

WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI, TRANS AND QUEER COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

VOL 35, NO. 08 **JAN. 8, 2020**

www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

HERE COMES THE JUDGE

Out judicial candidate (and current judge) **Levander Smith Jr.**
Photo courtesy of Smith



9

WINTER THEATER PREVIEW

Classics, revivals headed to the stage.
Photo of Amira Danan and Gage Wallace in A Doll's House by Gracie Meier



14

LOOKING BACK

National, global LGBTQ news from 2019.
Photo of Mara Keisling from NCTE



4



A VIEW TO A THRILL

The best (and worst) in TV and movies

PAGES 13, 18

IN REMEMBRANCE

WCT remembers local LGBTQs who passed in 2019



PAGE 8
Rich Pfeiffer.
Photo by Hal Baim

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INDEX

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NEWS	
National LGBTQ highs and lows of 2019	4
Global LGBTQ news in 2019	5
Local passages in 2019	8
Out gay judicial candidate Levander Smith Jr.	9
Study: Caregivers of LGBTQs with Alzheimer's	10
The year in LGBT parenting	12
ENTERTAINMENT/EVENTS	
Best/worst in 2019 movies	13
Winter theater preview	14
Golden Globes wrap-up	15
Eric Huffman: From 'Mormon' to 'Mean Girls'	16
'The Guilty Feminist' podcast comes to Chicago	17
Best/worst in 2019 TV	18
NIGHTSPOTS	19
Classifieds	21
Calendar	22

UPCOMING 2020

WINDY CITY TIMES PRINT DATES:

Jan. 22, 2020	April 1, 2020	June 10, 2020
Feb. 5, 2020	April 15, 2020	June 24, 2020
Feb. 19, 2020	April 29, 2020	July 8, 2020
March 4, 2020	May 13, 2020	July 22, 2020
March 18, 2020	May 27, 2020	Aug. 5, 2020

online exclusives at
www.WindyCityTimes.com

MOTOR GRADE

Which vehicles made the cut as the top vehicles of the decade?

Photo (left) courtesy of Gaywheels.com

KINSEY SCALE



December concert coverage includes shows by Roy Kinsey, The Joy Formidable and the band Whitney.

Photo of Roy Kinsey by Vern Hester

LOUD AND PROUD

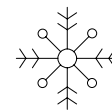
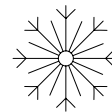
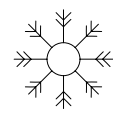
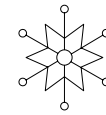
Live Out Loud marked 10 years with an inclusive fashion show.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Stacy London, Project Runway and Eddie Murphy.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

Whether you're upsizing, downsizing, rightsizing, or staying put, we wish you and your family...

Peace, Health, & Happiness
in the New Year!

Brad Lippitz Group

773.404.1144
brad@bradlippitz.com
bradlippitz.com
3323 N. Broadway

Brad Lippitz has supported and contributed more to LGBTQ causes and candidates over the years than any other real estate broker in Chicago. And Brad's team happens to be in the top 10 in all Chicago with over \$80 million sold in 2018. If you need to choose a real estate broker, why wouldn't you choose a community leader who consistently gives back year after year? Brad looks forward to working with you!

National roundup: Highlights and lowlights

COMPILED BY ANDREW DAVIS

In the last Windy City Times print issue, the publication covered 10 of the most important LGBTQ events that happened nationally in 2019. However, media outlets reported a lot more that occurred, from the sublime to the ridiculous.

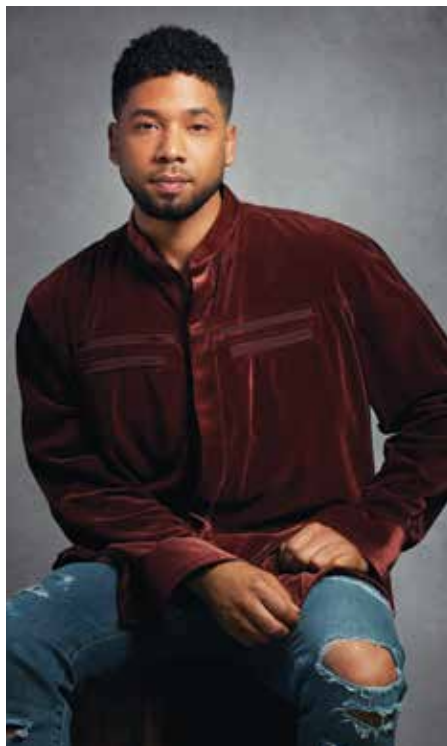
—Turning 50: Cities around the country marked the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion at New York's famed gay nightclub.

—Death in Colorado: Alana Chen—a 24-year-old woman who shared her story to The Denver Post about undergoing conversion therapy through the Catholic Church after coming out to a priest—was found dead. Chen said earlier in 2019 she hoped to educate readers about the harm the therapy caused her. Authorities said Chen's death was "not considered to be suspicious."

—Sad trend: Continuing a sad trend, at least two dozen transgender or gender non-conforming people were fatally shot or killed by other violent means in 2019—and, again, the vast majority were people of color.

—Pivotal: The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in three cases of workers that were fired because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The implications of the impending rulings could have a monumental effect on the national landscape regarding LGBTQs and employment.

—Seeing the light: Lori Lightfoot made national headlines as the first openly LGBTQ mayor of Chicago—the largest U.S. city to date to have



Jussie Smollett.
Photo by Amanda Demme/Fox

such a leader.

—Just Jussie: Out gay actor Jussie Smollett also made national news by claiming to be the victim of a hate-based attack on Jan. 29. However, by the time the year ended, it was alleged that he orchestrated the incident; then, the charges were dismissed. At this point, the city is pursuing repayment of more than \$130,000 spent on the investigation—and Smollett has countersued.

—Military ban: In April, President Donald Trump's ban on transgender people serving in the military took effect. (People in the military who came out as transgender between 2016 and the date the ban took effect can remain in the forces under a grandfather clause.)

—Hey, Wisconsin: An insurance exclusion for transgender surgery for Wisconsin state employees was removed. In August 2018, the state's Group Insurance Board reversed itself to vote in favor of hormone and gender-surgery coverage for state employees.

—New York, New York: On Jan. 15, the New York legislature passed two pro-LGBTQ bills—the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) and a law banning so-called "conversion therapy."

—Stalled: The nomination of lesbian attorney Chai Feldblum for a third term on the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission died in the Senate when Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) declined to allow a vote to break a hold placed on the nomination by U.S. Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah).

—The Buck stops here: Forty-one LGBTQ and allied organizations released a statement to demand a thorough investigation by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and District Attorney's Office of the second death of a Black man at the West Hollywood home of Ed Buck, a prominent LGBTQ political donor/activist, within two years.

—Goodbye, Dolly: Broadway legend Carol Channing—known for her signature lead role in the Jerry Herman musical Hello, Dolly! and who continued performing into her 90s—died of natural causes at her home in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 97.

—Herman dies: Speaking of Hello, Dolly!, Jerry Herman—who was behind that musical as well as Mame and La Cage aux Folles—died at age 88.

—Texas first: For the first time in Texas history, the state legislature had an LGBT Caucus. State Rep. Mary Gonzalez—a four-term representative who identifies as pansexual and is the dean of the delegation—filed paperwork to create the caucus.

—Siperstein dies: Barbra "Babs" Siperstein—the first openly transgender member of the Democratic National Committee—died at 76. She served on the DNC's Executive Committee from 2011 to 2017.

—The Pete goes on: South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg announced Jan. 23 that he was in the early stages of a presidential run, forming an exploratory committee that would investigate



Mara Keisling.
Photo courtesy of NCTE

the viability of such a bid. Now, he has made history as the first openly gay Democratic presidential candidate.

—Front end: Best-selling novelist Patricia Nell Warren died at 82. Warren's 1974 novel, *The Front Runner*, told the story of an affair between a closeted coach and his out star athlete. LGBTQ running groups all over the nation are named *Front Runners* after the book.

—Net loss: Pro-LGBTQ organization Athlete Ally dropped lesbian tennis icon Martina Navratilova from its advisory board after the 18-time Grand Slam champion wrote an op-ed in *London's Sunday Times*. Navratilova criticized the rules regarding transgender women in athletics in her op-ed and called their participation in female events "cheating and unfair."

—I love a parade: Despite its longtime reputation as an LGBTQ enclave, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, just hosted its first-ever gay Pride Parade last year, on Feb. 23. More than 100,000 people attended.

—Denied: The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal of Phyllis Young—who runs the three-room Aloha Bed & Breakfast in Honolulu—who turned away a lesbian couple due to her Christian beliefs. A state court ruled that Young violated Hawaii's public-accommodation law—which, among other things, bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation—when she would not allow Diane Cervilli and Taeko Bufford to reside at the B&B in 2007.

—Filmmaker passes: Pioneering experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer—whose works involved a distinctive lesbian perspective—died of ovarian cancer at age 79.

—Jail time: Transgender ex-Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning once again found herself in jail—this time for refusing to testify about her disclosure of military and diplomatic secrets to WikiLeaks in 2010.

—Grilled chicken: Newly released tax documents showed that Chick-fil-A was still giving money to anti-LGBTQ organizations—years after

promising to stop. However, conservative groups also railed against the fast-food chain once it was discovered that it also donated to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

—No therapy: Conversion therapy was banned in several states last year, including New Hampshire, New York, Massachusetts, Colorado and Maine.

—Get out the vote: In Tampa, Florida, Jane Castor easily beat her opponent in the mayoral runoff and became the first openly LGBTQ person elected mayor of a top 100 city in the Southeastern United States.

—Mass exodus: Most of the staff of the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) departed. Leaders offered buyout packages to all staff in a four-and-a-half-hour meeting last week, sources said. The offer came after staffers wrote a letter demanding that Executive Director Mara Keisling and Deputy Executive Director Lisa Mottet resign within 18 months, citing a racial divide between NCTE and leaders within trans people of color.

—Introduction: Sen. Edward Markey (D-Massachusetts) and Congressman Joe Kennedy III (D-Massachusetts) introduced the Gay and Trans Panic Defense Prohibition Act, which would ban the use of the gay and trans "panic" defenses.

—Rapinoe's run: Out lesbian activist/soccer player Megan Rapinoe had a year that was nothing short of amazing. Not only did she lead the U.S. women's national team to a World Cup win, but *Sports Illustrated* magazine named her its Sportswoman of the Year—and she even parlayed her exposure into a TV appearance on *The L Word: Generation Q*.

—It's a wrap: In a sudden move on Oct. 11, Shepard Smith said that after more than two decades at Fox News, he was stepping down as chief news anchor and leaving the network. In 2017, Smith came out as gay.

—Over the Hill: U.S. Rep. Katie Hill, D-California, announced her resignation from Congress days after she admitted to having an inappropriate relationship with a campaign staffer before coming into office. News of Hill's resignation came after the House Committee on Ethics announced it was opening an investigation into allegations Hill (who identifies as bisexual) engaged in an improper relationship with a congressional staffer in possible violation of House rules. Also, a conservative blog released intimate photos of Hill, alleging she and her husband had a separate relationship with an unnamed female campaign staffer.

—Shakeup: Phillip Picardi and Zach Stafford, the respective editors-in-chief of *Out* magazine and *The Advocate*—two LGBTQ brands owned by Pride Media—announced Dec. 11 that they were leaving their posts. On Dec. 31, Nico Lang, the deputy editor of *Out* magazine, left the position as well.

