collection taped to the center cylinder of a paper towel roll for, you guessed it, my own steering wheel. I would then spend hours driving in my mind; or at least until one of my nine siblings decided I was having too much fun and would fabricate a massive crash and destroy my paperboard play toy.

These memories came flooding back recently when I experienced three box-like vehicles in a row: The Scion xB, the Kia Soul and the Nissan Cube. All three are funky entries into the entry-level segment and give new meaning to "Econo-box." This triad is similar in price point (under \$15), powertrain choices (4-cylinder with either a 5-speed manual or automatic) and intended target market (the ever-elusive "youth" market). But like the products housed in the myriad of

cardboard containers at your big-box store, the shape alone doesn't indicate what's inside. Each vehicle is as distinct as the myriad of products that come wrapped in Georgia Pacific's best.

The Scion xB (base: \$15,750)

The Scion xB is the oldest of this group and the one that started it all in 2004. The first iteration was a direct translation of a Japanese domestic product that helped launch Toyota's Scion brand.

The Scion feels considerably less sophisticated than its new competition. It has the most powerful engine but in this case, more power isn't necessarily a good thing. The torque steer was quite strong and the brakes on our test car were not up to the performance the engine delivered. My first 5-minutes behind the wheel were hair-raising as I hit the brakes upon approach to a particularly lumpy exit ramp near Newark, N.J. I overestimated their stopping power and ended up bouncing violently through the corner. I never got used to the brakes and driving in and out of New Jersey/New York City traffic had a few uncomfortable moments.

Where the xB excels is interior room. If you want maximum interior space, this vehicle wins hands down. With the seats folded down, a dorm room's worth of accoutrement can fit with plenty of room for a driver and passenger. Headroom is also exemplary.

Bottom Line: The first, the biggest but not necessarily the best.

The Kia Soul (base: \$13,300)

The 2009 Kia Soul isn't exactly a box in the same vein as the Scion xB and Nissan Cube but the price point, target market and unconventional look make it a natural competitor to those more square in nature. It is technically a "two box" design like the xB and Cube but its design is the most sporty and aggressive of the bunch.

It is also the most conventional of the three, which in this group isn't that hard to do.

Don't get me wrong; the Kia Soul is far from "normal" when it comes to affordable transportation. Like its competitors, its design and customization options allow owner's to create their individual Soul but in my opinion, the shape, size and driving characteristics have more of a broad appeal than the Scion or Nissan.

Of the three, I'm referring to the Soul as the box that the entertainment center came in. You can't help but smile when you approach the car and with color choices like "Alien" and "Motel" it is evident that the designers and product planners had fun creating it. Once you get behind the wheel you notice that the fun continues on the inside as well. The design is cohesive and entertaining without trying too hard. Even the seat fabric and patterns are fun with designs ranging from black with glow-in-the-dark "Soul" inserts to an available houndstooth pattern.

The Nissan Cube (base: \$13,990)

I'm just going to come out and say it; the Nissan cube is cute. And by "cute" I mean a little cartoonish. And by "cartoonish" I mean, well, "girly"...not that there is anything wrong with that. There have been many an argument over whether or not cars can be gender-associated and I've argued for and against it but in this case I have to say that the cube = cute (follow the definition trail above).

The real surprise is when you begin to drive the cube. The 1.8-liter engine delivers 122 horsepower via either a five-speed manual or an advanced continuously variable transmission (CVT) and in this funky box 122 horsepower is enough. I spent a few hours behind the wheel in Miami in both the manual and CVT and was pleasantly surprised at how fun to drive the cube was. It can't match the xB on raw oomph and it isn't as spirited as the Kia Soul but the cube holds its own in city and on the open road. The CVT takes bit of getting used to as the engine will rev to an optimal RPM and then stay there as the cube gathers speed. It is a bit odd to the unaccustomed but after a few hours it becomes normal. Owners of other Nissan's won't even notice. The manual is the real gem as it allows the cube to get a little crazy and even chirp a tire here and there. Both combinations of engine/transmission deliver excellent MPG numbers of 28 city/30 highway.

I'm calling the cube the Playhouse. It looks like a less-than real vehicle but like some Playhouses my friends had growing up, it is surprisingly sophisticated. If you love the design, you'll love the car. If the design freaks you out, I challenge you to give it a chance and at least test drive it. It will surprise you.

Read more at www.Gaywheels.com.

Gaywheels.com: Gay car shoppers are 'brand-agnostic'

Gay car shoppers are driven by proximity to a gay-friendly dealer rather than by loyalty to a specific brand

River Edge, N.J.—Data from Gaywheels.com shows that the majority of gay car shoppers are brand agnostic when searching for a new vehicle. The analysis examined how in-market gay car shoppers search for new car retailers, found that more than half (54%) of gay consumers allowed their purchasing decision to be driven by the proximity of a gay-friendly dealership rather than an allegiance to a specific make of vehicle.

"Gay consumers are concerned that when they enter the showroom with a partner of the same sex, they won't be afforded the same respect as a straight car buyer," said Gaywheels.com founder Joe LaMuraglia. "These concerns, whether right or wrong, are what drives gay car shoppers to seek out a gay-friendly dealership first and foremost when it comes time to spend money on a new car, truck or SUV."

When gay car shoppers did search for a specific brand, Mazda was the most-requested nameplate with 5% of the search results, which equates to 2.4x their market share. Other brands that over-index with this demographic include Audi (2.9x), BMW (1.8x), Volkswagen (1.8x) and Mercedes-Benz (1.4x).

Every franchised new-car dealer in the United States is listed in the Gaywheels.com dealer locator, but dealers have the option to advertise via premium listings that allow the user to e-mail the showroom, get directions or click directly to the dealers' web site. While Gaywheels.com does not classify dealers as gay-friendly, simply advertising to the Gaywheels.com user is generally interpreted as such by gay car shoppers.

"Many dealers are missing an inexpensive and easy way to increase showroom traffic and sales," added LaMuraglia. "63% of the respondents to the survey said that advertising in gay media is a way for a company to define themselves as gay-friendly and these results indicate that the users are seeking a gay-friendly dealer near them."

