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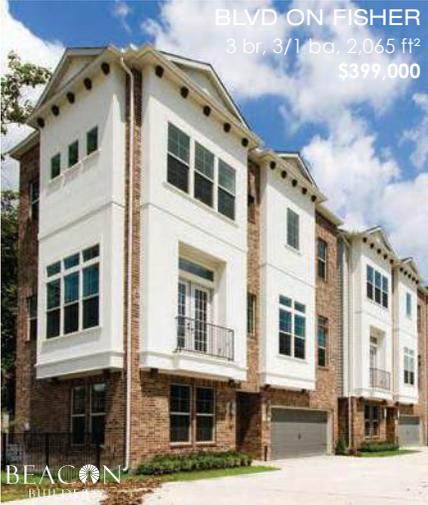
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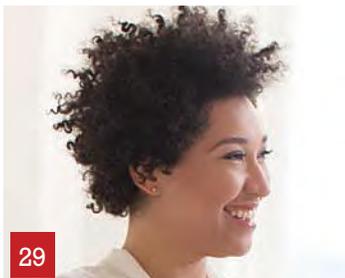
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29



49



67



61



77



45

COVER STORY

29 FALL ARTS PREVIEW

Get thee to a theater or museum!

37 SPA'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

The world's best come to Houston for the 2016–2017 season

41 LGBT ARTISTS AT MFAH

'Statements: African American Art from the Museum's Collection'

45 THE DIVERSE EMMYS

It's a win-win for TV's LGBT stars and allies

49 A LESBIAN MISS AMERICA?

Erin O'Flaherty redefines stereotypes on the pageant stage.

53 CINEMA AND CUI-SCENE

Get a taste of Houston's dine-in theaters

55 WORDS FROM THE CORAZÓN

Out Mexican slam poet Chibbi Orduña talks sexuality, culture, more

61 TOP LGBTQ HISPANIC LEADERS

Celebrating these individuals and their impact in Houston

67 MIXING THE CULTURE POT

Growing up gay and Austro-Mexican in Houston

69 IMMIGRANTS V. THE WORLD

Lawyer Raed Gonzalez discusses electoral politics and LGBT discrimination

73 KNOWING YOUR VOTING RIGHTS

Houston attorney Abbie Kamin stresses the need for more voter education

75 PARTIES, PLATFORMS, AND PLANKS

Where Democrats and Republicans stand on healthcare

77 SPOKEN LIKE A TRUE TEXAN

Author Marianne Williamson talks politics, gay America, and growing up

81 POWER IN COMMUNITY

Houston Transgender Uni Banquet honors activists

83 END THE STIGMA

The Walk for Mental Health Awareness Houston returns

85 GETTING CHEEKY

... for a cause

86 WEDDING GUIDE

Two more couples tie the knot.



ON THE COVER

PARSONS DANCE MEMBERS IAN SPRING AND ELENA D'AMARIO (SEE PAGE 29.)

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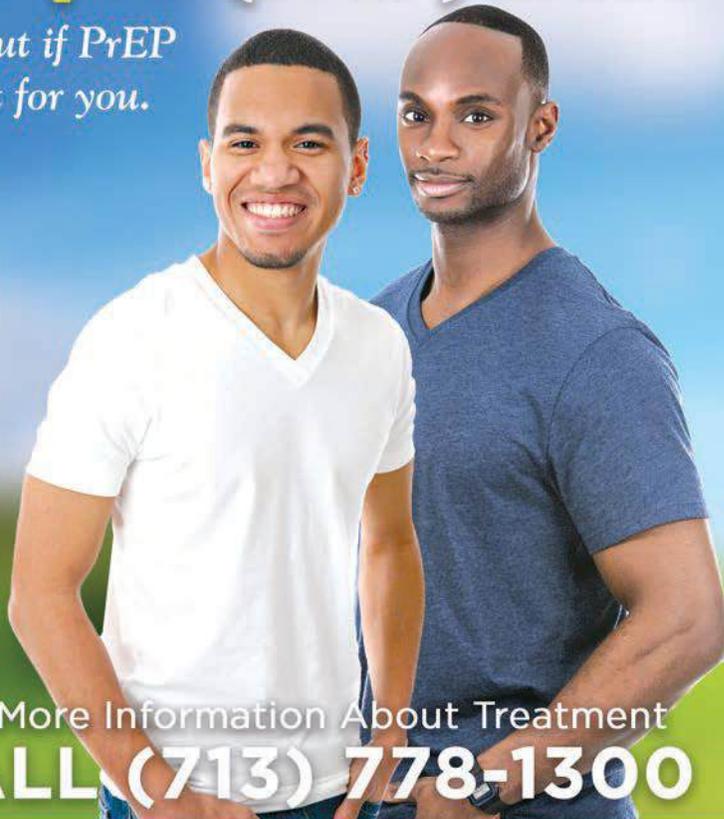
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NEWS & COMMENT

- 12 › **NEWS & COMMUNITY**
- 20 › **LEFTOUT**
Trumplethinskin . . . and marijuana
- 22 › **MONEYSMART**
Buy or rent a car or home? Making wise long-term financial decisions
- 26 › **TIMEOUT**
OutSMART's readers and recommendations

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

- 92 › **QUEER QUOTES**
Meryl Streep, Laverne Cox, Clea DuVall, Colton Haynes, and Christian Borle
- 94 › **DVDS**
Parched and *Tab Hunter Confidential*
- 96 › **GROOVEOUT**
Camille Bloom, Tom Odell, Miike Snow, Mike Posner, Fitz and the Tantrums, *Close to You: Bacharach Reimagined*, and more
- 98 › **READOUT**
The Joy of Swimming and *Treehab*

OUT & ABOUT

- 16 CALENDAR
- 100 OUTTHERE
- 105 BUSINESS NEWS
- 110 BAR/CLUB GUIDE
- 112 SIGNOUT
- 114 SCENEOUT

ADVERTISERS INDEX

- 106 Advertisers Index
- 108 Classified Marketplace



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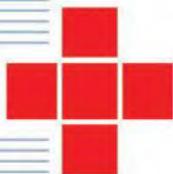


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There's no denying it—this has been an unprecedented roller coaster of an election season. On one side, we have the first female candidate to head a major party ticket. On the other stands a man who was naively written off as nothing more than political entertainment. Now, no one is laughing.

But we aren't just facing a battle on the national level. Many state and local candidates—whose decisions will directly impact our day-to-day lives—need our support, too.

With so much at stake across the board, we at OUTSMART know it's hardly time to throw in the towel. So, we have a simple request—*get up, get out, and go vote*. But **first, get yourself registered to vote**. To make that process easier, we've included a voter registration application on page 43—the cost of which was generously underwritten by our ally Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen. Whether you're registering to vote for the first time, need to change your previous name or address, or want to request a replacement voter registration card, fill out this form and **stick it in the mail no later than October 11**. Your official voter registration card will then be mailed to you before the November election.

In case you need a little extra push to get out and vote on November 8 (or early vote between October 24 and November 4), we've filled this issue with editorial surrounding the impact of this election cycle.

How can we better protect our LGBT immigrant siblings? Houston lawyer Raed Gonzalez shares the importance of comprehensive immigration reform and the struggles faced by transgender immigrants on page 69.

Know your voting rights! On page 73, attorney Abbie Kamin discusses the need for more education surrounding voter registration in light of Texas' controversial voter ID laws.

Legacy Community Health's Januari Leo analyzes where Republicans and Democrats stand on healthcare on page 75.

Are you thinking your vote doesn't matter? *New York Times* best-seller Marianne Williamson talks about her views on gay America and eliminating apathy toward voting on page 77.

Plus, be sure to pick up our upcoming October issue for the lists of candidates endorsed by the Houston GLBT Political Caucus and the Houston Stonewall Young Democrats.

Get yourself registered to vote. Vote on Election Day. Make the difference.

For more information on the voting process, visit harrisvotes.com.

—Megan Smith
Assistant Editor

Do you have the look?

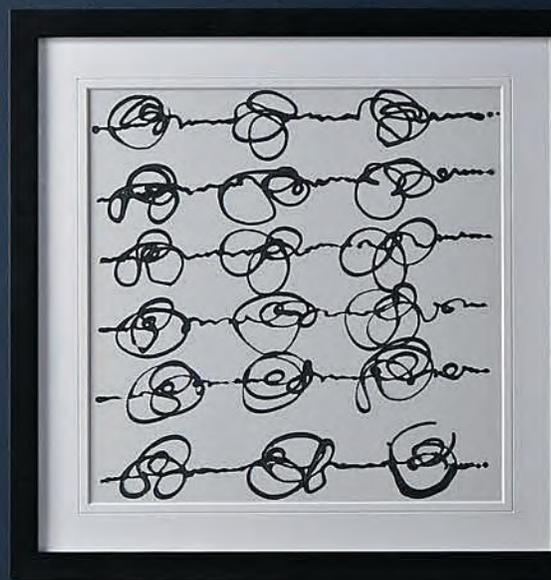
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Pearland Mom, Devout Christian Takes on School District Over Trans Restroom Access

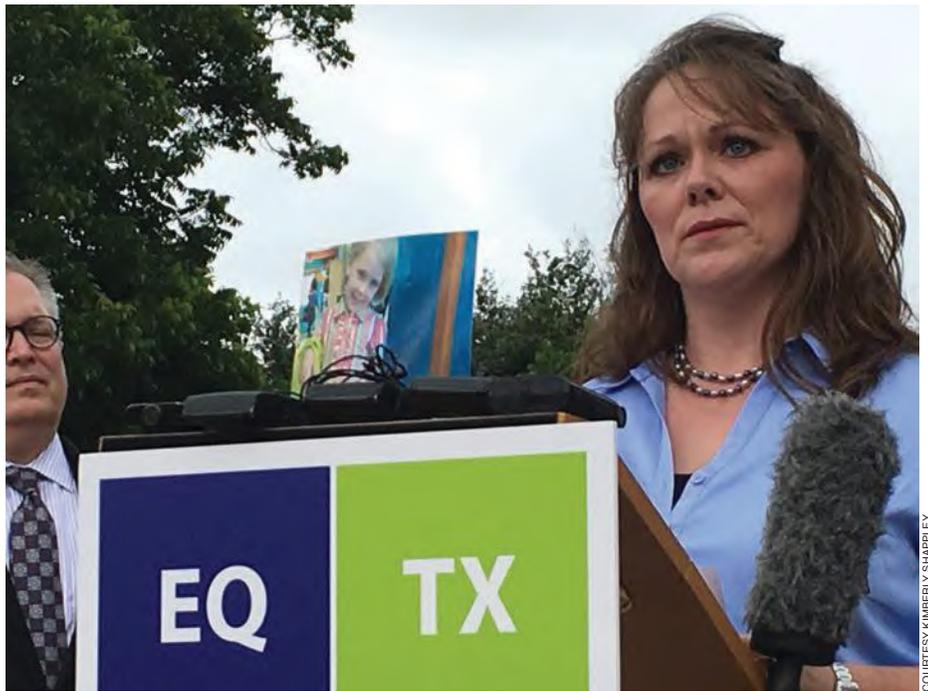
By John Wright

As an evangelical Christian who attends Houston's iconic Lakewood Church, Kimberly Shappley feels that she brings an important voice to the debate over transgender restroom access.

Shappley, an ordained minister who identifies as Republican, is also the mother of a 5-year-old trans girl, Kai, who began kindergarten in the Pearland Independent School District last month.

Pearland ISD officials are refusing to follow recent guidance from the Obama administration saying public schools should allow trans students to use restrooms based on their gender identity. In response to the guidance, school superintendent John Kelly issued a statement in May suggesting it would lead to "legalizing pedophilia and polygamy."

But Shappley isn't backing down. In early August, she made national news by attending a school-board meeting and imploring officials to reconsider the policy, pointing to high suicide rates among trans youth. "I made life very challenging for my little girl for a long time, because I felt it conflicted with my faith," Shappley told *OUTSMART*. "For people to see a strong Christian who loves the Lord



☹ Mom on a Mission

Kimberly Shappley holds up a photo of her transgender daughter, Kai, during an Equality Texas press conference in Austin. Kai is a kindergarten student in Pearland ISD, a school district that doesn't allow trans students to use the bathroom that aligns with their gender identity.

stand up for her transgender child, I think that's impactful."

