

# WINDY CITY TIMES

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JAN. 21, 2009 • VOL 24 NO 17

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## Winds of Change



**South Side March**

page 8



**Sigourney Weaver**

page 18



**Obama Exhibit**

page 8



page 4

Among the sights at the inaugural kickoff event on Jan. 18 were (clockwise from left): President Barack Obama with his family; the Right Rev. Gene Robinson, who delivered the prayer; and entertainers Josh Groban and Heather Headley with the D.C. Gay Men's Chorus. Read more about Obama's historic inauguration on page 4. Photos by Patsy Lynch

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## Winter Theater Preview

pages 11-17

From left: Maria's Field, Richard Chamberlain and Beer are among the productions and individuals featured in Windy City Times' winter theater preview.



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# WINDY CITY TIMES

## index

### NEWS

Inauguration coverage	4
Obama's LGBT team	6
Equality Summit	6
National roundup	6
Sex and the seminary	7
South Side march for justice	8
Gress' Obama art	8
Life is a cabaret at Center	9
Quotelines	9
Rev. Irene Monroe; letters	10
High school cartoon	21

### WINTER THEATER PREVIEW

Richard Chamberlain	11
Site-specific theater	12
Jason Southerland	13
Venue-hopping	14

### ENTERTAINMENT

Theater reviews	16
Sigourney Weaver	18
Entertainment news	20
'L Word' viewing party	21
Knight at the Movies: Bobby	22
DVD review: Schoolboy Crush	22

### OUTLINES

Real estate; classifieds	19
Calendar	21
Sports briefs	22



A lot of fun was had at the L word viewing party that took place at T's Jan. 18. See more photos on page 21.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)



The DVD of the guilty-pleasure film Schoolboy Crush (above) is reviewed on page 22.

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Features include:  
 -World roundup  
 -A letter from Peter Tatchell to President Obama  
 -A preview of the trans year to come  
 -A review of the book Voluntary Madness (right)



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**YOU GLOW, GIRL!**  
 Lighting up the night at Hydrate's Black Out Party.

Photo by DJ Res-5

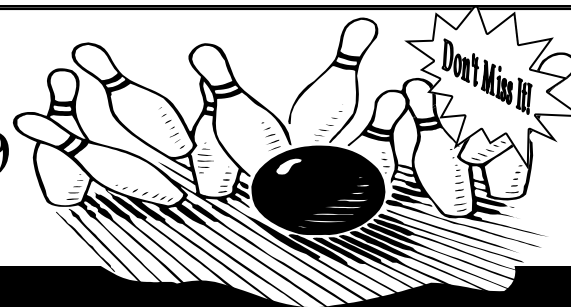


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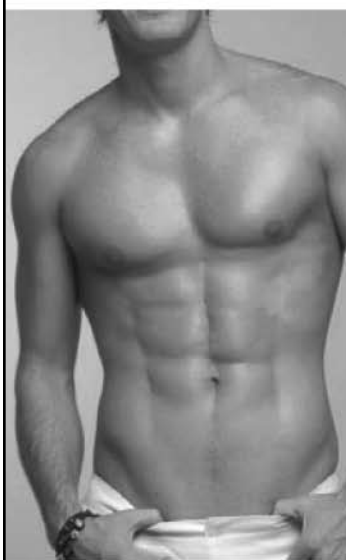
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# INAUGURATION 2009

## Obama becomes the 44th president

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Providing the high point for millions of visitors to Washington, D.C.—and ushering in an era of change, diversity and hope—Barack Obama was sworn in on the steps of the U.S. Capitol Jan. 20, becoming the 44th president of the United States.

Officials expected approximately 2 million people on Inauguration Day, compelling outgoing President George W. Bush to declare the district a federal emergency area, according to the Washington Blade.

The timing of the swearing-in—the day after Martin Luther King, Jr., Day—provided even more meaning to a historic day when the first

African-American commander-in-chief took office. Obama spent the holiday at the Sasha Bruce House, a place for homeless teens, while issuing a “call to service” to the nation; there, he assisted people who were fixing up rooms.

The inauguration ceremony included a performance by Aretha Franklin, a reading by renowned poet Elizabeth Alexander and an invocation by controversial minister Rick Warren. The selection of Warren—who supported California’s anti-same-sex measure, Prop 8—galled many members of the LGBT community, in particular. After announcing the choice of Warren, Obama’s transition team selected openly gay Episcopal Bishop V. Gene Robinson to lead the prayer at this past Sunday’s inaugural kickoff event at the Lincoln Memorial.

Obama started off by saying that he was “humbled by the task before us, grateful for the

trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.” He then acknowledged the economic crisis: “The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act—not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth.”

The new president also addressed the issue of war: “To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society’s ills on the West: Know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.”

Obama’s message—which stressed that this country will rise to the challenges presented to it—also mentioned religion, but did not mention sexual orientation.

Tuesday’s ceremony ended with the inaugural parade, which included the Lesbian and Gay Band Association (LGBA), a musical organization composed of marching and concert bands from across the U.S. and around the world. Among the songs the LGBA performed during the 1.5-mile route were Brand New Day (from the musical The Wiz), The Washington Post and Hold On, I’m Comin’. Six members of Chicago’s Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles marched with the band.

LGBT-rights groups expressed their happiness with the new leadership. Human Rights Campaign Joe Solmonese said that “[t]oday’s inauguration represents a paradigm shift. The pendulum has swung away from the anti-gay forces and toward a new president and vice president who acknowledge our equality. ... Our community and do many others are looking at a new day of welcome and great promise.”

### The Lincoln Memorial

On Jan. 18, a half-million people witnessed the two-hour “We Are One” concert, an all-star collection of actors and singers that took place at the Lincoln Memorial. Among those performing or speaking were Beyonce, Garth Brooks, Mary J. Blige, Queen Latifah, Denzel Washington and Bono.

Obama included the LGBT community in his speech at the event: “It’s the same thing that gave me hope from the day we began this campaign for the presidency nearly two years ago. A belief that if we could just recognize ourselves in one another, bring everybody together, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Latino, Asian, and Native American, Black and white, gay and straight, disabled and not, then not only would we restore hope and opportunity in places that yearn for both, but maybe just maybe we might perfect our union in the process. This is what I believed, but you made this belief real.”

However, the event did not occur without some controversy. Obama’s inauguration committee took responsibility for failing to broadcast Robinson’s prayer; HBO showed the concert

but did not air what the bishop said, according to a Boston Globe item. On Tuesday, HBO sent a release to Windy City Times stating that “Rev. Robinson’s invocation was not included in the live presentation due to a miscommunication within the Presidential Inaugural Committee.” The release also said that Robinson’s invocation would be included in Jan. 21, 24 and 25 re-airings of the concert.

Also, Brooks performed Shout and We Shall Be Free, a song that many have said endorses same-sex marriage, but did not include the stanza about gays in the latter song. In addition, the D.C. Gay Men’s Chorus performed with singers Josh Groban and Heather Headley; however, the group was not identified on HBO, although the individual singers were. However, Groban, when interviewed by MSNBC about the event, mentioned the chorus and called the gay and lesbian community “phenomenal,” according to AfterElton.com.

The concert ended with all of the speakers and performers singing America the Beautiful (written by the lesbian Katharine Lee Bates), led by Beyonce.

### Galas galore

The celebrating certainly did not stop with the concert on Sunday. Galas took place Sunday through Tuesday evenings.

Lesbian comedian Kate Clinton co-hosted (with activist Verna Avery Brown) at the Inaugural Peace Ball at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Jan. 19. She was joined by such celebrities as Joan Baez, Alice Walker, Eve Ensler, Holly Near & Emma’s Revolution and Harry Belafonte.

Among the galas scheduled for Tuesday night were the Youth Inaugural Ball, the Obama Home States Inaugural Ball (for guests from Hawaii and Illinois), the Midwest Inaugural Ball and the Commander in Chief’s Inaugural Ball.

Well over a dozen organizations (including the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force) were slated to host the “Out for Equality” Ball at the Mayflower Hotel Tuesday night. Melissa Etheridge, Rufus Wainwright, Catie Curtis and Cyndi Lauper were among those scheduled to perform.

### A Chicago presence

Many members of the local LGBT community made the trek to the nation’s capital, and could not contain their excitement before, during or after the trip.

One, Vernita Gray, described Tuesday’s events to Windy City Times, as “off da chain.” She added that she was headed to the Home States Ball that evening.

We will run more reactions and photos online at [www.windycitymediagroup.com](http://www.windycitymediagroup.com) and in next week’s Windy City Times.

**Note:** In a late development, Sen. Ted Kennedy, who has been battling a cancerous brain tumor, apparently had a seizure and collapsed in the U.S. Capitol’s Statuary Hall at the inauguration luncheon. Visit [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com) for more details as they become available.



Barack Obama takes the presidential oath of office. Photo taken by Kirk Williamson from CNN coverage



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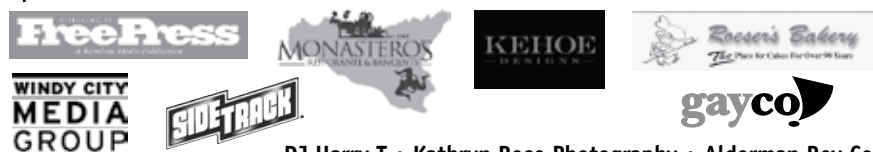
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Pictured are Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles members who participated in the Lesbian and Gay Band Association that marched in Obama’s inaugural parade. In the front row are (left to right) Vernon Magsino, Sarah Avampato, Katrina Cook and Sue Jones; in the back row (left to right) are Michelle Wetzel, Dot Wood, Rhonda Tullis and Denise (Volunteer, Band-Aid). Photo courtesy of Sandy Olson

# WINDY CITY TIMES EXCLUSIVE Obama marriage story goes national

## 1998 survey shows another shift

BY TRACY BAIM

In last week's Windy City Times, we revealed for the first time the complete answers from Barack Obama to a 1996 Outlines newspaper questionnaire. While we had reported before that Obama backed same-sex marriage in that election for state Senate, the old survey had just been found in the Windy City Times archives and published in full for the first time. (Outlines merged with Windy City Times in 2000.)

In that Outlines survey, which had been sent to all local and federal candidates, Obama or someone in his campaign did not just answer yes or no, but instead typed a complete set of answers to the survey, and Obama signed the bottom of the page. On the marriage issue it said: "I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages."

This evidence of Obama's shift from early support to where he stands today -- opposed to gay marriage but in favor of civil unions -- caused quite a stir last week. The Windy City Times story was picked up around the country, first on blogs and then on news programs. The story was on The Rachel Maddow Show (where the host brought it up during an interview with Bishop Gene Robinson), the Advocate, the Christian Broadcasting Network, Fox News, Huffington Post, Politico, Towleroad, Dan Savage's blog, Andrew Sullivan's blog, and in numerous other stories, both in the gay media and mainstream media.

The survey from 1996 was found during my archival dig into more than 300 boxes of old Windy City Times and Outlines newspaper files. I am scanning old items for the www.ChicagoGay-History.org Web site, so as I continue to find more items we will be posting those.

Last week, I found yet another Obama survey response, this time from the 1998 race where he was seeking re-election for state Senate. This time, Obama's campaign just wrote their answers

OUTLINES/BLACKlines CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE '98  
Illinois SENATE Candidate: BARACK OBAMA District: D-13TH SENATORIAL

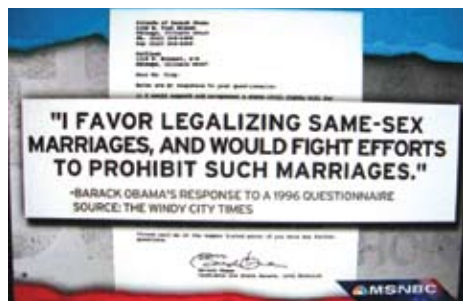
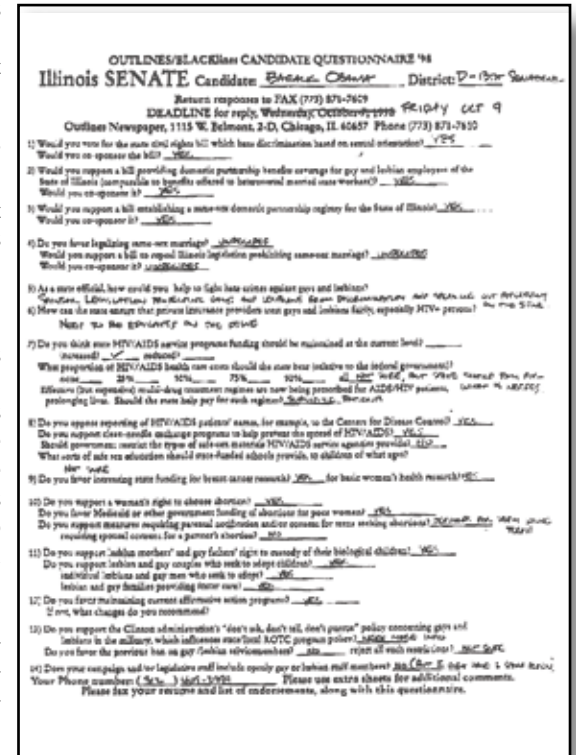
4) Do you favor legalizing same-sex marriage? UNDECIDED  
Would you support a bill to repeal Illinois legislation prohibiting same-sex marriage? UNDECIDED  
Would you co-sponsor it? UNDECIDED

In the 1998 Outlines survey, Obama had already started his shift, stating he was "undecided" about same-sex marriage.

on our Outlines questionnaire. There was a three-part question on same-sex marriage: Do you favor legalizing same-sex marriage? Would you support a bill to repeal Illinois legislation prohibiting same-sex marriage? Would you co-sponsor it? For all three questions he wrote in "undecided". The shift away from same-sex marriage support had begun. Later, in his run for U.S. Senate, he backed away further, now saying he favored civil unions, and felt marriage is a state's issue.

See the complete story from last week's Windy City Times at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com. The complete 1998 survey is also online with this article. [In 1998 he also answers "not sure" and "need more info" when asked about the military's gay ban; now he says he is opposed to the ban; in this case one step forward instead of two steps back.]

Tracy Baim is publisher and executive editor of Windy City Times. She was the co-founder and publisher of Outlines newspaper.



The Rachel Maddow show featured the Windy City Times exclusive Jan. 14. At left is the excerpt they showed, at right is Maddow asking Bishop Gene Robinson about the apparent change of heart Obama has had, backing away from full gay marriage rights.



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## Obama's newest LGBT appointees

BY LISA KEEN, KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The last week leading up to the inauguration of the new president has brought a virtual cascade of LGBT-related political developments: eight new appointments were revealed to be in the works.

Most significant by far, in terms of political importance, are the new appointments, albeit they are in various stages of being vetted, finalized and announced.

Openly gay National Zoo Director John Berry is being named to head the Office of Personnel Management. It's a tad short of the Secretary of Interior position gay leaders had hoped for but it is the highest-ranking position ever for an openly gay appointee. The Office of Personnel Management, with more than 5,000 employees and an annual budget of about \$1.5 billion, is the hiring agency of the federal government's three million-strong civilian workforce.

In addition to being director of the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., Berry was, under President Bill Clinton, assistant secretary for policy, management and budget at the Interior. He has also served as head of the Congressionally sanctioned the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Berry is a major donor to and a member of the Human Rights Campaign's board. Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund leader Chuck Wolfe singled out Berry from a pool of LGBT Presidential Appointments Project candidates as a strong contender for a cabinet position. Wolfe and other gay leaders were openly disappointed when Obama appointed no openly LGBT people to the cabinet. The transition team this week did not officially confirm reports that Berry's nomination is imminent, but gave indications that an announcement could come in the next few days.