The Top 10 Dealer Locator brands list is based on Web site statistics gathered Jan.1-April 30 from Gaywheels.com's servers.

See www.gaywheels.com.



The Nissan Cube (left) and the Kia Soul.

VEHICLE REVIEW

2009 Toyota Corolla

BY CASEY WILLIAMS, GAYWHEELS.COM

Brother Boy's flashing eyelashes and Dr. Eve's store-bought titties bring excitement to a couple of middle-aged characters on Logo's *Sordid Lives*. Without Leslie Jordan's portrayal of a drag queen obsessed with Tammy Wynette and Dr. Eve's plan to de-homosexualize him, they would be a couple of old skin sacks heading towards retirement—boring, in whole. Kinda reminds me of the old Toyota Corolla.

I don't think anybody ever confused the Corolla with stimulating. It's as stable and conservative as your grandmother's banker and as affordable as a White Castle hamburger. That's been enough to make the Corolla the best-selling nameplate of all time, but that's not enough. To slay Honda Civics, Saturn Astras and Nissan Sentras, Toyota had to go in for a makeover. When Toyota designers saw the sexy sleek Civic a couple of years ago, they nearly hurled their last supper. They should be feeling better

by now.

Much of the Corolla's tall, three-box design will cause no trauma among the faithful, but a snarly aero face, steeply raked windshield, smooth bodysides, and squinted taillamps are a bit like gluing falsies on a 53-year old man—they look fabulous, but glitz up a simple soul. Large alloy wheels and ground affects up the amps in the sporty column while body color door handles, and crisp creases dress for a night out. Toyota claims the car's styling was in collaboration with its studios in Turin, Italy.

Corolla's base 132-horsepower 16-valve 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine, connected to either a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission, sings like Olivia Newton's umpteenth comeback attempt on the stage at Bubba's bar in the show. For more stage presence, step up to the available 2.4-liter four-cylinder that summons 158 horsepower to bark rubber. I'll tell you right here and now that I'm not a fan of the twitchy electric power steering, but it contributes to excellent fuel economy ratings of 22/30-MPG city/hwy.

No big surprise, most Corolla drivers are practical people. They'll wet themselves over an

extra storage bin above the glove box, door storage that can hold 20 oz. bottles, and large center console. They can even store their glasses in a compartment over the rearview mirror. Whether driving cross-country or just to Fresh Market for sushi and Morbier, four passengers ride high and comfy under the sedan's tall roof, enjoying XM Satellite Radio, protected by side curtain airbags, and getting a commanding view of the road and sidewalk hotties.

Don't worry if nobody respects your version of excitement; you can make fun of their gas-popping luxury barges all the way to the club and

back. Toyota took a boring, but infinitely practical compact sedan, gave it a facelift, added athleticism, and delivered a car as reliable as the laughs on *Sordid Lives*.

It's never too late to have some fun—just ask Rue McClanahan about her character, Peggy Ingram. From a proper Baptist grandma to bar hussy and adulteress, she blazes a marvelous trail for the staid and boring—just like the all-new 2009 Toyota Corolla.

See www.gaywheels.com.



2009 Toyota Corolla. Photo courtesy of Toyota

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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES



Departures.

Departures; Easy Virtue; film note

I want to have my funeral in Japan. That was my thought as I walked out of the intensely moving, lyrical **Departures**, the surprise winner of this year's foreign-film Oscar; it was a "surprise" because the little-known film took the prize over the highly touted *The Class* and *Waltz with Bashir*. Guess what? Academy voters got it right. *Departures*, from director Yojiro Takita, is a beautifully realized poem to life—and death. During Takita's movie, the characters deal with a lot of big themes that are all delicately layered into Kundo Koyama's dense but never heavy script. The film, 10 years in the making, is picturesque and graceful with touches of gentle comedy, awash in lovely images and a gorgeous music score by Joe Hisaishi, with one poetic sequence following another.

At the outset of the film, Daigo (Masahiro Motoki, who looks a bit like Lou Diamond Phillips and holds the viewer with a deeply felt performance) is a professional cellist whose orchestra

is unceremoniously dissolved. Without the job he won't be able to pay for the expensive cello he's bought but, luckily, his perky, supportive wife Mika (Ryoko Hirouse) suggests they move back to Yamagata, his hometown, into the small house his mother left him in her will to start a new life.

Daigo spots an ad in the paper that reads "working with departures—no experience necessary" and, thinking it's a travel agency, decides to apply for the job. But it's a misprint and should have read "working with the departed." The job is to help out with "encoffination," the Japanese ritual in which the body is prepared in full view of the mourners before it is placed in the casket and then cremated. A great deal of social prejudice comes with this task, but the money the practical boss Sasaki (Tstutomu Yamazaki) offers him is too good to turn down.

Daigo's first duty is almost too much—he is to model as a dead body in a video about how to go about the ritual. (When glimpsed in the traditional sumo outfit, the gay male portion of the audience will quickly discern something else about Daigo—he's hot stuff.) But slowly, as the seasons pass, he learns to appreciate the precision, importance and dignity inherent in the job. (One of the ceremonies for a transgendered female—an apparent suicide—is particularly moving.) At the same time, Daigo, who plays the child-sized cello that was a gift from the father who left him behind, is overwhelmed by

memories of his past.

Filled with expressive, contemplative scenes and performances that are quietly powerful, *Departures* (which is subtitled) is a sensitive, bit-tersweet masterpiece that earns its tears honestly.

Stephan Elliott—the openly gay director noted for *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*—returns to filmmaking after suffering a 2004 life-altering skiing accident with a frothy adaptation of the Noel Coward comedy-of-manners play **Easy Virtue** (also the basis for an early Hitchcock film). Jessica Biel stars as Larita, a madcap race-car driver from the United States who smokes, drinks and makes no secret of her passion for her new husband, the sexy John (Ben Barnes), the scion of a snobbish but stony broke English family that welcomes him home with open arms and his new wife with the cold shoulder.