Shappley is one of dozens of parents across the state who've emerged in recent months as passionate advocates for their trans children. The parents have become the LGBT community's most visible response to efforts by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Attorney General Ken Paxton to restrict restroom access.

Shappley "came out" at an Equality Texas press conference at the state capitol in May, where she and other parents condemned Paxton's decision to challenge the guidance by filing a lawsuit against the Obama

administration. Since then, Shappley said she's been ostracized by the majority of her friends and family.

"I'm not gay, I'm not trans, but I still had to come out of the closet," Shappley said. "I still had to risk losing family and friends and support that's always been there. Even the people who have known about Kai being trans before we came out publicly—once we came out publicly, it became too risky for their own reputations to continue to support us."

Chuck Smith, CEO of Equality Texas, said the sacrifices of Shappley and other parents who have gone public have not been in vain. →

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“None of these parents sought out being advocates, and they find themselves becoming advocates because their kids are being targeted, and I think it’s important for the public to see that our lieutenant governor and our attorney general are trying to make political points at the expense of young children, and it’s disgusting,” Smith said.

In response to Paxton’s lawsuit, a federal judge issued a nationwide injunction on August 21 barring the Obama administration from enforcing the guidance. LGBT advocates expect the U.S. Department of Justice, which was reviewing its options, to appeal the injunction.

In the meantime, three months after he was first invited, Paxton recently agreed to meet with the family of a trans child, Adam and Amber Briggie of Denton, and their 8-year-old son, MG.

“It may not change either of their minds, but I want them to see the real people that they’re hurting,” Smith said of Paxton and Patrick. “They’re doing things that jeopardize innocent children’s physical and mental well-being.”

Shappley said she was “disappointed and sad” to learn of the injunction, but for now, it won’t affect Kai’s situation. Pearland ISD has unisex restrooms in kindergarten classrooms, but if Kai is in the cafeteria or on the playground or at an assembly, a staff member will have to escort her to a nurse’s station.

Kai carries an extra set of clothes to school in case she can’t wait and has an accident, Shappley said, but she hasn’t tried to explain the situation to her young daughter.

“If she’s going to be told that she can’t use the restroom with her peers, it will have to be a staff member who tells her,” Shappley said. “It’s not going to be her mother. I would never tell her that.”

In response to an inquiry from OUTSMART, Pearland ISD spokeswoman Courtney Morris said the district’s stance on trans students had not changed since the superintendent’s statement in May.

“Children whose parents declare them transgender must go to the bathroom for the sex indicated on their birth certificate,” Morris said in an email. “Such students have

also been allowed to use a private bathroom (such as in the nurse’s station) if they are so inclined.”

Morris acknowledged the district’s “stance” isn’t a formal written policy and has not been voted on by the school board.

“With federal guidance on this issue now being litigated by Texas and other states, policy on this matter is delayed,” she said. “Until then, Pearland ISD’s stance remains as stated previously.”

Shappley said she’ll continue to communicate with teachers and school officials, and advocate on behalf of her daughter.

Meanwhile, she said the response from Lakewood Church leadership has been positive, although she hasn’t met directly with pastor Joel Osteen.

“It’s really, really hard to look at your child and know that they were born this way, that the Lord made them this way, and they’ve done nothing wrong, but people hate them,” Shappley said. “I am a Christian, and I believe that the Lord is going to take care of Kai through all of this.” ■

COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart



The Montrose Center held its volunteer town hall event on August 6. Pictured are **Don’L Nicol, Jessika Davidson, Lura Groen, Kennedy Loftin, Meleah Jones, Fred Reninger, and Jay Mays.**



On August 20, “Let Your Superhero Out” field day was held at Discovery Green. The event benefitted Lazarus House and Lazarus House Neuro.



The Houston GLBT Political Caucus held its endorsement meeting for the general election on August 6. Pictured are **Jennifer Schechter Rosen, Constable Alan Rosen, and Brandon Wilke.**



On August 14, Brooks Ballard, Engel & Volkers, and the Vincent Mandola Family held a back-to-school supplies drive at Grappino di Nino’s. Pictured are **Clint Sosa, Robert Atmar, Kristin Thornborrow, Ballard, Julia Lavitsa, Diane Angel, and Mauricio Martinez.**



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The Detour Tour

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A Grammy-, Tony-, and Emmy-Award winner, Cyndi Lauper doesn't just want to have fun—she's also a best-selling author (*Cyndi Lauper: A Memoir*), has a recurring role on the hit TV show *Bones*, is on the current cover of *AARP Magazine* (with pink hair, no less), and is honorary chair and co-founder of the True Colors Residence, the first project of its kind to provide a permanent, supportive, and secure home to formerly homeless LGBT

youth in New York City. If you think we've got a girl-crush on her, you'd be right, because this '80s icon is simply awesome. She wrote the score for the Broadway hit *Kinky Boots*, and her latest album, *Detour*, takes this amazing lady into a whole new genre: country. • She says classic country was the pop music of her youth, and she now pays it homage on this album where she sings such legendary songs as "Walking After Midnight," "I Fall to Pieces," and Dolly Parton's great hit "Hard Candy Christmas." There are also duets with Allison Krause and Vince Gill, and while this album isn't groundbreaking, it is a loving tribute to the music of yesteryear, small-town diners, and honky tonks. With her stellar voice, it is a must-have for fans of Lauper and country, and you won't want to miss her Detour Tour that comes to Houston for one night only



BOTH PHOTOS: CHARLIE BAHLER

September 11 at Revention Music Center. Show your true colors, and get tickets now. —Marene Gustin

Cyndi Lauper: The Detour Tour
September 11
cyndilauper.com/events

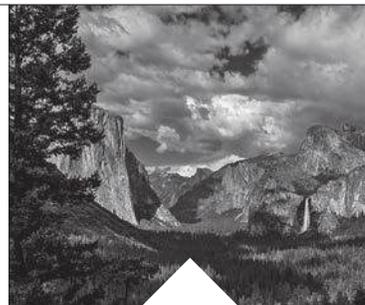
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1

A View Within 📷 thru 3
Fiber art at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft.
crafthouston.org

2

Blithe Spirit ★ thru 18
Noël Coward's masterpiece.
crighton-theatre.com
Best If Used By 📷 thru Jan. 15 This exhibit investigates the intersection of craft and food. crafthouston.org



4

Infinite Pause: Photography and Time 📷 thru 11 Nearly 50 works that offer a snapshot of time's relationship with photography.
mfah.org

5

Zoo in You 📷 thru 11 New exhibit explores the microscopic world that lives in all of us.
thehealthmuseum.org

6

Matthew Ronay & Hillary Lloyd 📷 thru Oct. 1 Two new exhibits.
blafferartmuseum.org

7

National Parks Photography Project 📷 thru Sept. 28 Photos of all 59 national parks on exhibit. hmns.org
Twelve Moments Series + Rabbi Scott Hausman-Weiss leads a guided meditation. rothkochapel.org

8

Go Goo Dolls ★ "Over and Over" is just one of the hits on this tour. googoodolls.com/tour
True West ★ thru 30 Fourth Wall Theatre's season kickoff.
4thwalltheatreco.com

9

Honky Tonk Angels ★ &10 At Miller Outdoor Theatre. stages theatre.com
Linda Eder Sings Judy Garland ★ thru 11 houstonsymphony.org
Dog Sees God ★ thru Oct. 1 Confessions of a blockhead. islandetc.org

10

Freneticore's Apocalypse Ball: Mad Max Edition + freneticore.net (See page 19.)
The Texas Tenors in Concert ★ This concert will be taped for a PBS special. the grand.com

11

Same Love, Same Rights + A Houston LGBT wedding expo. rainbowweddingnetwork.com
Cyndi Lauper ★ The legend's Detour Tour for her 11th album. cyndilauper.com/events

12

Elemental Alchemy 📅 thru 29 New work by wood-turning sculptor Paula Haymond. archwaygallery.com

13

In the Heights ★ thru 25 Lin-Manuel Miranda's smash hit before *Hamilton*. tuts.com

14

2016 Pearls of Wisdom Luncheon + W's daughter Jenna Bush Hager speaks at this event. mhahouston.org
Scrabble in the City + A fun fundraiser for Literacy Advance of Houston. scrabbleinthecity.org

15

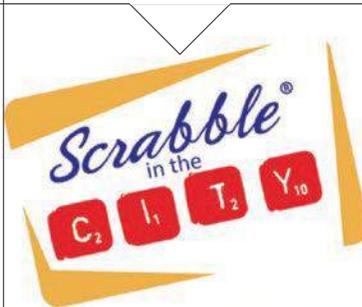
The Motherfker with the Hat** ★ thru Oct. 8 It's a romantic comedy, really. obsidiantheater.org

16

Hearts of Gold Gala + The Health Museum honors Carolyn Farb. thehealthmuseum.org/heartsofgold
Picasso: The Line 📅 thru Jan. 8 A collection of the artist's line drawings. menil.org

17

Peter and the Wolf ★ Sir Ben Kingsley. houstonsymphony.org
Positive Record Release Party + Beaver Nelson. beavernelson.com
Mark Russell ★ Politically incorrect. the grand.com (See page 19.)



19

Look to the East: Decorative Arts and Orientalism, 1870-1920 📅 thru Oct. 23 Showcasing the influence of "the East" on Western artists and designers. mfah.org

20

Sassy Mommas ★ thru Oct. 16 Three cougars are on the hunt for men. ensemblehouston.com



22

Hooked on Books Wonderweek + thru 28 Explore the world of books at the Children's Museum. cmhouston.org

23

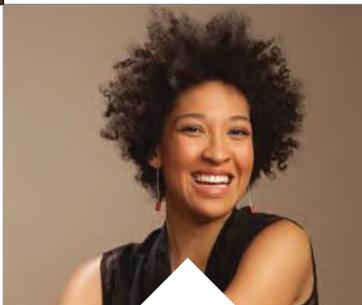
Dave Parsons Dance ★ One of the legendary modern dance companies comes to Houston. spahouston.org

24

Gay 10K + One love. One finish. Run/walk to raise funds for a charity of your choice. thegay10k.com
Steppin' Out Live with Ben Vereen ★ One of the great Broadway talents of all time. the grand.com

25

The Complete Choral Works of Maurice Duruflé ★ Rice Univ. Organ Hall. houstonchamberchoir.org
Statements 📅 last day African-American art at MFAH. mfah.org (See page 00.)



27

Peter Max—The Retrospective: 1960-2016 📅 last day Here's your chance to buy your own Peter Max. (Meet the artist at receptions on September 24 and 25 at Off the Wall Gallery.) offthewallgallery.com



29

Remote Houston ★ thru Nov. 18 A unique walking tour/theatrical experience. alleytheatre.org
Houston Art Fair 📅 thru Oct. 2 With more than 45 galleries, this is a shopping mecca! houstonartfair.com

30

Josephine Baker: A Personal Portrait ★ Soprano Julia Bullock (pictured) portrays the legendary performer. dacamera.com
New Exhibits 📅 thru Nov. 27 Three Houston-based artists. camh.org

Save the Date

CORE Presents Dance from Israel ★ Oct. 1 Powerful contemporary dance at Miller Outdoor Theatre. coredance.org

Save the Date

Shakespeare Outreach Program + Oct. 1-Dec. 4 Saturday-morning classes for kids 10 to 13. classicaltheatre.org

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Calendar of Events

continued from page 17

Statements

Now thru September 25



Off the Edge by Mequitta Ahuja

Thru 25

This exhibit of African American art at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is pulled from the museum's permanent collection and includes 40 works in a wide range of media, from Richmond Barthé's iconic *Feral Benga* of 1935 to Mark Bradford's *Circa* 1992, created in 2015. Divided into three sections, it focuses on early

artists—including the works of John Biggers—artists from the 1950s on, and finally contemporary artists, many with a Houston presence. mfah.org

Freneticore's Apocalypse Ball: Mad Max Edition

September 10

10

Who doesn't love a good gala with a dystopian theme? Pony up \$25, or \$50 for a pre-sale VIP ticket (that gets you free booze all night long), and get down to the newly named "Pilot on Navigation" for an evening of performances, desert-dweller grub, and booze. The evening will feature a new dystopian-themed set by FrenetiCore Dance, explosive fire performance by Holding Space Dance Collective, and live music by the Houston-based band Space Aliens.

freneticore.net

An Evening with Mark Russell, Politically Incorrect

September 17

17



Mark Russell has been on the forefront of political satire longer than some readers have been alive. His jokes are so current he claims they have a shelf life shorter than that of cottage cheese. He mixes song parodies into his act, accompanying himself on the piano. He actually re-

fired in 2010, but come on—no political comedian can stand aside during this nut-case presidential race. So he's back to touring and will appear for one night down on the island at The Grand 1894 Opera House. Go see him, and prepare to laugh! thegrand.com ■



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Trumplethinskin

... plus marijuana.