Read the full list of national events online at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



2019 global roundup: From Toronto to Taiwan

COMPILED BY ANDREW DAVIS

There was no shortage of the good, the bad and ugly regarding global LGBTQ developments. Below are just a few of media reports (highlights and lowlights):

—Bus attack: In London in late May, a group of teen boys attacked couple Melania Geymonat and Christine Hannigan when the twosome refused to kiss when the boys demanded it. Three of the boys eventually pled guilty to using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behavior, with at least one being ordered to attend diversity sessions.

—Wed-dy or not: Two women tied the knot just minutes after midnight in Austria—making them the first same-sex couple to get married on the day it became legal. Nicole Kopaunik and Daniela Paier, both 37, got married in the southern town of Velden at five minutes past midnight on Jan. 1.

—Parenthood: In Israel, Supreme Court President Esther Hayut criticized the state's position on surrogacy for gay fathers, and said that the solutions that apply to women should also apply to men. Etai and Yoav Pinkas-Arad filed a petition that called to amend Israel's surrogacy law in a way that would allow gay men—both couples and individuals—an equal chance at parenthood.

—No conversion: Members who perform conversion therapy could now be expelled from the Israel Medical Association—which represents 90 percent of the country's doctors—if a complaint is filed to its ethics committee. In a related matter, a group of international lawyers researching the criminalization of homosexuality met with the Vatican secretary of state and urged the Holy See to publicly oppose conversion therapy for gay people.

—Home base: Lithuania's top court ruled that foreign spouses of gay citizens must be granted residence permits. The Constitutional Court ruled that denying residency permits to the spouses of gay Lithuanian citizens who had married abroad was discriminatory.

—Out of Africa: Angola finally decriminalized the “vices against nature” provision in its law—widely interpreted to be a ban on same-sex conduct. Taking things one step further, the government has also prohibited discrimination against people on the basis of sexual orientation, with violators facing up to two years in prison. Also, In a groundbreaking ruling, Botswana's High Court, on June 11, tossed out a colonial-era law that criminalized same-sex relations.

—Killer pleads: Toronto serial killer Bruce McArthur—who targeted men within the city's gay community—pled guilty to eight murders, and was sentenced to life in prison. There were eight counts of first-degree murder over the deaths of eight men that took place between in 2010 and late 2017.

—Brunei backlash: The nation of Brunei faced global backlash for proposing the death penalty for gay sex and adultery. Celebrities such

as George Clooney and Elton John slammed the policy, and some businesses cut ties with the country.

—Kiss off: Two Sicilian women photobombed Italy's anti-LGBT and far-right interior minister, Matteo Salvini, with a same-sex kiss. Salvini recently endorsed the anti-LGBT, anti-feminist and anti-abortion World Congress of Families, held in Verona in March.

—Taiwan's triumph: On May 17, Taiwan's legislature became the first in Asia (by a vote of 66 to 27) to fully legalize same-sex unions. The law—which allows for same-sex couples to apply for “marriage registration” as part of “exclusive permanent unions”—came a week before Taiwan's codes barring same-sex marriage would have been automatically dropped by court order.

—The Vatican released the document “Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a path of dialogue on the question of gender in education” to address issues surrounding sexuality and gender identity. Unfortunately for the LGBTQ community, the document rejected the idea that people can choose or change their genders, and insisted on the sexual “complementarity” of men and women to make babies.

—On the run: Mid-distance runner Caster Semenya had a tumultuous year. After being allowed to compete without having to take testosterone-reducing medication, the Swiss Federal Tribunal reversed its ruling, causing Semenya to miss the 2019 World Athletics Championships in Doha.

—What a kick: On July 7 in Lyon, France, the United States claimed a fourth Women's World Cup triumph with a 2-0 victory over European champions Netherlands in the final. Megan Rapinoe, an out lesbian, and Rose Lavelle scored goals for the U.S. team.

—Trip cancelled: Dan Ware, the owner of Chicago-based Toto Tours—which has a mostly gay clientele—cancelled an October trip to Ethiopia



Elton John.
Photo by Serge Arnal



Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel.
Official photo

after receiving death threats from people in the African country.

—Head to head: In a notable meeting between two out heads of government, Prime Minister Xavier Bettel of Luxembourg hosted his counterpart from Serbia, Ana Brnabic, and discussed the possibility of Serbia joining the European Union.

—Stigma: Former Welsh rugby star Gareth Thomas revealed he is HIV-positive and has vowed to help “break the stigma” surrounding the illness.

—A murder in Russia: LGBT activist Yelena Grigoryeva's body was found in St. Petersburg, Russia, on July 20—with evidence she had been choked, stabbed and thrown into the bushes near her home.

—Trailblazer: Time magazine named a top Brazilian drag queen and LGBT+ advocate as one of 10 young people “changing the world” in its bi-annual list. Pablo Vittar—a 24-year-old Brazilian drag pop singer—was included alongside other rising stars from around the world in Time's roster of “Next Generation Leaders.”

—No marriage in Caymans: The Cayman Islands Court of Appeal most recently ruled in favor of the government, overturning Chief Justice Anthony Smellie's previous ruling that legalized same-sex marriage in the Cayman Islands.

—Revelation: On Dec. 17, Pope Francis announced major changes to the way the Roman Catholic Church deals with sexual-abuse cases involving minors, abolishing the rule of “pontifical secrecy” that previously covered them.

—Changing teams: Out gay freestyle skier Gus Kenworthy, a two-time Olympian who has represented Team USA, announced he plans to compete for Great Britain's team in the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing to honor his “#1 fan”—his mother.

—Beauty mark: Miss Myanmar Swe Zin Htet took part in the Dec. 8 Miss Universe pageant as the first lesbian in the event's history. Miss South Africa won the 2019 Miss Universe title.

2020

#MakeItCount

Saturday, January 18
11:00 am
Grant Park

5 issue areas

- 2020 Census
- Climate Change
- Gun Violence Prevention
- Women's Health Rights and Access
- Get Out The Vote



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This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

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These are not all the possible side effects of BIKTARVY. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking BIKTARVY.

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Local passages in 2019

COMPILED BY MATT SIMONETTE

A number of LGBT Chicagoans (as well as persons who otherwise left their marks on the city's LGBT community) passed away in 2019. Among the passages Windy City Times noted:

—A. J. Petras died in Boston Jan. 1. Petras served two years as co-chair of the original organizing committee that brought Gay Games VII to Chicago in 2006.

—Margaret "Marge" Bellisario died Jan. 3. She was sole owner of Forest View Lounge Bar and Grill in Forest View.

—John Myron Hisel—a painter and fine artist in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood who was a native of Kankakee—passed away Jan. 26.

—Brian Patrick Donegan—a U.S. Air Force veteran and much-loved dog-walker and house sitter who was a native of Algonquin—passed away Feb. 2.

—Grab Magazine Co-Publisher and Co-Founder Mark Nagel passed away unexpectedly on Feb. 4.

—Health advocate Victoria "Vicky" DiProva died Feb. 12 due to multiple health complications.

—Chyna Sky Gonzalez died by suicide March 9. She was 32.

—Chicagoan Richard David Wold passed away unexpectedly but peacefully at home on April 17.

—Ralla Klepak, a legendary attorney in Chicago's LGBTQ and legal communities, passed away April 25.

—Chicagoan Rebecca J. Ernst passed away April 28.

—North Side resident James Krueger passed away peacefully on June 3 after a long illness.



Chyna Sky Gonzalez, with son Julian.
Photo from Nikki Kalinowski

—Ruffin Nelson Robinson, a retired registered nurse who resided in Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood, died peacefully June 6.

—James Andrew Aull IV of Oak Park died June 8.

—Longtime Chicagoan Michael Francis O'Reilly—a queer artist, activist, Radical Faerie and some-time provocateur best known as Penny—died June 10.

—Steven Joseph Courtney died of natural causes on June 26 in Chicago.

—Rogers Park neighborhood resident Randy Boston died July 1.

—Robert F. "Bobby" Nicholson passed away Aug. 2, leaving a long local and national gay sports legacy that dates back about 40 years.

—Frank Rice Jr., a poet and resident of Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, passed away unexpectedly at home Aug. 15.

—Steven Ray Dobson, of North Aurora, passed away Aug. 16.

—Paul Baker, a longtime North Side resident, passed away Aug. 19.

—Activist Michael Bauer passed away Aug. 29 after a long bout with cancer.

—Chicagoan John Rent passed away Sept. 9.

—Chicagoan Marca Bristo, who was at the forefront of numerous causes relating to disability rights, passed away Sept. 8.

—HIV/AIDS activist Bill Rydwels passed away Oct. 3.

—Longtime Chicago Pride Parade organizer Rich Pfeiffer passed away Oct. 6.

—Jason Zdebski, who was a business partner in Shakers on Clark, 3160 N. Clark St., passed away in early November.



Strawberry Hampton (right) with John Knight.
Photo by Matt Simonette

Judge orders IDOC transgender healthcare overhaul

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A federal judge ordered recently that the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) fix practices by which a "transgender committee"—composed of individuals with no experience in transgender-specific healthcare delivery—is tasked with meting out gender-dysphoria related medical services to IDOC detainees.

Prisoners will now be able to more easily access hormone therapy, gender-appropriate clothing and other resources to facilitate a more straightforward social transition. The order, issued in an injunction by U.S. District Court Judge Nancy Rosenstengel, also directed IDOC to stop automatically routing prisoners to facilities based on their genitalia or physical appearance.

The injunction comes after a May 2019 lawsuit by five transgender prisoners who said that they were subject to mistreatment while serving sentences in IDOC facilities. Among those prisoners was Strawberry Hampton, who was eventually released after being held in a series of facilities for male prisoners.

Hampton told Windy City Times in July 2019 that she was subjected to treatment in prison that left her feeling "embarrassed, degraded and dehumanized" during her incarceration. "It was a disgrace to be transgender" in prison, she added. "Every day you were in there, you were fighting for your life."

Rosenstengel's order affords prisoners access to culturally competent medical service providers, as well as the ability to obtain evaluations for gender dysphoria on their own volition or at the directive of healthcare personnel. IDOC staff must also participate in training on transgender-related issues.

"This is a sweeping victory for our clients, who have been subject to unspeakable harm

by a Department of Corrections that has truly been deliberately indifferent to our clients' suffering. We look forward to ensuring that IDOC complies with the order without any delay so that all prisoners who have gender dysphoria in Illinois will receive humane and professional treatment," said Ghirlandi Guidetti, staff attorney of the LGBTQ & HIV Project at the ACLU of Illinois, who has been representing the plaintiffs.

IDOC has until Jan. 22 to notify the court of how it intends to implement the changes.

Advocates laud final Medicaid rule for gender-affirming surgery

Advocates across Illinois celebrated the final rule that regulates Medicaid coverage for gender-affirming surgery.

The final rule prioritizes the patient-provider relationship, allowing Medicaid to cover life-saving, medically necessary procedures for trans and gender non-conforming people.

A proposed rule by the state's Medicaid agency, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, was first released last summer. That proposed rule passed the final step in the Illinois rulemaking process that was published Jan. 3, 2020; said rule is being put into effect retroactively for Dec. 23, 2019. This codification takes place after the updated regulation cleared the last hurdle of approval from the State's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules.

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago, American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, Center on Halsted, Equality Illinois, Howard Brown Health, Lambda Legal, the National Center for Transgender Equality, and the TransLife Care Program of Chicago House and Social Service Agency were among lauding the rule, according to a Howard Brown press release.



Rich Pfeiffer.
Photo by Hal Baim

Levander Smith Jr.: Out judicial candidate on status, campaign

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Levander Smith Jr. is in a unique position.

It's his first campaign for Cook County Circuit Court judge—but he already sits on the bench.

In February 2019, the Illinois Supreme Court appointed Smith as a judge (in the domestic-violence division), with a term set to expire Dec. 7, 2020. Therefore, in order to retain his seat, he has to run for office (in the Larsen vacancy, so called because Judge Diane Larsen retired, paving the way for Smith to be appointed). However, it turns out that he also holds another judgeship.