The movie, set in the roaring '20s, combines the eccentric character elements of *Gosford Park* and the dizzy froth of *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*, and is a sort of Jazz Age Mother-in-Law with Biel's hot little platinum-blonde pistol pitted against John's mother, the implacable, overbearing Veronica (Kristin Scott Thomas). Veronica presides over her down-on-its-luck, tweedy family with an iron fist and rattles Larita with venomous comments like, "Hilda isn't as experienced as your wife." Beat. "No one is." Colin Firth plays her distracted, henpecked husband and there are also two gawky sisters, a pair of comedic servants and a runty, obnoxious lapdog that is the family pride and joy—and the bane of Larita's existence.

The action, which includes a climactic ball and a hunt scene directly out of *Mame*, is set in the deteriorating estate the family clings to as the mother hopes that Little Lord Spoiled Brat will take on the burden of running the place. But Larita has other plans, and wants her husband off to the next race as soon as her speeding

roadster can carry them. The madcap pace of the film is helped along by new, jaunty renditions of a raft of Coward tunes, including "Mad About the Boy" and hot jazz-baby arrangements of some oddities like "Car Wash" (which actually work quite well).

Elliott's got all the right elements and the film zips along, but his conception has one rather noticeable sore thumb in the cocktail shaker—Biel, who simply doesn't have much talent for brittle comedy and is hopelessly out of her element around the other actors, who make hay out of the sharp dialogue exchanges. Biel displays a light vocal touch with a few songs but she doesn't have much variety in the speaking department—certainly not enough to make her lines zing. Later, though, she gets better when the depth of the character enters in and we see what Larita's had to do to rise "above her station." And every time Firth enters the scene—my God—he's just effortlessly terrific, as is Thomas as the horrid mother.

Biel's rather lumpen line readings aside, *Easy Virtue* has enough stylish zest and laughs to make is an easy recommendation.

Film note:

—Local filmmaker Louis Lapat will be present for the Illinois premiere of his documentary **Win or Lose: A Summer Camp Story** on Sunday, May 31, at the Highland Park Movie Theater, 445 Central. The film follows a group of boys participating in an extremely competitive event called "Collegiate Week" at a summer camp attended primarily by boys from the northern suburbs. Lapat and members of the documentary cast will participate in Q&As following both the 11 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. screenings. The movie will be broadcast on PBS later this year. www.winorlose-movie.com

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitytimes.com or www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site.

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Kage Alan.

BOOKS

Kage Alan: School daze

BY YASMIN NAIR

Kage Alan's latest book, **Andy Stevenson vs. The Lord of the Loins** (Zumaya Boundless; \$14.99)—a sequel to *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to My Sexual Orientation*—is an adroitly written and funny tale about the perennially bemused Andy Stevenson, a gay college student who struggles with the semester's assignments as he looks for love. His sexual encounter with fellow student Tristan leads to heartbreak. And then, with his best friends, Kim and Ryan, he plots Tristan's downfall. *Windy City Times* spoke to Alan.

Windy City Times: Is Andy based on you? And why did you write a sequel about him?

Kage Alan: I'm not Andy and Andy's not me, and yet he came out of my experiences. In the first book, he's almost an idealized version of how people think somebody gay might be at certain times when they don't know who they are. There, the character came to terms with his sexuality, so, as an author, what do you do after that? You try to find a relationship with someone compatible. I had a lot more to say about the character in the second book, which was about relationships, about finding something you don't want, thinking you do and then finding what you do want and realizing the difference between the two. The first one comes back to bite him in the ass.

WCT: Your book is filled with banter but it doesn't seem gratingly artificial. How do you write dialogue so that it's fresh and funny?

KA: The dialogue is usually the first thing that gets done. I hate going in and adding description because I think I'm terrible at it. I base the dialogue on the importance of the scene, what I'm trying to convey with it, and on the dialogue I have with my own friends. A lot of the way my

friends and I talk is exactly the way we will talk to each other. And we do have a lot of banter back and forth. So it's taking the best of the banter.

WCT: I'd like to talk about one scene in particular without giving it away—the pivotal one between Tristan and Andy. It's very funny, but it's also about something possibly traumatic.

KA: That was the one scene in the book that I rewrote the most. It felt too harsh too often. And I wanted to leave it as open-ended as possible. I see it as: Andy was there in the moment, he was questioning it, but he wasn't really allowed to fully explore the questions before the event happened. In my mind, if he had really, really wanted to go, he would have gone. He knew something wasn't right. But he went through it anyway because he thought it was what he wanted. But that was the one scene I struggled with the most. [I wanted] to make it seem like he didn't want to be there but he went through it anyway and was ultimately overpowered by the whole sensation—which is why I injected a bit more humor into it.

WCT: Another pivotal scene takes place in a bathhouse, and it's Andy's first time in one. He's monogamous and his sexual life seems quite different from that of earlier generations, when gay men's first experiences might have been in bathhouses. And then he has a conversation with one of the regulars who explains what some might like about bathhouse culture. Was that a deliberate attempt to talk about different sexual politics?

KA: It was deliberate. When I put the bathhouse scene in, I thought, there's got to be a point to this. He's got to balance his ideas. What does it mean to him? How can he express that? So he has a conversation with someone else who says, "We can argue the morality but this is what it used for, this is what it means to people." And then he throws it back to Andy by asking, in essence, what does this mean to you? If it doesn't mean any of these things, why are you here?

I was trying to show two sides of the story there. Tristan exemplifies the stereotype: fun, free, do whatever you want. Andy sees that and he knows from his first love Jordan that it doesn't have to be like that. And he doesn't like it when Tristan uses him, and doesn't want to make that mistake again. I think he goes against the stereotype because people do think that all gays go and have sex the first time.

Kage Alan will be at Borders, 2817 N. Clark, on Saturday, May 30, 2-5 p.m.



Jorjet Harper's Hatshepsut's Daughters.

Prairie Avenue Gallery hosting 'Pride' show

Prairie Avenue Gallery will host a Pride Show in honor of Gay Pride Month in Chicago. The opening reception will take place Sunday, June 7, 12-4 p.m., with food, music and mingling with the artists.

The gallery is housed in the Prairie Avenue Historic District, in the Keith House, one of the few remaining historic homes along Prairie Avenue. The building, located at 1900 S. Prairie, is also the former home of Woman Made Gallery.