The transition team has also indicated that announcements will likely be made soon concerning the widespread reports that openly gay businessman Fred Hochberg will be named to chair the Export-Import Bank, and activist Brian Bond will be named deputy director of the White House office of Public Liaison. Hochberg, a former HRC board member, was an acting administrator of the Small Business Administration under Clinton. The Export-Import Bank helps finance the export of U.S. goods and services.

Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese called Hochberg "one of the most highly qualified and experienced public servants in our community" and said "the fact that President-elect Obama has tapped him for such an important economic position speaks well for the LGBT community."

Bond, former head of the Victory Fund, served as Director of Constituencies for the Obama presidential campaign and, for a time, was head of the Democratic National Committee's LGBT outreach. The Office of Public Liaison does outreach through briefings, meetings and events at the White House to various constituency groups—

depending on the president's priorities.

Other openly LGBT people whose appointments have not yet been officially confirmed by the transition team but which are expected to be announced soon include:

—Moe Vela, as director of operations in the Office of the Vice President;

—Dave Noble, as White House liaison to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA);

—David Medina, as deputy chief of staff for First Lady Michelle Obama; and

—Karine Jean-Pierre, as White House liaison to the Department of Labor.

What is official, however, is that on Jan. 8, the transition announced the appointment of Anthony Bernal to be director of scheduling for Vice President Joe Biden's wife, Jill, a position he held during the campaign as well. Bernal, a graduate of the University of Texas El-Paso, served in the scheduling offices of Clinton and Vice President Al Gore.

If all these appointees are finalized and announced, they will bring to 11 the number of openly LGBT people thus far named to positions in the Obama White House and administration. Previously, the Obama transition team named Los Angeles Deputy Mayor Nancy Sutley to chair his White House Council on Environmental Quality and Brad Kiley as director of the White House Office of Management and Administration.

Meanwhile, the Washington Post reported Tuesday that Mark Dybul, an openly gay physician who has served for the past three years as President Bush's Ambassador for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a global program, is staying put, at least for now. Post political columnist Al Kamen said Dybul sent an e-mail Jan. 9 to his staff, saying he has "been asked to rescind my resignation so I will be continuing in the coordinator position beyond the inauguration."

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## Equality Summit drops restrictions on media

BY REX WOCKNER

The California Equality Summit, a large gay activist powwow being held in Los Angeles Jan. 24, has abandoned a plan to block media access to portions of the gathering.

The meeting of more than 250 California GLBT activists at the Los Angeles Convention Center will focus on strategizing and organizing to win back same-sex marriage in California.

Internal meeting minutes and e-mails, given to reporters by a disgruntled co-organizer, had made clear that the 53-member organizing committee had decided to prevent reporters from attending at least some portions of the summit.

"Media will have access to cover only a portion of the summit," stated the minutes of a Dec. 18 planning-committee meeting. "Co-chairs will

determine which section that is."

The policy was reiterated as late as Dec. 29, when summit coordinator Anne Marks of Equality California informed the planning committee that the summit's co-chairs "have decided not to revisit the committee's decision on media policy."

But after the documents became public and news stories were published on Jan. 5 and Jan. 7, organizers apparently opted to reconsider the decision.

A note published Jan. 13 on Equality California's Web site stated simply, "There will be press access at the entire summit for pre-registered members of the media."

The planned media limits had been controversial because the people who ran the failed campaign against Proposition 8 have been widely criticized for their alleged insularity during the campaign, in which Equality California had the lead role.

Prop 8, passed narrowly by voters on Nov. 4, 2008, amended the California Constitution to wipe out same-sex marriage, which had been legal since June 16, 2008, following a state Supreme Court ruling which found the state's opposite-sex definition of marriage unconstitutional.

Prop 8 itself is now under attack before the Supreme Court as allegedly unconstitutional for a variety of reasons. A ruling is expected in June.

## NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Log Cabin Republicans President Patrick Sammon has admitted that **the organization is facing financial difficulties** and ended 2008 at least \$100,000 in debt, the Washington Blade reported. Sammon said the economic crisis "certainly has affected" Log Cabin's ability to raise as much as had been predicted for the year.

**After 37 years, police have solved the murder of Gerald Jackson**, a gay man who was stabbed 55 times in the San Diego, Calif., area known as Horton Plaza, Gay & Lesbian Times reported. Helped by DNA and fingerprint technology, police were able to track down the suspect, Gerald Dean Metcalf, who had moved to Texas. Metcalf had a preliminary hearing Jan. 15 in San Diego Superior Court.

For the first time, researchers have established **a definitive link between the rejecting behaviors of families towards lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) adolescents and negative health-related results in early adulthood**, and these findings will be published in the January issue of Pediatrics, according to a Renna Communications press release. Among the scientific discoveries is that LGB young adults who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide than those who did not face rejection.

In Tennessee, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has asked a state appeals court to overturn **a ban that prevents divorced mother Angel Chandler from having her partner of nine years and her own children live at her home at the same time**, according to an ACLU press release. According to the ACLU, the trial court imposed the "paramour restriction" even though a psychologist found the partner to be a positive influence on the children.

Robert Gibbs, a spokesperson for President-elect Barack Obama, has said that **the next leader of the United States is committed to ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell,"** CNN reported. However, Gibbs added that terminating the policy will not happen right away, as the economy is Obama's top priority.

President Barack Obama followed a meeting with conservative columnists **by dining with liberal commentators** Jan. 14, according to Politico.com. Among those in the latter group



Patrick Sammon.

were lesbian Rachel Maddow and openly gay columnist Andrew Sullivan.

The Stonewall Democrats have issued a release congratulating Laura Calvo upon her election as treasurer of the Democratic Party of Oregon. In a historic development, **Calvo has become the first openly transgender officer** of a state Democratic party.

**Donald Hitchcock, a former outreach director for the Democratic National Committee (DNC), has reached a settlement with the organization**, the Washington Blade reported. Hitchcock sued the DNC and its chair, Howard Dean, after Hitchcock was removed as head of party outreach to the LGBT community. Hitchcock claimed that the DNC discriminated against him because the firing occurred after his partner, Paul Yandura, criticized Dean about the latter's handling of LGBT issues.

**Alicia Skillman has been named executive director of Michigan's Triangle Foundation**—becoming the first woman and person of color to lead the state's prominent LGBT-rights organization, according to an organizational press release. Skillman is also a member of Project Harmony's Advisory Council, VOICES; Project Harmony is an initiative of Family Equality Council that involves LGBT families of color.

The California Council of Churches and various other religious leaders and faith organizations **have filed a friend-of-the-court brief with the California Supreme Court asking the Court to invalidate Proposition 8**, according to a press release from the council. Like other complaints with the court, this brief argues that Prop 8 poses a severe threat to the guarantee of equal protection for all and that the measure did not go through the correct legislative process needed for such a dramatic change to the California Constitution.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of State and contractor Triple Canopy, Inc., **charging that they discriminated against a former veteran who is HIV-positive**, an organizational press release stated. A motion filed by Triple Canopy confirmed that the State Department contract required a negative HIV test for all employees, which the ACLU charges violates the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans for Disabilities Act.

**A lesbian couple—Lisa Hazirjian and her partner, Michelle—was among 16 U.S. families** invited to join President-elect Barack Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden on the Whistle Stop Tour from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., the Saturday before the inauguration, the Washington Blade reported. According to a press release from the Presidential Inauguration Committee, the guests are "everyday Americans from all walks of life [who] have made extraordinary contributions to the life of this country."

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# Sex and the seminary

BY PAUL MARINKOVICH

Connecticut's Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing and New York's Union Theological Seminary have released a study that reveals a lack of sexual curricula in United States seminaries and rabbinical schools.

In *Sex and the Seminary: Preparing Ministers for Sexual Health and Justice*, 36 Protestant and Jewish seminaries, rabbinical schools, non-denominational and Unitarian Universalist institutions were surveyed on the education and training of issues connected to sexuality. The study was conducted in order to assess the performance in areas connected to sexuality studies, LGBT/queer studies, feminist/women's studies, and sexual abuse/violence studies.

"Through our own experiences with seminary students and also through our teaching, we realized that most people have graduated without the skills needed to deal with sexual health issues in the parish," said Kate Ott, Ph.D., associate director of the Religious Institute and author of *Sex and the Seminary*. "We needed to find out if that assumption holds for most places and if so, what was the kind of training that the ministry needs."

An advisory committee was assembled that consisted of various seminary faculty members and administration, and together with the Religious Institute and the Union Theological Seminary, developed a foundation as to what an ideal seminary might look like in terms of properly educating the future religious professional in sexuality-related issues. The result was the survey.

"We refer to this as a survey, but this was a very in-depth survey—it took weeks for seminaries to respond because we asked them to tell us about the specific courses they offered in various areas and how often these courses were

required for ordination or graduation," said Tim Palmer, director of research and communications at the Religious Institute. "From there, we collected the data and were able to see the larger pattern emerging."

The survey found that seminaries and religious schools are failing to provide future religious leaders with the education needed in order to become what the study calls "sexually healthy." In her book, *A Time to Build: Creating Sexually Healthy Faith Communities*, Debra Haffner describes that sexually healthy religious professionals are "comfortable with their own sexuality, have skills to provide pastoral care and worship on sexuality issues, and are committed to sexual justice in their congregation and society at large." But without the opportunity for study, self-assessment and ministerial formation in sexuality, the next generation of religious leaders will not be prepared to deal with sexuality issues within their communities and their congregations.

"I think that theological education has a responsibility to train leaders, to rigorously teach them in order to prepare them to minister," said Alice Hunt, Ph.D., president of the Chicago Theological Seminary. "We need to provide them with the theoretical underpinning, the critical thinking skills they will need to engage these issues, and the understanding of the context that they are in. And we need to help them have the rhetorical skills they will need to speak about this."

But according to the survey, more than 9 in 10 seminaries do not require full-semester sexuality and LGBT courses for graduation, ultimately allowing future religious leaders to be ordained without adequate sexuality training.

"Most folks who are going to serve as clergy or as religious professionals are going to be faced with dealing with sexuality issues of their community and of their congregants," said Ott. "It could be child sexual abuse, it could be establishing a sexual abuse policy for their church, dealing with married couples, teens or adults in

their congregation questioning their orientation or gender identity—people come to their clergy when they have these kinds of questions. I think it is so important because people are going to have to deal with this, as clergy, and it's best to be prepared."

The study also revealed that courses with a strong emphasis in sexuality-related issues are generally absent from the curriculum; women and feminist studies are more prominent than any other sexuality issues for religious professionals or LGBT/queer studies; and that the next generation of religious scholars are not willing to teach sexuality-related courses. Some other key findings were the presence of a "stained-glass ceiling" in seminaries, which refers to the apparent difficulty women have gaining a role within church leadership.

Regarding these shortfalls, the Religious Institute and Union Theological Seminary have recommended that the seminaries:

- Require/develop competencies in sexuality for ordination;
- Revise ministerial formation standards to include sexuality education;
- Strengthen curricular offerings and seminary environment;
- Invest in faculty development and continuing education; and
- Promote collaboration among seminaries, educational organizations and advocacy groups.

But the survey does provide insight to the advances that have been made. For instance, 8 in 10 of the institutions that participated did offer workshops in sexual-harassment prevention; three out of four schools report that faculty and or administration have published on or been featured in the media addressing sexuality issues, with the majority focusing on LGBT issues; and 25 percent of the seminaries have free-standing centers dedicated to sexuality-related issues.

The Chicago Theology Seminary is one of the few institutions with an LGBT religious-study center.

"We have cutting-edge faculty, particularly in

the LGBTQ area, which are developing material to provide resources for the leaders in communities and in congregations that speak to these issues," said Hunt. "We have one of the largest selections of LGBTQ library materials, because that is the focus of our faculty. We are also developing a certificate in LGBTQ studies so that someone can come here and get their M. Div, which is a three-year professional degree, in LGBTQ studies."

But as for the overall results, Ott believes they could be better.

"I wasn't surprised with the results of this study, but I think shows us what is happening now and it is always good to take stock of what is going on," she said. "It was most effective in the fact that it gives us criteria of what is needed; it gives us the tools of an institutional assessment so that seminaries can look at themselves and do their own assessment. But the most important factors are what can be done and why it should be done. Once people can focus on that, we can move forward."

## AGLOChicago completes challenge

The Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach of Chicago (AGLOChicago) has completed a social-justice challenge that marks the culmination of the organization's 20th anniversary year. The challenge was posed to encourage members and friends of the organization to share their time and talents with others through works of charity, peace and justice.

Joseph Ferrallo, the organization's co-director, said in a statement that "We originally set our goal of 1,000 hours as a stretch, but [we've] ... exceeded that goal by giving over 2,000 hours in service to others."

Volunteers worked with 20 different agencies, including Howard Brown Health Center, Broadway Youth Center, Lesbian Community Care Project, Bonaventure House, Chicago House, Center on Halsted and Lakeview Men's Shelter.



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Marchers walked through Chicago's Chatham neighborhood. Photo by Sam Worley

## Coalition marches through South Side

BY SAM WORLEY

On the holiday celebrating the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Coalition for Justice and Respect (CJR) sponsored a march Jan. 19 along 79th Street in Chicago's Chatham neighborhood. In a rally preceding the March for Justice and Respect, now in its third year, CJR representative Mark Loveless highlighted ongoing problems faced by Black LGBT people in the realms of healthcare, employment, social services and the criminal-justice system.

He noted in particular the three-year-old shooting deaths of two Black gay men at 79th Street and Woodlawn Avenue—a development Loveless said is a hate crime that remains unsolved.

Loveless said that the passage of Proposition 8, the recent California state initiative banning same-sex marriage, served as a reminder of the importance of grassroots organizing by the LGBT community. Despite the historic election of President Barack Obama, Loveless said, "The effort of social justice is not over with the election of any official."

Bob Schwartz, an activist with the Gay Liberation Network, echoed Loveless' remarks. "This justice will not be elected, in Washington or elsewhere," Schwartz told the assembled crowd of about 20 people. "[Obama's] election would not have been possible but for the movement that was led by [Martin Luther] King." Schwartz pointed to the recent police killing of a young Black man in Oakland, as well as the ongoing struggles of Hurricane Katrina survivors, as examples of work still needed in order to reach the

goals of social justice and racial equality.

After the rally, the marchers walked east along the sidewalk of 79th Street, carrying signs that read "Proud to be black and gay," "We will not back down," and "Honor my family." Loveless and others led chants of "Equality for all!" as the group huddled close in the cold January morning air.

## Mell, Harris sworn in as reps

State Rep. Deborah Mell, D-Chicago, was officially sworn in as the new 40th District state representative from Chicago's Northwest Side on Jan. 14. She was elected to the position in November, making history as Illinois' first open lesbian member of the General Assembly. Her partner, Christin Baker, accompanied her to the swearing in ceremony.

"I'm honored to join the Illinois General Assembly today and to get to work on the many challenges facing our state and the people in my district," Mell said in a statement. "By working together, I know we can get a lot done to serve our constituents and address pressing issues like the budget deficit, high foreclosure rates, job creation and crime reduction."

In Springfield, Mell's top legislative priorities are to: offer relief to working families hit hardest by the economic crisis; provide affordable health care to all Illinois' families; strengthen the state's commitment to funding education; protect and expand rights for women, LGBTs and minorities; and, support initiatives that expand public safety. In her first official action as state representative, Mell voted against the impeachment of Gov. Rod Blagojevich, being the only person to cast his or her ballot in favor of the embattled official.