Windy City Times: You're already a judge, but you're running for a vacancy.

Levander Smith Jr.: Yes. I applied for an associate judgeship in 2017; that process didn't start until 2018. I was selected to be among the finalists and—from what I understand—for the first time in Cook County history, I tied with a guy for the last position (the 17th slot). I again applied for an associate judgeship and I waited patiently for that round to take hold again—and then I was called in February [2019] to fill a vacancy for someone who retired during her six-year term. So I'm completing her term, but I have to be in that number, so to speak [laughs], in order to keep my position for the next six years as a circuit-court judge.

In the process of campaigning for this circuit-court position, I was blessed to not only make the short list for the associate round but also to get an associate position, so I [was sworn in] on Jan. 6 as an associate judge. I know it's a bit confusing. [Laughs] And if I win the primary in March, I'll be back on my way to being a circuit-court judge.

WCT: So how does that hierarchy work?

LSJ: Circuit-court judges are elected by the people; associate judges are selected by circuit-court judges—so I did vote for myself. [Laughs] It's weird, I know.

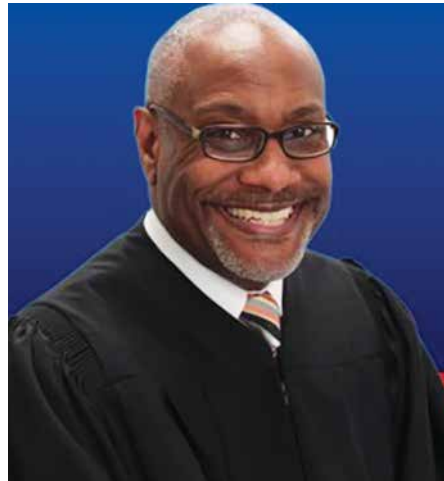
The [circuit-court judges] make a little more money and, more importantly, have more voting power.

WCT: Your website says you've "[focused] most of his career fighting to protect children and families." Do you believe a judge can be an advocate?

LSJ: No—a judge is not an advocate. That phrase is from when I was an attorney. I worked for DCFS.

[Advocacy] is one of the temptations to overcome when you're a new judge. You want to advocate certain cases and people, but you must remain neutral. When it boils down to it, it's about the law and the facts of the case.

WCT: How did your Victory Fund endorsement come about? [Note: The Victory Fund endorses LGBTQ political candidates.]



Levander Smith Jr.
Photo courtesy of Smith

LSJ: That's another blessing. [Laughs] I was advised to apply and completed the application process and—lo, and behold—there were a couple phone interviews, and I was selected. I was so happy to receive that endorsement because I knew that one of my colleagues received the endorsement as well, and I was so happy for her.

WCT: What do you think are the most significant issues affecting the LGBTQ community?

LSJ: Well, I sit in domestic-violence court and I see a number of same-sex couples there as well as members of the trans community. The worst violence I've ever seen has been with [LGBTQ] couples. The threats are so pervasive with members of the trans community.

WCT: This is your initial campaign. What's been the most surprising thing so far?

LSJ: [Laughs] In addition to the amount of time and money spent? The lack of sleep. But it's all good because I get to meet a lot of good people. People are fundamentally good, even though you hear so much on the news.

WCT: You're running against two other people in the Democratic primary. What's your biggest advantage in this race, and what's your biggest disadvantage?

LSJ: One advantage—which I just discovered a few days ago—is that I'm listed first on the ballot. I'm told that there have been studies done that show that people tend to vote for the person listed first. I also think I stand out in that I offer more diversity than my opponents, being a man of color who is openly gay.

My biggest disadvantage? That I'm a man of color. I've seen a lack of victories for people of color county-wide.

Smith's website is at SmithJrForJudge.com.

Democrat Lipinski sides with GOPs who want to overturn Roe

U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Illinois) is being criticized for aligning with Republicans who ultimately want to overturn the abortion case *Roe v. Wade*, CBS Pittsburgh noted.

On Jan. 2, more than 200 members of Congress signed a legal brief urging the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold a Louisiana law that severely restricts abortion (in the case of *June Medical Services LLC v. Gee*). All the lawmakers who signed the brief are Republicans, except for two Democrats in the House: U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minnesota) and Lipinski.

"This case could decide the future of abortion access in this country and we will not silently stand by and let Congressman Lipinski pledge his support for taking away Illinois woman's right to a safe and legal abortion," Planned Parenthood Illinois Action Senior Director of Public Policy Bridgid Leahy said in a news release.

Marie Newman—who recently received endorsements from Democratic presidential candidates Cory Booker and Elizabeth Warren, as well as U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-New York)—is running against Lipinski in the March 17 primary.

The CBS item is at <https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/01/02/rep-dan-lipinski-takes-heat-for-signing-onto-amicus-brief-asking-supreme-court-to-consider-overturning-roe-v-wade>.

ELECTIONS 2020

U.S. Sen. Baldwin backs Yoni Pizer

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin) has endorsed progressive Democrat Yoni Pizer for state Representative in Illinois' 12th state House district.

"Today, I am proud to endorse my dear friend, Yoni Pizer, for State Representative of Illinois' 12th District. After growing up together and attending the same high school, Yoni and I remained close through my political career. At every step in my own political journey, I would turn to Yoni for his counsel on our shared values and a warm heart and home in which I could always find support and love," said Baldwin, in a statement.

Media outlets have reported that state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, currently representing the 12th District, is aiming to replace longtime state Sen. John Cullerton, who is retiring.

Pizer has served as the community liaison for Congressman Mike Quigley for the past five years, is a small business owner and has been a grassroots organizer for Democratic presidential candidates for several decades.



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Study focuses on caregivers of LGBTs with Alzheimer's

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Taking care of and participating in research focused on patients with Alzheimer's disease (a form of dementia) has been a part of Indiana University (IU) Center for Aging Research at Regenstrief Institute Research Scientist and IU School of Medicine Associate Professor of Medicine's Dr. Alexia Torke's life since her undergraduate years at Minnesota's Carleton College.

"As an undergraduate, I helped with research on persons with dementia in the nursing home," said Torke. "When I came back to my hometown of Indianapolis after college, I got a job as a research assistant and worked on a study about the cognitive changes of dementia."

Now Torke—who specialized in internal medicine during her residency at Emory University and currently practices the new field of outpatient palliative care at IU Health Methodist Hospital—is taking her interest in the well-being of patients with Alzheimer's a step further with a new grant from the National Institutes of Health. The grant money will be used to study how LGBT older adults with Alzheimer's caregivers (surrogate decision-makers) are coping with this responsibility.

"Throughout my 15-year research career, I have been drawn to the really hard situations where family members and clinicians have to make decisions for someone who cannot make them by themselves," said Torke. "That is hard in any case but when the patient or caregiver is part of the LGBT community there are other challenges that include prior bad experiences with the healthcare



Dr. Carey Candrian.

Photo courtesy of the University of Colorado

system including overt and covert discrimination that has led to a lack of trust in these institutions.

"LGBT people with dementia are less likely to have a caregiver spouse or adult children and have to rely on a chosen family member to make

these decisions. As a lesbian, I think it is really important to focus on the special needs and vulnerabilities LGBT older adults with Alzheimer's and their caregivers face as they interact with the healthcare system."

The main thing that has deepened Torke's understanding of the challenges LGBT patients face, including the lack of knowledge or prejudice from some clinicians, is her own experience in seeking healthcare for herself, her spouse Martha Egger and their two teenaged sons.

Torke said the grant covers doing interviews in two locations: Indianapolis and Denver. She is collaborating with University of Colorado School of Medicine General Internal Medicine Division Assistant Professor Carey Candrian, Ph.D., to conduct the caregiver surveys in Denver while she will be doing them in Indianapolis. Candrian is an ethnographer and her graduate training focused on interaction as a site of inequality due to the way people talk to each other and whether they reveal their true selves to others.

Candrian said she, like Torke, has been interested in improving health equity and reducing disparities among LGBT older adults for years. This includes creating a volunteer program for advance care planning focused on the LGBT community in Denver.

"We are using a combination of methods, including working closely with local LGBT advocacy groups, support groups and clinicians in our clinics in Colorado caring for older LGBT adults to choose our interview participants," said Candrian.

In terms of the questions they will be asking, Candrian said, "The interview guide is divided into different domains around their caregiver experience, information received and how emotional support, their role as a surrogate decision maker and their engagement with advance care planning. The majority of them are open-ended to really give people the opportunity to share their experience.

"Ultimately, we hope to improve this surrogate decision-making process for people caring for

older LGBT adults with Alzheimer's or related dementias from the people actually involved in this process. We want their voices and experiences to guide us all into improving the overall care experience for LGBT people."

Candrian said there is almost no literature on surrogate experience in the LGBT community and that is why the project is so important to her. The icing on the cake for Candrian is being mentored by Torke through this process because of their shared interest in the topic combined with both Torke's clinical and her non-clinical approach to this study.

Torke told Windy City Times that the findings will be published in scientific journals and be made available in layman's terms on the web so caregivers can access this resource as they navigate the healthcare system going forward.

"I want every LGBT person to think about who you want to make healthcare and financial decisions for yourself if you are unable to do so down the line no matter your family circumstances and get the legal documents in order for that to happen," Torke said.

El to honor Baim, youth center at gala

Equality Illinois will present its annual gala on Saturday, Feb. 1, at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan Ave., starting at 6 p.m.

The organization will honor Tracy Baim—former publisher of Windy City Times and current publisher of the Chicago Reader—for her 35-year career in Chicago journalism; and the Rainbow Cafe LGBT Youth Center in Carbonale for its work on behalf of LGBTQ youth in southern Illinois.

The gala brings together 1,500 people each year to celebrate the power and energy of the LGBTQ community.

Visit EqualityIllinois.us/2020-Gala.



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UMC may split over same-sex marriage, inclusion

A schism is expected within the United Methodist Church (UMC) over same-sex marriage and LGBTQ inclusion, media outlets reported.

UMC leaders signed a proposal that outlines the separation, and this could be approved at a general convention in May.

The agreement, facilitated by mediation expert Kenneth Feinberg, reportedly gives \$25 million to the "traditional" denomination that will be formed, The Hill noted. That group will include churches in the United States as well as most of the churches in Africa.

The United Methodist Church is the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the country, The Hill noted. Many other Protestant denominations, including the Episcopal Church and Presbyterian Church, allow same-sex marriages and appoint LGBTQ clergy.

When asked about the possible split, First United Methodist Church of Chicago Senior Pastor Rev. Dr. Myron McCoy told Windy City Times, "I think it's an opportunity for us to move on beyond years of acrimony and to have an amicable divorce," also stressing that the process hasn't been finalized.

"[Our] church is fully Reconciling, which means it's totally inclusive," he added. (Note: The church's website has a statement of inclu-

sion that says, "We welcome all people to the life of this congregation. We believe that we are all in need of God's love and grace and that God, through Jesus Christ, intends the church to be a community that incarnates love, grace and justice for all people. Holding true to that belief, we welcome and encourage all persons, including persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities, in every aspect of our Christian life together.")

Another who weighed in on the situation was Broadway United Methodist Church's Rev. M Barclay. They told Windy City Times, "Despite the headlines, those suggesting this particular plan will inevitably lead to split is premature. The group's proposal is one of many that will be considered in May and could very well be rejected just as the legislation put forward by many of the same players was rejected last February.

"With that said—as a queer minister committed to truth, justice and love for queer people—The Protocol concerns me for a few reasons: It was negotiated behind closed doors while leaving out important groups and voices, it prioritizes institutional preservation, it grants a phenomenal amount of money to traditionalists and potential pennies to liberationists and does nothing to affirm LGBTQIA people after decades of violence.