The Prairie Avenue Gallery was founded in the mid-1980s by Joy Darrow, a photojournalist who was a managing editor of the *Chicago Defender*. Darrow died in 1996, and her daughters, Marcy and Tracy Baim, re-opened the gallery in May of this year with a show featuring freshmen students at the School of the Art Institute.

The Prairie Avenue Gallery was known for ground-breaking shows, including what is believed the first AIDS art show in the mid 1980s, a showcase of Black photojournalists, and shows featuring emerging Chicago photographers, sculptors and painters.

The new Prairie Avenue Gallery will have weekend hours. During the week the gallery will offer classes and studio space for photographers and artists.

Artists in the Pride Show include photographers Rick Aguilar, Steve Becker, Kat Fitzgerald, Lisa Howe-Ebright, Renee Brown and Betty Lark Ross. The painters and illustrators are Jorjet Harper, Juarez Hawkins, Carol James, David Johnson, Andrea Kasprzyk, Mary King, Riva Lehrer, Otis Richardson, Erik R. Sosa and Travis. Carmen Noriega will display her stained glass.

Labrys Chicago will present musicians Christine Kent, Lisa Danielson and Kat Fitzgerald.

The Pride Show is in honor of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Pride Month and will be up through June and July. The hours are: Sunday, June 7, 12-4 p.m. opening; Sat., June 13, noon-3 p.m.; Sat., June 20, 12-3 p.m.; Sunday, June 21, 12-3 p.m.; Closed pride weekend (June 27-28); and open every Saturday and Sunday in July, 12-3 p.m. Call 312-907-7909 for hours by appointment.

Also, look for Prairie Avenue Gallery on Facebook.

Queer-owned gallery airs 'Laundry'

The first show at barbara&barbara gallery is showing 17 artists working around the theme of "Laundry" in their preferred medium. Among the LGBTQ artists whose works will be shown are Sierra Berquist, Kara Wabbel, Ray Arroyo, Dustin Yager, Alex Coggins, Celia Rose Marks and Sofia Moreno.

The gallery is located at 1021 N. Western. See www.barbaraandbarbaraloveyou.com.

Leather more



The 31st annual International Mr. Leather (IML) conference took over the Chicago Hilton, 720 S. Michigan, with its market, competitions and parties over Memorial Day Weekend. More than 50 contestants from around the world competed for the title of Mr. IML 2009. Jeffrey Payne, Mr. Texas Leather 2009, is the new 2009 IML; first runner-up was Brendan McGovern (Mr. Leather Ottawa 2009) and second runner-up was Alan Penrod (Mr. Atlanta Eagle 2009). McG of the Black Eagle Toronto was named International Bootblack. Photos by Jerry Nunn, Steve Starr and Israel Wright; more photos are in *Nightspots* and online at www.windycitymediagroup.com

WHAT TO DO?

Wednesday, May 27

Cattle Call Revue Angelique Munro's birthday show: Munro, Ashley Morgan, Miss Foozie, Bianca Chablis Balenciaga, Tina Torch, Delores Van-Cartier. 9 p.m. Cattle Call, 1547 W. Bryn Mawr, 773-334-2525 www.cattlecallchicago.com

Folksongs of Illinois 1:30 p.m. Free. Skokie Theatre Music Foundation, 7924 N. Lincoln Ave. www.skokie-theatre.org or 847-677-7761

Kat Fitzgerald's Birthday Bash w/ The Pin Ups! 7:30 p.m. and 4 Women Only, hosted by Kat. Uncommon Ground 1401 W. Devon Ave. www.uncommonground.com

Thursday, May 28

Windy City Gay Idol Wild Card Night 9 p.m. sign up/10 p.m. start Roscoe's 3356 N. Halsted cynthia@windycitymediagroup.com www.windycitymediagroup.com/Idol2009.html

milkweed, intimate look in poetry/theatre at three African-American female survivors of gender-based violence. Presented by Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media Columbia College Chicago \$15 / \$7. Through May 29. Presented at Northwestern U., Annie Mae Swift Hall, 1920 Campus Dr., Performance Spaces Studio 7 p.m. Free. Reservations required: 847-491-3171

NewTown Writers Fortnightly Writing Workshop 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Gerber-Hart Library 1127 W. Granville Ave. http://www.newtownwriters.org

Friday, May 29

5th Annual Queer Prom, theme "Amor sin Fronteras" (Love without borders), youth \$10, allies \$25, National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th St. www.wrte.org/homofrecuencia 312 455-9455 x 203

HIV: Hey, It's Viral, Beyondmedia screening. 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Free. Chicago Teacher's Center, 770 N. Halsted St. #420, 773-857-7300 or beyond@beyondmedia.org

Saturday, May 30

Belmont-Sheffield Music Festival N. Sheffield from Belmont to School.

Noon - 10 p.m. Saturday, noon - 9 p.m. Sunday Central Lakeview Merchants Association

Dignity/Chicago seminar on work and working from a Christian perspective. 10 - 11:30 a.m. Broadway United Methodist Church, 3344 N. Broadway. Free Register at 312-458-9438 or DignityChicago@aol.com by Wednesday, May 27

Fischerspooner at Metro, 3730 N. Clark St. 8 p.m.

Party with a Purpose An Insight Arts House music dance party 8 p.m. - 1:30 a.m. Loyola Univ., Lake Shore Campus. The Centennial forum's Rambler Room corner of Sheridan and Loyola Ave. www.insightartsliberation.org/\$5.