Last month, the DEA refused to de-schedule marijuana, which I take as a personal insult to the last 50 damn years of my life. I am 68 years old, and enough is enough, y'all.

If we had legalized marijuana and taxed it back in 1966 when I first politely suggested it, by now we'd have collected enough money to Make America Ritzy Again. We could have swanky libraries and gold-leaf city-park slides. Hell, toll roads would be paying us to drive on them. You know that garbage collector who comes once or twice a week to pick up your garbage? He'd be coming daily, and he'd also offer to stop in and clean the tops of your ceiling fans.

But no, we can't have all that, because a United States senator thinks marijuana is as hazardous as any other illegal drug. Honey, if you think marijuana is as dangerous as heroin, I may need to get your dealer's number.

Y'all, I'm old. My bones ache, and I am cranky. I don't need no damn aspirin—I need a toke. So, get off your semi-stoned butt and tell the DEA that we have better things for them to be doing—and plus, with all that extra tax money we'll buy them some real adorable uniforms.

(Drags out soapbox, dusts it off . . .)

Legalize Marijuana and Tax It.

(Gets off soapbox, puts it away, but remembers where she put it—so don't mess with her.)

Look—Cheech and Chong, Willie Nelson, Bill Maher, and I have all tried our damndest, but we are getting old. You gotta do something, kids. You're gonna feel real stoopid sitting at the old-folks home smoking a Mrs. Paul's fish stick.

Okay, this is the political column, so we have to talk about the GOP elephant in the room.

Trumplethinskin. Holy cow, I wonder what kind of cheese goes with that whine. Now he's whining that if he doesn't win, the election is rigged.

ORIGINAL PHOTO FROM DREAMWORKS/SHREK: THE FINAL CHAPTER; PHOTOSHOPPED BY BLASE DISTEFANO



Yep, he can't admit that we might not want to elect a man who inherited millions, avoided the draft five times, gratuitously uses bankruptcy laws to rip off people while benefitting himself, and marries a new woman every 10 years when he tires of the old one.

If he gets defeated, it will be because of the numbers—you know, arithmetic. If he loses, he'll blame the Babylonians.

Plus, let's face it, he'd be winning this race if they had just listened to him and eliminated the talent competition.

Remember when Trump asked the foreign-policy expert three times during Trump's one-hour national security briefing about why he couldn't just use nuclear weapons to settle disputes? Having a "safe nuke" area on the earth is like having a safe-peeing area in a swimming pool. It don't stay put. Honey, asking that question out loud would have earned him a sixth deferment from the Vietnam War—and gotten him dismissed from jury duty.

I am worried about this election, because Trump is building a wall on the Mexican border that will keep me in, and I'm far too rude to live in Canada. (Don't look at me like that. You are, too.)

At the Republican National Convention, Trump has a list of things that he—"and only he"—could fix.

I also have a list, because he forgot some things.

Top Nine Things that Donald Trump, and Only Donald Trump, Can Do (Because #10 Is Never Funny Enough)

9. Usher in the seventh sign of the apocalypse
8. Put his vice president, Mike Pence, in charge of curing scabies . . . and homosexuals
7. Five words: Secretary of Defense Gary Busey
6. Release his stockpile of orange self-tanner to save us all from our long national nightmare of natural flesh-toned faces
5. Save America from overpopulation by appearing nude at his inaugural address
4. Ignore climate change, because you can't blame that on brown people
3. Feed and clothe all homeless supermodels. Well, until they turn 40
2. "Sarcastically" start a nuclear Armageddon
1. Give Vladimir Putin the keys to the back door.

The next time someone asks you if you'd trust Donald Trump with the nuclear codes, just say, "Hell, child, I wouldn't trust him with my Netflix password."

Susan Bankston lives in Richmond, Texas, where she writes about her hairdresser at The World's Most Dangerous Beauty Salon, Inc., at juanitajeane.com.

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Buy or Rent a Car or Home?

Making wise long-term financial decisions.

Throughout life, many people will strive to acquire assets such as a home, a car, and savings and investments for future needs. Since you probably aren't able to simply write a check to pay for a home or car, you will typically need to finance at least a portion of the purchase price. Alternatively, you could lease or rent. But which is the better option? It depends.

Should You Lease or Purchase Your Vehicle?

Over the years, there have been numerous debates over whether leasing or buying a car is the better way to go. There are people who swear by both. But the reality is that it really depends on your specific situation.

While buying or leasing anything can be somewhat confusing, in the case of automobiles it can be almost overwhelming because of the price haggling and other negotiations that can go on for hours before you even reach an agreement.

It is important to have a good understanding of what each scenario entails, how much it will actually cost you, and what you will be getting for your money. There are pros and cons to either option.

Car Purchase Pros and Cons

When you finance a car with monthly payments, you will own it at the end of the loan's term. This is definitely one of the biggest benefits, especially if you keep the car for a long period of time and no longer have any payments on it. Once your car is paid off, you could even continue making that same "payment" into a savings or investment account to build up for a future car purchase.

Owning the car also means that you have a tangible asset that you can sell or trade in when the time comes to purchase a new car. Often, the value of your trade-in can be used as your entire down payment on the new vehicle—and then some.

If you own a car, you have no restrictions on the mileage that you can put on it, so you're not



constantly watching the odometer and worrying that you'll have to pay a penalty for going over the mileage limit like you would if you leased the vehicle.

But owning a car can also have some drawbacks. For example, the car's original value is quickly eroded by depreciation, especially in the first few years. In fact, if you make only a small down payment on your vehicle and finance the rest, you may find that you actually owe more on it than it's worth.

Car Leasing Pros and Cons

When you lease a car, you are basically renting something that you must return to the dealer after the term of the lease expires. While some people may not care for this option, for others it is ideal.

For example, if you are someone who ends up going out every few years and searching for the latest models to purchase, then leasing may be something for you to consider, as you won't take the depreciation "hit" when you go to trade in a car that you own. Leasing can also offer business owners tax advantages if the vehicle is used for business purposes.

However, one of the biggest factors to keep in mind when considering the lease-versus-buy question is that when you lease, you will never end up owning the car—even though you will always have monthly payments to make.

In addition, leasing will typically come with mileage restrictions on the car. Since most leases restrict the number of miles that you can drive each year to 12,000 or 15,000, leasing may not be your best option if you are behind

the wheel frequently. Excess driving could cost an additional 15 to 25 cents per additional mile you drive, depending on the type of vehicle you lease.

Since you'll probably own or lease multiple vehicles throughout your life, you may opt to try both options, depending on your particular circumstances at the time. But what about when it comes to your home?

Buying or Renting Your Home

Buying a home has always been considered "the American dream." One reason for this is that you can build equity over time as you pay down the mortgage and (hopefully) the value of the home increases. Many people will actually start out renting as they continue to save for a down payment on their first home. Indeed, renting can be less expensive than buying—starting with the fact that you don't need a big down payment in order to move in.

So, what are some of the pros and cons when deciding whether to buy or rent a place to live?

Advantages of Buying

Even though most people will have a monthly mortgage payment, knowing that each time you write out that check you are inching closer to owning your home outright can be a huge plus on the buying side. This is especially true if you plan to stay in the property for at least five to seven years. Also, you have the potential of your property appreciating in value over time. (A renter's monthly payment essentially goes toward helping to pay the landlord's mortgage →

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continued from page 22

and property taxes, so renters don't build up any type of equity in the property.)

In addition, you can take a nice tax deduction each year for both your property taxes and the interest that you pay on your mortgage—which, in the first several years, will be the majority of your payment. Renters don't get this advantage. Although some people say that the tax-deductions benefit doesn't outweigh the cost, it really depends on your income and whether or not your itemized deductions will exceed the standard deduction on your tax return.

2016 Standard Deduction Amounts

Single.....	\$6,300
Married, filing jointly.....	\$12,600
Married, filing separately.....	\$6,300
Head of household.....	\$9,300
Blind or over 65 and married, add....	\$1,250
Blind or over 65 and single/ head of household, add.....	\$1,550

But if your mortgage interest and other itemized deductions are more than your standard tax deduction listed above, home ownership can offer you a big potential benefit. While this is another area where being married may be

beneficial, it's important to do the math in order to determine what is best for you.

Some additional plusses of owning include the fact that you can redecorate and even renovate in any way you choose, provided that it passes building-code regulations. The extra space you might have in a home could even help you pay a portion of the mortgage by renting it out to a friend. (Renters don't have nearly as much control over how they can redecorate—and they might not even be able to have a pet.)

While it is best to make a 20-percent down payment when you purchase a home, there are some mortgage programs that allow you to purchase with no money down. Unfortunately, a small down payment will mean having to pay private mortgage insurance, which increases the amount of your monthly mortgage payment.

Advantages of Renting

Even with all of the nice advantages to owning a home, there are some drawbacks that may convince you to rent rather than buy. While owning a home has traditionally been a goal for many people, a growing number of today's Millennials are actually renting for many years before they even consider making a home purchase.

One reason for this is the great deal of flexibility that renting can offer. In an era of career uncertainties, renting provides the ability to move from one area to another without the

need to sell a home. Moreover, anyone who is unsure about their income will want to wait on making any big purchase such as a home.

Waiting it out can also help keep your budget in check, as many potentially costly emergencies such as broken appliances and leaking roofs are up to the landlord to repair, not you. And in some cases, the landlord may even pay for utility costs such as water and gas. (Homeowners are solely responsible for all of those expenses, since there's no landlord to call.)

How to Determine Your Best Next Step

Whether to rent or buy your home or your vehicle will depend solely on your specific circumstances. Often, the best way to determine the best answer for you is to discuss all of the options with a financial professional, and then develop a game plan for going forward. This can help to keep you on track with both your short- and long-term goals.

Personal finance-related questions may be emailed to grace.yung@lpl.com.

Grace S. Yung, CFP, is a certified financial planner practitioner with experience in helping domestic partners plan their finances since 1994. She is a principal at Midtown Financial LLC in Houston and was recognized as a "Five-Star Wealth Manager" in the 2014 September issue of Texas Monthly.



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FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Check out these fabulous events co-sponsored by OUTSMART and our marketing partners.



Sept. 15: Out@TUTS Night presents *In The Heights*. Join us the first Thursday performance of each show. After the performance, mingle with the cast and listen to fabulous cabaret music with your LGBT friends at Artista restaurant. INFO: tuts.com/out

Sept. 15-18: Bayou City Concert Musicals presents **Promises Promises** INFO: bayoucitymusicals.org

Sept. 16: HIV and Aging Coalition is hosting an **HIV and Aging Coalition Symposium**. INFO: agingcoalition.org

Sept. 17: 2016 **Transgender Unity Banquet**. INFO: UnityBanquet.com

Sept. 25: 8th Annual Equality Brunch presented by the Houston GLBT Political Caucus. Benefitting the Caucus. INFO: BrandonKWilke@gmail.com

Oct. 1 & 2: Diana Country Dinner Weekend benefiting local charities. INFO: thedianafoundation.org

Oct. 8: Coming Out Party presented by OutReach United benefits local charities. INFO: outreachunited.org

Oct. 8: The Houston Walk For Mental Health Awareness at Stude Park. INFO: thehoustonwalk.org

Oct. 13: Out For Good presented by The Montrose Center honoring community visionary Phyllis Frye. INFO: montrosecenter.org

Oct. 22-23: Halloween Magic 25th Anniversary: RandPaul's Drag Race: Destination 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Info: 713/256-3880.