"I do affirm their recognition that racial reparations must be a part of any future for the UMC, but the plan leaves significant concerns, nonetheless. [Pastor Rev.] Alka [Lyall] and I are both a part of a group called UMForward (who wasn't

Center on Halsted lays off employees

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Center on Halsted has cut two positions for financial reasons, according to organization officials.

Director of Gender Equity and Inclusion Vanessa Sheridan posted to Facebook the morning of Jan. 2 that her position had been cut.

"This morning I was informed that, due to Center on Halsted's financial deficit and the need for funding cutbacks, my position ... has been eliminated," Sheridan said.

"Unfortunately we did layoff two individuals," said CEO Modesto "Tico" Valle in a statement to Windy City Times. "Center on Halsted was short in unrestricted funding in 2019 and

therefore reduced uncovered expenses to align with revenue."

Valle additionally emphasized that the Center has not eliminated programs, further noting, "We continue to grow our youth housing program and anti-violence project with the expansion in secured government funding."

He added, "Building trans programming and diversifying our COH partnerships continues to be a priority for the Center and as we continue to host numerous community programs and support the work of Brave Space Alliance by being their fiscal agent."

Sheridan said she bore "no ill will" towards the Center.

"I know the layoff wasn't because of the quality of my work—it was purely a cost-cutting decision," she said. "I'm proud of the work I did there and the impact I made on thousands of lives. Now I'm ready to move on and do it again in a new situation."

invited to the table for these negotiations). We put forward the N.E.W. Plan legislation [available at um-forward.org/new-plan] months ago that would achieve a similar goal but with more transparency, accountability and a commitment to LGBTQIA and POC equity throughout the process."

Lyall concurred with Barclay, telling Windy City Times, "What M says is accurate. This is one of the many proposals that are on the table and

will be voted upon in May. Many of the proposed plans also suggest a split, so this is not a new concept.

"As M said, the leaders of this proposal did leave out a significant demographic out of the conversation and the distribution of funding if not equitable. Also, this was a closed door negotiation that raises many conversations for me."

—Andrew Davis

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**Dana
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MOMBIAN LGBTQ parenting: The year in review

This past year saw many challenges to LGBTQ equality—but there was still some progress. Let's review the parenting-specific news of the year.

Some setbacks

The Trump administration's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was perhaps the biggest antagonist of the year. HHS began in January by granting South Carolina a waiver so that federally funded adoption and foster care agencies in the state may discriminate based on a person's religion, LGBTQ identity, or other factors that do not fit with the religious or moral beliefs that the agency espouses.

HHS proposed another rule in April that would abandon the collection of data related to the sexual orientation of youth, parents, and guardians connected to the foster care system, except when a case worker knows that this is related to the reason a child was removed from their home. LGBTQ and child welfare organizations say the fuller data would have helped to serve LGBTQ youth more effectively.

In May, HHS finalized a rule that allows any health care worker—from doctors to clerical staff—to deny medical treatment, information, and services to patients because of the worker's personal religious or moral beliefs, even if their institution takes federal funds like Medicare or Medicaid. The rule focuses mainly on abortion, sterilization, and assisted suicide, which is bad enough, but it could also lead to health care workers refusing to serve LGBTQ people or their children, to deny them fertility treatments, treatment or preventative care for HIV/AIDS, or care related to gender transitions.

In November, however, just a couple of weeks before the rule was set to go into effect, three federal district courts, in California, New York, and Washington, said the rule was unconstitutional and completely vacated it. It remains in effect in other districts, however; and the decisions could be appealed by HHS.

On Nov. 1, however, HHS also issued a new rule that similarly would allow discrimination against LGBTQ people and others by all recipients of HHS grants, including foster care and adoption agencies as well as programs dedicated to youth homelessness, HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and substance abuse prevention, among others. While ten states (Alabama, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and Virginia) already allow child service agencies to similarly discriminate in foster care and

adoption, the new HHS rule would enshrine such discrimination at the federal level and extend it to the full range of HHS services.

The State Department also showed its anti-LGBTQ side. Two married, two-dad couples sued the department for refusing to recognize the U.S. citizenship of their children, born via surrogacy abroad, even though the parents are all citizens. These families join two other same-sex couples, each of which has at least one U.S. citizen parent, who have been fighting the department over their children's citizenship for several years.

On the state level, both New York and Rhode Island saw the failure of bills that would have more effectively protected families formed through assisted reproduction by offering cheaper and easier ways to ensure firm legal recognition of nonbiological parents. The New York bill would also have legalized gestational surrogacy (where the surrogate does not contribute the egg).

In Michigan, two same-sex couples filed a lawsuit against the state after they were rejected by two Christian adoption agencies with state contracts. In a March settlement, Michigan said it would require all state-contracted child welfare agencies to accept all qualified families, including same-sex couples. Then in May, one of the agencies sued the state in turn, claiming it had a constitutional right to be exempt from that requirement. A federal district court agreed with the agency in a September injunction, allowing it to maintain its contract while refusing to work with same-sex couples and unmarried people while the case is fully litigated.

In a separate case in April, however, a Catholic child service agency in Philadelphia was denied a similar injunction by a federal appeals court. That's good—though the case could now be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court (and the Michigan case could ultimately find its way there as well).

Signs of progress

The Equality Act—a comprehensive, federal LGBTQ civil rights bill—passed the U.S. House in May. It offers protections against discrimination in foster care and adoption as well as in employment, housing, public accommodations, public education and other areas.

More focused on children and family, the Every Child Deserves a Family Act was introduced in both houses for the sixth Congress in a row. It prohibits discrimination in foster care and adoption on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and marital status, as with past versions, but also bans it on the basis of religion; bans conversion therapy; directs HHS to assist states, tribes, and agencies in improving services to LGBTQ and two-spirit foster youth; and requires HHS to collect data on the sexual orientation and gender identity of children and parents connected to the foster care system. The bill would counter many of HHS' moves this year, but looks unlikely to pass the Republican-controlled Senate.

The American Bar Association, the "national representative of the legal profession," in January ad-

opted a resolution that "Opposes laws, regulations, and rules or practices that discriminate against LGBT individuals in the exercise of the fundamental right to parent." While that clearly didn't stop HHS, it's good to know that many of the nation's lawyers view HHS' moves as discriminatory.

On the state level, Connecticut, New Jersey and Oregon each enacted laws that extend paid family leave with broad definitions of who's in a family.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court not only ruled in favor of a nonbiological mother in a child custody case in June, but established guidelines for future cases, writing conclusively that "A non-biological same-sex parent stands in parity with a biological parent."

Arizona, in April, repealed an anti-LGBTQ law that had banned instruction in public school health curricula that "Promotes a homosexual life-style" or suggests there are "safe methods of homosexual sex."

More than three dozen queer parents elected in 2018 took office in January 2019 at all levels of government. Additionally, in April, two lesbian moms were elected mayors: Lori Lightfoot in Chicago and Jane Castor in Tampa, Florida.

Financial giants J. P. Morgan and MassMutual each announced expanded fertility benefits to help LGBTQ employees start or grow their families. Among other features, these benefits are offered without requiring a medical diagnosis of infertility—useful for single people and couples who simply don't have both egg and sperm.

In a major reversal of policy, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) in April said that children of LGBT parents may now be blessed and baptized in the faith, and that same-sex couples in the LDS Church will no longer be considered "apostates," although marrying a person of the same sex is still "a serious transgression."

This was also another banner year for LGBTQ-inclusive children's books in quality and quantity—too many to list here, but I've rounded up some of the best at mombian.com.

A loss

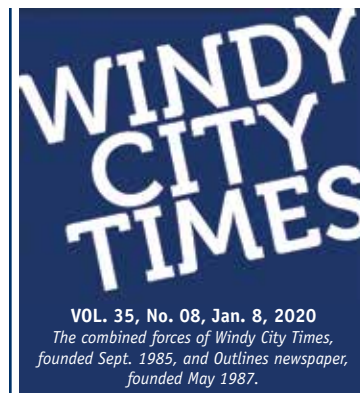
Sharon Mattes, known as Sharon Bottoms when she fought to overcome anti-LGBTQ bias in a legal battle for custody of her son in the 1990s—a headline case for queer parents—died in February at age 48.

Looking ahead

While it's easy to get disheartened over the significant political setbacks, I hope we can take heart at the progress that has been made, even if it is less than we would like. Next year may be similar—but it is also an election year. We may never have a perfect candidate, but we can still vote for the one most likely to make a positive difference for ourselves and our families.

Wishing you joy and love this holiday season, and a more equitable new year for us all.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents.



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WEB HOSTING LoveYourWebsite.com (lead

programmer: Martie Marro)

PRESIDENT Tracy Baim

(773) 871-7610 FAX (773) 871-7609

Editorial: andrew@windycitymediagroup.com

Sales: terri@windycitymediagroup.com

Calendar: calendar@windycitymediagroup.com

Circulation: jean@windycitymediagroup.com

Art/ad copy: kirk@windycitymediagroup.com

Theater: cateysullivan25@gmail.com

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So-dam Park and Woo-sik Choi in *Parasite*.
Photo courtesy
of NEON CJ
Entertainment

'Parasite,' 'Peanut Butter' and pachyderms: The best and worst movies of 2019

BY JERRY NUNN

In the cinematic world, 2019 will be forever remembered for its sheer variety.

For once, movies did not squeeze into a neat little box or get stuck in a rut as in years past. Bong Joon Ho's *Parasite* is a perfect example, as it doesn't fit into any one genre while tackling a class struggle storyline. *Parasite* is refreshing and a shows that foreign films are ahead of the curve, including in terms of telling queer stories this past year.

Avengers: Endgame beat up the competition as the highest-grossing movie of all time, but other movies overpowered the superheroes with stronger acting skills, such as Netflix's **Marriage Story**. Just give Adam Driver a trophy already; he began a stellar year with the horror comedy *The Dead Don't Die*, sang Sondheim in *Marriage Story* and played a son of a Solo in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*.

It came as no surprise that Joaquin Phoenix captivated as the **Joker**, but who knew that Adam Sandler would shine so much in **Uncut**



Renee Zellweger in *Judy*.
Photo by David Hindley

Gems before the end of the year? Shia LaBeouf was completely overlooked during awards season, but really soared in terms of performance in **The Peanut Butter Falcon**. That modern Mark Twain story about a young man with Down syndrome on the run is the real diamond in the rough and should be sought out.

With no strong female representation in Martin Scorsese's mob movie **The Irishman**, viewers luckily had Greta Gerwig's **Little Women** to make up for it. Actress Florence Pugh was one to watch in the latter movie; she also headlined the horror film *Midsommar* and appears in the upcoming *Black Widow* movie this year.

Celine Sciamma's lesbian romance flick **Portrait of a Lady on Fire** was robbed of the French Oscar nomination. (*Les Misérables* was chosen instead.) **Pain and Glory** may possibly take home the newly named Best International Film Oscar. It's a return to form for Antonio Banderas to play gay once again and team with Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar.

The Elton John biopic **Rocketman** and Judy Garland film **Judy** rounded out the list for movies

that were geared for the LGBT crowd in 2019.

Netflix tasted success in 2018 with *Roma*, learning to release movies in theaters just long enough to qualify for awards then allowing the audience to play them at home. The entertainment platform followed that by stepping up its game in 2019 with powerful films such as *The Irishman*, **The Two Popes** and *Marriage Story*. This bodes well for a promising cinematic future with new projects and stories to tell in 2020.