West Suburban Gay Association Bike Ride, Illinois/Michigan Canal in Willow Springs 11 a.m. west_burbs_gay@yahoo.com, 630-512-0100, www.wsga.com

Windy City Gay Idol Semi-Finals 2 p.m. sign up/4 p.m. start Sidetrack 3349 N. Halsted cynthia@windycitymediagroup.com www.windycitymediagroup.com/Idol2009.html

Windy City Rollers women's flat-track roller derby league's sixth bout of the home season. Doors 5 p.m. /Game 6 p.m. UIC Pavilion, 525 S. Racine Ave. Tix www.windycityrollers.com

Youth Pride Center and Windy City Black Pride present Chicago's Next Top Model, the youth face of Chicago Pride. Info at youthpridecenter@gmail.com

Sunday, May 31

Couture for Autism Victor Blackful "Tha Dizz" from Soul 106.3FM hosts. Spike's Rebellion and comedian Damon Williams, cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, entertainment 4-6 p.m.. Fashion show 6-7 p.m. DJ "Tha Dizz" 7-9 p.m. \$35. Holiday Inn at 500 Holiday Plaza Dr. Tix www.fabulosityavecamour.com

West Suburban Gay Association Picnic and concert at Cantigny Park, 1 p.m. west_burbs_gay@yahoo.com, 630-512-0100, www.wsga.com

Monday, June 1

4th Annual Highland Park Art Walk through June 31, 2009. Info from Anatomically Correct Gallery

312-514-1802

Citywide Pride event LGBT Adoption: Managing the process at home and at work. Speakers: Elizabeth Keith, Rosemary Mulryan and Andrew Cripe. 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP / Bank of America #300, 222 N. LaSalle St. ; see www.citywidepride.info

Men on Mondays, a monthly social networking night for men to meet other men in a relaxed and welcoming bar-alternative atmosphere. Tonight: Dick O'Days Big, Lovely Bingo. 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. Rooftop Garden, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. culture@centeronhalsted.org, or call 773-661-0763

Tuesday, June 2

Homolatte featuring Dana Kaye & Samantha Cathcart 7:30 p.m. Free concert. Big Chicks/Tweet, 5024 N. Sheridan

Ladies at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre, major four-night show features tonight: Sharon McNight with Songs to Offend Almost Everyone. 7:30 p.m. Tix \$30/40 at www.centeronhalsted.org/coh/calendar/events.cfm#702

SHURE sponsored Open Mic - Hosted by Kat Fitzgerald. 9 p.m. \$10. Uncommon Ground 1401 W. Devon Ave. www.uncommonground.com

Tuesday on the Terrace: Veteran jazz saxophonist Fred Anderson 5:30 - 8 p.m. Free. Museum of Contemporary Art Terrace and Sculpture Garden, 220 E. Chicago Ave. mcachicago.org

Youth Pride Center Youth Pride Series. Each week different YPC teams, groups, fraternities, choirs, etc. take part in an exciting production to showcase the well known talent of YPC youth. Free. 7 p.m. Pie Hole Pizza Joint, 737 W Roscoe @ Halsted youthpridecenter@gmail.com or 773-690-6790

Wednesday, June 3

Best of Broadway, 1:30 p.m. \$10. Skokie Theatre Music Foundation, 7924 N. Lincoln Ave. www.skokie-theatre.org or 847-677-7761

Citywide Pride Speaker: Esera Tuaolo, former professional football defensive lineman in the National Football League for nine years, including a participant in Super Bowl XXXIII with the

Atlanta Falcons 8:30 a.m. - 10 a.m. Light breakfast. Kraft Foods Inc, Three Lakes Drive, Northfield. RSVP by May 28. www.citywidepride.info

Cirque Shanghai through Sept. 7. \$14.50 - \$19.50 adults, \$12.50 - \$14.50 kids. Pepsi® Skyline Stage® Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand Ave. 800-745-3000 or www.ticketmaster.com/shanghai

Ladies at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre, major four night show features tonight: Spider Saloff performs Entertaining Guest "World Premiere" 7:30 p.m. Tix \$30/40 at www.centeronhalsted.org/coh/calendar/events.cfm#702

Out & Proud in Chicago re-airing here and in other cities of the 2008 WTTW documentary about the lives of LGBT Chicagoans. www.wttw.com 773-583-5000

Women on Wednesdays, Chef Jenny Urban teaches new ways to grill and marinade the Urban Café way! Chix Mix Productions speed Dating. 6 - 9 p.m. Rooftop Garden, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted. culture@centeronhalsted.org, or call 773-661-0763.

Thursday, June 4

Qweirdo recurring showcase of Chicago's top gay comedians/improvisers on Thursdays. 1, 2, 3, Fag! (Seth Dodson, John Hartman, Kellen Alexander) will invite different gay groups and solo acts. During June, benefits Lambda Legal. 9 p.m. \$8. 773-880-0199 i0, upstairs, Del Close Theatre, 3541 N. Clark St. www.chicago.ioimprov.com

Saturday, June 6

Amigas Latinas Gala, Siempre Latina "An Evening of Elegance" benefits. Amigas Latinas 7:30 p.m. - 12 a.m. Center on Halsted. Info on tix and rsvp: info@amigaslatinas.org

Sunday, June 7

Prairie Avenue Gallery Pride Show opening reception noon-4 p.m. Food, music, mingling with the artists. 1900 S. Prairie Ave. former home of Woman Made Gallery.

Thurs. & Sat., May 28 & 30



DOWN THE IDOL PATH

Windy City Gay Idol will hold its wild-card night and semifinals at Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted, and Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, respectively.

Photo of last year's winner, Cori Calderon, by Kirk Williamson

Wed., June 3



TACKLING A SUBJECT

Former pro football player Esera Tuaolo will talk about coming out, among other things, at Kraft Foods, Three Lakes Drive, Northfield. The talk is part of the Citywide Pride series.



BY TERRI KLINSKY

The warm weather is finally here. Check out these upcoming pet events.

—Sunday, May 31, is **Paws Chicago's Angels with Tails** adoption event on Michigan and Oak, 12-4 p.m. Adoptable pets include dogs, cats, puppies and kittens. See www.pawschicago.org for more information.

—Sunday, May 31st is **Woofstock 2009** at Pooch Park at Channelside Park, 3220 Oakton, Skokie. The event takes place from 11 a.m.-3 p.m., and is sponsored by the Skokie Park District and The City of Evanston. This award-winning dog-and-people party featuring dog acts,

demonstrations, music, food, exhibits and family/dog activities and contests will be full of fun and excitement had for all. Dogs are welcome. Admission is free; call 847-674-1500 for more information.