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American Ingenuity

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SEPT. 13-25

REGIONAL PRODUCTION

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY: FRANK LOESSER BOOK BY: ABE BURROWS, JACK WEINSTOCK AND WILLIE GILBERT

OCT. 25 - NOV. 6

REGIONAL PRODUCTION

INTO THE Woods

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY: STEPHEN SONDHEIM BOOK BY: JAMES LAPINE

DEC. 6-18

NATIONAL TOUR

An American in Paris A New Musical

MUSIC BY: GEORGE GERSHWIN LYRICS BY: IRA GERSHWIN BOOK BY: CRAIG LUCAS

FEB. 21 - MAR. 5

REGIONAL PRODUCTION

DREAMGIRLS

MUSIC BY: HENRY KRIEGER LYRICS AND BOOK BY: TOM EYEN

APR. 4-16

NATIONAL TOUR

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LIVE ON STAGE

NOVEMBER 8 - 20

Fall Arts Preview

Get thee to a theater
or museum!

By **D.L. Groover**

Photo by Lois Greenfield

Well, what do you say to a season that has everything? How about something cribbed from Shakespeare, like, *Get thee to a theater!* Or, *Once more unto the breach, dear friends!* But does anyone know what a breach is any more? Probably not, so just go and see some live performance. There's got to be something in the following preview to stop you momentarily from obsessing over Pokémon Go. I've heard a few of those elusive little critters are romping in Houston's Theater District. If that doesn't interest you, how about heading to the theater to forget the upcoming election? There's plenty of stage trumpery on view, at least, to make Houston theater great again (as if it needs that, considering what's on tap). So, pick something—anything, really—and let live theater change your life. It really can, if you let it. You might even learn what a breach is.

Hand to God Through September 18

Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave.

Remember your beloved sock puppet that you chewed on for years and years, never letting it out of your sight except when you slept? How you watched over it anxiously when mom had to clean it in the washing machine because it was so filthy and disgusting? Well, what if that little guy could talk? And what if that little guy had a mouth on him like some low-rent dude on a Harley, or maybe, just maybe, like Satan on a very bad day? When sweet Tyrone takes possession of little Jason during a youth church

service, all hell breaks loose. Robert Askins' deep, dark comedy (Tony-nominated as Best Play in 2015) opens the Alley's 70th season with a disclaimer: *Hand to God* contains explicit language, profanity, sexual situations, and very rude puppets. Mature audiences only. Into the washer, Tyrone.

The Marvelous Wonderettes: Dream On Through September 18

Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Pkwy. Roger Bean's lucrative Wonderettes musical franchise is such a chick magnet for Houston audiences that Stages commissioned the world premiere of yet another jukebox musical adventure for these intrepid beehived girls. How many more songs are left in the pop rep that haven't already been used by Bean? Quite a few, it seems, like "Build Me Up, Buttercup," "Gimme Some Lovin'," "I Will Survive," "I Can See Clearly Now," and "We Are Family." The four fast-and-furious friends are Rachael Logue, Chelsea Ryan McCurdy, Christina Stroup, and Holland Vavra. All have musical chops for days, and their stage-trouper bonafides (how many editions have they performed?) clearly compensate for Bean's perfunctory plotting.

Best If Used By September 2, 2016–January 15, 2017

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft
4848 Main St.

Organized by HCCC curator Sarah Darro, this exhibition, featuring the work of Celia Butler, Kazuki Guzmán, Joshua Kosker, Aurélie Mathigot, Yuka Otani, and Rachel Shimpock, "investigates the dynamic intersection of craft and food in contemporary culture." The artists use wool, ceramic, electro-formed metal (whatever that is), cast sugar, cured tangelo rind, embroidered meat, and sculpted chewing gum to make their witty installations. Half-eaten donuts are encrusted with semi-precious gems; a banana is sewn with a Louis Vuitton logo; French fries are made into bangles. Do not eat the art.

The Revolutionists September 3–October 2

Main Street Theater, 2540 Times Blvd.

History buffs and theater mavens unite, for here is the play of your dreams: Lauren Gunderson's (*I and You, The Silent Sky*) fantasia on the French Revolution. Four women collide as the Reign of Terror and history swamp →



Ⓞ
David Parsons Dance
(SEE PAGE 32.)

FALL ARTS PREVIEW

continued from previous page

them. Crazy Charlotte Corday, who assassinated firebrand Marat in his bath; feminist playwright Olympe de Gouges, whose pamphlets mocking the Jacobins would lead her straight to the guillotine; pitiable royal one-percenter Marie Antoinette; and an imaginary Haitian activist Marianne Angelle, fighting the French occupiers of her island. Girl power indeed!

Seth MacFarlane

September 4

Houston Symphony

Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St.

Yes, you read that correctly. The *Family Guy* creator channels his inner Frank Sinatra. Really, he's the real deal as a lounge singer, a bit like Vic Damone with his lazy, smoky baritone and finger-snapping rhythms. He has an impressive musical background, he's released three albums of songs from the Great American Songbook, and he looks good with a martini in his hand leaning seductively close to the piano. Belting like Peter Griffin is one thing (in those sassy Broadway parodies on his animated Fox sitcom), but MacFarlane's got the Broadway Baby bug bad.

American Ingenuity

September 8–18

Houston Ballet

Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave.

Born in Georgia, Russia, the greatest ballet choreographer, George Balanchine, began his training at the prestigious Imperial Ballet School in Saint Petersburg. Surviving the tumultuous 1917 revolution, he graduated into the Mariinsky Ballet (later known as the Kirov), and soon established a reputation as a strikingly modern dance-maker. In 1924, while on a tour to Paris with a small group from the ballet, he was offered a job as choreographer at the Ballets Russes by the world-renowned impresario Serge Diaghilev, and the rest is history. By 1934, Balanchine was in the U.S. looking to open a school to promote the technique he wanted for his particular type of ballet. He found it, and the world of dance has never been the same. He became an American citizen in 1939, already having created dances for Broadway and Hollywood: *On Your Toes* (he insisted on the credit "choreographed by," the first such Broadway designation); *The Boys from Syracuse*, *The Golden Follies*, plus his classic ballets *Apollo*, *The Prodigal Son*, and *Serenade*. His lightning-fast steps, his incredible musicality, his fertile imagination, and his innate ability to set movement to match music are just a few aspects of his evident genius. There's never been another like him. See his 1947 masterpiece *Theme and Variations* (created for the burgeoning American Ballet Theatre and set to the final movement of Tchaikovsky's *Suite No. 3 for Orchestra*) on HB's fall rep. This is classical ballet at its most



JOAN MARCUS

Lin-Manuel Miranda (c) on Broadway, with the original cast of *In the Heights*, in 2008. TUTS brings the show to Houston this month. (SEE BELOW.)

modern, an homage to his training in imperial Russia and his never-wavering love of the speed and vivacity of America. Also on the program: William Forsythe's spiky post-modern ballet *Artifact Suite* (2004) and Jerome Robbins' romantic duet *Other Dances* (1976).

Honky Tonk Angels

September 9, 10

Miller Outdoor Theatre, 6000 Hermann Park Dr.

Those singin', jukebox stealin', goodtime trailer-park gals from Ted Swindley's *Honky Tonk Angels* via Stages Rep refuse to go away. Bonding on a bus to Nashville, the bouffant trio goes for the gold with stars in their eyes as they battle marital troubles, bad boyfriends, and each other on their not-so-bumpy road to country success. Fried in lard would be too good a punishment.

Buried Child

September 9–October 1

Catastrophic Theatre

MATCH, 3400 Main St.

American dysfunction (incest, infanticide, and even crop failure) landed young playwright Sam Shepard a Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1979. Here, the American dream is a definite nightmare, and there hasn't been such a messy family since the age of Sophocles. This is comic, utterly black surrealism with a vengeance. The symbolism piles up like the desiccated cornstalks. I'm not sure the malaise has gotten any better since the Carter administration.

The Texas Tenors

September 10

The Grand 1894 Opera House

2020 Postoffice St., Galveston

One's blond and hunky (Marcus, the contemporary tenor), one's dark and sexy (JC, the romantic tenor), one's sort of ordinary (John, known as The Tenor), but these wily cowpokes in their designer duds have a surprising ability to blend their voices into a very profitable, pleasing enterprise. This crossover trio has three Emmy Awards, a PBS special currently airing, and no doubt a backstage trunk heaped with female panties thrown at them by panting fans from China to Washington. With dramatic strobe lighting and lots of fog, the guys lightly trip through Puccini, Webber, and all your favorite Las Vegas lounge-act melodies. They know just how to give to their audiences.

In the Heights

September 13–25

Theatre Under the Stars

Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St.

Before there was his incredible blockbuster *Hamilton*, creative guru Lin Manuel-Miranda wrote and starred in this rather traditionally plotted 2008 musical drama about life on the Upper West Side—the very upper-west side of Washington Heights, to be precise. Full of patented sass, electric hip-hop rhythms, and super-fluid choreography by Andy Blankenboehler, this tale of the disparate Dominican

neighborhood of Hispanics, blacks, and assorted weirdos getting along as well as they do filled a niche that Broadway had never seen. Sure, there's plenty of old-time melodrama and musical shtick, but there's abundant life and color and a heart-tugging message about home and friendship and family. The show won Best Musical, Score, Choreography, and Orchestrations. Not bad for a work that Manuel-Miranda originally wrote in college.

Squirrel Nut Zippers and Shinyribs

September 16

Miller Outdoor Theatre, 6000 Hermann Park Dr.

If you've never experienced the unique sound of this most original of New Orleans bands (Benny Goodman meets zydeco?), then air-boat over to Miller Outdoor and bask in their fun, raucous sound. I don't know if the bubble machine will be in full swing, but for 20 years creator Jimbo Mathus and Chris Phillips have been swingin' hot and bubbling away with their laughing style. Ingrid Lucia from Flying Neutrino joins the boys, and other friends from N.O. Squirrel's warm-up act will be Shinyribs (another down-home original with Kevin Russell on his six-string uke, Winfield Check on keyboards, Keith Langford on drums, Jeff Brown on bass, and the Tijuana Trainwreck horns). Houston's al fresco joint in the park'll be jumpin'.

Picasso: The Line

September 16, 2016–January 8, 2017

The Menil Collection, 1533 Sul Ross St.

In this comprehensive exhibition, our little gem of a museum presents Pablo Picasso's way with a pencil, or pen, or charcoal. In over 90 works, spanning the years 1901 through 1969, we follow the master artist as he refines his style and keeps learning how to draw. A lifelong admirer of Ingres, France's greatest draftsman of the 19th century, Picasso's dreams are put down on a flat plane, but his work turns deep and rich as he draws in 3-D.

Houston Symphony Opening Night

September 17

Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St.

Maestro Andrés Orozco-Estrada directs Mahatma Ghandi... no, no, no, I mean Sir Ben Kingsley... through his paces as narrator of Prokofiev's charming *Peter and the Wolf* during the opening-night performance and gala dinner honoring our Houston Symphony. Also on the program will be Rossini's cackling overture to *The Thieving Magpie* and Richard Strauss' majestic, buoyant, wistful *Suite from Der Rosenkavalier*.

The Origin of Fruit, Sky Island, and Bug

September 17–October 29

BOX13 ArtSpace, 6700 Harrisburg Blvd.

Five very different artists are showcased in this triptych exhibition of new art at BOX13. Daniela Koontz and Taylor Waldt use →

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FALL ARTS PREVIEW

continued from previous page

flowers as motifs in *Origin of Fruit*; fiber artists Sarita Westrup and Analise Minjarez explore the Texas border in *Sky Island*; and Bryan Keith Gardner sees us as bugs hurtling through space. There's a connection here somewhere.

Madame Butterfly

September 22–October 2

Houston Ballet

Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave.

Houston Ballet's artistic director Stanton Welch molds Puccini's tragic opera into a real verismo, gut-wrenching ballet. Using

the Italian master's score as his blueprint, Welch's treatment is packed with action, lively characters, fragrant pastels, lots of fog, and the most athletic love pas de deux (cad naval officer Pinkerton bench-presses frail geisha Butterfly twice before hauling her off into the paper-walled house for their honeymoon). The imagery is delicate Japanese, but the tale is gangbusters, as is the dancing, and definitely the storytelling.

Sassy Mamas

September 22–October 16

Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main St.

Playwright Celeste Bedford Walker, an NAACP Image Award-winner, gets a regional premiere with her comedy about three older

ladies of accomplishment and status—black panthers, they call themselves, not cougars—who pursue much younger men. Will the studs that these ladies pursue reciprocate, laugh out loud, or fall hard? Will the gentlewomen keep the peace between them that they've shared for many years? What's more important at this stage in life—friendship or a fun time?

David Parsons Dance

September 23

Society for the Performing Arts

Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave.