"Given my unique relationship to the Governor, this is a vote to which I have given a great deal of consideration," said Mell. "I have known the Governor for more than 20 years and the charges in the impeachment were difficult to reconcile with the man and brother-in-law I know. I could not in good conscience vote for his impeachment. I regard him as innocent until proven guilty and many of my constituents have expressed this view. I want to focus on moving forward, working on rebuilding our economy and providing excellent constituent services to the people I represent."

Also, openly gay State Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago, was sworn in for his second term. Harris represents the 13th District, which includes the neighborhoods of Uptown, Ravenswood, Lincoln Square, Bowmanville and North Center.

"Serving the people of the 13th District is a

great honor and one that I look forward to every day," Harris said in a statement.

Appointed to finish out the term of retired State Rep. Larry McKeon in 2006, Harris was elected this past November. Before taking office, Harris spent 14 years as chief of staff to 48th Ward Alderman Mary Ann Smith.

In his first term, Harris was successful in passing legislation that increases women's access to clinical breast exams, provides additional relief to seniors on their property taxes, created a commission on children and youth to help the state improve healthcare and wellness among children, and made significant progress on legislation to permit civil unions in Illinois.

Mell's district office is located at 3657 N. Kedzie; she urges residents to contact her at deb@deb mell.org. Harris can be reached at Greg@GregHarris.org or 773-348-3434.

## Report: Illinois colleges flunk on LGBT issues

The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance (the Alliance) just released "Visibility Matters," the first statewide report card on LGBT presence in higher education and teacher preparation in Illinois. This historic report examines the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in

university policies related to anti-discrimination and in student codes of conduct, as well as in teacher education programs.

Seventy-two percent, or 41 out of the state's 57 teacher-education preparation programs, received a failing grade of F. The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) was the only institution to receive an A.

The report offers a number of recommendations to improve grades, to strengthen policies and to increase LGBTQ visibility.

The full report is at [www.illinoisafeschools.org](http://www.illinoisafeschools.org).

## Harris helps pass cancer measure

State Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago, and the General Assembly passed legislation Jan. 13 that is aimed at reducing breast-cancer disparity rates and outcomes for low-income women, minority women and immigrants.

Harris hopes that Senate Bill 1174 will begin to close the gap on these disparities by, among other things, increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates for mammograms and screenings to bring about provider participation.

The legislation unanimously passed through the General Assembly and now awaits action by the sitting governor.



## Natural election

The Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, unveiled the show "Yes We Can: John Gress on the Campaign Trail with Barack Obama" in its third-floor gallery on Jan. 16. Working for Reuters News Service, Gress, a photographer, traveled with the Obama campaign over the course of the election; he also covered the campaigns of John Edwards, Hillary Clinton, Mitt Romney and John McCain.

An admirer of the new president, Gress expressed optimism for the incoming administration. "It almost felt like the world had changed" the day after the election, he said. Asked about the prospects of LGBT issues under Obama, though, Gress was more reticent. He noted that while Obama does not support full marriage equality, with the departure of George W. Bush, "it's not a situation where the executive branch will try and suppress [LGBT] rights."


Gress's photographs of Obama remain on display at the center until March 1. Text and upper photo of Gress by Sam Worley; lower photo courtesy of Gress

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A performer at "Showtime at the Apollo."  
Photo by Emmanuel Garcia

## A lesson in drag

BY EMMANUEL GARCIA

The art of female impersonation can be as difficult to learn as walking in five-inch heels; then, try dancing in them. On Jan. 16, the Hoover-Leppen Theatre inside the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, featured an all-youth gender-queer cabaret. The revue, entitled "Showtime at the Apollo," featured performances by four entertainers imitating legendary African-American singers like Patti Labelle, Whitney Houston and the late Etta James; but songs by newcomers Fantasia and Jennifer Hudson were also included in the set list.

The Center on Halsted's youth program invited veteran entertainer Dion Walton to facilitate "diva" workshops for youth who wanted to learn the art of drag performance. "The very first person I taught was Alexandra Billings. She is the first person I originally dressed up and pushed out on stage," said Walton, who taught workshops on developing performance skills, walking and make-up application.

Emcee Honey West introduced each "diva" and gave a linguistic lesson of her own, using the phrase "drag droppings" to refer to the leftover earrings or garments an entertainer loses during a performance.

Walton's involvement was an opportunity to inspire "confidence in themselves."

West added, "If you've never been on stage before, it's a challenge to be on stage, but then to wear high heels and earrings and eyelashes and all kinds of things underneath and over [is] a challenge."

Walton is planning on participating again next year, with plans to incorporate other gender identities, adding, "I'm going to try to get the kings to be part of it also, for the women."

A clear audience favorite, Biodun roused the crowd with her salacious performance of Britney Spear's Womanizer, performing it better than the singer herself. For the final number, the four "divas"—Phoenix Jade, Anastasia, Crystal and Biodun—came together to perform Hold On by '90s girl group En Vogue.

## MCA event to feature Rufus Wainwright

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), 220 E. Chicago, will celebrate a season of visual

and performance art with the "Dry Ice" benefit, which will feature several special art auctions featuring artwork by Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer and Olafur Eliasson.

The event will take place Saturday, Jan. 24, at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$1,500-\$5,000; see [www.mcachicago.org/benefit](http://www.mcachicago.org/benefit) or call 312-397-3868. Attendance is limited to 200 people.

## Room & Board awards \$50K to Chicago House

Minneapolis, Minn.-based furniture retailer Room & Board has announced a two-year gift totaling \$50,000 and employFee volunteer time to Chicago House, the first organization in the Midwest to provide housing and support for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Craig Sullivan, Chicago distribution manager for the company, said, "It was a difficult decision because there are so many amazing charities in Chicago, but Chicago House stood out, not only because of the great work they do, but because their values align with ours and because of their innovation and creativity as an organization. We're honored and excited to be a partner to Chicago House."

## Vital Bridges gets \$25K grant

HIV/AIDS agency Vital Bridges has received a \$25,000 grant for its food and nutrition program from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois.

Vital Bridges helps people throughout metropolitan Chicago impacted by HIV and AIDS to improve their health and build self-sufficiency by providing food, nutrition, housing, case management and prevention services. In its 20-year history, Vital Bridges has provided more than 9 million nutritious meals, 600,000 nights of shelter and 250,000 hours of counseling.

## Leather Archives art exhibit opens Jan. 23

"Beauties Service," a themed retrospective of watercolor figures by Chicago fetish artist Kate Tastrophe, will open at the Leather Archives & Museum, 6418 N. Greenview, on Friday, Jan. 23, and will be on exhibit through Friday, April 10.

"Beauties Service" shows women who have taken control over their own external sexuality. The curator for the show is S.I.R.

## Trans supporters' discussion group

The Center on Halsted has announced the launch of a new program entitled "Joys and Challenges"—a group for the Trans SOFFA (significant others, family, friends and allies) community, believed to be the first of its kind in Chicago.

The group will meet every Monday, 7-8 p.m., for 10 weeks, beginning Jan. 26. There is a \$5 fee per session.

Contact Tim Bechtel at 773-472-6469, ext. 158, or [tbechtel@centeronhalsted.org](mailto:tbechtel@centeronhalsted.org).

# QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"WE'RE GOING TO DO THREE THINGS IN CONGRESS. First, a hate-crimes bill—that shouldn't be too hard. Next, employment discrimination. We almost got that through before, but now we can win even if we add transgender protections, which we are going to do. And finally, after the troops get home from Iraq, gays in the military. The time has come." — *Gay U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., to The New Yorker, Jan. 12.*

"PEOPLE WHO ARE AGAINST GAY MARRIAGE DO NOT UNDERSTAND the very freedoms that they themselves are enjoying. What if someone said, 'Sorry, no Christianity here? No Judaism. Certainly no Mormons.' No one would stand for that, and I wouldn't allow anyone to say that either. I'd fight them in the same way." — *Actor Brad Pitt to W magazine, February issue.*

"PROP H8 - Niederauer Ratzinger - Where is the love?" — *Graffiti, accompanied by a swastika, spray-painted on San Francisco's Most Holy Redeemer Roman Catholic Church in the Castro neighborhood Jan. 4.*

"(ON) THE NATIONALLY SYNDICATED RADIO PROGRAM The War Room with Quinn & Rose, co-host Jim Quinn made highly offensive and ignorant statements including '[G]ay marriage doesn't produce anything that the state has an interest in. Gay sex produces AIDS, which the state doesn't have—or should have an interest in. They should charge homosexuals more for their health insurance than they charge the rest of us.'" — *The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in a Jan. 7 report, "Worst Anti-gay Defamation of 2008."*

"OKLAHOMA REPRESENTATIVE SALLY KERN MADE HEADLINES ... after telling a group of supporters that 'the homosexual agenda is destroying our nation' in a gathering of Republicans outside the Capitol. She went on to say that the gay community is 'the death knell in this country' and 'the biggest threat that our nation has, even more so than terrorism.'" — *The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in a Jan. 7 report, "Worst Anti-gay Defamation of 2008."*

"THE YES ON PROPOSITION 8 campaign filled the airwaves with deliberately misleading commercials. ... The ads relied on scare

tactics and spread inflammatory lies, including that the defeat of Proposition 8 would mean changes in schools and churches. These ads used misinformation to shape public opinion and helped sway voters to pass the discriminatory ban, in spite of various legal experts and mainstream media outlets uniformly denouncing the dishonest approach." — *The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in a Jan. 7 report, "Worst Anti-gay Defamation of 2008."*

"JAMES DOBSON, FOUNDER OF ANTI-GAY ORGANIZATION FOCUS ON THE FAMILY, appeared on an episode of CNN Headline News and made false claims about Proposition 8, including that if the proposition failed, there would be a 'spate of lawsuits against churches' and 'all textbooks would have to be repub-



People who are against gay marriage do not understand the very freedoms that they themselves are enjoying.

—Brad Pitt



lished' and 'everything in schools will change.' The Museum of Broadcast Communications chose to honor Dobson by inducting Focus on the Family into the Radio Hall of Fame, despite his history of anti-gay rhetoric and lies." — *The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in a Jan. 7 report, "Worst Anti-gay Defamation of 2008."*

"(FOX NEWS) HOST GREG GUTFELD AND HIS GUESTS grossly misrepresented serious medical concerns faced by transgender youth and laughed as one of his guests referred to transition as 'turning a hole into a pole.' Then Gutfeld criticized Ellen DeGeneres for announcing her upcoming wedding, saying Ellen should 'shut the hell up about it.'" — *The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in a Jan. 7 report, "Worst Anti-gay Defamation of 2008."*

"NO ONE WANTS TO IMMEDIATELY HAVE 80 PERCENT OF the world hate you—that don't understand that subject. It's a very hard decision when you're actually gay (to come out), because you know what you're about to face." — *Out singer Lance Bass to the Las Vegas Review-Journal, Dec. 26.*

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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**REV. IRENE MONROE**

## Obama's inauguration and mixed feelings

The last time a nation came to Washington and was mesmerized and stirred to action by the oratory brilliance of an African-American man was at the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963, when the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his legendary "I Have a Dream" speech. In that speech King said, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal." King, a Baptist preacher and the Moses of the 1960s Black civil-rights movement, knew in a distant future that a Barack Obama would come, but not in his lifetime.

"And I've seen the Promised Land," he added. "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!"

Those were King's final words, delivered April 3, 1968, at the Mason Temple (Church of God in Christ Headquarters), in Memphis, Tenn. The following day King was assassinated.

With a nation in moral chaos, who would lead not only Blacks in this country toward full equality, but all Americans?

Forty years later and the day after Americans celebrated MLK Day 2009, our nation once again came to Washington mesmerized and stirred to action by the oratory brilliance and leadership of the African-American man sworn in as our nation's 44th president: Barack H. Obama.

With the election of Obama as our country's first African-American president, my enslaved ancestors who built the White House could have never imagined that one of their progeny would one day occupy it.

This New Year's Eve held important significance in the life of African-American churchgoers, because the many Watch Night services that took place across the country—centering around Obama's campaign slogan, "Yes we can!"—gave boundless hope that, as African Americans, we can make positive changes in our lives, such as

stem gang violence, the AIDS epidemic ravaging the entire African-American community, the epidemic level of fatherlessness and teenage pregnancy, just to name a few.

Watch Night services can be traced back to Dec. 31, 1862, also known as "Freedom Eve," when African-American slaves came together across the nation to await the good news that President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had finally become law. And on that following day, Jan. 1, 1863, a new life began for us even as the Civil War was still going on.

Whereas the Watch Night service of Dec. 31, 1862 involved my ancestors awaiting the news of the Emancipation Proclamation to set them free, this year's Watch Night service was a celebration of setting America free from her centuries-long stain of racial bigotry that barred persons of color from seeking the highest office in the land.

This historic election inspires many of our Black boys and girls to not only consider college but to one day consider running for president too.

Obama has galvanized the country, bringing people of all races and ethnicities, sexual orientations, religions and cultures together.

But on the day Obama was sworn in, not all of US will feel this historic moment includes us. With evangelical minister Rich Warren—a supporter of California Proposition 8—chosen to give the invocation at Obama's inauguration, many LGBTQ Americans who voted for Obama feel thrown under the bus.

And like Bayard Rustin—the gay man who was chief organizer and strategist for the 1963 March on Washington that further catapulted Martin Luther King, Jr., onto the world stage—was not the beneficiary of King's dream, we (especially LGBTQ African Americans) also feel we will not be the beneficiaries of Obama.

And many of us are speaking out.

Sylvia Rhue, director of religious affairs for the National Black Justice Coalition, recently wrote in an op-ed on the Huffington Post: "President-Elect Obama, many of us will be at your inauguration. We will dance and party and drink a toast to your success upon which so many hopes are tethered. But, you have to understand that we are once again coming to Washington DC to cash a check. Yes, like the 1963 March on Washington, organized by a black gay man, Bayard Rustin, we LGBTQ people have been given the same promissory note that is the heritage and pride of every American. The right to pursue life, liberty and happiness, 'the riches of freedom and the security of justice.' And this fierce urgency of now has been tainted by the choice of a man who

is so deeply flawed that he equates the lifelong love and commitment of a same gender couple to be equivalent to incest and pedophilia."

An African-American cleric and ally to the LG-BTQ community, the Rev. Kenneth L. Samuel, senior pastor of Victory for the World United Church of Christ in Stone Mountain, Ga., told the Associated Press that "If Barack Obama or the King Center had selected Reverend Jeremiah Wright to speak at these auspicious occasions, more than a few persons would have become agitated to the point of having their heads explode. Why? Because many would have seen Reverend Wright's selection not as an invitation to dialogue, but as an affront to their national solidarity and their personal dignity. Apparently, anger about America's historic and current racism is totally unacceptable, while denial of equal rights based upon sexual orientation is not only to be tolerated, but also given center stage... Obama's hope and King's dream should inspire each of us toward a greater commitment to freedom and equality for all persons."

Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, was selected to give the invocation at the kickoff event "We Are One" on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial Jan. 19. While many feel the selection of Robinson was made to placate the queer community, Robinson, however, opined differently about it. In an e-mail to his friend, Robinson wrote, "It will be an enormous honor to offer prayers for the country and the new president, standing on the holy ground where the 'I have a dream speech' was delivered by Dr. King, surrounded by the inspiring and reconciling words of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. It is also an indication of the new president's commitment to being the President of ALL the people. I am humbled and overjoyed at this invitation, and it will be my great honor to be there representing the Episcopal Church, the people of New Hampshire, and all of us in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community."