—Sunday, June 7, is when Red Door Animal Shelter's **9th annual Gimme Shelter** walk for animals takes place. It will start at 10 a.m. at Indian Boundary Park, 2500 W. Lunt. The event raises much-needed money for the shelter. You

can register online at www.reddoorshelter.org, and you can even pick your own team: the rabbit, dog, cat or "I love all animals" team. Prizes are given to the teams raising the most money. Registering online is \$15 per adult, and \$5 per kid 3-12. (Kids under 3 get in for free.) Your registration fee gives you brunch, a Walk! T-shirt and access to the Doggy Splash Pool. Entertainment this year includes animal communicators, tarot card readers, magicians, and much more.

PETS FOR ADOPTION



The Red Door shelter is absolutely overwhelmed with rabbits. Meet Lucky and Ramon. They are a bonded pair of rabbits who were rescued from Kuwait. They were found in a meat market in Kuwait City and a nice couple contacted Red Door for help. The couple paid to fly the bunnies to O'Hare, and now they are safe at the shelter and ready to be adopted. Contact: Red Door Animal Shelter, www.reddoorshelter.org. E-mail info@RedDoorShelter.org or call 773-764-2242.

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—Saturday, June 13, is the Anti-Cruelty's **9th Annual Wooftop Party and Adopt-A-Thon**. The event takes place 12-4 p.m. This dog day of summer fun fest features a KISSFM Adopt-A-Thon, food, refreshments, games, raffles, pet psychic Denise Zak, doggie massages and much more. The event takes place on the upper levels of The Society's parking garage with a great view of the City's skyline, 169 W. Grand. Admission is \$20 for adults and \$5 for children. For more information call Emily Ledergerber at 312-644-8338 ext. 319 or visit www.anticruelty.org.

—Saturday, June 13, is when **Anderson's Midsommarfest** features the annual Pet Parade. Enter your pet in contests ranging from prettiest pet, best pet tricks, to best pet costume. The contest takes place at 12 p.m. at the family stage located on the corner of Clark Street & Summerdale.

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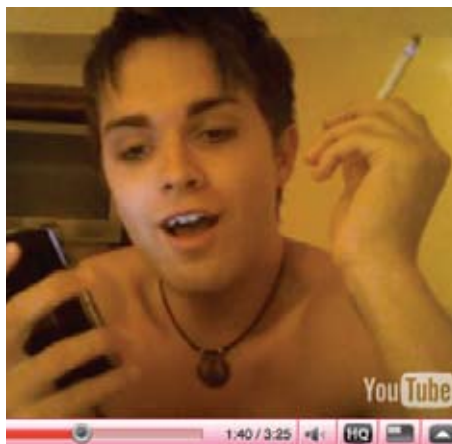
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BILLY MASTERS

"I have just as much experience as he has—I just wasn't in *Wicked*."—Kris Allen responds to a reporter on the eve of his "American Idol" coronation. I'm told it wasn't as catty-sounding when he said it.

This past week, the networks announced the fall schedule, sending good and bad news to so many of our favorites. On the positive side, Sherri Shepherd gets her own sitcom, "Sherri", on Lifetime—the *de facto* gay network, if you ask me (and I know you would if you could).

FOX cancelled "The Sarah Connor Chronicles". This isn't one of my shows, but I took an interest when I heard that Thomas Dekker who plays "John Connor" (the part taken on by Christian Bale in the upcoming big screen flick) made a Web video pleading for the show to be renewed. In the funny clip, a shirtless Dekker says (in part), "I have extra need to be picked up—Daddy's got bills to pay." I'm sure some daddy out there would be happy to pick him up. The phrase "as a goose" comes to mind! You can watch it on BillyMasters.com.



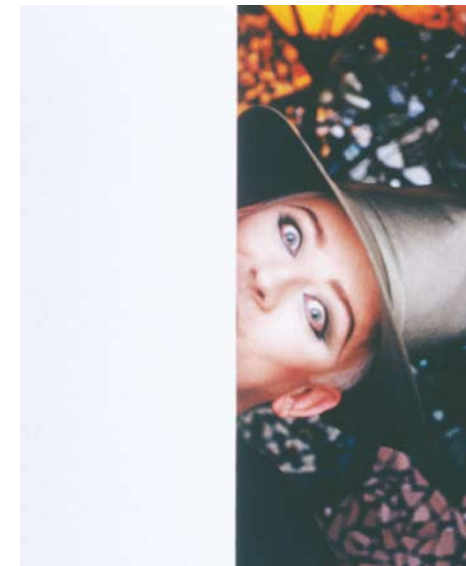
Little Thomas Dekker is fighting the good fight on YouTube.

In a strange twist even by daytime-television standards, Thom Bierdz will soon return to *The Young and the Restless*. Will he return as Phillip Chancellor III. That's the question. His character apparently died in a drunk-driving car accident. Since then, he's returned as a ghostly apparition. Lately, there's been some question about who he was and who was buried. With Bierdz joining the cast as a regular in August, it looks like we'll find out some of those answers.

Far more predictable casting is John Barrowman joining the West End cast of *La Cage aux Folles*. After Graham Norton's stint as "Albin/Zaza," people felt the show would promptly shutter. Then it won a number of Olivier Awards (the UK version of the Tonys). Suddenly there was renewed interest. I'm told that Norton passed on the chance to return to the production, and in walked Johnny.



In what would normally be happy news, Boy George has been released from prison. It's not all good news—his freedom will likely cost him a significant drop in sexual activity. Be that as it may, he was quite fortunate to only have to serve four months of his 15-month sentence for false imprisonment and assault of a male prostitute. The reason for his premature ejection was "good behavior". He will, however, have to maintain an early curfew and wear an ankle bracelet—which I'm sure he'll accessorize smashingly.



Boy George comes out... of lockup.

Richard Hatch is one step closer to freedom. Last week, the "Survivor" winner was moved from the federal prison he's been calling home for the past three years to a halfway house. He's expected to be released Oct. 7.

Speaking of halfway houses, hetero porn star Mary Carey is putting her time on "Celebrity Rehab" and "Sober House" to good use—as the premise for a porn flick. After a three-year hiatus from porn, "Celebrity Pornhab with Dr. Screw" hits the shelves with Mary Carey taking on the role of the rehab nurse, rather than a patient. She has a girl/girl scene with Lexxi Tyler, who plays patient "Tanya Clitaen". I'm fairly certain Carey could have gotten the real thing if she asked nicely.