Bad boys of ballet eventually grow up. David Parsons certainly did. In his heyday, as a lead dancer for legendary Paul Taylor, the beefy and movie-star handsome Parsons—the type of male

Bayou City Concert Musicals Promises a New Era of Tunes

The season kicks off with a 1960s flair.

Some Broadway shows promise a fun night out. With *Promises, Promises*, it's practically a guarantee.

The musical adaptation of the 1960 Oscar-winning comedy *The Apartment*, which starred Jack Lemmon, Shirley MaLaîne, and Fred MacMurray, will kick off the 10th season of Bayou City Concert Musicals this month at the Heinen Theatre in Midtown.

Promises, Promises features a buoyant pop-music score by Burt Bacharach and Hal David that includes "I'll Never Fall in Love Again," "She Likes Baseball," and the title tune, which Dionne Warwick recorded before the musical even opened on Broadway in 1968.

The score "will be more familiar" to audiences than recent BCCM productions, says the show's conductor, Dr. Dominique Røym. She explains that each year, out artistic director Paul Hope's group produces an unabridged concert staging of an under-performed musical from the 1940s to the 1980s that originated on Broadway.

Promises, Promises "moves us into the '60s," says Røym. "It is an entirely different soundscape than previous musicals. It sounds so much of its era because of the way the harmonies are written."

Røym conducts an orchestra of 20 professional musicians, along with four singers who perform the score's smooth backup vocals. "It felt vitally important to make them part of the orchestra, to achieve the Hollywood-style soundscape."

The deep stage at the Heinen Theatre allows maestro Røym, the orchestra musicians, and ensemble singers Arianna Bermudez, Bridget Fletcher, Jennifer Gilbert, and Susan Shofner to perform onstage, behind the action but still in full view of the audience. "I wear a black suit, which is standard for women in this country who are

conducting," explains the Montrose resident.

After BCCM performances in previous years, many audience members have lined up to meet Røym. "It's out of the ordinary," she admits. "Because I'm visible on stage, it piques people's interest."

BCCM producer Sharon Williams says, "From the first notes of Burt Bacharach's score, you will know you are back in the corporate world of the 1960s, a time we all know from John Cheever novels and *Mad Men* on TV."

Neil Simon adapted *Promises, Promises* from Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond's Academy Award-winning screenplay for *The Apartment*. The story transports audiences back to the domain of business executives in gray flannel suits who pursued women like, well, mad men.

Gay fave Dylan Godwin portrays Chuck Baxter, who works as an accountant for a New York insurance company. He longs for both romance and a promotion. Since women seem to ignore him, he opts for the promotion, using his only asset—his apartment—which he lends out to company executives for afternoon delights. When his boss, Mr. Sheldrake, promotes Chuck after he agrees to give Sheldrake exclusive use of the apartment for an affair, Chuck realizes that Sheldrake's mistress is Fran Kubelik, the girl of Chuck's dreams.

Røym says, "My first interaction with *Promises, Promises* was through the score." The Chicago native was a vocal performance major at Houston Baptist University when she discovered the show's "Turkey Lurkey Time" as a festive number for small groups of women to sing. The late Michael Bennett (*A Chorus Line*) won his first Tony Award nomination for *Promises, Promises*, partly for choreographing "Turkey Lurkey Time" as the act-one closing number at the company



Maestro, If You Please

Dominique Røym will conduct a full orchestra with 1960s-style backup singers for BCCM.

Christmas party.

Conducting the show for BCCM, says Røym, "is an unprecedented chance to do it with a full orchestra, with no changes or cuts to the book material. It's a very, very rare thing to get to do this gem in its original form."

A 2010 Broadway revival of *Promises, Promises*, which starred Sean Hayes and Kristen Chenoweth, added more hit songs that Bacharach and David penned for Warwick, including "I Say a Little Prayer" and "A House Is Not a Home." Warwick won her second Grammy Award, in 1971, for "I'll Never Fall in Love Again." (I would be remiss if I didn't mention that Warwick also famously told model Niki Taylor, "I got your number, hussy," on a 2011 edition of NBC's *Celebrity Apprentice*.)

The Broadway bow of *Promises, Promises* was nominated for eight Tonys, winning two: Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical for the late Jerry Orbach, who later found fame as NYPD Detective Lennie Briscoe on NBC's *Law & Order* from 1992 to 2004, and Best Perfor-

dancer Taylor liked—was always an audience favorite. His infamous publicity photo (by another legend, photographer Annie Leibovitz, where he posed nude atop one of the immense Art Deco gargoyles on Manhattan's iconic Chrysler Building) is itself legendary, and boosted sales for his newly formed Parsons Dance Company. His signature piece as choreographer is the sublime solo "Caught," where the dancer in blackness circles the stage in bounding leaps while tripping a strobe light whose control he conceals in his hand. The effect of constant weightlessness and heavenly flight is theater magic at its best. Parsons still has the magic. See modern-dance prestidigitation at its best when his famous company (around since 1985—a milestone) bounds into the Wortham. →

mance by a Featured Actress in a Musical for the late Marian Mercer as bar-pickup Marge MacDougall, who sings "A Fact Can Be a Beautiful Thing" with Chuck. The same role won a Tony for Katie Finneran in the 2010 revival.

In the BCCM show, says producer Williams, "Brooke Wilson is playing Marge, and she's going to be fabulous."

"It's a great vehicle for an actress because the character is drunk, so she gets to speak some truths onstage that you usually can't get away with," says Røyem.

Promises, Promises won the 1970 Grammy Award for Best Score from an Original Cast Show Album. Bacharach and David were on a roll, having won Oscars a month earlier for "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" from the movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

The Houston revival also stars John Gremillion and Katie Fridsma in her BCCM debut.

Hope is directing the show, with co-director Mitchell Greco, musical director Michael Mertz, and choreographer Melissa Pritchett.

Proceeds from Bayou City Concert Musicals' production of *Promises, Promises* will benefit the Tim Harris Memorial Fund and The Actors' Fund. Both organizations support performers who have suffered catastrophic illness or injury, explains Williams.

BCCM will round out its 2016-17 season with two cabaret productions at the Performance Centre in the Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main Street. The first, February 18-20, 2017, will feature more of the music of Burt Bacharach and Hal David. The second will feature an evening of the music of Duke Ellington, May 20-22, 2017.

Due to the adult subject matter, *Promises, Promises* may not be suitable for younger audience members. —*Donalevan Maines*

What: *Promises, Promises*

When: September 15-18

Where: Heinen Theatre, 3517 Austin Street (on HCC's Midtown campus)

Details: bayoucityconcertmusicals.org or 713.465.6484



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Josephine Baker: A Portrait

Soprano Julia Bullock brings the story of Broadway's highest-paid chorus girl to the Jones Hall stage. (SEE BELOW.)

DARIO ACOSTA

FALL ARTS PREVIEW

continued from previous page

**Peter Max—The Retrospective: 1960–2016
September 25, 26**

Off the Wall Gallery

1515 Westheimer Rd., Suite #2208

Oh, the colors, the colors. Mr. Max is the artist of psychedelia. His '60s graphics are the very pictures of the time: vibrant and weedy; eye-popping; totally rad, man. He created record covers, redesigned the NBC peacock, and was the official artist for Woodstock. He was saturated way before Photoshop. When you think of The Beatles' fat little underwater ship, that yellow submarine was Peter Max. When you think of hippie flower-power, those day-glo rubbery petals are Max. Follow his eclectic career and meet the German-born artist at this most colorful celebration.

Remote Houston

September 29–November 18

Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave.

One of the coolest trips in Houston, this immersive downtown walking tour will blow you away. Created by the Berlin performance company Rimini Protokoll, and presented through the Alley Theatre, a group of 50 pedestrians, wearing headphones, follows the instructions of the strange voice in their head. "I am Heather," she says without inflection. "Do you trust me? I am not human, but I want to be your friend. Let's go." And you're off to Oz, although it looks a lot like Houston.

**Josephine Baker: A Personal Portrait
September 30**

Da Camera of Houston

Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St.

In 1925, the highest-paid chorus girl on Broadway sailed to France and never looked back. Truly overnight, she became the toast of Paris, a star of stars in the La Revue Nègre and at the Folies Bergère, where her "Danse Sauvage," performed in a skirt of artificial bananas, caused a scandal. She was electric on stage—the jazz age personified, as those who saw her always noted. America turned its back on her, though, and she never received the fame in the States that she deserved. A lifelong advocate of civil rights, Baker spoke at the preliminary session during Martin Luther King's historic March on Washington in 1963, but no female speakers were officially recognized. Baker remained a superstar in France, and she would ultimately receive France's highest honor, the Legion d'honneur, among so many other awards. Up-and-comer soprano Julia Bullock, who's received glowing press recently for her recitals and opera performances, brings Baker's story to the stage, illuminated with new music and arrangements by composer and multi-instrumentalist Tyshawn Sorey.

Fly Dance Company

September 30

Miller Outdoor Theatre, 5000 Hermann Park Dr.

There's nothing in the world of contemporary

dance quite like Fly. Okay, they don't actually fly, but these talented young guys do take to the air and leave one breathless. Their energy is a perpetuum mobile. Each one is unique in body type, but when they juke it up, their combined power, grace, and wit is undeniably infectious. From Alaska and the Kennedy Center to the crowned heads of Europe, Fly has left 'em smiling and wanting more.

The Bear and The Proposal

October 5–23

Classical Theatre Company

4617 Montrose Blvd.

Anton Chekhov, that gentle Russian of exquisite melancholy (*Three Sisters*, *Cherry Orchard*, *Uncle Vanya*) who packed a stiletto behind his sighs, isn't known for his laugh-out-loud comedy stylings, but his funny streak peeks through in these one-act plays. *The Bear* is even subtitled "A joke in one act," in case we don't get it the first time. Produced in 1888 in Moscow, his "trivial little vaudeville" was a tremendous success, providing royalties for his entire lifetime. Smirnov barges in on young grieving widow Elena, demanding the money her late husband owes him. He won't leave until she pays him. Their sparring eventually turns into a kiss, just as the neighbors are aroused by the furor. *The Proposal* (1890) is sweet farce, where neighbor Ivan courts Natalia, but they fight every time he proposes. The great playwright called this work "vulgar and wretched." So much for insight.

Beethoven Reconstructed

October 7, 8

Ash Danceworks

MATCH, 3400 Main St.

If u cn rd ths mesg, u lik modrn danc. No, that's not a typo in the title, it's just contemporary dance being edgy. One of Houston's leading dance makers, Rebecca French, has reimagined Beethoven's stunning Violin Concerto in D. Using electronic enhancements and video projections, her nine dancers (and the modern troupe Group Acorde, a quartet of two dancers and two musicians) will bring Beethoven's 1806 masterpiece to vibrant life.

The Musical of Musicals, the Musical!