For King, justice was more than a racial issue, and more than a legal or moral issue. Justice was a human issue, and this was evident in King's passionate concern about a wide range of concerns. "The revolution for human rights is opening up unhealthy areas in American life and permitting a new and wholesome healing to take place," King once told a racially mixed audience. "Eventually, the civil rights movement will have contributed infinitely more to the nation than the eradication of racial injustice."

Hopefully, Obama's words—"Yes we can!"—will inspire us all to contribute in our own way.

## LETTERS

### H8 crime

The Rainbow Sash Movement must condemn in no uncertain terms those who vandalized Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in San Francisco. Painting all Catholics with a wide paintbrush is just as wrong as saying all gay people are child abusers.

Black swastikas and anti-religious phrases and slurs were spray-painted in red and black on the outside of the big white structure in the Castro district in outrage over the passage of Proposition 8 on election night. This isn't the first criminal act.

Hate must be exposed no matter who promotes it. At the end of the day what is the difference between hate of Catholics and hate of LGBT people. Our LGBT political leadership has been strangely silent on this matter.

When LGBT-friendly Catholic parishes are attacked in the name of political correctness, people of goodwill in the LGBT community must stand with their LGBT Catholics and their allies. Silence only brings shame to our movement, which was founded on the dignity of Stonewall.

We continue to call for dialogue around the issue of Prop 8 in the hopes that the spirit of love may enter the process. The Rainbow Sash Movement will not be complaisant in addressing this hateful attack.

Joe Murray  
 Executive Director  
 Rainbow Sash Movement  
 Chicago

### Props to editorials

Dear Editor:

While your readers hopefully found some item of interest in your annual shopping section, I hope they also glanced at the two columns on aspects of gay marriage and homosexuality in the Dec. 3 issue, by Jamar Osborne and Tom Foster—both, obviously, good legal thinkers.

In all the discussion on how to view the passage of Prop 8 in California, these two people seem to have gotten it right. They both point out the danger in a nation if a majority can vote

to take away the civil/equal rights of some minority. This is something that goes beyond just anti-gay laws.

In his column (Chicago Gay History) in the same issue, John D'Emilio also puts the issue in perspective by recalling the Anita Bryant push called "Save our children" in Florida, in the '70s.

The incompetent and unethical coverage of the issue by the Chicago Tribune and Daily News was awful. Today's media is a lot better, and that helps our cause. Bill Kelley, and others who were there and speaking out at the time, can testify to this progress.

Billy Glover

## GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



## BREW LOVE

Beer, set in a microbrewery, is part of WCT's feature on site-specific productions. Read page 12.

## THEATER

Snow way.  
page 17

Photo by Jaclyn Biskup



## TELEVISION

Leave it to Weaver.  
page 18

Photo by Ben Mark Holzberg/Lifetime Television



## EVENTS

'L' bound.  
page 21

Photo by MysticImagesPhotography.com



Richard Chamberlain. Photo by Greg Gorman

## Richard Chamberlain: Forever young

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

Seventy-four is the new 30. This is the conclusion after spending an hour chatting with Richard Chamberlain, who almost 25 years into AARP territory, maintains the spry wit—and dance moves—of a chap half his age.

Chamberlain is the latest celebrity to take on a role in *Spamalot*. And not to diss the youngsters, but we're betting he brings a lot more to the show than, oh, Clay Aiken. With close to half a century of solid show business behind him, the former teen heartthrob (Dr. Kildare), king of the mini-Series (*Shogun*, *the Thorn Birds*, *the Count of Monte Cristo*) and acclaimed Shakespearean stage actor (*Hamlet*, *Richard II*) could easily be resting on his laurels in the Hawaiian home he shares with Martin Rabbett, his partner of 33 years. Instead, Chamberlain is hoofing it through eight shows a week and travelling on his day off. And, he says, loving every moment of it.

"This show is so nuts and so crazed and so off the wall. And that's a part of my personality that I seldom get to use," he said in an interview shortly before beginning *Spamalot* rehearsals. "I'm actually a very silly person."

Unlike *Hamlet* and *Richard II*, *Spamalot* is—of course—a very silly show. Based on Monty Python's skewed version of the *Legends of King Arthur* and *Camelot*, it opened in Chicago and continued to Broadway in 2005, picking up three Tonys (Best Musical, Director and Featured Actress) that year.

"Of course it's easier than *Hamlet* or *Richard*," said Chamberlain, "But it's tricky material. One must never let on that one thinks one is funny. If you do that, it's all over."

"Anyway, I feel like I start at zero with every new role," he added. "There's almost a necessary insecurity. The moment you start thinking you've mastered something, you start to get a little slick. And that's not good."

Chamberlain has mastered much, both offstage and on, over the course of a life that could provide the plot for a miniseries like those he so excelled in throughout the 1970s and early '80s. For more than 60 years, he maintained what he calls the Richard Chamberlain Magic Show, presenting the illusion of a dashing straight man. Hollywood made millions. Women and girls swooned. Chamberlain, a gay man, lived in a painful closet.

"I grew up when being gay was the absolute worst thing you could be," he recalled. "Constantly pretending to be something you aren't—it's a rotten, rotten way to live your life. For almost my entire life, I had this fear that there was something horribly wrong with me. I'd been in a stable, loving relationship for 32 years, and I was still certain that I was somehow irrevocably broken."

"Martin," he added of his of the man he met while working on *The Night of the Iguana* in 1976, "was pushed into the background during the heights of my career. I'd be squiring lady friends around everywhere, and never talking about him. That was horrible for him. He's

younger than I am by 20 years, so his fears weren't nearly as embedded as mine were."

But all those embedded fears were somehow dislodged when Chamberlain began penning 2003's *Shattered Love: A Memoir*. Unlike most celebrity "autobiographies," Chamberlain wrote his without a ghostwriter.

"It was almost as if an angel put their hand on my head and said, 'Richard. Enough of this,'" he recalled. "And suddenly, there I was on television, talking about the book and all of my secrets without the slightest bit of fear."

"The basic question of the book isn't about being gay or straight. It's about whether it's possible—or even desirable—to live a life with

"Hatred," he continued, "has its pleasures. It's great to feel morally superior to everybody else."

But it's not hate that Chamberlain focuses on these days. "I want to live more open-heartedly. I want to be a better friend. I want to keep working," he said. "I love it when my phone rings and people say 'We need you for such and such.' It just makes me happy."

**Spamalot runs Jan. 20 through Feb. 1 at the Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress. Tickets are \$25-\$90; call 312-902-1400, or go to [www.MontyPythonsSpamalot.com](http://www.MontyPythonsSpamalot.com) or [www.BroadwayInChicago.com](http://www.BroadwayInChicago.com).**

## Sidebar: Celebs and the city

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

Richard Chamberlain isn't the only celeb in town this season (although he may be the most substantial). Chicago theaters are brimming with the rich and famous as winter grinds onward. Star-struck? Here are a few places where you can see the rich and famous, up close and personal.

—**Brian Dennehy** in *Desire Under the Elms*, Jan. 22-Feb. 27, Goodman Theatre, [www.goodmantheatre.org](http://www.goodmantheatre.org): He's Photoshopped beyond recognition in the play's avatar on the Goodman's Web site, but that is indeed the long-time heavyweight of stage and screen. Known for TV endeavors such as *To Catch a Killer*, *Foreign Affairs* and *Murder in the Heartland*, Dennehy's no slouch on stage. This is his sixth collaboration with playwright Eugene O'Neill and Tony winning-director Bob Falls. We've seen 'em all, and he hasn't disappointed yet.

—**Carla Gugino** in "Desire Under the Elms," see above: She got the plum job Ari Gold didn't want last season on *Entourage*. Now, Gugino flexes her muscles beyond sitcom fluff (albeit, really entertaining sitcom fluff) to play the

Turn to page 14

## Winter Theater Special

an open heart all the time. Our culture would say 'no,'—you have to be touch. You can't be vulnerable. But I think the answer is yes. Because love is our absolute source of strength," he continued.

"When we deny and abandon that, we deny and abandon ourselves. We force ourselves to live in a mode of flight and constant resentment."

Since coming out, Chamberlain says he's had nothing but support and good wishes from fans. "I'll be walking through the airport, and somebody'll come up and say, 'Good for you!'" he said.

Even so, he's under no illusion that the world is all puppies, lollipops and rainbows.

"Society moves at a glacial pace," he said. "Look at Proposition 8. Mormons put millions of dollars into promoting disastrous lies, saying gays are trying to corrupt all your children. Those fears still linger."



## All the world's a stage: Site-specific theater

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Let's see—there was the play where the actor entered off the second-floor window ledge high above the street. And the romantic comedy with its lovers lounging nude on the bedroom-window sill of a real apartment in Uptown. And that group in Edgewater who forgot to alert the neighbors before staging a live-action adaptation of the horror film, *Evil Dead*, in their backyard, leading to visits by police patrols investigating the shrill cries of "Oh, no! He's killing her!"

An "auditorium," in other words, is not always your everyday commonplace assembly hall. Budget-strapped theater companies searching for performance space have staged plays about volleyball teams in gymnasiums, plays about art collectors in loft galleries, countless plays about drinkers in all varieties of saloons—and does anybody remember riding in the back seat of a minivan alongside three other passengers while Michael Fosberg and Scott Hamilton Westerman swapped dialogue as they drove?

Many of these were one-run novelties, but several Chicago troupes now enjoy a lasting reputation for what has been dubbed "site-specific" theater, tailoring their play choices to unconventional arenas.

Walkabout Theatre's history encompasses shows in such diverse locales as laundromats and roof gardens, but is known chiefly for its 2004 premiere production of *Downsize*, Chris Welzenbach's look at corporate executives' covert conversations in the seclusion of a men's washroom, performed before an audience of perhaps 10 playgoers in the Steppenwolf Garage's latrine.

"Our 'site-specific' work is more 'site-inspired,'" explains artistic director Kristan Schmidt.



Beer.

"Sometimes the play itself calls out for a 'real' space, and sometimes we create something for a shared public space." Though their upcoming play, *Goldbrick*, opening Feb. 3 at the Building Stage, is not site-specific, "[w]e try to bring the feeling of being 'immersed' in the environment."

Two companies trace their origins to an Equity Library Theatre production of Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* in the North Lakeside Cultural Center (NLCC), a 1910-vintage mansion on Sheridan Road, where the action was spread over the whole house. The center's director, Frank Farrell, said, "Mary Tatro, the NLCC program director, had wanted the house used in exactly that way. She asked me to do more shows there, so I formed the North Lakeside Players. We've adapted a number of plays to this style. This spring, we're doing *Little Lord Fauntleroy*."

But Farrell was intrigued by another possibility: "The notion of moving through a house came to me while I was hiking in Michigan. From there, it was only a short step to Theatre-Hikes." This highly successful series is comprised of plays performed on pedestrian walkways winding through parks, forest preserves and conservatories. "I usually choose plays with outdoor settings, but frequently we tackle an 'indoor' play,

finding outdoor areas that give the feeling of an enclosure," he added.

The Neo-Futurists' most conspicuous break into alternative spaces came in 2008 with *Fake Lake*, Sharon Greene's account of an idyllic holiday at a mountain resort whose "natural" beauty is revealed to be false. Said Greene, "As I thought about the actions I'd be describing—jumping off cliffs, boating accidents, water ballets—I realized that they took place not just *near* the water, but *in* it as well."

So the show was written to be performed in the Welles Park swimming pool. "The poolhouse has two walls made entirely of windows facing south and west," Greene said. "The audience watched the sun set over the park and we had darkness for the night scenes. The morning was originally going to be a joke, with the overhead floods snapping on. But [our lighting team] discovered that the facility's halogen lamps warm up slowly after being turned on—taking almost a full 10 minutes. So we had our sunrise!"

Opening Jan. 29 is *Beer*, Sean Benjamin and Steven Mosqueda's exploration of "craft" beers and their manufacture as experienced by two boys on a Willy Wonka-type journey through the "Land of Beer." Standing in for this yeasty fantasy-realm is the Metropolitan Brewing plant located along the Ravenswood corridor—a fully functioning microbrewery with mash tuns, fermenters, boilers and copper tubing on display to audiences and gleaming with a newness to lend the industrial ambience a magical quality. Wooden pallets shifted with forklifts, a live band, animation and puppets—among them, Matilda the Grain Puppet, herself constructed of the sacks used to transport her namesake cereal—all assist in bringing the machinery to life.

We didn't know we'd have the brewery to perform in," admitted Benjamin. "But when we heard that our friends, Tracy and Doug Hurst, were going into business right around the corner from our theatre, we talked to them and they loved the idea. Our play is about the great beer being created by artists."

## CRITICS' PICS

**The Bowery Boys**, Marriott Theatre, through Feb. 15. It's a brash, albeit predictable, new musical inspired by 1880s melodrama and music. Like its bootblack hero, the show pulls itself up by its bootstraps, thanks to lively songs, athletic dance and an all-aces cast. JA

**Madama Butterfly**, Lyric Opera of Chicago, through Jan. 29. For pre-Valentine's Day heartache, look no further than Patricia Racette as Cio-Cio San. Racette's sublime depiction of almost impossible innocence and trust makes *Madama Butterfly* all the more devastating. CS

**Touch**, New Leaf Theatre at Lincoln Park Cultural Center, through Feb. 14. *Touch* is a wonderfully poetic and touching look at the joys of love and the despair of unexpected loss. The refined performances also help to make this intimate drama a satisfying tear-jerker. SCM

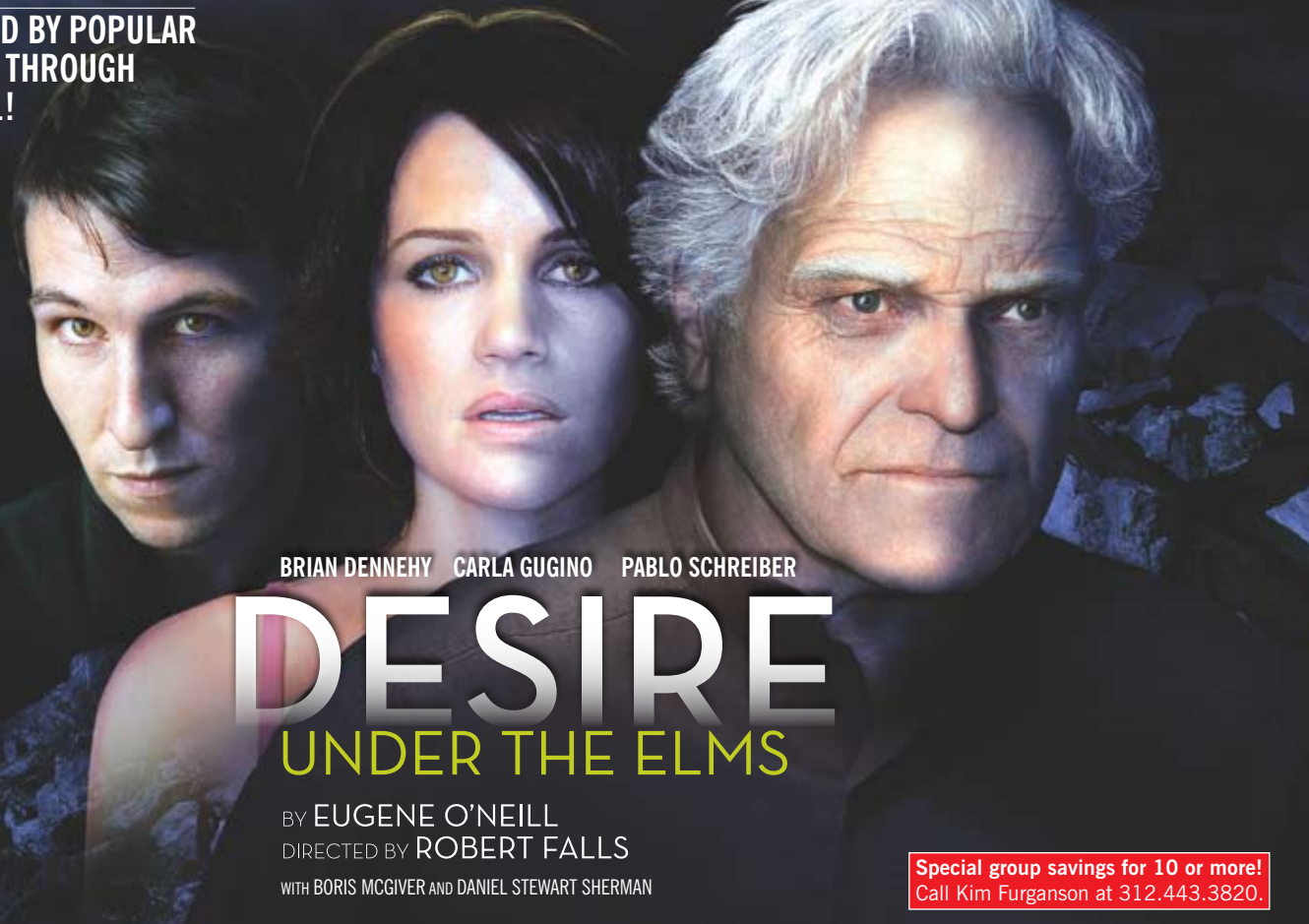
**Yoni Ki Baat**, Rasaka Theatre Company at Strawdog Theatre, through Feb. 1. Don't be fooled by the Kama Sutra word in the title—these vagina monologues opt for candor over cutes in their smartly articulate commentary on sexual issues in South Asian communities. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

Nikolchev labored on *Look, What I Don't Understand* with five directors (although it plays seamlessly), most of whom have ties to Wesleyan University, of which Nikolchev is a 2008 graduate. How and why he/they arrived in Chicago is unknown, but they appear to have the talent to achieve things if they stay. Yasen Peyankov, watch out: There's another hot Bulgarian actor in town now.