Carey ain't the only one showing some skin. Shirley Jones is hoping to become a Playboy Centerfold. I know—freaky, right? But Jones' wacky hubby, "comic" (and I use that term loosely) Marty Ingels is trying to make this plan a reality. "She's still drop-dead gorgeous, and at the age of 75, a natural beauty." Of course, Shirley hasn't publicly signed off on this idea and "Playboy" hasn't shown any interest. But Marty's giving interviews.

Hunk of yesteryear Steve Antin has announced that he'll direct a big-screen musical for Screen Gems called *Burlesque*. And sexy Steve has his eyes on some big names for the flick. He's asked Cher to play the owner of a burlesque club where Christina Aguilera works as a singer. Antin knows a bit about the subject matter—his sister is "Pussycat Dolls" founder Robin Antin.

This week's "Ask Billy" question is about someone with a new job. Steve in Dallas asks: "What do you know about the guy who was just cast as Thor? I saw a report on one of those entertainment shows, and was excited because I'm a comic collector. I love that Marvel is making a movie about him, but I didn't recognize the name."

You may not know the name Chris Hemsworth, but you might know the face—he's in the new Star Trek flick as the father to James T. Kirk. While he only gets 12 minutes of screen time

'So You Think...' judge apologizes for remarks

Nigel Lythgoe, the executive producer and a judge on the popular reality-TV show So You Think You Can Dance, has apologized for remarks he's made.

According to E! Online, after two men (Misha Belfer and Mitchel Kibel) danced a samba together on the May 21 premiere, Lythgoe said, "I think you probably alienate a lot of our audience. ... Do you know what? I'd like to see you both dancing with a girl."

Lythgoe then continued online, commenting "The same-sex ballroom guys did remind me of Blades of Glory. However, I'm not a fan of Brokeback ballroom."

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) then urged the show's fans to contact the FOX television network in an effort to get Lythgoe to apologize.

According to GLAAD.org, Lythgoe did apolo-

gize, stating, "I sincerely regret the fact that I have upset people with the poor word choices and comments I made both during the taping of the 'So You Think You Can Dance' audition and on my personal status update. I am not homophobic and it was extremely upsetting for me to be classed as such.

"I have been a dancer, and involved in the dance world, for nearly 50 years. Professionally and personally, I believe the sexual orientation of an auditioner or contestant is irrelevant."

'American Idol' here Sept. 2

All top 10 American Idol finalists from the latest season—including Adam Lambert, Allison Iraheta, Danny Gokey, Lil Rounds and Idol Kris Allen—will embark on a tour beginning July 5.

The American Idols Live! Tour 2009 will stop at Allstate Arena, 6920 N. Mannheim, Rosemont, on Wed., Sept. 2, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$43.50-\$69.50 each; see www.ticketmaster.com.

SKYY VODKA Miller Lite present

Windy City Gay Idol - @mosphere

WINDY CITY GAY IDOL 7TH ANNUAL

@mosphere did not disappoint as we met our new finalists Brad (top, right) and Jason (below, right) in the Windy City Gay Idol competition on Wednesday, May 20. Catch the wild card round Thursday, May 28 at Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted St. Photos by Kirk Williamson

BILLY from page 24

as George Kirk, the 25-year-old made enough of an impression on the folks at Marvel to be handed the lead role (incidentally, the flick is being directed by actor/director Kenneth Branagh). Chris has also signed a deal to star in a remake of the 1984 flick "Red Dawn", taking on the role originated by Patrick Swayze. What do we know about this Hemsworth guy? Judging from the shirtless pics on BillyMasters.com, he's like a hotter version of Chris Pine, which ain't all that bad. Oh, and he's a popular Australian actor—which means he's big down under. Bada-bing!

When a Partridge and a porn star have something in common (other than Danny Bonaduce), it's definitely time to end yet another column. It's here—Gay Pride Month is upon us. And, you know what I'm proud of? That this column will soon celebrate 15 years in print. In fact, www.BillyMasters.com has been serving you since 1998—or, to put it simpler terms, before anyone else. And you know what that means? I'm old!!! But not so old that I can't answer each and every letter. So drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Boy George and Richard Hatch hook up! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

WINDY CITY GAY IDOL 7TH ANNUAL

Join your friends at Sidetrack for the **Semi-finals!** and watch some of the season's top performers vie for a chance to move onto the finals & be named Windy City Gay Idol 2009 and win great prizes.

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SPORTS/RECREATION

Calif. team nets NAGVA title

BY ROSS FORMAN

Robbie Martin, who played high school and Division I college volleyball in the Chicago area and still lives in the Windy City, recorded the game-deciding block in the championship game of the top-tiered AA Division of the 27th annual North American Gay Volleyball Association (NAGVA) Championships, held May 21-24 at Navy Pier.

Martin helped his Hermosa (Calif.) Beaches win a three-game match over the San Francisco Raptures to capture their sixth consecutive national championship; he has played on the last three championship teams.

"That was a nice moment," Martin said of his block.

Martin was an All-State player at Providence Catholic High School, and then played two years at Loyola University. He is gay and now is the director of finance for CouponCabin.com.

The NAGVA Championships drew a record 133 teams with about 1,100 players, including teams from Puerto Rico and Canada.

"It was an incredible tournament, the largest event we've ever had," said NAGVA President Rick Talley of Houston. The previous record for teams participating was about 90. "The play has been very, very good in all four divisions. There were a lot of very close matches."

The 2010 NAGVA Championships will be held in Portland, Ore.

The results were as follows:

—AA Division:

1st Place: Hermosa Beaches
2nd Place: San Francisco Raptures
MVP: Pono Kahale, Hermosa

—A Division:

1st Place: San Antonio Cherries
2nd Place: Houston Cherry Poppers
MVP: Albert Trevino, San Antonio



Volleyball player at the NAGVA Championships. Photo by Ross Forman

—BB Division:

1st Place: Minneapolis Smack
2nd Place: Seattle Battle Cattle
MVP: Joe Thronson, Minneapolis

—B Division:

1st Place: Baltimore Disturbia
2nd Place: New York High Klass
MVP: Phuoc Le, Baltimore

Chicago softball team excels in Minn.