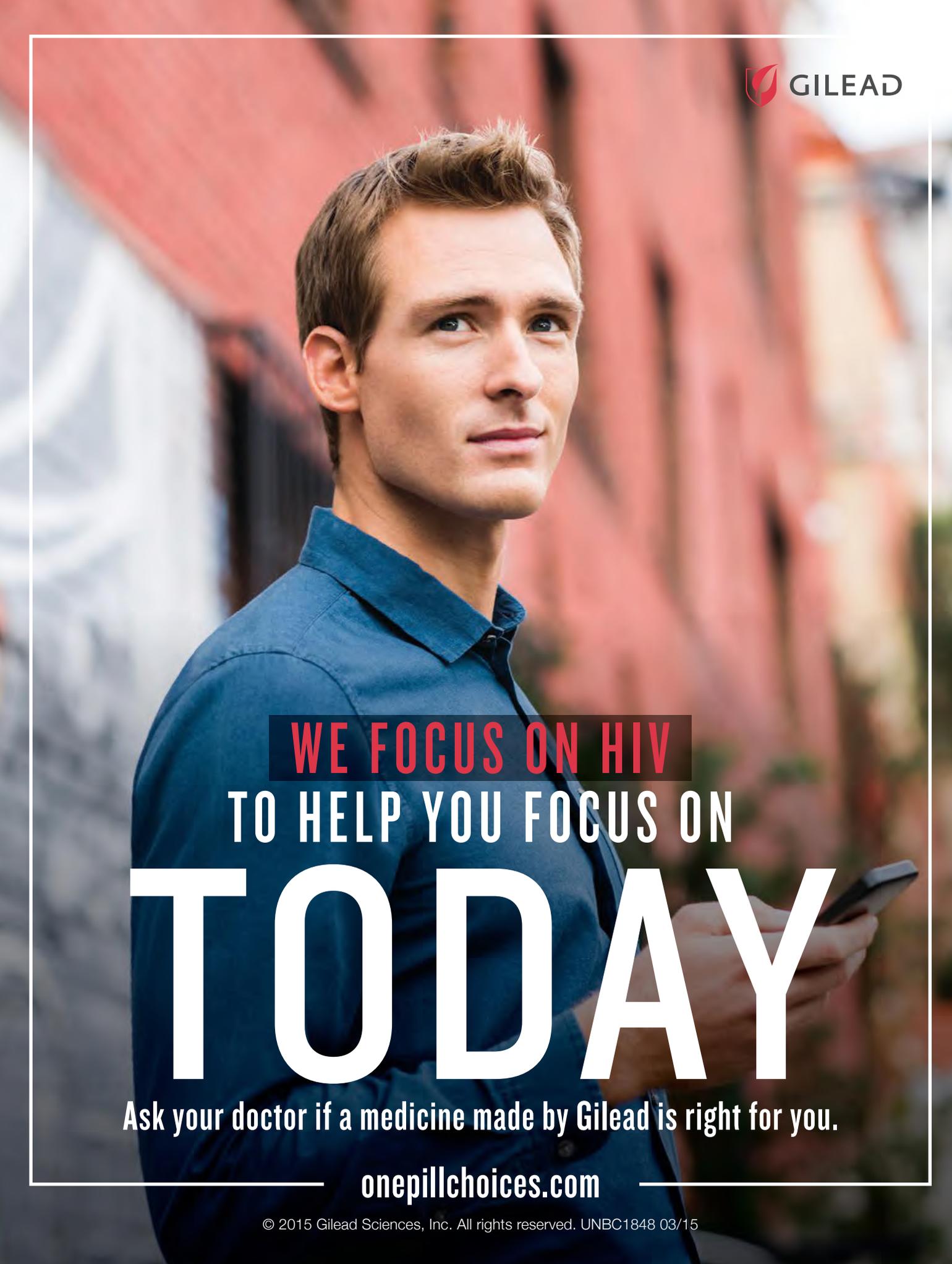
October 7–23

Theater LaB Houston

MATCH, 3400 Main St.

"I can't pay the rent" is the theme of the cult 2003 off-Broadway hit by Joanne Bogart and Eric Rockwell. Each of its five mini-musicals parodies the style of famous Broadway composers by using the same cast of iconic characters: the hero, the villain, the ingénue, the matron. Let's see, how about Rodgers and Hammerstein's melodic *Corn* with "I Couldn't Keer Less About You," or Stephen Sondheim's brittle *A Little Complex* with "We're All Gonna

continued on page 58



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7:00 pm • Resurrection MCC Sanctuary

Resurrection MCC invites you to a concert version of the rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar!* The performance will showcase a full orchestra, members of the worship arts department, and the Resurrection MCC Sanctuary Choir. Early Admission is \$20 with seating at 6:30 pm. General Admission is \$15.00 with seating at 6:45 pm.

Tickets online at www.ResurrectionMCC.org/jcs

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OCTOBER 8

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Pre-registration required by Oct. 5 at www.ResurrectionMCC.org/golf

Southern Baptist SISSIES by Del Shores

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8
7:00 pm • Resurrection MCC Activities Building

Resurrection MCC is proud to present the story of four boys who are gay and growing up in the Southern Baptist Church, and how each of them deals differently with the conflict between the teachings of the church and his sexuality. There are scenes with brief nudity, sexual content, and strong language. This show is Rated R. Ticket prices are \$15.00 for Thursday, October 6 and Friday, October 7. Tickets are \$20.00 for Saturday, October 8 and include the play plus a Q&A with playwright Del Shores following the performance.

Tickets online at www.ResurrectionMCC.org/sbs

DEL SHORES PRESENTS SINGULARLY SORDID CELEBRATING NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9

3:00 pm • Resurrection MCC Activities Building

Del Shores, the playwright of *Southern Baptist Sissies* and *Sordid Lives* will bring his one person show aptly called *SINGularly Sordid* in honor of National Coming Out Day. Be ready for this funny man to regale you with some of the best gay comedy out there. Many of Del's campy stories center on his friend, actor, and gay comedian Leslie Jordan as well as other great stories about George Lopez and Dolly Parton. This is a free event. Donations will be accepted.



Sunday Worship 9 & 11 am • Nursery Available • Handicap Accessible
11 am - Spanish & Deaf Interpretation, Youth & Teen Program
2025 West 11th Street, Houston 77008 • 713-861-9149 • www.ResurrectionMCC.org



SPA's Golden Anniversary

The world's best come to Houston for the 2016–2017 season.

By **Donalevan Maines**

Photo by Angelo Redaelli

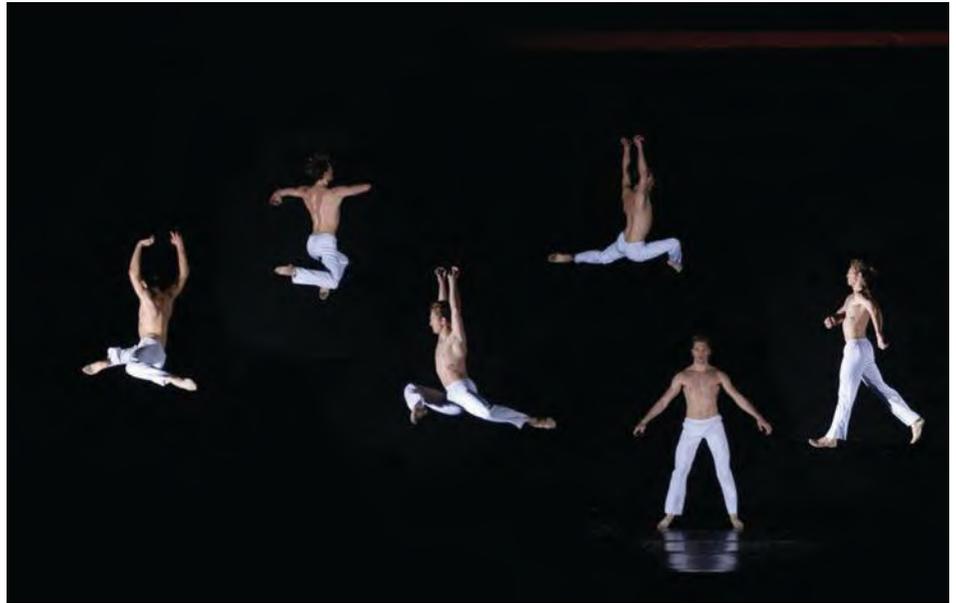
A golden year of entertainment awaits audiences as Society for the Performing Arts, the largest nonprofit presenting organization of its kind in the entire Southwest, celebrates 50 years of “bringing the world's best to Houston.”

The 2016–2017 season begins with a sensory-friendly matinee by David Parsons Dance at noon on Friday, September 23, before the energetic, athletic ensemble performs that night at 8 in Cullen Theater at the Wortham Center. The mid-day performance is designed for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

This year's SPA lineup boasts a number of Houston debuts, from 13-year-old jazz prodigy Joey Alexander to *Underwater Bubble Show*, along with returning favorites such as out humorist David Sedaris and the hilarious Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, that amazing *en pointe* ballet corps featuring men in tutus.

“Our goal every season is to bring a wide selection of the world's best performing artists to the stages of Houston, and this 50th anniversary season continues that tradition,” says June Christensen, SPA's CEO and president. “The 2016–2017 season for SPA offers something for fans of nearly every performing-art form.”

Long an advocate for dance, SPA continues the practice in its anniversary season with a Dance Series that also boasts Brazil's Balé Folclórico da Bahia (January 13, 2017), followed by Pilobolus and their latest work *Shadowlands* (January 20), and Aspen Santa Fe Ballet (April 21). The series will conclude with a performance from Jessica Lang Dance (May



An Energetic Start

Society for the Performing Arts' 50th season kicks off with performances by David Parsons Dance on Friday, September 23.

20) that includes the brand-new *Tesseract of Time*, commissioned in part by SPA. Christensen says the collaboration with Steven Holl, whose legendary projects include the current expansion of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is deemed a “dance for architecture.”

The 2016–2017 season also features a stunning Music Series, starting with a holiday performance from The Irish Tenors (December 7), then Third Coast Percussion (March 4, 2017), and an encore of sibling piano masters The 5 Browns (May 12).

SPA's annual free show at Miller Outdoor Theatre will showcase French/American electro-swing band Gingkoa on May 6, 2017.

SPA, which presented Broadway musicals for 26 years, including Carol Channing in *Hello, Dolly!* in 1966, will showcase a new incarnation of *Annie* at Jones Hall, with a nod toward the original staging of the 1977 Tony Award-winning musical. The title character, a resilient redhead from the popular Harold Gray comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*, will sing “It's the Hard Knock Life,” “Maybe,” and “Tomorrow” in the perfectly family-friendly show.

In 2016–2017, SPA expands its lineup of family programming with two series: the Family Fun Jr. Series, geared toward children ages 4–10, and the Family Fun Series, with shows

for the entire family. Things kick off October 9 with *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood LIVE*, an interactive musical adventure through the vibrant world of the iconic “Neighborhood of Make-Believe.” *Odd Squad LIVE*, another staging centered around a PBS show, will make its Houston debut January 21, 2017, with Kid Agents Otto and Olive. Rounding out the Family Fun Jr. Series on October 28 will be the cutting-edge, immersive entertainment from Latvia, *Underwater Bubble Show*.

Among offerings in the Family Fun Series will be *Cirque Dreams HOLIDAZE*, a November 18–20 holiday extravaganza that blends circus performers with Broadway musical staging, the return of *STOMP* February 10–12, 2017, and a one-of-a-kind new tour from Australia, *Circus 1903* (June 9–11), that celebrates the golden age of the circus with a global cast of performers and stunning animal puppets from Significant Objects.

Award-winning British author Neil Gaiman will return to Houston for a performance on July 8, 2017.

David Sedaris, who will appear on Saturday, October 22, in Brown Theater at the Wortham Center, shot to fame when his amusingly self-deprecating essay *Santaland Diaries* was broadcast in 1992 on National Public →



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SPA'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

continued from previous page

Radio. He confirmed his promise with short stories and best-selling essay collections such as *Naked* (1997), *Me Talk Pretty One Day* (2000), and, most recently, *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls* (2013).

Joey Alexander, who is set to perform on Friday, February 17, 2017, in the Wortham's Cullen Theater, was born on the island of Bali. Discovered by jazz legend Wynton Marsalis, Alexander was nominated for 2016 Grammy Awards in the categories of Best Improvisational Jazz Solo (for *Giant Steps*) and Best Jazz Instrumental Album (for *My Favorite Things*).

The hairy-chested dancers of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo will entertain on Friday, March 24, 2017, at the Wortham. The playful troupe has delighted audiences around the world since its founding in 1974 by gleeful enthusiasts of grand ballet.

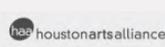
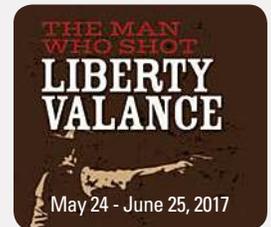
Subscriptions for the 2016-2017 season are on sale now. Renewing subscribers will be seated first; all other orders will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information regarding performance dates, times, and details, call 713.227.4772 or visit spahouston.org.

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.



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Five LGBT Artists Take Center Stage

‘Statements: African American Art from the Museum’s Collection’ at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

By Andrew Edmonson

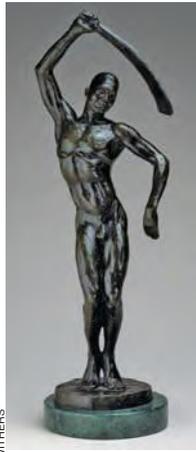
Statements: African American Art from the Museum’s Collection is a stunning MFAH exhibition that takes the viewer on an engrossing journey through eight decades of art history and African-American cultural history, from 1935 to 2015.