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Jason Southerland.

## Transition of power at Next Theatre: Jason the second

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There's been a lot of excitement in the United States about all things tied to "leadership transition" lately. But on a more local level, "leadership transition" has been big on the minds of everyone tied to Evanston-based Next Theatre.

Jason Southerland has been adapting to his new role as Next Theatre's artistic director. (His first official day was the opening of Lisa Kron's *Well* last November.) Southerland has been taking over for Jason Loewith, who helped build Next's nationwide stature since 2002. (Loewith now carries the Next Theatre title of artistic director emeritus.)

Southerland built his reputation in Massachusetts as co-founder and artistic director of Boston Theatre Works since 1998. But when the opportunity came to head west to the Chicago area, the 41-year-old Southerland jumped at it.

"Chicago is theater Mecca," said Southerland. "It is a city that embraces its theater the way the rest of us envy and dream about."

Before he even moved to the Windy City, Southerland had already developed ties to Chicago's creative community. Southerland pointed out that he became friends with the artistic leadership of About Face Theatre and successfully presented the East Coast premiere of the lesbian musical comedy *Pulp*. Another important Boston premiere for Southerland was *The Sweetest Swing in Baseball* by Chicago native Rebecca Gilman.

On a more personal level, Southerland and his husband, Dalyn Miller, became close friends with Chicago cabaret diva Amy Armstrong and pianist Freddy Allen.

"I first met them when they were working on an RSVP cruise in February of 2004," Southerland said. "My partner and I actually got engaged on that cruise, and Amy made it quite public!"

Southerland said that Armstrong kept on insisting that, "you need to come to Chicago." Now that Southerland's here, he's picking up from the stellar work of Loewith.

"I think it's been a very smooth transition and we've been very fortunate to also have Kevin Heckman aboard as managing director earlier this summer to help connect our two tenures," Loewith said during a break from rehearsals.

Of course, Loewith and his colleagues on *Adding Machine: The Musical* have been riding a wave of success since its triumphant New York run in 2008. (*Adding Machine* memorably debuted at Next in 2007 and has boosted the Evanston theater's national reputation as well.)

The *Adding Machine* success gave Loewith the courage to leave his Next position and focus purely on writing, while others tied to the show are making a name for themselves.

For example, *Adding Machine* director David Cromer is set to direct Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound* in repertory on Broadway next season, following an off-Broadway run of his recent Chicago staging of *Our Town for The Hypocrites*.

Loewith's latest project is *The War with the Newts*, a new theatrical adaptation of a novel by Czech author Karel Capek (best known for Rossum's *Universal Robots* and *The Makropulos Case*). In fact, *War with the Newts* was slated for February in Next's current season, but was postponed due to the fact that Loewith and two of his collaborators won a special MacArthur Foundation grant to travel to the Czech Republic to do research on the show this past October.

That left a hole in Next's current season which was planned by Loewith before Southerland arrived. Already showing his savvy with artistic planning, Southerland chose the 2008 Pulitzer finalist *Dying City* by Christopher Shinn for its Chicagoland debut.

*Dying City* concerns a widow who lost her husband in the Iraq War. Things are complicated when her husband's gay twin brother shows up.

"It uses the events of 9/11 and the War in Iraq," Southerland said, "but it's more about how those events have changed our experience of the world and how we have to move forward while dealing with our past."

Directing *Dying City* is Loewith, who points out that despite the dour subject matter, "it's a psychological thriller" that is also an acting challenge "made for Chicago actors." Loewith also calls *Dying City* "the finest play about post-9/11 America that has yet been written."

As for Southerland, he's still in the process of getting to know the Chicagoland theater com-

munity and Next's many loyal subscribers. He's set for an upcoming meet-and-greet at T's Bar and Restaurant, 5025 N. Clark, and Southerland hopes to develop ties with Northwestern University during his tenure.

Southerland is also busy planning his debut season. *The War with the Newts* is already slated for the 2009-10 season, but Southerland can't disclose what he has planned just yet.

"I can only tell you that I'm as excited about the play that we're planning to open the season with as I was seven years ago when I discovered an unknown script called *Bug* by a then-unknown playwright called Tracy Letts," Southerland said

with a laugh, adding that he presented the Boston premiere of *Bug* long before it reached New York. "When I read that script I knew that I had found something magical and I feel the same way about what audiences are going to see in September of 2009 at Next."

**Next Theatre's Chicago-area premiere of Christopher Shinn's *Dying City* plays in the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes, Evanston, Feb. 5-March 18. Performances are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays; 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets run \$23-\$38; call 847-475-1875 or visit [www.nexttheatre.org](http://www.nexttheatre.org).**

Tickets are \$44-\$48. Call 847-673-6300 or visit [www.centreeast.org](http://www.centreeast.org).



The Capitol Steps.

## The Capitol Steps at North Shore Jan. 22-25

Centre East celebrates the inauguration of the new president with an exclusive Chicago area week-long engagement of the musical satirists *The Capitol Steps* Thursday-Sunday, Jan. 22-25 at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie, 9501 Skokie. With songs like *Flock Around Barack* and the economically inspired *Monster Crash*, this troupe "has a laugh and an insult for everyone," according to *Variety*.

## Rhino Fest's LGBT offerings

The 20th anniversary of the Rhinoceros Theatre Festival will take place Jan. 23-March 1—and there will be plenty of fare for LGBT audiences.

One of the scheduled productions is *Ralph* (Jan. 24-Feb. 21), described as "[a] mythic story of love, loneliness and liberation, told by a gay schizophrenic living on the edge." Another is *Big Goddess Pow Wow: From the Ashes*, a one-time event occurring Saturday, Feb. 7, at 8 p.m.; this evening of spoken-word and musical performances will include Chicago's own C.C. Carter.

Yet another intriguing event is *Dancing Young Men From High Windows* (Feb. 14, 21 and 28) at Acme Art Works. It's described as "[a]n original opera [that] examines myth and pop music through the eyes of a deranged king, a timid secretary, Elvis Presley, Don Quixote, and, of course, Phil Spector's head."

See [www.rhinofest.com](http://www.rhinofest.com).

## SPOTLIGHT



Not too many people in America know of Russian playwright Oleg Bogae. TUTA Theatre Chicago hopes to change that when it produces the U.S. premiere of Bogae's drama, *Maria's Field*, in an English adaptation by Fyodor Sakhnovski. *Maria's Field* looks at lost generations of Russian women in the 20th century as seen through the flights-of-fantasy eyes of three 100-year-old women. *Maria's Field* plays through Feb. 22 at the Storefront Theater, Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, 66 E. Randolph. Tickets are \$20-\$25; call 312-742-8497 or visit [www.dcatheater.org](http://www.dcatheater.org). Photo by John W. Sisson, Jr.



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## Trading places: theaters play venue hopscotch

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

There will be no shortage of shows to see as the 2009 theater year unfolds, but some familiar faces may turn up in unfamiliar places as several local theater troupes have changed addresses.

Of particular note to LGBT audiences is the widely reported news that **Bailiwick Repertory** has relinquished its longtime location at 1229 W. Belmont. During the 15 years Bailiwick occupied the former light industrial space, it pretty much served as the epicenter of LGBT theatre in Chicago, with shows ranging from the Dyke Mic series to Terrence McNally's *Corpus Christie* to the long-running hit *Naked Boys Singing*. Bailiwick will continue to produce on an itinerant basis, although the company has nothing immediately scheduled. We anticipate that Bailiwick will be back, somewhere, this summer with its annual *Pride Series*.

The large Bailiwick space has been taken over, on a 10-year lease, by LGBT-friendly **Theater Wit**, which has closed the space for remodeling. It's not expected to reopen until the fall, when the company will unveil a new floor plan featuring three theaters of 99 seats each, with each sharing a common lobby and box office. Theater Wit will produce its own shows there, and also host several resident troupes.

Another troupe with LGBT ties on the move was **Hubris Productions**. Hubris was one of the inaugural resident companies sharing the Hoover-Leppen Theatre at the Center on Halsted, but dropped out of the resident rotation for the 2008-2009 season. The company staged *Torch Song Trilogy* (well, two-thirds of it) earlier this season at the Victory Gardens Greenhouse on Lincoln Avenue, and will produce its next show at the National Pastime Theatre, 4139 N.

Broadway. The show is the large-cast and elaborate comedy *Red Noses*, a play by Peter Barnes set in Europe during the Black Plague-ravaged 14th century (Jan. 22-Feb. 28).

Andersonville acquired a new theater venue last fall as **Steep Theatre Company** opened a handsome storefront space at 1115 W. Berwyn. Steep had been in a smaller storefront on Sheridan Road near Irving Park for five years, but finally couldn't take the noise from the live bands playing at the bar next door. The new location is larger and more comfortable for both actors and audiences, and the only noise is the intermittent rumble of the nearby Red Line trains. Steep continues the season with *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings*, by Stephen Adly Guirgis (through Feb. 21).

One of the city's finest small ensemble troupes, **The Artistic Home**, finally found a new home after a year of living on the streets, having given up in 2007 its cramped storefront studio on Irving Park just west of Southport. A series of disappointments and delays about other spaces forced The Artistic Home to miss an entire season of producing. Now, the company has taken over the former Live Bait Theater space at 3914 N. Clark, which gives The Artistic Home two theaters, more than double the seating capacity and a real lobby, too. Next up at The Artistic Home is *Modigliani*, about the famous painter and his bohemian lifestyle in 1900 Paris (Feb. 3-March 22). FYI: Live Bait, which welcomed LGBT artists such as Edward Thomas-Herrera and David Kodeski for many years, still owns the Clark Street space but has chosen to discontinue producing and presenting. Also FYI: Chemically Imbalanced Comedy took over The Artistic Home location at 1420 W. Irving Park, and is presenting *The Wake* (through Feb. 15) by the late, great comedian/composer Steve Allen.

For every troupe that moved, there was a gypsy company that laid down some roots. Even the **Journeyman Theater Company**—whose very name suggests a troupe of wandering artisans—took up residence in the coach house of the



**The Christmas Schooner**, a recent Bailiwick Repertory production.

Berger Park Cultural Center, 6205 N. Sheridan, after more than a decade of producing at various locations. As of our press deadline, *Journeymen* had announced no winter productions.

Finally, two completely new theater venues have come online for the 2008-2009 season, both in the North Center neighborhood near the Addison-Kedzie-Elston intersection. **La Costa Theatre Company** offers a very spacious loft-style second-floor theater of 150 seats with a huge gallery lobby at 3931 N. Elston, while **Stage 33 Chicago** is a tiny storefront blackbox of 25 seats at 3655 N. Kedzie. Both La Costa and Stage 33 produce their own shows in the spaces and also lease them out to other companies. Indeed, the active resident company at Stage 33 Chicago is the Sandhill Theatre Company, which already this season has staged *Faith*, a family Christmas show with a strong gay streak. The next Sandhill show is *Jump*, by Jess Lacher, but no dates have been announced.

## CELEBS from page 11

adulterous, incestuous, real estate-obsessed wife in O'Neill's shattering tragedy.

—**Michael Pennington** in *Sweet William*, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Feb. 2-22, [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com): He might not be a household name, but make no mistake—Pennington's a Shakespearian superstar. In our book, he's famous. With the much-lauded *Sweet William* he offers a one-man retrospective on 40-plus years of working with the Bard.

—**David Schwimmer** in *Our Town*, Looking-glass Theatre, Feb. 11-April 5, [www.lookingglasstheatre.org](http://www.lookingglasstheatre.org): Ross from *Friends* moves to Grover's Corners. Consider this a test: Can he really act, or was he just doing a variation on himself with his long-lived sitcom persona? Having caught him in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* a few years back, we're leaning toward the former opinion. And with Anna D. Shapiro and Jessica Thebus directing, our hopes are high that he delivers on Thornton Wilder's classic.

—**Joey Slotnick** in *Our Town*, see above: Agile as a comedian (and another *Entourage* vet, see Carla Gugino, above), Slotnick comes home to join Schwimmer in a drama about the sublime essence of everyday life.

—**John O'Hurley** in *Chicago*, Feb. 25-March 8, Broadway in Chicago, [www.broadwayinchicago.com](http://www.broadwayinchicago.com): John O'Hurley, that fleet-footed silver fox from TV's *Dancing with the Stars*, becomes the 900th celeb to step into the tap shoes of razzle-dazzler Billy Flynn, slick attorney-at-law for the murderous mistresses of Kander and Ebb's musical.

—**Chazz Palminteri** in *A Bronx Tale*, Broadway in Chicago, March 10-22, [www.broadwayinchicago.com](http://www.broadwayinchicago.com): In a live version of his film of the same name, Academy Award nominee Chazz Palminteri is one singular sensation as he recounts a childhood in one of New York's toughest boroughs.

Fresh from his smash hit production of *Caroline, or Change*, director Charles Newell confronts Ibsen's searing tragicomedy.