Best movies of 2019

10. **The Peanut Butter Falcon**
9. **Uncut Gems**
8. **Portrait of a Lady on Fire**
7. **Judy**
6. **Rocketman**
5. **Pain and Glory**
4. **Toy Story 4**
3. **Little Women**
2. **Marriage Story**
1. **Parasite**

Turn to page 22

WINTER THEATER PREVIEW

Classics and revivals around this season

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

One advantage to 2019's abbreviated lead-up to the holidays is the number of shows that decided not to close when the mirror-ball dropped, but instead extended into 2020.

People can still catch Black Ensemble's *The Other Cinderella* through Jan. 19 (BlackEnsembleTheater.org), Firebrand's *Always ...Patsy Cline* through Jan. 5 (FirebrandTheatre.org) and Theo Ubique's *Working* (Theo-U.com) through Jan. 16. If theatergoers can wait a week or two, though, they can enjoy some bona fide classics and revivals often referenced, but rarely seen nowadays.

Can't argue with them track records

—**Shear Madness**, Mercury Theater, Feb. 16-March 29: Other cities may hold the record for this unabashedly silly, mostly improvised, audience-interactive murder mystery, set in a beauty salon populated by the usual suspects, but a show viewed by Windy City out-of-town guests for 18 years at the legendary Blackstone Hotel and two more in the new millennium at the Chicago Theater (albeit in the basement) must be doing SOMETHING right. Details: MercuryTheater-Chicago.com and 773-325-1700

—**The Mousetrap**, Court Theatre, Jan. 25-Feb. 16: The London production of Agatha Christie's

murder-the-rich bunker drama—where audiences are still cautioned not to reveal the “surprise twist” ending—has been running continuously since its London premiere in 1952, but Court Theatre's staging features Hypocrites-alumnus Sean Graney, directing a cast that includes Kate Fry, Hollis Resnick and David Cerda (wearing trousers), ensuring a few more surprises than perhaps the author intended. Details: CourtTheatre.org and 773-753-4472

Gay history will forever remember

—**The Boys in the Band**, Windy City Playhouse, Jan. 29-April 19: Mart Crowley's pre-Stonewall portrait of gay males living in the shadows of a cosmopolitan, but still closeted, Manhattan broke new ground for the portrayal of men-who-love-men as complex individuals worthy of our empathy as they struggle to survive under social oppression and the loneliness engendered thereby. Details: WindyCityPlayhouse.com and 773-891-8985

—**Charley's Aunt**, St. Sebastian Players, Feb. 1-March 15: Everybody in Brandon Thomas' romantic farce might identify as het—it's 1892 England, after all—but when a chaperone is required to assist two pairs of lovers seeking refuge from disapproving fathers, the willingness of a best buddy to pose as the necessary nanny precipi-



Amira Danan and Gage Wallace in *A Doll House*.

Photo by Gracie Meier

tates this prototype for cross-dressing comedy as we know it today. Details: SaintSebastianPlayers.org

Singing in treble key

—**Top Girls**, Remy Bumpo Theatre, Jan. 19-Feb. 22: What if you could invite a conference of feminist heroes from the past to discuss gender issues over dinner? Well, that's exactly what Caryl Churchill did in 1982 in a dramatic symposium staged by Remy Bumpo to launch its season in 2001. Annabel Armour and Linda Gillum return for this revival production, directed this time by Keira Fromm. Details: RemyBumpo.org and 773-975-8150

—**A Doll's House**, Raven Theater, Feb. 10-March 22: The woes of privileged Norwegian housewives in 1870 spurred Henrik Ibsen to propose a remedy shocking audiences of his era, but Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey and Kirsten Brandt's adaptation adds colonialist tensions to patriarchal domination to locate the source of the problem in an impulse shared by every society where idealized images eclipse imperfect reality. Details: RavenTheatre.com and 773-338-2177

—**Mrs. Warren's Profession**, Promethean Theater Ensemble, March 2-29: No one can deny the progress of business opportunities for enterprising women since George Bernard Shaw explored the incompatibility of morality and commerce, but while it's too early to tell what new insights Melanie Spewock's adaptation will address, the topic could not be timelier. Details: PrometheanTheatre.org

Pioneers of diversity

—**Bug**, Steppenwolf Theatre, Feb. 3-March 8: In 1996, Pulitzer-winning playwright Tracy Letts followed up his spectacular debut with a close-up—veeery, very close-up—case study of fugitives trapped in toxic delusion. It's now 2020, though, and take-no-prisoners director David Cromer and the starpower duo of Carrie Coon and Namir Smallwood will assess whether its All-American paranoia has waned in the decades since. Details: SteppenwolfTheatre.org and 312-335-1650

—**Intimate Apparel**, Northlight Theatre, March 20-April 19: Have you heard the one about the seamstress and the fabric (“dry goods” in 1912 parlance) salesman? Mildred Marie Langford and

Sean Fortunato play working-class sweethearts whose hopes for a future together are undone by the unswerving bigotry—racial, religious and economical—of New England society in Lynn Nottage's bittersweet romance. Details: Northlight.org and 847-673-6300

—**A Raisin in the Sun**, Invictus Theatre, Feb. 17-March 15: An unexpected windfall prompts a Black family to dream of a better life, only to clash over the meaning of that word in Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 drama that spawned a literary genre still invoked today, and director Aaron Reese Boseman plans to show us why on the tiny Pride Arts Buena stage. Details: InvictusTheatre-Co.com

—**Stick Fly**, Writers Theatre, Feb. 12-March 15: Lydia Diamond's portrait of an African-American family sporting Ivy League educations, high-status careers and a summer home in Martha's Vineyard reminds us that even in 2008, money and privilege alone was not enough to banish troubles rooted in the path to achievement. Details: WritersTheatre.org and 847-242-6000

Rhinoceros Festival Jan. 11-Feb. 23

The Rhinoceros Theater Festival will mark its 31st year with performances Jan. 11-Feb. 23 at Prop Thtr, 3502 N. Elston Ave.

The newest Rhino Fest will feature 48 shows, including new plays, dance, devised works, variety, music, performance, and fresh takes on classic texts. The festival—curated and hosted by the Curious Theatre Branch and Prop Thtr—will open with the Full Moon Vaudeville featuring *The Crooked Mouth*, an art-cabaret rock band piloted by Curious co-founders Beau O'Reilly and Jenny Magnus.

There will be emerging companies and individuals, including Social Sciences Productions, El Bear, Theatre of the Beyond, Museum of Unnatural History Chicago, Ashley Hollingshead, Briana Morris and Persephone Jones alongside Chicago performance stalwarts including David Shapiro, Chris Bower and M.C. Steffen.

In addition, the fest will spotlight returning performers Jeff Glassman and Lisa Fay; Ira Murfin, continuing his formalized conversation series *An Interview*; Kelly Anchors' *Sweetback Productions* in the family ensemble piece *Deep Fried Refried*; punk-cabaret musician Violet, in *Hotel Violet*; and Tyler Anthony Smith, in *Out, Darn Spot!*—a drag monologue portraying Lady Macbeth as a fed-up midcentury homemaker.



Hotel Violet.

Photo by Paul Brennan

Curious will premiere *Four Story Animal Plus Dessert*, an ongoing series (with dessert) including performances of short works by Samuel Beckett, Flannery O'Connor, Anton Chekhov, and Elizabeth Bishop. Prop Thtr will produce several new and visiting works for this year's Rhino—*Panther Women: An Army for the Liberation* and *Emergence*, two new devised works from Cleveland Public Theatre; and *@midnight*, a group-devised meditation on late-night consciousness, co-produced with The Whisper Theatre Collective.

Tickets (\$15 each, or pay what you can) and a full performance schedule are available at RhinoFest.com.



Stick Fly, featuring Ayanna Bri Bakari.

Photo by Frank Ishman

Ellen DeGeneres, Elton John among Golden Globe honorees

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The 77th Annual Golden Globes were distributed by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills on Jan. 5. Contributions from members of the LGBT community in the entertainment industry—as well as LGBT-themed films and TV programs—were widely noted.

Among those films competing for Golden Globes were gay director Pedro Almodóvar's *Pain and Glory* and *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, from lesbian director Céline Sciamma, which both competed for best foreign-language film. Alas, the South Korean thriller *Parasite* won in that category instead.

Rocketman, a biopic about the life of Elton John, was up for best comedy or musical motion picture, but lost to *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. John and songwriter Bernie Taupin introduced clips from *Rocketman*. Their original song from the movie, "I'm Gonna Love Me Again," later won for Best Original Song. John noted that it was the first award he'd won an award with Taupin, who described their longtime collaboration as a "52-year-old marriage."

Taran Egerton won for Best Actor in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy for his performance playing John in *Rocketman*. "This role has changed my life," Egerton said.

Other key motion picture nominations included Antonio Banderas, who was nominated for *Pain and Glory* but lost to Joaquin Phoenix's performance in *Joker*; Beanie Feldstein, who was nominated for *Booksmart*, and lost to Awkwafina for *The Farewell*; and Margot Robbie, who played a sexually fluid woman in *Bombshell*, but lost to Laura Dern for her turn as a divorce attorney in *Marriage Story*.

Renee Zellweger won for her turn as Judy Garland in *Judy*; she mentioned how many people had shared their memories and thoughts about Garland since the film was released.

As for small-screen nominations and wins, Netflix's *The Politician*, starring out actor Ben Platt, received nominations both for best comedy or musical television series and Platt's lead performance. Platt lost to Ramy Youssef for the Hulu series *Ramy*, while the series itself lost to Amazon Prime's *Fleabag*. Andrew Scott, who is also openly gay, was named for a supporting role in a limited series for *Fleabag*; however, Stellan Skarsgård won for the HBO drama *Chernobyl* instead.

BBC America's *Killing Eve* received a nomination for best dramatic series, as did co-star Jodie Comer, who plays the assassin Villanelle. Comer lost to Olivia Colman's performance in *The Crown*, while the show itself lost to the HBO program *Succession*. Out actor Billy Porter was nominated for his leading role on the FX drama *Pose*,



Ellen DeGeneres at the Golden Globe Awards. Screen shot

but lost to Brian Cox (*Succession*).

Out comedian and television host Ellen DeGeneres was honored with a Carol Burnett Award for Excellence in Television; she was introduced by out Saturday Night Live cast member Kate McKinnon, who spoke only half-jokingly about feeling "alien" for being gay when she was younger.

"If I hadn't seen her on TV ... I would have gone on thinking that I was an alien, and that I didn't have a right to be here," said McKinnon.

"You never knows where life takes you," DeGeneres said, shortly before jokingly thanking her "husband Mark" and "children Rupert and Fiona" as the camera fixed on her wife, Portia De Rossi. DeGeneres then thanked Burnett, and—again, jokingly—suggested that she read Burnett on TV as being gay too.

Comedian Ricky Gervais hosted the event for the fifth and (as he reiterated throughout the night) final time.

A poster for the play 'Steppenwolf'. The background is a dark, textured surface with many small, dark insects (possibly beetles or flies) scattered across it. The title 'STEPPENWOLF' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters at the top. Below it, in smaller white text, is 'The mind-bending cult classic by TRACY LETTS'. The word 'BUG' is written in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters in the center. Below that, in white text, is 'By ensemble member TRACY LETTS' and 'Directed by DAVID CROMER'. Further down, in white text, is 'Featuring ensemble members Randall Arney, Carrie Coon and Namir Smallwood with Jennifer Engstrom and Steve Key'. At the bottom, in white text, is 'ON STAGE JANUARY 23 – MARCH 8'.

A poster for the play 'The Boys in the Band'. The background is dark with a subtle pattern. At the top, it says 'WINDY CITY PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below that is a group photograph of the eight male cast members. At the bottom, the title 'THE BOYS IN THE BAND' is written in large, stylized, red-outlined, sans-serif capital letters. Below the title, in white text, is 'BY MART CROWLEY DIRECTED BY CARL MENNINGER'. To the right of this text is a white box with the words 'NOW ON SALE' in black, bold, sans-serif capital letters. At the very bottom, in white text, is 'FOR TICKETS: windycityplayhouse.com/the-boys-in-the-band • 773.891.8985'.