Featuring painting, photography, sculpture, works on paper, and decorative arts, the exhibition spotlights 47 pieces from the museum’s collection of 900 works by African-American artists, ranging from historical luminaries such as John Biggers and Gordon Parks to exciting contemporary artists like Mequitta Ahuja, Trenton Doyle Hancock, and Kara Walker, with a strong focus on artists with Houston connections. As the nation struggles through a painful discussion of racial disparities in our criminal-justice system in the wake of the killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castille, the ideas explored in several works in *Statements* resonate with even more power and relevance.

At the heart of the exhibition are five LGBT artists: Richmond Barthé, Mark Bradford, Nick Cave, Glenn Ligon, and Mickalene Thomas.

Richmond Barthé: Capturing the Spiritual Quality in the Human Figure

Opening the show is a sleek, irresistibly sensual sculpture from 1935, *Feral Benga*, by Harlem Renaissance master Richmond Barthé (1901–1989). In 1934, the artist visited Paris where he encountered the Senegalese cabaret dancer François (aka Feral) Benga and Josephine Baker at the Folies Bergère. A devout Catholic who was inspired throughout his career by the beauty of the black-male body, Barthé once observed, “All my life I have been interested in trying to capture the spiritual quality I see and feel in people, and I feel that the human figure as God made it is the best means of expressing this spirit in man.” In this work, suffused with a powerful homoeroticism, Barthé beau-



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE BARTHÉ TRUST; NICK CAVE (COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAMMAN GALLERY); NEW YORK; THOMAS T. DUBROCK; ESTATE OF ERNEST C. WITHERS

An Artistic Journey

Clockwise from top right: *Feral Benga* by Richmond Barthé; *Soundsuit* by Nick Cave; *Off the Edge* by Mequitta Ahuja; and *I Am A Man* by Ernest C. Withers can be viewed as part of the *Statements: African American Art from the Museum’s Collection* exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

tifully captures the leonine grace and languorous lines of the Senegalese dancer’s body in motion.

Glenn Ligon: Sounding the Distance from One Historical Moment to Another

After focusing on works of artists from the 1930s and 1940s who broke through institutional barriers to achieve a series of firsts, the exhibition moves into the tumult of the 1950s and 1960s as the civil-rights movement gained momentum. One of the iconic images from this period is Ernest Withers’ 1968 *I Am A Man, Sanitation Workers Strike, Memphis, Tennessee* depicting a phalanx of black men carrying signs declaring I AM A MAN, protesting for a living wage and better working conditions, and asserting their basic human dignity, in the week preceding the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Thirty-two years later, New York conceptual artist Glenn Ligon looks back to this iconic moment in American history with his work *Condition Report*. As an intern at the Studio Museum in

Harlem in the early 1980s, he had glimpsed a copy of Withers’ photo in the office of Representative Charlie Rangel. In 2000, he created a diptych, with two identical images of the placards carried by the striking sanitation workers. The version of the placard on the right, however, contains notations by a curator, documenting the cracks, smudges, and abrasions—a “condition report” detailing the physical decline of the work.

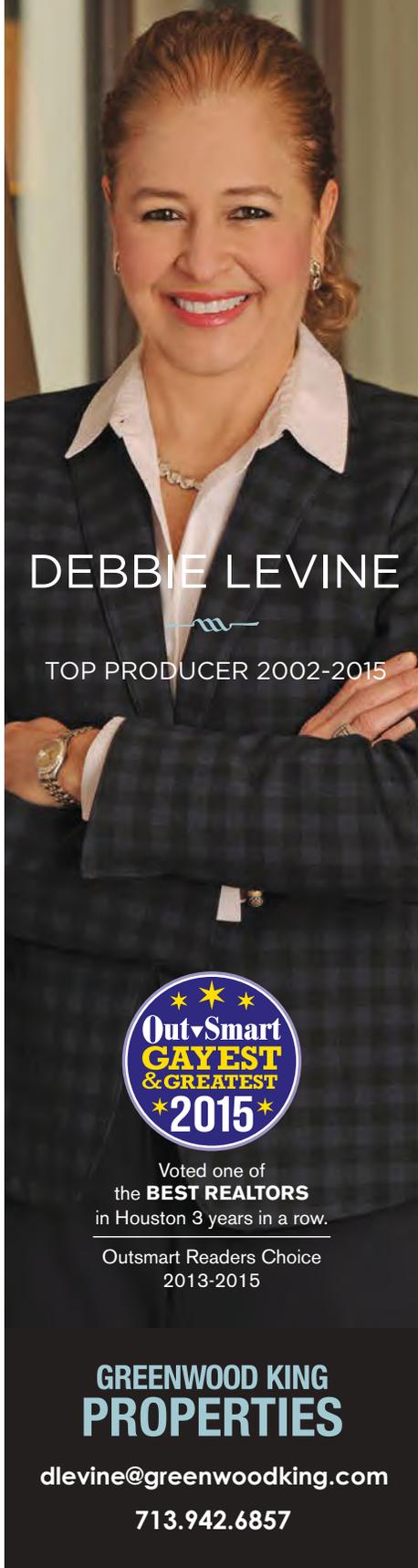
“I see them as not only documenting the aging of the painting,” Ligon has observed of the piece, “but the aging of certain ideas about the civil-rights movement, masculinity, and the distance between one historical moment and another.”

Ligon’s work has won fans in high places. He is a favorite of President and Mrs. Obama, and they selected one of his works for display in the private residence of the White House.

Mickalene Thomas: Venerating the Black Female Body

In stark contrast to Ligon’s chilly conceptualism →

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FIVE LGBT ARTISTS TAKE CENTER STAGE

continued from previous page

are the lush bodaciousness and vibrant colors of lesbian artist Mickalene Thomas' large-scale 2011 photograph, *Lovely Six Foota*. The work depicts a fierce, sensual African-American woman, arrayed in chic 1970s attire, trailing clouds of Black Power and feminist glory, as she looks boldly at the viewer with her blouse unbuttoned and her legs spread slightly. Thomas created this installation replete with 1970s furnishings and vinyl LP album covers.

"All of the women in my work have a profound sense of confidence and recognize themselves as the visible subject," Thomas has said. "Their directness is filled with agency and self-knowledge. They have all the power and control to demand the viewer to meet them in their own space, rather than being exploited or scrutinized."

"As a black woman who loves women, Ms. Thomas is in a double bind, and she makes the most of this to transcend it," observed art critic Roberta Smith of Thomas' work in the *New York Times* in 2012. "She celebrates, decorates, and really venerates the black female body by making it, and its lavish surroundings, bracingly tangible. She doesn't so much depict a universal humanity as practically force it in the viewer's place where it implicates, illuminates, and bedazzles."

A graduate of the Pratt Institute and Yale University School of Art, Thomas has expanded beyond the world of museums and galleries into popular culture, working as a DJ, designing the cover art of Solange Knowles' limited-edition EP *True*, and directing the HBO documentary *Happy Birthday to a Beautiful Woman*, paying tribute to her late mother and longtime muse, the fashion model Sandra Bush.

Nick Cave: A Shaman in Surreal Soundsuits

An artist who shares Thomas' vibrant theatricality is Nick Cave of Chicago, represented here by one of his signature soundsuits. He created his first soundsuit—wearable sculptural forms based on the human body, comprised of found objects—in the wake of the Rodney King beating by four Los Angeles police officers in 1991, envisioning it as an emotional shield that conceals one's race or gender while still expressing individuality.

"When I was inside a suit," Cave observed, "you couldn't tell if I was a woman or man; if I was black, red, green, or orange; from Haiti or South Africa. I was no longer Nick. I was a shaman of sorts."

A graduate of the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Art, Cave danced with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, created his own fashion line that he sold in a shop he ran for 10 years, and is today chair of the fashion-design program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. All of these disparate strands of his background are synthesized spectacularly in his soundsuits, which are seen to their best advantage when he performs in them in public spectacles and vid-

eos. His 2011 soundsuit featured in *Statements* is made of brightly colored braided rugs found in thrift stores in Chicago's South Loop, sewn together to create a surreal, fantastical, vibrantly colorful sculpture.

Mark Bradford: Transmuting the Pain of the Los Angeles Riots into Hope

Another artist profoundly impacted by the beating of Rodney King and the ensuing rebellion in Los Angeles is Mark Bradford, winner of the State Department's 2015 National Medal of Arts, the highest honor that the U.S. government can give for artistic achievement. In April, it was announced that he had landed another plum honor: representing the United States at the prestigious Venice Biennale, opening in May 2017.

Bradford was born in 1961 in South Los Angeles, and still makes his studio in the space where his mother ran a beauty shop in Leimert Park, one of the largest centers of the black middle class in America. He graduated from high school, got his hairdresser's license, and went to work in his mother's salon. Coming of age in the 1980s, his worldview was informed by queer and feminist politics during the developing AIDS crisis. After travelling through Europe, he enrolled at California Institute of the Arts in 1991, received his B.A. in 1995, and his M.A. in 1997.

In 2015, after his work had been featured in exhibitions across the globe, he had his first hometown solo show entitled *Scorched Earth* at L.A.'s Hammer Museum, which was described thusly: "Examining the moment and afterlife of the 1992 uprisings in Los Angeles, which he experienced from his studio in Leimert Park, Bradford has translated the outrage and lasting wounds of the riots into these new paintings."

His monumental 2015 tableaux *Circa 1992*, which MFAH has recently acquired for its permanent collection, was also inspired by that seminal moment in American history. After the riots that tore Los Angeles apart, a church group issued signs declaring REBUILD SOUTH CENTRAL WITHOUT LIQUOR STORES!/RECONSTRUIR AL SUR CENTRAL SIN NEGOCIOS DE BEBIDAS ALCOHOLICAS! *Circa 1992* appropriates this phrase in a richly textured work featuring Bradford's trademark mixture of painting and collage. It brings *Statements* to a transcendent conclusion, fusing a painful moment in American history with beautiful aestheticism and a message of hope for the future.

Statements: African-American Art from the Museum's Collection is on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, through September 25. The exhibition was curated by Alison de Lima Greene, with the assistance of Althea Ruoppo and John Semlitsch, for the museum's modern and contemporary department. Admission to the museum is free on Thursdays.

Andrew Edmonson serves on the advisory board of The Oral History Project, which is capturing and preserving personal stories of the AIDS crisis in Houston, Harris County, and Southeast Texas.

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The Always-Diverse Emmys

It's a win-win for television's LGBT stars and allies.

By Donalevan Maines

Shows that are queer-ish are among the wonderfully diverse slate of nominees at the 68th Emmy Awards, which Jimmy Kimmel returns to host live from Los Angeles this month.

LGBT stars also share the kudofest's spotlight, including the gayest faceoff ever in the battle for Outstanding Host for a Reality or Reality-Competition Program. RuPaul Charles is finally nominated in the category, for *RuPaul's Drag Race*; his competition includes Jane Lynch, who has won the past two years for *Hollywood Game Night*, and Tim Gunn (with Heidi Klum) for *Project Runway*, along with Tom Bergeron (*Dancing with the Stars*), pageant screw-up Steve Harvey (*Little Big Shots*), and *American Idol*'s Ryan Seacrest, who has to be put in the LGBTQ category after that *questioning* look by Britney Spears when somebody suggested that Seacrest sleeps with women (check it out at youtube.com/watch?v=opKaKLuKGhY).

Even RuPaul's gowns are nominated for an Emmy, in a category called Outstanding Costumes for a Variety, Nonfiction or Reality Program.

Can you barely breathe?

Jeffrey Tambor, as transgender Maura Pfefferman in *Transparent*, hopes to repeat as Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series, while comedian Louie Anderson's cross-dressing turn as Christine Baskets in *Baskets* is nominated for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series. Anderson previously won Daytime Emmy Awards for voicing another female character based on his mother in the animated children's series *Life with Louie*. Among his competition at the grown-up Emmys, he competes opposite Andre Braugher as gay Capt. Ray Holt on *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and



A Kiss from Kimmel

Jimmy Kimmel hosts this year's Emmy Awards show, which airs September 18.

out actor/singer Tituss Burgess as flamboyantly gay Titus Andromedon on *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*.

As RuPaul says (in a new promo for *All Stars 2*, which premiered August 25 on Logo), "Let the best wimmins win!"

Some other majorly queer-ish nominees include NBC's *American Crime* (in which a gay high school student accused another boy of raping him) and ABC's always-reliable *Modern Family*.