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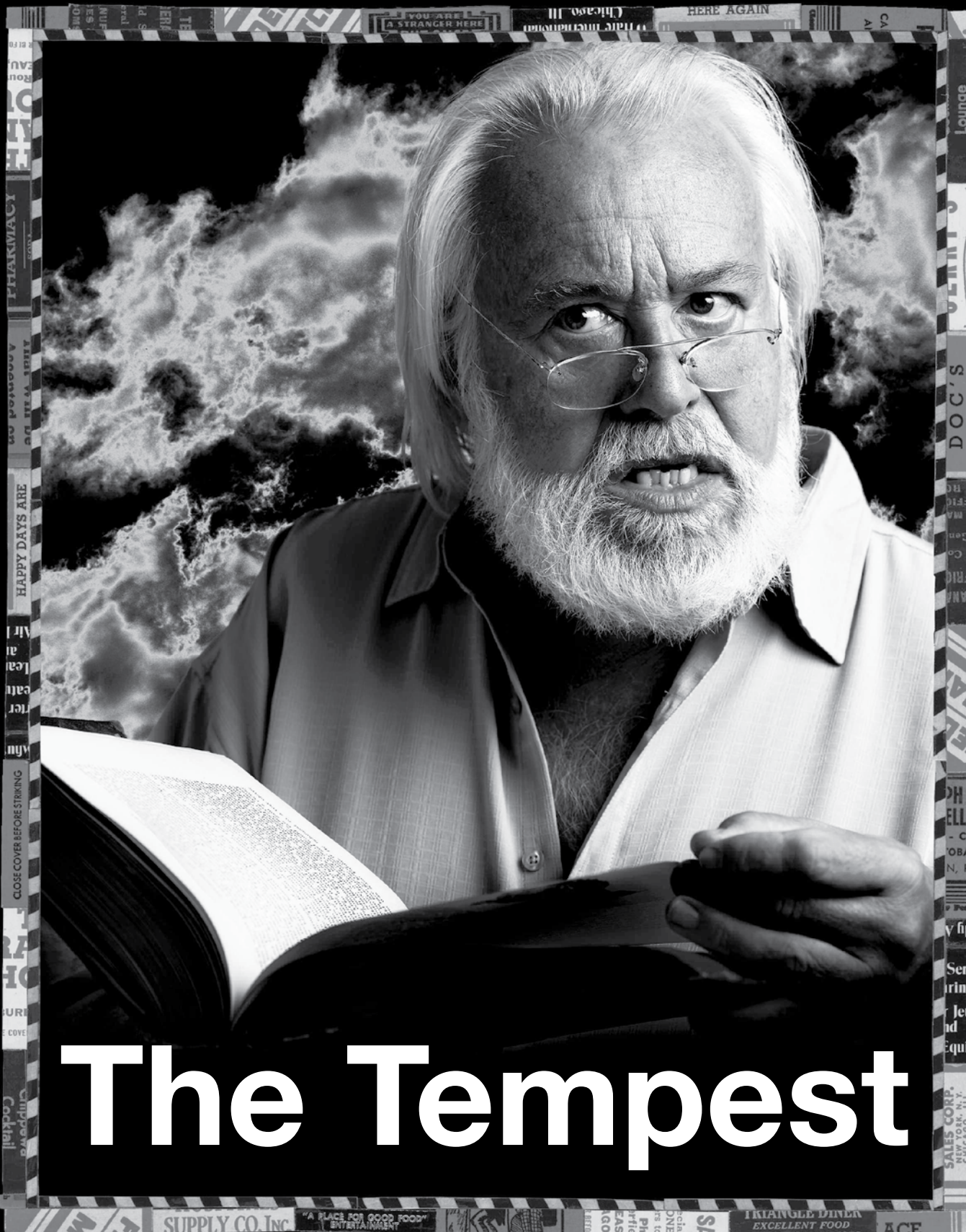
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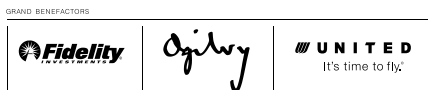
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## THEATER REVIEW

**In Arabia We'd All Be Kings**

Playwright: Stephen Adly Guirgis  
 At: Steep Theatre, 1115 W. Berwyn  
 Phone: 312-458-0722; \$18  
 Runs through: Feb. 21

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Whenever a play has a weird title, it's typically explained away in a second-act monologue that shows the symbolic reasons behind the playwright's choice.

In Stephen Adly Guirgis' 2007 drama *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings*, an elderly barfly named Sammy (Peter Esposito) does blurt out the title in the second act. Yet the title baffles, since it has nothing to do with the play's rogues gallery of prostitutes, junkies, alcoholics and ex-cons facing gentrification in 1990s New York.

That makes *In Arabia...* disappointing when compared to Guirgis' other works like *Jesus Hopped the "A" Train* and *Our Lady of 121st Street*. *In Arabia...* has no religious or symbolic payoff.

Without that obvious kernel of transformation or realization, it makes it hard for you to feel much for the characters of *In Arabia...* (other than pity, or a smug sense of superiority). The play's meandering vignettes of violence and betrayal also don't leave you with much to warm to.

What you do get out of *In Arabia...* is Guirgis' glorious gift-of-gab dialogue. The largely stellar company of actors under Joanie Schultz's astute direction are all enjoyable as they dig down and wallow in the messed-up despair or befuddlement of Guirgis' characters.

Much of the play is set around a Hell's Kitchen dive bar run by Jake (Richard Cotovsky) and his mentally challenged barman, Charlie (Sean Bolger). (Set designer Brandon Wardell and lighting



**In Arabia We'd All Be Kings**

designer Aaron Weisman work seedy wonders on stage with lots of neon signs.)

There we meet the ex-con Lenny (a menacing Michael Salinas), who has difficulty earning the respect of his onetime girlfriend Daisy (Lily Mojekwu) and adjusting to a rapidly gentrifying New York. Lenny's failure at a job interview for handing out fliers is emblematic of the change. (Peter Moore as the type-A employer, Vic, is perfect in this scene.)

The other main focus is the junkie couple of Skank (Jonathan Edwards) and Chickie (Caroline Neff). In order to get their next fix, they degrade themselves. Chickie resorts to prostitution, while Skank has a tearoom encounter with an affluent gay guy (D'Wayne Taylor in another spot-on performance).

Providing most of the disturbing comic relief is the bickering mother-and-daughter duo of Miss Reyes (Mari Stratton) and her daughter DeMaris (Rinska M. Prestinary). Both these actresses are experts with their urban Latina cadences, even if they come close to caricature.

Now if *In Arabia...* is making gentrification a generalized villain, you'd be hard-pressed to find people longing for the play's characters to be loitering around their front doors anytime soon. And in light of Steep Theatre's own contribution

to further gentrify the Edgewater Beach neighborhood by renovating a long-vacant corner store, presenting *In Arabia...* seems like an odd act of contrition.

## THEATER REVIEW

**Macbeth**

Playwright: William Shakespeare  
 At: Chicago Shakespeare Theatre at Navy Pier, 800 E. Grand  
 Phone: 312-595-5600; \$54-\$70  
 Runs through: March 8

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Its status as Shakespeare's shortest play has made *Macbeth* one of the three tragedies most often selected for classroom study—a distinction subsequently rendering it overwhelmingly familiar to American audiences. But when every schoolchild can sing along with “double-double-toil-and-trouble,” theaters attempting to find fresh relevance in the tale of a feudal lord undone by his lust for power are often reduced to focusing on its most reliable elements—to wit: sex, violence and magic.

Setting the story in our own times makes for

a certain skimpiness in the violence. (Whatever theatrical warfare these days may have gained in noise and scope, it lost in the intimacy of face-to-face combat.) And the sex in this production relies as much on the luxury of the Macbeths' penthouse apartment—the introduction of a glass bathtub into the decor adding a provocative touch to Lady M's seductive patter—as on its owners' amorous floor exercises.

Fortunately, magic is easier to come by these days than ever before: electronic distortion lends aural mystery to the weird sisters' pronouncements, while fussy costumes and wigs blur the intriguing diversity in their ages (one is played by Mike Nussbaum, though you won't recognize him—especially in the gentleman's club scene where he poses as a go-go dancer). Gloomy chiaroscuro lighting and fog machines throw noiresque shadows, conveniently obscuring the murders essential to the plot; and a grisly apparition draws forth a baby (umbilicus still attached) from its own belly. Meanwhile, Michael Tutaj's video projections splash ghosts, dressed in little more than quarts of Day-Glo blood, across huge screens—a spectacle less shocking, ironically, than the moment where a live-action Banquo breaks out of his frame to cavort among his killer's dinner guests.

Surrounded by technology that George Lucas might envy, the principal actors are to be commended for refusing to acknowledge their excesses and delivering their speeches as if anybody really cared what they were saying. With the exception of the witches, whose speech is artificially scrambled to the point of unintelligibility, the surprisingly articulate company assembled for this Chicago Shakespeare production acquit themselves with admirable dignity. Ben Carlson abandons the rapid-fire delivery expected by his Chicago fans to instead adopt a fatigued tone suggesting a leader regretful, if resigned, to the very end of his career. Magic is all very well, of course, but aren't the moral struggles of flawed human beings more interesting, ultimately?

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The Private Lives of Eskimos. Photo by Jaclyn Biskup

## THEATER REVIEW

### The Private Lives of Eskimos

Playwright: Ken Urban

At: The Mill at Stage Left Theatre,  
3408 N. Sheffield

Phone: 312-388-7660; \$20

Runs through: Feb. 7

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

The Private Lives of Eskimos (or 16 words for snow) is an odd mukluk of a play, given a punchy world-premiere production by The Mill. First, be warned it has nothing to do with Eskimos, and it's quickly apparent that all 16 words for snow, projected as scene titles, are creations of playwright Ken Urban.

The play *does* concern the private life of Marvin, a young big-city Internet technology guy. Marvin melts down when his sister is killed in a train explosion while on her way from Alaska, especially after he loses his cellphone with her last voice message. Much as with Sarah Ruhl's Dead Man's Cellphone at Steppenwolf last season, his phone is recovered by a woman into whose gratifying personality but underworld life Marvin is sucked. Marvin also has psychotic episodes during which mysterious Eskimo-like creatures—or sometimes his girlfriend Christine and “office amigo” Tom—lapse into freakish, high-speed repetitions of e-mail spam phrases such as “Do to orange of Frenchburg himself possible.” In 16 scenes—one for each pseudo-word for snow—played in 95 minutes, Marvin deals with his grief, his guilt (his sister was visiting him, so he must be responsible for her death) and his not-so-latent hostilities and violence against an increasingly surreal backdrop in which the Arctic tundra breaks into Marvin's tenuous reality.

The play is performed by five actors, three of whom take multiple roles in sketch-like scenes. The script demands theatrical energy that, fortunately, this production has, under director Jaclyn Biskup. Her first-rate cast is headed by tall, boyish Adam Breske, who portrays Marvin's emotional twists and turns with seeming ease but with high intensity. He is supported by Darci Nalepa as the put-upon Christine, Alison Connelly in an arch turn as a Serbian mafia *femme fatale*, Megan Larmer as the sultry-voiced cellphone woman, and scene-stealing Joel Ewing as the insensitive jerk of an office buddy from Hell.

Despite the fine cast and production, the play itself has too many quirks. It takes the entire play to figure out who has died and her relationship to Marvin. Then, Marvin's therapist puts him on mood-calming drugs, but his behavior is no different on drugs or off. The therapist is in only two scenes, so why not just drop her? Also, the link between Marvin's spam-related and Eskimo psychoses is entirely arbitrary. They never really mesh, and either by itself would be sufficient for the play's dramatic purposes. Finally, the action begins so very quickly that one isn't given reasons to like Marvin before he falls apart. It's a fascinating, deft little play that is serious in purpose but comedic in tone. Its high theatricalism may stick with you, but at the end you don't care.

## THEATER REVIEW

### Po Boy Tango

Playwright: Kenneth Lin

At: Northlight Theatre at the  
North Shore Center for the Performing Arts,  
9501 Skokie, Skokie

Phone: 847-673-6300; \$25-\$55

Runs through: Feb. 15

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

It's a premise so irresistible, you want to package and distribute it to every playwrighting workshop in the United States: Middle-aged Richie's wife and grown daughter are away, attending his mother's funeral. In their absence, he plans his gift to his soon-to-be-married offspring—a banquet duplicating that prepared by the late matriarch for a delegation of foreign diplomats. He will re-create these exotic recipes assisted solely by videotapes of her cooking show and the medic who nursed his child through a severe illness 10 years earlier. Gloria has been selected as chef, he confesses, because she is the only person he knows who can cook. Oh, did I mention that Richie Po—the “Po Boy” of the title—is an immigrant Taiwanese and Gloria B is African-American?

In order to accomplish their mission, these highly dissimilar characters must overcome, not only the mysteries of international cuisine—Richie's prospective menu includes fish and game brought home alive from the market and slaughtered in the kitchen—but the suspicions engendered by both their present social status and long-ingrained cultural heritage. (Consider, for example, how Gloria learned her culinary skills from her father, but Richie is so coddled—and dominated—by his womenfolk that only his preternatural palate allows him to even identify the ingredients in the old-country dishes he dimly remembers.)

Gradually, however, these oddly matched comrades arrive at an accord, exchanging memories of growing up poor in a climate of oppression—she, by Jim Crow laws, and he, by the Chinese Nationalist Party (before it became our ally)—and of dreams deferred: Richie secures Gloria's participation in his project by promising to finance the restaurant she yearns to open. Forging alliances is not without its setbacks, of course. But if the plot twists arise right when we expect them, they are just as likely to be not what we anticipated.

Another unanticipated boon is the premiere of Kenneth Lin's play at Skokie's Northlight Theatre. Though this midwestern production deemed it necessary to find its director and Asian actors—respectively, Chay Yew, Ken Narasaki and Jeanne Sakata—on the West Coast, their presence alongside our own Jacqueline Williams bespeaks progress (beyond the “ethnic outreach” programs) toward recognition of audiences often overlooked by theater marketers. Whatever its flaws (a stage too large for its intimate dynamic, for one), Po Boy Tango delivers more than its share of worthy insights into universal human values.

### 'Rob Roy' canceled

Rob Roy The Musical—which was to have premiered at the Arie Crown Theater, 2301 S. Lake Shore, starting Feb. 3—has been canceled, according to the Chicago Tribune.

The production will now premiere at the Elgin Theatre in Toronto. A spokesman cited “financial” reasons for skipping Chicago.

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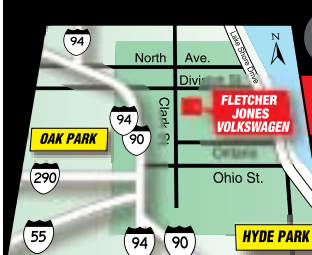
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# Dream Weaver

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

Mary Griffith's rabid belief in hellfire and damnation for queers drove her 20-year-old gay son, Bobby, to commit suicide in 1983. In the tragedy's wake she transformed from close-minded religious zealot into a PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)-waving activist for LGBT youth and their families. Sigourney Weaver portrays Mary in Lifetime's powerful original TV movie, *Prayers For Bobby*, which is based upon Leroy Aaron's 1996 book, *Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son*. It premieres Saturday, Jan. 24 at 8 p.m. CT.

Via telephone, the pro-gay actress and dykon—who appeared as a motivational speaker from hell in 1995's gay classic, *Jeffrey*—discussed

her award-worthy turn, the real Mary Griffith, a new danger facing gay youth, and, of course, whether we're going to see Alien's Ripley back in action.

**Lawrence Ferber: How did making this film affect your own views on religion?**

Sigourney Weaver: I'm an Episcopalian and it seems to me that Jesus' teachings are so much about including people, loving people, believing in people. I have to say I found it so difficult to understand why people put more faith in the Old Testament, with all its ferocity, than the New Testament, which preaches kindness and "do unto others." Mary Griffith believed [the Old Testament] was the word and her church was certainly not saying, well, that's one way to believe. It was fascinating and disturbing.