Eric Huffman
(center) in
Mean Girls.
Photo by
Joan Marcus

NUNN ON ONE: THEATER

Eric Huffman goes from 'Mormon' to 'Mean Girls'



BY JERRY NUNN

The original Mean Girls movie was partially based on a self-help book and was released in 2004. Now that the popular tale has turned 15 years old, it's the perfect time to wear pink and celebrate its legacy in the theater.

Mean Girls follows the story of teenager Cady Heron, who moves with her family from Africa to an Illinois suburb and attends public school. Heron joins a clique called the "Plastics," and antics ensue courtesy of a "Burn Book" full of juicy stories at the school.

Damian Hubbard is the gay character in a storyline that was a vast improvement on the typical stereotype. Openly gay performer Eric Huffman plays that role in the musical version and brings experience from a past national tour with The Book of Mormon.

Tina Fey wrote the Mean Girls book and her husband, Jeff Richmond, worked on the music before Mean Girls the Musical premiered on Broadway at the August Wilson Theatre in 2018.

Huffman explained on the phone about the differences in this version of Mean Girls before the Chicago premiere.

Windy City Times: Hi, Eric. Start off by talking about your background.

Eric Huffman: I grew in Kansas City. I did theater as a kid, then auditioned for some colleges and got in. Right as I was graduating, The Book of Mormon was casting a Chicago company. I was in that production for seven years. I had two weeks off, then joined Mean Girls!

WCT: You were with the Ben Platt group?

EH: Sure was!

WCT: Were you a fan of the Mean Girls movie?

EH: I am a huge fan of the movie. I saw the show in DC when they were doing an out of town tryout. We had an overlap where both of

our shows were there. I had been thinking about leaving Mormon and what I would do next. I saw that role and knew I was going to play it.

WCT: Wow. So you just knew?

EH: Yes. I told everyone that was my role and what I was doing next. I can't believe that it worked out. I have only done that twice and it was for Mormon and Mean Girls. I did it! [Laughs]

WCT: Talk about your role in Mean Girls.

EH: Damian Hubbard is the one that's notoriously known as "too gay to function." In the musical, he and Janis Sarkisian narrate the show, which is in an addition from the movie. They intentionally don't play the social game like the "Plastics" do and are proud of that. When faced with the opportunity of Cady Heron, they have a fun toy to play with and don't mess around! They make her do it for them. It's fun.

WCT: The original actor who played your role in the movie was gay in real life also. Have you met Daniel Franzese?

EH: No, I haven't, but I am hoping to in L.A. I know a group of people from the movie are coming when we perform there. I just don't know who or when.

WCT: Have you met Tina Fey?

EH: Yes. She's actually way more hands-on than we thought. She was there almost every rehearsal, giving input and feedback. It was really awesome having her around. She really cares about this show. It's beautiful.

She was not a diva or didn't have any sort of attitude. She would show up and ask, "What are we doing today, guys?" It was just fun!

WCT: Is "Fearless," from Mean Girls, your favorite song or do you have a different one?

EH: "Fearless" is my favorite song from the show, which is sad, because I'm not in it.

WCT: You watch it in the wings?

EH: I do, every night! I have little moments with everyone that runs by that way. I will say,

the mainstream conversation. The musical takes everything a step further and goes deeper, which is really nice.

Second, on the gay front, it's interesting playing a role like this now, as opposed to the movie; in the movie, he's more of a background character. He was known as just the gay one before, but now it's more talked about and acceptable. He's more confident in the musical than he was in the movie. He's allowed to be himself a bit more and be celebrated for that. I think it's really fun to play that.

WCT: You have a really great role.

EH: Yes, I do. I want to stick with this for a while. It's a great company to work for and we are going for at least a year.

My character, Damian, is well-paced, too. Poor Danielle Wade, who plays Cady, doesn't get to breathe. She starts the show wearing four costumes on top of each other, because she doesn't have time to change her clothes, she just strips one off. I get little breaks built in, which is so nice. I get awesome numbers, then I have a break for five minutes. It's a rarity, because most people in this show don't.

WCT: How much is the cast playing their roles like the movie versions?

EH: We are really making it our own. They were very insistent on that and letting us be ourselves, which is refreshing. Mary Kate Morrissey, who plays our Janice Sarkisian, is the closest to her movie character. Ironically, MK is the one principal who never watched the movie. She didn't watch it, because she didn't want to be influenced by it.

The writing for my character is different than it is for the movie. I couldn't even begin to be exactly like him.

WCT: I prefer that, because one time I interview the lead for Pretty Woman the Musical and asked if it was a fresh take. She said yes, then I see the show and she copied exactly off Julia Roberts—down to the breaks and expressions in the dialogue.

EH: Oh, no! It was part of the audition process that the final callback was more like a coaching session than an audition. They wanted to play with the roles and see what was right together. It was very interesting.

WCT: Do you notice more pink in the audience on Wednesday performances?

EH: Definitely. I don't actually own anything pink. I have a couple of red shirts, so I try to wear red on Wednesdays.

WCT: You have to step up your game.

EH: I know. I'm close!

WCT: Maybe your fans can bring you pink shirts and boas.

EH: I would wear it if they do.

WCT: What is your favorite thing about touring?

EH: I like seeing all the cities. So many cities have different personalities that you wouldn't know until you experience it. I like to get a feel for the culture and food across the country.

WCT: Do you have a "Burn Book"?

EH: [Laughs] Only in my head!

Check out the totally "fetch" musical Mean Girls at James M. Nederlander Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St., through Sunday, Jan. 26. Tickets and parking can be found at BroadwayInChicago.com.



Eric Huffman.
PR photo

"You can do it" or something like that.

WCT: What do you want to tell people about Mean Girls the Musical?

EH: Two things. First, it's an excellent update from the movie, not just an adaptation. A lot of themes and issues that the movie touches on have been talked about more with this new generation. Things like bullying and identity were cutting-edge 15 years ago and are now part of

PODCASTS

Deborah Frances-White brings 'The Guilty Feminist' to Chicago

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Deborah Frances-White knew there was humor to be mined from her bungled attempts to be a good feminist. Which is why the U.K.-based Australian comedian/writer/producer co-created the comedy podcast The Guilty Feminist.

Frances-White's first "guilty" admission was: "I'm a feminist, but one time I went on a women's rights march, and I popped into a department store to use the loo, and I got distracted trying out face cream. And when I came out the march was gone."

Frances-White was certain she wasn't alone. So she co-created a podcast platform for other comedians and guests to "explore our noble goals as 21st century feminists and the hypocrisies and insecurities that undermine them."

"I think comedians create audiences in their own image to a certain extent," said Frances-White during a recent telephone interview. "The wonderful thing about podcasting is you can attract a global audience who want to hear that and find that funny."

Since its creation in 2015, The Guilty Feminist has been downloaded more than 60 million times. The podcast's success has prompted The Guilty Feminist to tour across the U.K., Australia



Deborah Frances-White.

Photo by Daniel Hambury/Stella Pictures Ltd.

and New Zealand in increasingly larger theaters.

Frances-White also wrote a book of The Guilty Feminist in 2018. It gained the subtitle "You Don't Have to be Perfect to Overthrow the Patriarchy" for its recent North American release.

As part of the book launch, Frances-White is taping episodes of The Guilty Feminist in select Canadian and U.S. cities. One tour stop is at 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, at Thalia Hall in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood.

Frances-White is keen to return to the Windy City, since she was once an artistic associate with the former Chicago Improv Festival. Sneaking out to take improvisation classes as a teenager was also a way for Frances-White to "rebel" while being raised as a [now-former] Jehovah's Witness in Australia.

"Being a good improviser makes you a good podcaster," said Frances-White, who also co-au-

thored the book The Improv Handbook with Tom Salinsky, her British husband and Guilty Feminist co-producer.

Most episodes of The Guilty Feminist feature Frances-White co-hosting with a (usually female-identified) comedian. Then they like to "ally up" with special guests to tackle topics both lighthearted and serious.

For example, one recently released Guilty Feminist episode riffed on the idea of being "big" (women feeling comfortable taking up space in all kinds of ways). Another dove headlong into the current refugee and humanitarian crisis on the Greek island of Lesbos.

"If the values—the humanitarian or the feminist values—were absent from the comedy, that would be a problem," said Frances-White about the podcast's mix of being funny and promoting active compassion. "Audiences will go there with you if the values go across the comedy and sad truths."

Early on with The Guilty Feminist, Frances-White realized that she needed to have as many diverse voices as possible. For example, some past co-hosts and guests have included queer African-American comedian/writer Kemah Bob, transgender scientist Reubs Walsh and lesbian folk singer-songwriter Grace Petrie.

"If we do a podcast about feminism and it's full of white middle-class straight ladies, then we're only doing a show with a very specific perspective," Frances-White said. "But honestly, [diversity] just makes the show better and more interesting and funny."

The Guilty Feminist also occasionally has fa-

mous guests. For example, Emmy Award-winner Phoebe Waller-Bridge (Fleabag, Killing Eve) and lesbian comedian Hannah Gadsby (Nanette, Douglas) both appeared on the podcast long before the two women skyrocketed into to superstardom.

"They're close friends of mine, and to see their success has been absolutely amazing," said Frances-White. She added that Waller-Bridge and Gadsby contributed interviews for the second U.K. edition of The Guilty Feminist book.

Frances-White also wrote the screenplay and has a cameo in the 2019 screwball film comedy Say My Name. She is also tied to other podcasts.

Frances-White is a producer of the show GrownUpLand on BBC Radio 4. She is also a co-creator and co-host of Global Pillage, which grew out of a response to the historical lack of diversity on British TV panel shows.

But for now Frances-White is looking to build more North American audiences for The Guilty Feminist—especially amid these difficult political times with Brexit in the U.K. and the Trump administration in the U.S.

The Guilty Feminist is "a place where you can really find your tribe and feel part of something that is contemporary and relevant," Frances-White said. "It's absolutely necessary in an age where we must absolutely resist and be resilient in resiting. And resilience is built through joy and laughter, so please come out and bring friends."

A live episode taping of the podcast "The Guilty Feminist" is at 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, at Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport St. Tickets are \$35-\$45. For more information, visit GuiltyFeminist.com.

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Directed by **MEGAN CARNEY**

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Angelica Ross
in *American
Horror Story:
1984*.
Photo
by Kurt
Iswarienko

Screen queens: The best and worst TV of 2019

BY JERRY NUNN

The television entertainment landscape continued to evolve and grow in 2019, with Disney+ and Apple TV+ both making their debuts. Hopefully, the lists below will give TV watchers a way to separate the good, the bad and the ugly from last year.

The show **You** moved from Lifetime to Netflix for season two. Openly gay show runner Greg Berlanti added a LGBT posse and enough shocking moments to pull it into the top 10.

Work in Progress is the show that many have wanted. It's shot in Chicago and gave viewers a whole spectrum of LGBT representation.

Natasha Lyonne wrapped up **Orange Is the New Black** with season seven, then hopped to another Netflix series with the mesmerizing **Russian Doll**. **What We Do in the Shadows** took a bite out of the comedy horror genre with a dry wit.

This Is Us continued to deserve every trophy

and accolade for having the best writing on prime-time television.

Baby Yoda almost broke the internet last year by sheer force of cuteness, with his role as the 50-year-old "The Kid" in **The Mandalorian** on Disney+.