BY ROSS FORMAN

Hunter's softball team captured the C Division title in the prestigious annual North Star Classic Tournament, held May 22-24 in Minneapolis.

However, it wasn't an easy road for the 13-member team of Chicagoans. They lost two of their first three games in round-robin play, but

then won five in a row for the championship.

The North Star Classic drew a record 47 LGBT teams from across the country, including four other Chicago teams (Basil Hayden, Cattle Call, Sidetrack Blues and the Spin Wildcats) in the 18-team C Division.

"We were led by the pitching of Randy Detert and the bat of Greg McNitt," said Hunter's team manager Brian Kettner, who plays second base. "Randy was the pitcher of record in every game and Greg had a really big bat while playing first base. Shortstop Danny Tag was really solid defensively."

"This was a huge win for us, a strong all around effort from everyone. The team has played together for many years, so it was very exciting to win this tournament, especially since this tourney has history of breeding the [Gay Softball] World Series champion." (This Hunter's team finished fifth in the 2008 Gay Softball World Series in Seattle.)

Hadley's pedal shows his mettle

BY ROSS FORMAN

Robert "R.J." Hadley participated in his first long-distance, fund-raising bicycle ride in 1993—and since, he's logged about 100,000 miles on two wheels.

Hadley, 46, who lives in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, has participated in 18 rides, including five consecutive Ride For AIDS Chicago events, the annual 180-mile trek from Chicago to Lake Geneva and back. This year's adventure kicks off at 7 a.m. on Saturday, June 6, at Northwestern University, and Hadley is part of the five-member We Can Ride team that also features Joe Edde (of Minnesota), Karl Brunner (Chicago), Argenis Vegas (Chicago) and Chris Mellgren (Minnesota).

There are 20 Ride For AIDS teams this year, an event produced by Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) to raise funds for HIV/AIDS services in the Chicago area. The Ride takes place annually the first weekend of June in recognition of the date scientists began to notice the unusual disease that would later be known as AIDS.

The Ride for AIDS Chicago is now in its sixth year. The 2009 beneficiaries are About Face Theatre, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Better Existence with HIV (BEHIV), South Side Help Center, Vital Bridges and TPAN.

"It's a ride to raise funds for six worthwhile causes," said Hadley. "I got involved with these [rides] because they are inspiring; they were something to do. Plus, they are fun and raise funds for good causes. And, they are challenging, too."

"There's a lot of camaraderie, team-building during the ride. And I really want to help raise awareness—in small towns throughout Illinois and Wisconsin."

Hadley's cycling journey has led him to such ventures as the San Francisco-to-Los Angeles ride, the Minneapolis-to-Chicago ride (six times), the Fairbanks-to-Anchorage ride and a Montreal-to-

Portland, Ore., ride. He also participated in cycling at the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago.

He's used three bicycles during his career, and bought his first years ago at a sporting goods store for \$500. He now rides at least three days per week, and went for a 25-mile ride after this interview.

Most Ride for AIDS Chicago participants take pit stops every 15 to 20 miles for nutrition or bathroom breaks. Individual riders are asked to raise a minimum of \$1,000 each.

So what's on tap after the ride?

Hadley, who works at Center On Halsted, always takes off Monday and Tuesday "and I just sit home and veg," he said.

"Rob Hadley and Team We Can Ride have been involved with Ride for AIDS Chicago for many years," said Rhett Lindsay, TPAN's associate director of special events and communication. "Their dedication to this fundraising event and to the cause is one of the strongest among all of our riders. We're appreciative of their leadership in helping us recruit more riders and increase fundraising dollars at a time when AIDS service organizations need it most."

AIDS Walk/Run registration starts

Online registration for AIDS Run & Walk Chicago 2009 is now open at www.aidsrunwalk.org.

To participate alongside thousands of supporters Saturday, Oct. 3, in Grant Park, visit www.aidsrunwalk.org and click "Register Now." E-mail runwalk@aidschicago.org if there are any questions.

AIDS Run & Walk Chicago 2008 raised more than \$500,000. To further support these local organizations, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) will give 100 percent of all money raised by CommunityDirect teams back to the participating HIV/AIDS service organizations.

WSGA's bike ride in Willow Springs

The West Suburban Gay Association will have a bike ride along the Illinois/Michigan Canal in Willow Springs Saturday, May 30, at 11 a.m. The excursion will start at the forest preserve parking lot located off Archer, below Willow Springs Road, and may include a stop at a roadside café.

For more info, see www.wsga.com.

Sky's 'Battle of the Sexes' June 2

Members of the women's pro basketball team the Chicago Sky will take on a group of male celebrities in a basketball game scheduled for Tuesday, June 2, at the UIC Pavilion at 7 p.m.

Among the men who will be playing are actors Larenz Tate, Donald Faison (TV's *Scrubs*), Frankie Muniz (TV's *Malcolm in the Middle*) and Michael Clarke Duncan as well as singer Brian McKnight and rapper Nelly.

Tickets are \$15-\$225 each; see www.wnba.com/sky. For more information about the game, call 866-SKY-WNBA.

Komen for the Cure's golf tourney June 1

The Chicagoland affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure is hosting its first-ever Golf for the Cure tourney at Boulder Ridge Country Club, 350 Boulder, Lake in the Hills, on Monday, June 1.

Registration starts at 10:30 a.m. registration; the start is 12 p.m. The affiliate is hosting Golf for the Cure in an effort to raise \$100,000; 75 percent of those funds will stay in the Chicagoland community and 25 percent will go to the Komen headquarters for national research.

There will be an 18-hole tournament played, along with lunch, a VIP networking dinner and auctions. Tickets are \$60-\$250; see www.KomenChicago.org.

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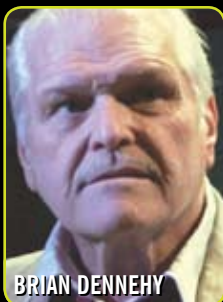
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