**LF: Mary seemed brainwashed, like the Hitler youth kids who turned against, and turned in to the SS, their own family members.**



Sigourney Weaver (right) and Ryan Kelley in *Prayers for Bobby*. Photo by Ben Mark Holzberg/Lifetime Television

SW: The thing is she kind of made up her own religion. She patched together a few things and it was all based on this father figure who was quite capricious and stern and the church she was connected with did not enlighten her. She found a church that felt homosexuality was an abomination, and there are people all over this country who believe that.

**LF: Was it difficult to inhabit Mary? Would you look into the mirror while preparing and say, "You're an idiot!"?**

SW: You can't judge the person you're playing, and I did have the great opportunity to meet Mary. She's such a gentle, easygoing person; when I met her I said, "I'm having a little trouble putting you together with this woman at the beginning of our story who was so closed-minded and fierce." She just looked at me and said, "Well, I was very serious." And I got it. She showed me her Bible, where she had underlined things in red and put exclamation points. The tragedy to me is Bobby's entire family loved each other so much and felt they were doing the right thing. If there's one thing I hope for the pockets of people who don't have the privilege of knowing any [LGBTs] in their family, it's that this film can humanize this issue.

**LF: But wouldn't a person who's like Mary used to be—such as a member of the God Hates Fags clan—shut this film off or dismiss Mary's transformation? Or could the message still manage to get through to them?**

SW: Well, I certainly hope so, because this movie is for them. One of the reasons I wanted to do this movie so much is I heard *Prayers For Bobby* is one of the books kids give their parents when they want to start the process of talking about being gay. I thought if we can give them another form in which to start this conversation, because some people won't go off and read a book, you can say, "Hey, let's watch this movie. It's got that woman from the Alien movies in it." They can sort of ambush their parents. Then maybe they won't be able to turn the tube off. I hope it will start conversations and give kids support and the knowledge that what they are is natural and normal and the church is wrong.

**LF: What was the toughest scene to shoot?**

SW: I think [it was] the moment where Mary realizes what she's done. That's tough. And, of course, what I admire so much about Mary is she has lived her life since then trying to make amends for the decisions she made and has paid a huge price because she lost Bobby, who is still so much a part of their lives. It's a difficult story to share with the world and does not put her in a very good light. I think it's so generous and courageous of her to put this story out because it will save lives.

**LF: The real Bobby turned to hustling and promiscuity, whereas he's depicted as quite innocent and clean-cut in the film. Do you feel that if he had been more like the film's boy-next-door, Mary would have been more likely to accept his being gay?**

SW: No. I think she was so concerned about his immortal soul she wasn't really paying attention to the quality of his life on earth. She was so driven by her own fear for herself, her family and him that any kind of gay life was evil.

**LF: Which is responsible for more deaths—the aliens or religion?**

SW: Religion, I'm afraid. I respect people's faith, yet at the same time I think the church for centuries has wanted to keep people under their control with very rigid dogma and, unfortunately, it's still going on today. I live in New York; I have so many good friends who are gay and so does my daughter. We're fortunate to be living in a world populated by so many different kinds of people. If you're in a town where you don't have access to different kinds of people then it's much harder to recognize their humanity. You don't have any personal knowledge of them.

**LF: Even if raised in a liberal, accepting family, there's another threat to gay kids' survival and well-being today, and from their own community no less: the barebacking trend. Gay youth are clicking on blogs and Web sites that glorify, eroticize and promote unprotected sex and portray HIV as something trivial and easily treated—condom use is becoming the exception rather than the norm. It infuriates me and needs to be talked about.**

SW: I didn't know that. That infuriates me as a parent because none of the younger generation should be having unsafe sex no matter what your sexual leaning is and I think it's particularly dangerous for gays not to use condoms. I have so many friends who are on the medication and it's a very difficult life.

**LF: No interview with you would be complete without asking about Alien—I read something online about you being open to another one.**

SW: I've done *Avatar*, which is Jim Cameron's new 3-D film [that] takes place in outer space. I play this fantastic woman scientist who also has a whole avatar life. That's my latest foray into sci-fi and I kind of believe in going forward and not going back, so I don't know what you've heard but there's always some rumor circulating that I'm going to do another *Alien*. The *Alien vs. Predator* series has knocked that particular character out of orbit for me.

**LF: We want to see lesbian clone Ripley.**

SW: Well, I imagine you could create her at this point with the work I've already done.

**LF: Is there a chance that if *Prayers* comes out on DVD, we might get a bonus scene where Ripley storms in and blowtorches Mary's homophobic pastor?**

SW: Well, I'm hoping this movie will act as a flame-thrower to everything he's saying. [Laughs] But you know, at this point in order to get people to see this movie I'm open to anything.

**Prayers for Bobby premieres Saturday, Jan. 24, at 8 p.m. on Lifetime.**

**Read the review of *Prayers for Bobby* on page 22.**



Weaver in *Prayers for Bobby*. Photo by Ben Mark Holzberg/Lifetime Television

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**RELATIONSHIPS CAN LAST:** We specialize in helping you sift through what is not working in your relationship so that you can maximize the good. With over 20 years of experience serving Chicago's LGBTQ communities, we offer safe, confidential counseling for drinking and drug related concerns, past or present abuse, coming out and coming out of marriage. Please call Dr. Margo Jaquot at 847-759-9110 exr. 10 or email [junipercenter@aol.com](mailto:junipercenter@aol.com) (2/04/09-TK)

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gender/trans issues, anxiety, depression, trauma, substance abuse. Northwest Suburbs & Chicago. 847-824-9590 or [www.LindaSLevi.com](mailto:LindaSLevi.com) (5/20/09-26)

## DVD

**THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT:** The Perfect DVD for every GLBT person. This excellent documentary presentation uses ONLY Biblical passages to dispel the misconceptions & to show GLBT people that God made them in HIS image, just the way he wants them... NO EXCEPTIONS! [www.TheTruthTheWholeTruthAndNothingBut.net](http://www.TheTruthTheWholeTruthAndNothingBut.net) (2/11/09-8)

## HELP WANTED

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

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**REHAB & REMODELING KITCHENS & BATHROOMS:** Over 25 years of experience serving Chicago and surrounding suburbs. Emergency plumbing services available. Fully licensed and insured. Free estimates. Contact Steve 847-791-2216 or [s\\_shoptz@yahoo.com](mailto:s_shoptz@yahoo.com) (12/16/09-52)

## INTERPRETER

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

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## Entertainment news

Spirits are supposedly preventing Courtney Love from delivering her newest album, *Nobody's Daughter*, according to the Guardian. Love's representative said that "paranormal technical issues" in the recording studio are holding up the mixing of the album.

Speaking of Love, she recently posted a blog accusing Robert Kardashian, Jr. (yes, of those Kardashians) of **breaking the nose of her gay employee**, according to Access Hollywood. Sister Kim Kardashian responded, saying that Love's accusation was false and that the family would contact its attorneys over the matter, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Prince fans will certainly get their fill of the

diminutive singer this year as **he plans to release three CDs in 2009**, Rolling Stone magazine reported. The three albums will be Lotus Flower, or Lotus Flow3r (which primarily features guitars); the funky MPLSOUND (short for "Minneapolis Sound"); and Elixir, a collaboration between Prince and his newest protégé, Bria Valente.

Hunky actor Chris Evans—probably best known as The Human Torch in the Fantastic Four movies—**has expressed his support of same-sex marriage**, according to IMDB.com. Evans—whose younger brother, Scott, is out and proud—said, "It's mind-boggling and appalling that human beings are being denied civil rights in this country. But time will heal all. I have to believe that in 10 years we won't be having this conversation."

Lesbian actress Cherry Jones—who is currently being seen in her role as U.S. President Allison Taylor on the TV show *24*—**recently had gallbladder surgery**, according to Entertainment Tonight. The show's executive producer, Howard Gordon, said that Jones went to the hospital in the past few days and had her gall bladder removed. He added that "[s]he is home and she is fine."

At the recent Golden Globes, actor Tom Hanks **spoke out against California's anti-gay-marriage measure, Prop 8**, according to a Washington Blade item. "It's un-American," he said of the initiative, and said that it will eventually be repealed.

Jennifer Hudson will make her first public appearance since the murders of her mother, brother and nephew when she sings the national anthem at the Super Bowl, which will take place Sunday, Feb. 1, in Tampa, Fla, according to the Chicago Sun-Times. Hudson who has been nominated for four Grammys this year, is also slated to sing at the Grammys' MusiCares event in Los Angeles a few days later.



Liza Minnelli.

### Liza Minnelli CD out Feb. 3

Music lovers around the world will have a chance to experience Liza Minnelli's much-talked-about recent engagement at Broadway's legendary Palace Theatre when *Liza's at the Palace...*, the new original cast recording of her show, will be released Feb. 3, courtesy of Hybrid Recordings.

Along with a 12-man orchestra led by conductor/drummer Michael Berkowitz and pianist/musical supervisor Billy Stritch, the two-disc *Liza's At The Palace...* is highlighted with many of her showstoppers, such as *Cabaret*, *Maybe This Time*, and *New York New York*.

The suggested retail price is \$19.99.

### Rihanna remix CD out Jan. 27

Barbadian singing superstar Rihanna will release *Good Girl Gone Bad: The Remixes*—a new version of her double-platinum, chart-topping album—on Tuesday, Jan. 27. This collection features new versions of Rihanna's hits remixed by today's hottest dance producers, including Tony Moran, Seamus Haji, Jody Den Broeder, Moto Blanco and Wideboys.

*Good Girl Gone Bad* (released June 5, 2007) and *Good Girl Gone Bad: Reloaded* (released June 17, 2008, and that had three brand-new songs) were catapulted past the 2 million mark by three number-one singles: *Umbrella*, *Take A Bow* and *Disturbia*. Rihanna has sold over 10 million tracks.

# Rhapsody for Blue

A benefit for Blue Gargoyle Community Services  
*"Alleviating Poverty through Literacy"*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2009 | 2 PM

DePaul's Merle Reskin Theater, 60 E. Balbo Drive  
 (Conveniently surrounded by 6 parking garages)

STARRING

Rachel Barton Pine  
 Chicago Chorale  
 Aleksandra Kurzak\*  
 Petra Lang\*  
 Matthew Polenzani\*  
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Ticket price in advance: \$85.00, at door: \$100.00  
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 Family/Group discounts available.

For details and ticket sales call 773-955-4108 x312, or visit [rhapsody4blue.eventbrite.com](http://rhapsody4blue.eventbrite.com).

\*Artist appears through kind permission of Lyric Opera of Chicago

# WHAT TO DO?

## Wednesday, Jan. 21

**4 Women Only** Hosted by Kat Fitzgerald (folk/rock) the only show in Chicago dedicated to new women artists. 9pm, Uncommon Ground Devon 1401 W. Devon Ave. 773-465-9801, www.uncommonground.com

**Roe v. The Real World event.** Our Voices, Our Choices reproductive justice coalition and Chicago Foundation for Women special event marking the 36th Anniversary of the landmark Roe v Wade decision. \$5 donation, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Center on Halsted, Hoover-Leppen Theater 3656 N. Halsted St. www.cfw.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=843&srcid=183

**Bar-lesque at Scarlet Bar** fundraiser 9 p.m. until 1 a.m., benefiting Test Positive Aware Network's Chicago Takes Off "Bar-lesque" online strip fundraising competition to help name Chicago's sexiest. \$5 donation at the door, 3320 N. Halsted www.chicagotakesoff.org/Bar-lesque.html

**Women and Children First Books.** Sid-darth Kara author of Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery Every year millions of women are sold into sexual slavery with billions of dollars changing hands. 7:30 p.m. Women and Children First Books, 5233 N. Clark, 773-769-9299

## Thursday, Jan. 22

**Center on Halsted singOUT Lecture Series 2008-09**, a new collaboration with Lyric Opera of Chicago. Patricia Racette, soprano. Tix \$10. 7p.m. Hoover-Leppen Theatre, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted Street. Purchase online: www.centeronhalsted.org/singout.html

**Chicago Abortion Fund Rally** on Hyde Amendment and HB5615 in recognition of anniversary of Roe v. Wade 11:30 a.m. Federal Plaza, www.chicagoabortionfund.com

**Crime Prevention Seminar**, for business owners. St. Luke's 1500 W. Belmont 6:30 p.m.

**Low vs Diamond** Beat Kitchen. 2100 W Belmont Ave 773 281-4444

**Newtown Writers** 7:30 p. m. Gerber-Hart Library, 1127 Granville, Chicago. For more info, contact Barry frau-

man8@yahoo.com <mailto:frauman8@yahoo.com> or (773) 528-3637.

**Stop/Kiss at Gift Theatre.** Friendship between two girls blossoms into a romance with devastating consequences (winner of the 2008 Meier Achievement Award, 2006 Jeff Award), \$20, 7:30 p.m., through March 15. Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee, (773) 283-7071 or buy online @ www.thegifttheatre.org

## Friday, Jan. 23

**Affinity Community Services** Singles Mingle Committee invites you out to Movie Night for a viewing of Truth Hall: the bonds of friendship between five women who were inseparable in college. Donations: Members: \$3, Non \$5. 5650 S. Woodlawn 773-324-0377

**NW Suburbs LGBT Spirituality Meetup**, mutual support, discussion of spirituality issues. Been burned by mainstream religion? 7 p.m. Elk Grove. Get location by joining http://lgbtfriends.meetup.com/152/

**The Rainbow Couples Get-Away Retreat** two day, two night relaxing, fun retreat with a relationship focus for a small group of same-sex couples at a gayfriendly location, Wisconsin Dells www.tpan.com

**Rhino Fest 2009** through March 1 in five locations.773-296-6024 www.rhinofest.com/

**Tragedy to Triumph** the Story of Artemisia, a freshly imagined multimedia music performance, one night only. Chicago composer, singer-songwriter Linda M. Smith and company perform life of 17th century Italian artist Artemisia Gentileschi. 7 p.m. Suggested donation \$15 adults, \$5 students and seniors. OSSIA Fine Arts Space, 410 S. Michigan, # 537. 773-220-2356

**Women Out Loud!** 2009 open mic series with readings from young and talented writers/performance artists Rominna Villaseñor and Ni'ja Whitson, 7 to 9 p.m. Center for New Possibilities, 1505 W. Morse.

## Saturday, Jan. 24

**Family Fun** Pocket Circus kid's fair, 4 p.m. \$12. adults, \$10 kids under 18. Saugatuck (Michigan) Center for the

Arts, 400 Culver St.269-857-2399

**Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago** 7th Annual dance with us Benefit. This event is a precursor to Spring Engagement March 13 and March 14. giordanodance.org or call 847-866-6779

**Hyde Park Art Center** collector workshop series, Collecting 2.0. 5020 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago. 773 324-5520. www.hydeparkart.org

**Rufus Wainwright** at the Museum of Contemporary Art; A Benefit DRY ICE 6 p.m. cocktails, an elegant hors d'oeuvres buffet, live entertainment by Wainwright, and art auctions featuring artwork by Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, and Olafur Eliasson. Intimate: just over 200 guests. Tix \$1,500 and couple packages \$5,000. www.mcachicago.org/benefit.

**Nicole Hollander solo show** Opening reception for It's Enough to Make a Cat Laugh. First in more than 10 years for Chicago's beloved cartoonist. 6 - 9 p.m. Woman Made Gallery. Studio cell: 773-640-4522.