Across the pond, sitcoms did well in 2019, thanks to **Fleabag's** Phoebe Waller-Bridge and **The Crown's** Helena Bonham Carter.

Unbelievable became a new generation's Cagney & Lacey on Netflix, with top-notch writing. Audiences got to see actress Kaitlyn Dever's extensive range this year, from a queer kid role in *Booksmart* to a performance as a rape victim that earned her a Golden Globe nomination.

Schitt's Creek aired its fifth season in 2019 and will end the series in early 2020. Explaining sexuality in terms of wine was genius on season one and season six promises to end on a high note, thanks to queer creator Dan Levy.

Best TV of 2019:

10. **You** (Netflix)
9. **Work in Progress** (Showtime)
8. **Russian Doll** (Netflix)
7. **What We Do in the Shadows** (FX)
6. **This Is Us** (NBC)
5. **The Mandalorian** (Disney+)
4. **Fleabag** (Amazon Prime Video)
3. **The Crown** (Netflix)
2. **Unbelievable** (Netflix)
1. **Schitt's Creek** (Pop TV)

Game of Thrones had droves of fans feeling like it was *The Sopranos* all over again on HBO, with hours of viewing time invested and no payoff in the end. Daenerys Targaryen should have trained her dragon better.

The Walking Dead won't ever die with future plans for an 11th season, movies and spinoffs. Sadly, much of the storytelling has passed away after writers were fired from the originally powerful show. When star Andrew Lincoln jumped ship in season nine, it wasn't a good sign.

American Gods had a promising first season, then fell from the sky immediately the following season.

Empire is deservedly ending, with a final sixth season that began airing on September 2019. Even local Chicago drag queen appearances couldn't save the show that has never regained the popularity of the first season. After his Chicago scandal, Jussie Smollett did not return to end his role as a Lyon with the rest of the pride.

In a world where Wayne Brady beats Chris Daughtry in a singing competition, something must be terribly wrong with **The Masked Singer**. "What does The Fox say?"

Ryan Murphy continued to rule on the small screen with important projects for the LGBT community like FX's **Pose** and Netflix's **The Politician**, but his weaknesses were exposed with **American Horror Story: 1984** because of unbelievable characters, plot holes and time jumps.

BH 90210 and **The Hills: New Beginnings**



Fleabag's Phoebe Waller-Bridge.

Photo by Steve Schofield

were both similar by having longtime fan bases and bad productions in the reboots.

MTV struck out again with Lohan hitting an all-time low on the beach.

Several on the list for worst TV shows are renewed for more seasons. Let's hope it gets better in 2020.

Worst TV of 2019:

10. **Game of Thrones** (HBO)
9. **The Walking Dead** (AMC)
8. **American Gods** (Starz)
7. **Empire** (Fox)
6. **The Masked Singer** (Fox)
5. **American Horror Story: 1984** (FX)
4. **The Bachelor** (ABC)
3. **BH 90210** (Fox)
2. **The Hills: New Beginnings** (MTV)
1. **Lindsay Lohan's Beach Club** (MTV)

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Bowie Ball to be held Jan. 10

Heaven Malone and A Queer Pride will present "Bowie Ball: David Bowie's Birthday" Friday, Jan. 10, 9 p.m.-2 a.m., at Le Nocturne, 4810 N. Broadway.

Lucy Stooile will be mistress of ceremonies. Mick Douch, Ari Gato, Margaret Y Ya and XO Carington will perform drag shows, with Kevin McComb giving a live performance. Malone will DJ the 21-and-older event.

See BowieBall.com.

Frankie Knuckles celebration Jan. 19

Queen!, in association with The Frankie Knuckles Foundation, will hold "For Frankie! A Celebration of his 65th Birthday" Sunday, Jan. 19, 9 p.m.-4 a.m., at Metro Chicago, 3730 N. Clark St.

Among the people slated to attend and/or



Bowie Ball.
Photo
by Miss
Meadows

perform are Michael Serafini, Garrett David, Alan King, Mark Grant and Zac Jones, along with hosts Lucy Stooile, Nico, Jojo Baby, Tonderoni and Bambi Banks-Coulee.

Knuckles, who was openly gay and honored for his DJ work around the world, died March 31, 2014, at age 59. The producer—inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in 1996—mixed work by artists such as Chaka Khan, Michael Jackson and Depeche Mode.

Visit "For Frankie! A Celebration of his 65th Birthday" on Facebook for more information.



BILLY Masters

"This is 20/20."—Cheri Oteri rang in the new year as **Barbara Walters** alongside a stoic **Andy Cohen** and a giggling **Anderson Cooper** on CNN.

I'm a lot like **Tina Turner**. Now, the obvious question to ask is, "How, Billy, are you like Tina Turner?" Sometimes I like my life to be nice and easy; but sometimes, I like it to be nice and rough. I was thinking—what would be a good challenge for this, the dawn of a new decade. Then it hit me—we've got 50 states in this country (more or less), and we've got 50 weeks in a year (more or less). So, why not try and have sex with a guy from a different state each week. I've built in a lot of conditions for this challenge. First off, none of this has to be done alphabetically. Also, layover sex in an airport definitely counts. However, the guy and I don't need to have sex in the state in question. But since I'm a stickler for details, IDs should be consulted—even at certain gatherings where clothing is not required. Come to think of it, on a good night I could cross like a baker's dozen states off the list if I'm lucid enough to keep track. Let's see how this goes—and how often I need to go to urgent care!

Kathy Griffin didn't need a gig on New Year's Eve to make headlines. Forget about CNN and ABC. Kathy had a captive audience watching her ring in the New Year from her palatial home, where she GOT MARRIED! Yes, Griffin married her on-again/off-again bea, Randy Bick. To make it a truly gayla affair, the officiant was the legendary Lily Tomlin, while Tomlin's spouse, the great Jane Wagner, was a witness. It's not God, but it's close.

I wonder if **Russell Tovey** and **Steve Brockman** will become the **Colton Haynes** and **Jeff Leatham** of 2020. (There's a chance many of you reading this would not be able to identify any of those four people in a police lineup.) Tovey and Brockman were dating in 2017. They got engaged in 2018. Later that year, they broke up (perhaps coinciding with news of Brockman's gay porn past going public). Last year, they started dating again. And as the year drew to a close, they were once again engaged. Looking forward to more drama with those crazy kids in 2020.

Gus Kenworthy has no use for kids. He's courting an older crowd. How much older? In the words of Mame Dennis, somewhere between 40 and death. Gus was videotaped meeting a group of three gay men who are denizens of God's waiting room, Palm Springs. (Fort Lauderdale is God's parking lot.) When shown a photo, the men seemed unsure who Gus was. One said, "Who was that Olympic skier? Adam Rippon's friend. Chuck Helmsworthy?" In the words of Jesus' parents—Oy! Once Gus was correctly identified, he came out to meet the oldsters, who were quite smitten—after all, Kenworthy is both dashing and delightful. Well, that and as one guy kept pointing out, he's got those thighs and that ass. Check out



Russell Tovey (right, with **Jonathan Groff** in *Looking*) definitely has an on-off thing happening, **Billy** says.

Photo by John P. Johnson/HBO

this fun video on BillyMasters.com.

One of the people who made our list of scandals of 2019 was **Kevin Spacey**—by way of that busboy (and, yes, I am well aware that he was not underage for the sexually activities Spacey was after; but he was underage for those drinks that Spacey bought). That busboy got off easy—so to speak. Two of Spacey's other targets had very different outcomes. One was a masseur in Malibu, and the other was married to the princess of Norway. You know what happened to them when they attempted to bring Spacey down? They ended up dead! The masseur sued Spacey for grabbing his genitals (in my massages, it's usually the other way around). When the case was cleared for trial, the masseur petitioned the court for anonymity, stating that he "has concern for their safety and/or do not want their names revealed publicly in the media." Days later ... DEAD. As for Ari Behn, the 47-year-old former prince, he died by suicide. Then again, 2019 was a tough year for princes.

As 2019 drew to a close, we lost a giant among men: the legendary composer **Jerry Herman**. It's interesting to note that 2019 began with the death of Herman's dear friend and muse, **Carol Channing**. I don't think Jerry would want us to remember him by mourning. He'd want us to celebrate life ... something he did in all of his musicals. And the fact that he was diagnosed as HIV-positive in 1985 and lived 34 years proves something. So long, dearie.

Our first "Ask Billy" question of the year isn't particularly gay, but it amuses me. Frank in Detroit asks, "Have you seen the *Mad About You* reboot? I love it—but where is Fran?"

I love it, too. The chemistry between **Paul Reiser** and **Helen Hunt** is perfect, as is the writing. (I could do without so much daughter, but that's me.) A hallmark of the original sitcom was the quirky supporting characters. I'm glad to see Ira, Lisa and Mark back. As for Fran, actress **Leila Kenzle** (who played the role) gave up acting a few years ago and is now a psychotherapist.

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pist. The irony is Fran's onscreen husband, Mark, is now married to Tonya, who is—you guessed it—a therapist! If the studio just matched Leila's hourly rate, they could probably get her to do a cameo.

When someone charging an hourly rate is NOT the subject of a blind item, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Speaking of *Mad About You*, where is Ursula? Why not have **Lisa Kudrow** drop in occasionally? Or have her work at Mark's restaurant? Why am I wasting these ideas on you? While I get my agent on the phone, let me remind you to get the latest gossip (and casting ideas) at BillyMasters.com—the site that has nothing against you doing it on the couch. If you have a question for me—or if you're an Alaskan visiting Los Angeles for the weekend—send an email to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I'll get back to you once I'm south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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the DISH

Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Best restaurants of 2019

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Last year, I had the pleasure of visiting dozens of spots covering a wide variety of cuisines. Here are some of the best—so indulge in what these spots have to offer:

—**Roanoke Restaurant and Club** (135 W. Madison St.; TheRoanokeRestaurant.com): Brunch at this Loop spot was absolutely wonderful, thanks for a delicious variety of items—including the French toast and the power bowl, as well as an impressive range of cocktails and mocktails.

—**Taureaux Tavern** (155 W. Van Buren St.; TaureauxTavern.com): Nestled in the Loop's financial district (as the restaurant's name notifies, as "Taureaux" is French for "bull"), this restaurant not only excels with Gallic dishes, but with Italian and U.S. ones as well.

—**Tuscany on Taylor** (1014 W. Taylor St.; TuscanyChicago.com/location/chicago): For anyone looking for classic Italian dishes done well, this is the spot—and it's been serving said classics since 1990. Not only are the antipasti delightful, but you can't go wrong with the pizzas (cooked in a wood-burning oven) or the decadent desserts.

—**Victory Italian** (434 W. Ontario St.; VictoryItalian.com): Continuing along the Italian-restaurant track, the vibe at this River North spot is extremely cool—down to the many photographs of celebrities that dot the walls. As



Tuna poke at GT Fish & Oyster.

Photo by Andrew Davis

for the food, just start with an appetizer pizza or meatball salad (with a giant beef-and-veal ball) and go from there.

—**Le Colonial** (57 E. Oak St.; LeColonialChicago.com): The revered French-Vietnamese spot may have altered locations, but not its standards. From cocktails such as the Chanh Day (Grey Goose vodka, passionfruit and fresh lime) to appetizers like the cha gio (spring rolls of shrimp, pork and Asian mushrooms, with chili-lime dipping sauce) to the signature chicken-fried rice, this place definitely warrants a visit.

—**Mango Pickle** (5842 N. Broadway; MangoPickleChicago.com): Mango Pickle features reimagined Indian dishes courtesy of Chef Marisa Paolillo—an Italian-American who fell in love with Indian cuisine while residing in Mumbai with her husband for nine years. The result is a menu full of delicious (and affordable) items—and, yes, there's a vegetarian menu.

—**Walton Street Kitchen** (912 N. State St.;

WaltonStreetChicago.com): Dinner at this spot was amazing—but lunch is just as compelling for the most part, with "Big Salads," and the incredible griddle burger, which comes with grilled onion, tomato jam, aged Colby, lettuce, bacon and aioli.

—**Avil Taverna** (1335 W. Wrightwood Ave.; avil.us): Another Avil has since opened, in River North (and I plan to visit it soon), but this Lincoln Park spot was sheer bliss. Adhering to authenticity to Greek culture while also putting its own spin on certain dishes, the menu includes everything from lobster spaghetti to a dessert consisting of housemade vanilla ice cream surrounding a caramel baklava center, with shredded phyllo on top.

—**GT Fish & Oyster** (531 N. Wells St.; GTOyster.com): This place, of course, specializes in seafood—but encompasses far more than the name implies. The fried-oyster slider is a must-have, but the crudo, duck-leg confit, tuna poke and even the strawberry key-lime pie aren't far behind.



Tao Chicago's giant fortune cookie.

PR photo

—**Tao Chicago** (632 N. Dearborn st.; TaoChicago.com): Located at the former Excalibur nightclub, the size of the space is almost matched by the extensiveness of the menu. The true highlight turned out to be the wagyu rib-eye teppanyaki—and it's worth the celebration-only price of \$89. However, everything I tried was a treat for the taste buds—and don't miss the giant fortune cookie.

Runners-up: Francois Frankie, Grand Trunk Road, Flight Club, City Mouse, The Purple Pig, River Roast and Bonci Pizza



BEHIND THE NAME

"Alex is my given name and Jenny is my mom's name. When choosing my stage name, I knew I wanted it to feel less like a character or a persona and more of an authentic reflection of who I am. Alex Jenny gives me permission to express my womanhood and have my trans identity seen and affirmed."

MY MUSE

"Britney Spears: her resiliency, hairgraphy, and very public journey with mental health are a constant inspiration to me. All the trans women who came before me and are in my life are also my muses and I very much channel their magic when I'm on stage."

GO-TO NUMBER TO SLAY A CROWD

"I don't know if I have a go-to number... my favorite number to date, however, is when I won Crash Landing and performed to 'Queendom' by Aurora. It perfectly captures my dream of uplifting queer and trans communities and making sure that everyone has a home in my queendom."

MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THAT I ...

"... work as a therapist at IntraSpectrum Counseling by day. My identity as a healer definitely informs my drag and I'm always thinking about how to create spaces where queer and trans people can heal, thrive, and harness joy."

WHEN I NEED A PICK-ME-UP, I ...

"... do a Berlin Bomb and then text all my friends how much I love them and yell at them about how talented and magical they are."

WHERE CAN WE CATCH YOU

"I am a resident host of HIGHFEMME, a party that centers queer and trans femmes of color."

SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram: @alexjenny_@alienbabesinlove.

Photo by Falyn Huang



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Joseph Stevens Photography

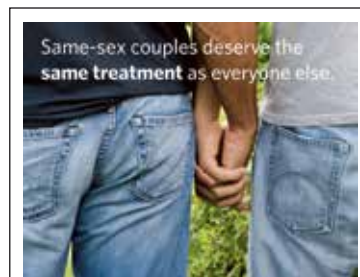


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Dropping the ball with ABC-7!
Photos courtesy of Lips Chicago

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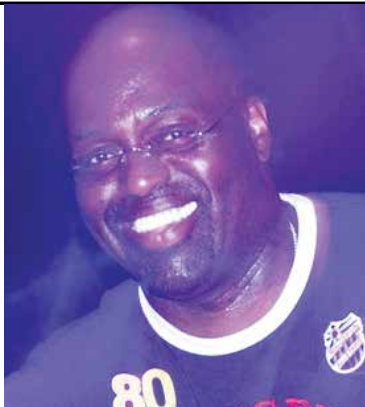
Thursday, Jan. 9

Artemis Singers new member night Chicago's lesbian feminist chorus is launching its 40th anniversary. Artemis is a non-audition chorus open to all women singers, regardless of experience level or music reading ability. Each singer should be able to hold a melody and want to sing with a lesbian feminist chorus that performs music written or arranged by women. Non-singing members can contribute other skills such as fundraising, promotion, concert production and graphic arts. info@artemissingers.org 6:30pm - 9:30pm Contact organizers for location 773-764-4465 http://www.artemissingers.org

Author reading: Martin McLean, Middle School Queen, by Alyssa Zaczek Seventh-grader Martin McLean is surrounded by people who can express themselves but he can only find the right words when he's answering a problem at a Mathletes competition--until his tio introduces him to the world of drag. Kid-friendly event is great for ages 8+ 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N. Clark St.; WomenAndChildrenFirst.com

America's Best Outcast Toy Pride Arts presents an oddball holiday reality musical. Through Jan. 12 7:30pm The Broadway, Pride Arts Center, Broadway Theatre at 4139 N. Broadway; PrideFilmsAndPlays.com

The Guilty Feminist podcast tour taping Since its creation in 2015, The Guilty



TRIBUTE Sunday, Jan. 19

There will be a celebration of the late DJ Frankie Knuckles' 65th birthday at Metro, 3730 N. Clark St.

Photo by Kirk Williamson

Feminist has been downloaded more than 60 million times. \$35-\$45. 8:00pm Thalia Hall, 1807 S Allport St http://GuiltyFeminist.com

Friday, Jan. 10

Voice of Good Hope A dramatic portrait of Barbara Jordan, the first African American congresswoman to be elected

from the Deep South. Written by Kristine Thatcher, directed by Terry McCabe. Through Feb. 23 7:30pm City Lit Theater 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Chicago 773-293-3682 Tickets: https://www.citylit.org/

Bowie Ball Glam and drag dance party: Glam it up, dress like a dandy, love the alien with some glitter on top to celebrate the birthday of David Bowie. DJs, drag shows, Bowie performance, glitter and glam makeovers. 21+ 9:00pm - 2:00am Le Nocturne, 4810 N Broadway http://bowieball.com

Saturday, Jan. 11

Counter Protest Against March for Life Rally The January 11th Abortion Rights Coalition will have a counter protest against the March for Life 2020 rally. Supporting Organizations: Chicago for Abortion Rights and Sound-off 12:00pm - 3:00pm SE Corner of Dearborn and Washington, Chicago, IL https://www.facebook.com/events/565524580691875/

Burning Bowl 2020 This year we'll gather to celebrate Affinity's 25th year together! We're burning the old and setting in motion the positive changes we want to see in ourselves, our community and the world. Free, lunch served. Register online by noon on Friday, Jan. 10 to be entered to win an Affinity shirt with the new branding 1:00pm - 4:00pm Charles Hayes Center, 4859 S Wabash Ave, Chicago http://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/w__b2XRwEwyQpGcX8mD7Q

Monday, Jan. 13

Gilda's Club Chicago, Howard Brown Counseling Center LGBTQA+ Cancer Networking group Free support group second Monday of every month for

anyone within the LGBTQA+ community who has been impacted by cancer. Time:TBA Howard Brown Counseling Center 312-464-9900 http://www.gildasclubchicago.org

Tuesday, Jan. 14

Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus Propriety Project Town Hall Updating and sharing findings from multi-year campaign an initiative focused on Black same-gender-loving men to understand how health is impacted by living, working and loving in the City of Chicago. Free. Refreshments. Doors 5:30 p.m. 6:30pm Stony Island Arts Bank, 6760 S. Stony Island Ave. http://www.facebook.com/events/768338113683479/?active_tab=about

Thursday, Jan. 16

Yoni Pizer campaign kickoff Kicking off campaign for 12th District State Representative. 6:00pm - 7:30pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago Tickets: http://secure.actblue.com/donate/pizersidetrack

Friday, Jan. 17

About Face Theatre's The Gulf Six years into a relationship, tensions and passions flare as a lesbian couple clash over past infidelities, life-choices, and job struggles. Directed by About Face Artistic Director Megan Carney, the production will feature AFT Artistic Associate Kelli Simpkins and Deanna Myers. Through February 15 7:30pm Theatre Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. Tickets: http://AboutFaceTheatre.com

Saturday, Jan. 18

Women's March Chicago Replacing rally format with a "Gallery of Issues" experience that marchers will interact with while on the go. Also, WMC will honor its marchers with disabilities by having them lead the March. Grant Park will open at 9 a.m. 11:00am Columbus Drive and Ida B. Wells Drive. http://womensmarchchicago.org

New Member Dance Workshop Chicago LGBTQ Country Dancing. Find Second City Outlaws on MeetUp 12:00pm - 5:00pm House of Music & Entertainment, 1227 N Rand Rd Arlington Heights

Sunday, Jan. 19

For Frankie! A Celebration of his 65th Birthday Slated to attend and/or perform are Michael Serafini, Garrett David, Alan King, Mark Grant and Zac Jones, along with hosts Lucy Stoolie, Nico, Jojo Baby, Tenderoni and Bambi Banks-Coulee. Knuckles, who was openly gay and honored for his DJ work around the world, died March 31, 2014, at age 59. Visit "For Frankie! A Celebration of his 65th Birthday" on Facebook for more information. 9:00pm - 4:00am Metro Chicago 3730 N Clark Chicago

Monday, Jan. 20

Chicago Sinfonietta MLK Tribute Concert Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy brought to life in sight and sound during this dazzling symphonic celebration, a symphonic tapestry made possible by the nation's most diverse orchestra. 3:00pm North Central College, 171 E. Chicago Ave. Naperville. (Also Tuesday, Jan. 21, at Chicago Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave.) http://chicagosinfonietta.org

MOVIES from page 13

Walt Disney Pictures crashed on several endeavors in 2019, like **Dumbo** with its featherweight character development and dark tones. **Aladdin** was gold at the box office, but Will Smith as Genie was all smoke and mirrors; Smith followed that performance up with Gemini Man's painfully bad dialogue later in the year.

It's the 50th anniversary of Sharon Tate's murder and two movies came out with her as the subject in 2019. Quentin Tarantino's **Once Upon a Time in Hollywood** had Margot Robbie playing Tate, while **The Haunting of Sharon Tate** had Hilary Duff in the starring role. One was approved by Tate's sister, Debra, and is winning tons of accolades; the other is not. Can you guess which one?

Limp Bizkit frontman Fred Durst wrote and directed **The Fanatic**, miscasting John Travolta as an obsessed fan in a film with weird transitions and strange narration. Travolta spouting a line about having to "poo" in the first scene gives the audience a clue to what's in store for this stinker.

Speaking of something that should have been left in the litter box, **Cats** might not only be the worst movie of 2019, but of all time. Taylor Swift can keep on throwing glittery catnip into the crowd, but Cats is just not campy enough to make it a good "Memory."



Dumbo.

Photo courtesy of Walt Disney Studios

Worst movies of 2019:

10. Men in Black: International
9. Aladdin
8. Charlie's Angels
7. Dumbo
6. Last Christmas
5. Rambo: Last Blood
4. The Intruder
3. The Haunting of Sharon Tate
2. The Fanatic
1. Cats

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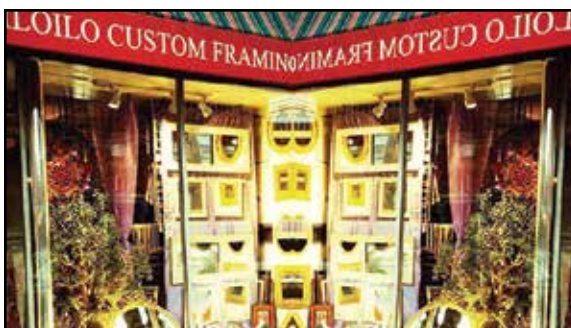


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