**Queer Artist Show "Stimulation" reception** \$2 suggested donation, 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Barbara & Barbara Gallery, 3144 W. Carrol

**TUTA Theatre Chicago** reading of Russian National Postal Service, noon. Free. TUTA Loft, 2032 W. Fulton. Alice Wedoff at 773.895.3026 or alicewedoff@yahoo.com. For more information on TUTA Theatre Chicago go to www.tutato.com-

## Sunday, Jan. 25

**Reconciling Journey** Affirming Devotional Study for GLBT Christians, 6:30 p.m. Brooke Road United Methodist Church, 1404 Brooke Rd, Rockford, 815-398-8914

**ROTC Chicago** a crowd favorite at Midsummerfest, Market Days and Pride events since 1993, seeking ew members. Informal rehearsals at Ebenezer Church on 1650 W Foster Ave. www.rotcchicago.org info@rotcchicago.org

**Winter Block Party for Hip Hop Arts**, by Chicago Public Radio. \$15/\$12/\$10 Noon to 6 p.m. Tix at www.chicagopublicradio.org/events or at thedoor. Victory Gardens Biograph Theater. Free.

## Tuesday, Jan. 27

**Anna Deavere Smith at Columbia College Chicago's Founders Lectures Series.** Actress, theater professor and MacArthur Foundation Fellow discusses her ideas on "Engaging the World: The Role of the Artist in Society". Free, reservations are required, 7:30 p.m., Film Row Cinema, 1104 S. Wabash. Free and open to the public but space is limited. RSVP 312-369-6600

## Wednesday, Jan. 28

**4 Women Only** hosted by Kat Fitzgerald (folk/rock) the only show in Chicago dedicated to new women artists. 9pm, Uncommon Ground, Devon 1401 W. Devon Ave. 773-465-9801, www.uncommonground.com

**Hermanos de Luna y Sol**, Addressing Stigma and Promoting Community Involvement as HIV Prevention for Latino Gay Men. Free community forum for gay Latino men and their allies features Dr. Rafael Diaz of San Francisco State University, Dr. Jesus Ramirez-Valles of UIC, and a performance by Nuestro Tambo. Light refreshments 7 p.m. presentation and discussion, Nuestro Tambo 6 p.m., La Estancia 2753 West Division, RSVP 312-334-0939 http://lifelube.org/docs/lifelube-sollyluna2-flyer-final.pdf

**Roe vs. Wade Anniversary Conversation** Open to the public and free of charge. Refreshments will be provided. 8pmJane Addams Hull-House Museum Residents' Dining Hall800 S. Halsted. 312-413-5353.

## Thursday, Jan. 29

**Ellen Stone Belic Institute** Discussion and book signing with South Africa Constitutional Court Justice Albie Sachs and Dr. Bronwyn Law-Viljoen Managing Editor, David Krut Publishing celebrating the publication of Art and Justice:The Art of the Constitutional Court of South Africa. Free. 6 - 7:30 p.m. discussion, followed by book signing Film Row Cinema 1104 S. Wabash, 8th Floor 312-369-8829 or institutewomengender@colum.edu.

## Thursday, Jan. 22



### THE BEAT GOES ON

Low vs Diamond will perform at Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont.

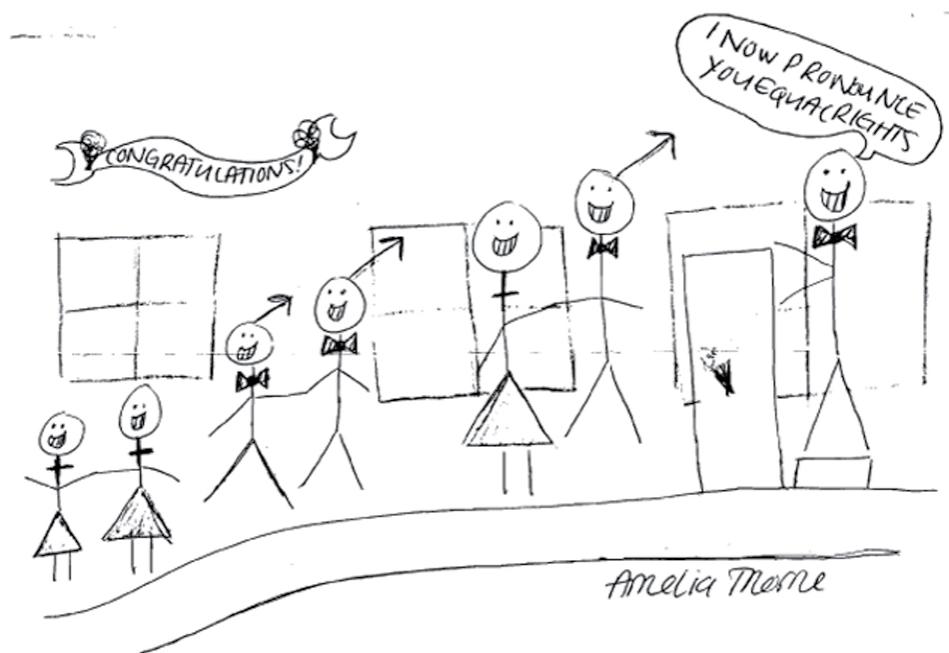
## Saturday, Jan. 24



### ICE AND EASY

Rufus Wainwright will perform at the DRY ICE benefit at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago.

See our online calendar: [www.windycitymediagroup.com/calendar](http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/calendar)



## An 'L' of a time

LGBT-rights group Equality Illinois held a viewing party for the season premiere of The L Word's sixth and last season Jan. 18 at T's, 5025 N. Clark. (However, it certainly wasn't the only such gathering in town, as Human Rights Campaign-Chicago held one at Circuit, 3641 N. Halsted.) Photos of the T's party by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)

## Freedom to marry

Reflecting the increasing impact of LGBT-related issues on adolescents, high schooler Amelia Thorne (from St. Charles, Ill.) drew the above image in response to an assignment to draw an editorial cartoon. Reprinted with permission from Suzanne Thorne, the student's mother

# KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

## Prayers for Bobby

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

It's true—many of the best roles for women of a “certain” age these days are to be found on television. Glenn Close has returned as the powerful lawyer on *Damages*; the *Wisteria Lane* ladies are having a particularly good season on *Desperate Housewives*; and Toni Collette soon takes on a four-character starring role in *United States of Tara*, Showtime's new series about a woman suffering from multiple personalities. And Lifetime, the cable network famed for its “television for women” slogan, has snagged Sigourney Weaver to star in one of its made-for-TV movies. But *Prayers for Bobby*, premiering this Saturday, Jan. 24, on the network, is anything but the standard female-in-crisis fare typical of the network. It's easy to see why Weaver signed on for the film: Her role as the devout Christian mother of a troubled gay teen is richly complex—and Weaver is magnificent in the part.

I found the storyline for *Prayers for Bobby*

eerily familiar. Based on true events, the majority of the film takes place between 1979 and 1982—the three-year period in which high school teenager Bobby Griffith (Ryan Kelley) comes out to his family, finds himself adrift from them (especially from Weaver and Henry Czerny, who is his tongue-tied father) and then follows the sad set of circumstances that will be familiar to a generation of gay men who came out during the period (including yours truly). Like many parents in that more unenlightened era, Mary and Bob can't see beyond the prejudices of the middle-class culture around them and the religious bigotry espoused weekly from the pulpit at their conservative church.

Mary, especially, just doesn't get it. “God will cure you,” she tells Bobby with perfect assurance while his dad intones, “You're not gay. You probably haven't met a girl you're attracted to.” Mary takes him to a rigid shrink for “reparative therapy,” posts “helpful” passages from the Bible throughout the house, prays over him (literally), has him exercise and gets him off junk food while Dad shares “manly” time with him (and at the same time puts down his desire to become a writer). Nothing changes Bobby's nature, however, and soon the temptation of the local gay bar is too much. After some heavy petting ensues, Bobby is even more determined to be honest about who he is. But when two friends show up at the house dressed in character for a midnight screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* the mother reaches a breaking point. Gay is one thing but Dr. Frank-N-Furter and Magenta?! Never!

To clear the air, Bobby takes a two-month vacation to Portland, Ore., where he stays with his understanding female cousin, who immediately takes him to a gay bar and introduces him to David (played by former soap-opera hunk Scott Bailey), a hottie who becomes his boyfriend. Returning home he announces he's in love and again asks for acceptance but Mary is implacable,

telling him, “I won't have a gay son.” This time, Bobby leaves home for good—with tragic results.

It's at this point that the film—and Weaver's performance—shifts into more complex territory. Faced with responsibility in the face of tragedy, Mary finally questions the rigidity of what she's been taught and an encounter with Dan Butler (one of Hollywood's first out actors), as a reverend at a gay-friendly church, and Susan Ruttan, as the mother of a gay son who points her toward PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), help with Mary's transformation.

Bobby Griffith's coming-out and subsequent ostracization from his family is, sadly, nothing new in life and on film. (The excellent queer indie *Save Me*, for example, also features a compelling portrait by Judith Light of a “compassionate Christian” forced to reassess her views on the gay “lifestyle.”) And *Prayers for Bobby*, directed by Russell Mulcahy (who helmed several episodes of *Queer As Folk*), also has moments of an after-school special quality to it (though it draws its tears fairly honestly).

But with Mary's enlightenment, which the last half of the film delves into, the movie also

touches on something larger that feels up-to-the-moment—like something going on in the culture right now. Can it be possible that centuries of acquiescing to religious terrorists by Our People will soon be a thing of the past? Is true tolerance really upon us, at last? Has the time for true Christianity in America finally returned?

You're asking yourself, “Did he really get all that from one pretty good TV movie made memorable by a great performance from its star?” The answer is “not altogether,” but when the network trumpeting the movie is Lifetime—a cable programmer that seems to know the exact time to air a movie based on whatever Hot Topic is currently at the epicenter of the cultural zeitgeist (which we are, thanks to the dastardly Prop 8 and a newly galvanized gay-activist movement)—the leap isn't all that hard to make. Aside from that, didn't we also just begin a new era of inclusiveness on Jan. 20? So, forgive my optimism—at least for a day or two.

Check out my archived reviews at [www.windycitytimes.com](http://www.windycitytimes.com) or [www.knightatthemovies.com](http://www.knightatthemovies.com). Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site.

### DVD REVIEW

## Schoolboy Crush

BY STEVE WARREN

The attraction between a high school student and his teacher could prove fatal in *Schoolboy Crush*. At the very least it's damned inconvenient when Sora Amakami (Kanno Atsumi) is transferred to Segal Academy after having been hired for a night by one of the teachers, Mr. Aoi (Kotani Yoshikazu).

TLA Video is offering *Schoolboy Crush* under the banner of their “Guilty Pleasures Collection,” and I must plead guilty to being pleased by it. It keeps one foot in the gutter at all times, trying to be the trashiest boarding-school drama ever made; yet there's some cleverness to the plotting and moments of sweetness that would well serve a film with higher ambitions.

Kotani looks more like a student than a teacher and he's given too much narration to deliver that's far more emotional than his impassive face (with its two expressions) is able to express visually. During their night together Sora programmed his client's number into his cell phone, and the teacher is afraid of exposure when the student shows up on his turf. The school strictly forbids students to have cell phones because of the potential for cheating, but they all have them.

Sora appears to have everything. He was adopted by a wealthy family (with whom he apparently has no contact) because he's so smart and was recruited by the school because of his family. He's not only brilliant but a natural athlete and all the boys are attracted to him, one

way or another.

A couple of these attractions lead to complications. Sora's nerdy roommate, Ichiyu Muzuki (Yuuki Kawakubo), is obviously in love with him. So is the richest of the rich kids, Riku (Tani Kazunori), who bullies Ichiyu but has a more complex relationship with him.

The screenplay, co-written by director Terauchi Kohtarō, occasionally goes too far off the deep end—perhaps appropriately, given Aoi and Sora's shared interest in marine biology. For instance, after weeks of doing their approach-avoidance dance, Sora offers to delete Mr. Aoi's number from his cell phone if the teacher will put his name on a house the youth wants to buy. Would this kind of business arrangement be less incriminating than a number in a cell phone, given the school's strict non-fraternization policy between students and faculty?

Violence, tragedy and love ensue, in no particular order.

In Japan *Schoolboy Crush* was known as *Boys Love—The Movie*. Press notes say “Boys Love” is a Japanese genre marketed to women. Well, *Queer as Folk* has its straight female fans, so why not? But this queer eye couldn't ask for a gayer movie this side of porn.

You certainly can't accuse *Schoolboy Crush* of being dirty, not with the boys taking showers at least every 10 minutes. Those scenes, of course, are carefully framed to show only butts or, if a boy turns around, to cut off about half a millimeter north of his pubic area.

Hey, you don't want a guilty pleasure to make you feel too guilty.



*Prayers for Bobby*. Photo by Ben Mark Holzberg/Lifetime Television

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### SPORTS

## Chicago Dragons show Jan. 24

Local gay rugby team the Chicago Dragons will hold its 3rd Annual Ms. Ruck & Maul Contest Saturday, Jan. 24, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, 5-8 p.m.

Tickets for the event—which will feature team members in drag—are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. This event is one of the team's biggest to help raise money for club expenses such as field costs, travel and equipment.

See [www.ChicagoDragons.org](http://www.ChicagoDragons.org).

## Strike Out Against Hunger on Jan. 31

The 9 to 12 Bowling League and River Rand Bowl will hold its 12th annual Strike Out Against Hunger—a benefit for HIV/AIDS agency Vital Bridges—Saturday, Jan. 31, at River Rand Bowl,

191 S. River, Des Plaines, 7-10 p.m.

Bowlers of all skills are welcome. Tickets run \$30 for an individual bowler or \$150 for a team of six. Ticket includes three games, shoe rental and snack foods. See [www.vitalbridges.org/pages/event-detail/17.php?id=3](http://www.vitalbridges.org/pages/event-detail/17.php?id=3).

## NBA star accused of sexual harassment

In a lawsuit, Dave Kuchinsky claims that pro basketball player Eddy Curry of the New York Knicks sexually harassed him and hurled racist slurs at him, the Washington Post reported.

Kuchinsky—who is seeking \$98,000 in back pay and expenses, and \$5 million in compensatory damages—said that the 6' 11" Curry exposed himself to himself and called him a “white devil,” among other things. Curry, a former Chicago Bull, said that he is “shocked” by the lawsuit.

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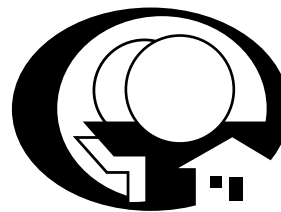


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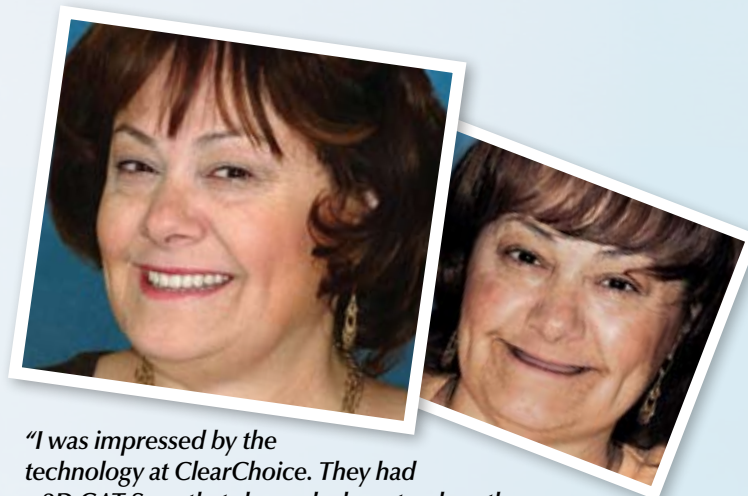
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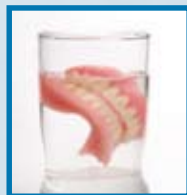
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