But nothing better illustrates the inclusiveness of the 2016 Emmys than the Best Commercial nod for The Ad Council's *Love Has No Labels*. That commercial-gone-viral, with about 60 million views at press time, shows pairs of skeletons embracing behind a giant X-ray screen, then surprising viewers when those friends and lovers of all races, colors, sexualities, and creeds emerge from behind the screen. The three-minute video was filmed on Valentine's Day 2015 in Santa Monica, California.

At lovehasnolabels.com, The Ad Council explains, "While the vast majority of Americans consider themselves unprejudiced, many of us unintentionally make snap judgments about people based on what we see—whether

it's race, age, gender, religion, sexuality, or disability. The Love Has No Labels campaign challenges us to open our eyes to our bias and prejudice and work to stop it in ourselves, our friends, our families, and our colleagues."

People of many different ethnicities are 2016 Emmy nominees, including Rami Malek, who is the twin son of Egyptian immigrants. His role as Elliot in the trippy cult sensation *Mr. Robot* pits him against is-he-or-isn't-he-gay Kevin Spacey as bisexual U.S. President Francis Underwood in *House of Cards*, among others.

London-born Idris Elba, a black actor who was famously snubbed in this year's Oscar nominations for his supporting work as Commandant in *Beasts of No Nation*, scored another Emmy nomination for *Luther*, but his category, Outstanding Lead Actor in a Limited Series or Movie (which includes both Courtney B. Vance and Cuba Gooding Jr. in *American Crime Story: The People v. O. J. Simpson*), might belong to Bryan Cranston as former Houstonian Lyndon B. Johnson in *All the Way*.

Out actress Sarah Paulson, a perennial Emmy nominee (always a bridesmaid, but never the bride), could nab her first "golden girl" for her portrayal of failed prosecutor Marcia →

THE ALWAYS-DIVERSE EMMYS

continued from previous page

Clark in the *O.J. Simpson* miniseries. Among her competition is six-time Tony Award-winner Audra McDonald as bisexual Billie Holiday in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*.

Paulson is also nominated for her supporting turn as Hypodermic Sally/Billie Dean Howard in *American Horror Story: Hotel*.

Out legend Lily Tomlin is nominated again for *Grace and Frankie*.

Among other Emmy finalists of particular interest in the LGBT community are: *Maplethorpe: Look at the Pictures* (produced by out filmmaking duo Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato); *Orange Is the New Black*; *Sense8*; *Empire*; *Orphan Black*; Kate McKinnon as various characters on *Saturday Night Live*; *Game of Thrones*; the short-form variety series *Gay of Thrones* at FunnyOrDie.com; the unstructured reality program *Gaycation with Ellen Page* on Viceland; and *Tig Notaro: Boyish Girl Interrupted* on HBO.

What: The 68th Emmy Awards
When: September 18, 7 p.m. CST
Where: ABC (abc.go.com)
Details: emmys.com

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

Former Houstonian Up for an Emmy

Fiona Dawson's 'Transgender, at War and in Love.'

Fiona Dawson says that generous LGBT Houstonians helped propel her to nomination for Outstanding Short Documentary at this month's 37th Annual News and Documentary Emmy Awards in New York City.

The \$20,911 that friends contributed to her Kickstarter campaign in 2011 allowed Dawson "to quit my job to make my dreams come true," explains the "out and proud bisexual" who led Houston's 2009 Pride parade as Female Grand Marshal.

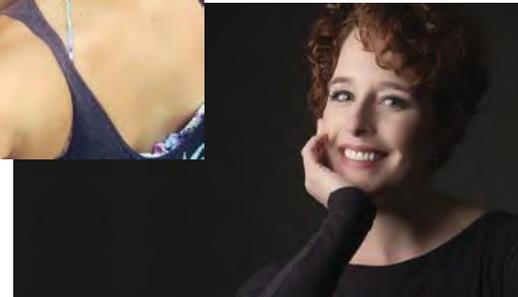
Without the help of Houstonians sending Dawson to India to film stories on sex trafficking, prostitution, and HIV/AIDS, she says, "I can't imagine how I'd now be an Emmy nominee."

Dawson, who now lives in the Washington



Love in War

Logan and Laila are the subjects of director Fiona Dawson's (below) short documentary *Transgender, at War and in Love*.



DC area, is nominated for directing and co-producing *Transgender, at War and in Love*, about a transgender airman from Dallas serving in Afghanistan and his transgender fiancée, a U.S. Army medic.



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With her iPhone, Dawson even created a brief clip seen in the film, capturing the tender moment the airman returns from overseas and reunites with his girlfriend. "Eighty to 85 percent of the film was captured on people's cellphones or a DSLR [video camera]," says Dawson, explaining that it wasn't until months into production that the *New York Times* joined the project and provided a camera crew. "When you have an idea, you have to do whatever you can to capture the images—and trust that financing is going to come through in the end."

The Emmy-nominated short film is a prelude to a feature-length documentary, *TransMilitary*, that completed filming last month.

Dawson has picked out a dress fashioned from organic materials to wear to the News and Documentary Emmys on September 21, where she will rub elbows with fellow nominees such as Diane Sawyer (who is in the running for *Bruce Jenner: The Interview* on ABC's 20/20) and out finalists Sam Champion, Anderson Cooper, and Thomas Roberts.

The day before, on September 20, Dawson will be in Houston to help kick off the Houston Human Rights Campaign 20th Anniversary Gala. —**Donalevan Maines**



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A Lesbian Miss America?

Erin O’Flaherty redefines stereotypes on the pageant stage.

By Donalevan Maines

There she is, the first out Miss America—maybe, if Miss Missouri 2016, vocalist Erin O’Flaherty, wins the granddaddy of all beauty pageants on September 11.

“It’s starting to sink in,” says O’Flaherty, 23, who won the Show-Me State’s crown on June 18. “I realize more and more every day that this is definitely not about me. Every single day, I receive messages from LGBT people [who just want] to say ‘thank you’ for being present. It’s taken a while to realize that I didn’t just make history—[I can also] be somebody who is a point of reference, to show adolescents they don’t have to fit a stereotype.”

O’Flaherty is the first openly gay woman to ever win a state title and advance to the Super Bowl of pageantry where an annual “queen of femininity” has been crowned 94 times.

The fact that other out lesbians haven’t competed at Miss America “is hard to believe,” says 20-year-old Caroline Carothers, the current Miss Texas 2016.

But then, it wasn’t until 1983 that an African-American beauty, Vanessa Williams, won Miss America and was crowned by Debbie Maffett of Cut and Shoot, Texas.

The Miss America pageant “exists in its own bubble,” 1998 winner Kate Shindle explained to the *New York Times* in August 2014.

A tireless AIDS activist, Shindle will play the grown-up lesbian protagonist Allison in the national tour of the 2015 Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *Fun Home*, which comes to Houston in May of 2017. The groundbreaking show, based on out author Alison Bechdel’s graphic 2006 memoir, unlocks labyrinthine mysteries in Bechdel’s life as the daughter of a closeted gay pedophile who runs a funeral parlor in Pennsylvania.

O’Flaherty says she was surprised to learn that Shindle originated “The Mad Hatter” song from the musical *Wonderland* that O’Flaherty will perform in the talent competition at Miss America. (The book for *Wonderland*, which played for a month on Broadway

One for the Books
Erin O’Flaherty (c) is crowned Miss Missouri, making her the first openly gay woman to win a state title and advance to the Miss American contest.



in 2011, was co-written by the Alley Theatre’s Gregory Boyd, who directed *Shindle* as Maggie in the Alley’s 2005 staging of Arthur Miller’s *After the Fall*.)

Unlike *Shindle*, O’Flaherty doesn’t dream of becoming a Broadway star. In 2013, she graduated from the University of Central Florida in Orlando with a major in legal studies. She hopes to put her pageant scholarships (including \$12,000 she won as Miss Missouri) toward obtaining a master’s degree in business administration.

Miss America 2017 will win a \$50,000 scholarship.

O’Flaherty, who was born in Ohio, graduated at age 16 in South Carolina. At 18, she began competing in pageants, advancing three times to Florida’s state preliminary and placing as a semifinalist in 2013 when she was Miss UCF.

After graduating from college, O’Flaherty moved to St. Louis, where until recently she worked in her family’s clothing boutique. “I took two years off from competing,” she says, returning to the pageant world this year and winning Miss Missouri as Miss City of Fountains.

An anomaly in pageants as an openly gay contestant, O’Flaherty says that she was encouraged in Florida by former Houstonian Juan Cantu, an out pageant aficionado who moved to Orlando to perform at Disney World.

“Juan is wonderful,” says O’Flaherty. “He was just great support. He always had my back.”

Last month, O’Flaherty returned to visit Orlando, where she had come out in college and was involved in the Equal club on campus, which provided an opportunity for “students who are LGBTQ+ or allies to network and socialize.”

She says, “The first place my best friend took me was Pulse,” the gay nightclub where 49 people were massacred and many others injured in a shooting rampage on June 12. “I finally [feel like I have] had the chance to process my grief and pay my respects,” she explains. “Pulse absolutely was a safe haven. It was incredible to see makeshift memorials across the city.”

O’Flaherty’s platform as a Miss America contestant is suicide prevention. She works closely with both the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and The Trevor Project, the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ young people ages 13–24. For example, O’Flaherty marched and tabled with The Trevor Project at this summer’s San Diego Pride in July.

The platform requirement (where each contestant advocates on behalf of a social issue) became a thing in Miss America competitions after Kaye Lani Rae Rafko of →

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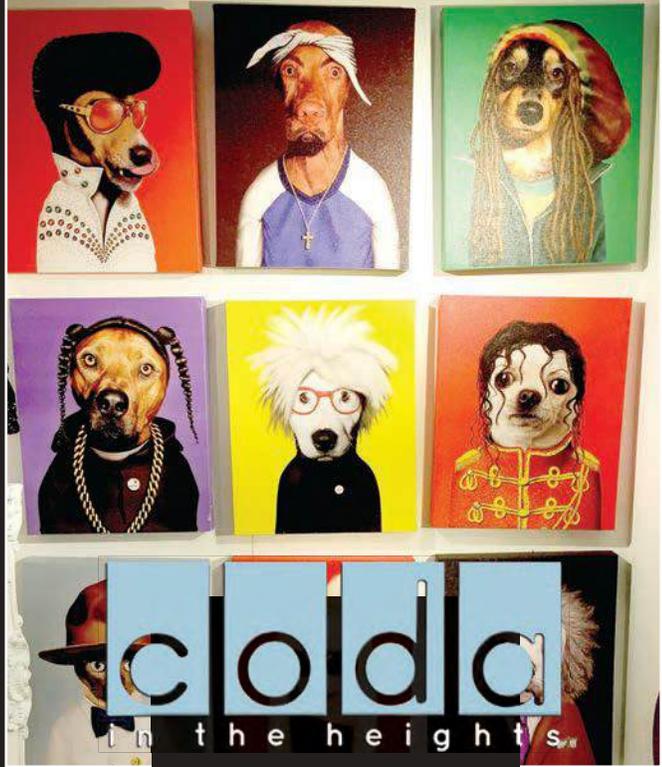
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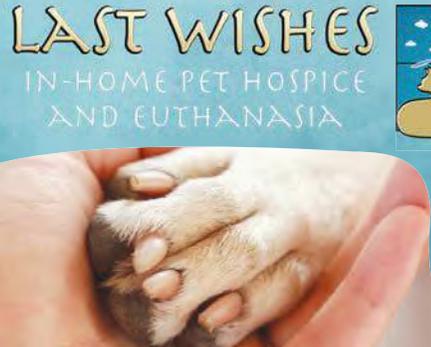
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A LESBIAN MISS AMERICA?

continued from page 49

Michigan, an AIDS hospice nurse, won the crown in 1987.

In 2012, Leanza Cornett won as Miss Florida and toured the country, urging safer sex and AIDS prevention.

The first Miss America contestant to promote gay rights, Miss New York 2010 Claire Buffie, was rewarded by fans who voted her into the Top 15 as an "America's Choice" contestant at the 2011 Miss America Pageant.

Again this year, public voting will advance a contestant into the Top 15. Fans may vote daily at <http://missamerica.org/vote/>. The remaining contestants in the Top 15 will have been selected by the Miss America preliminary judges' panel. It is possible for the "America's Choice" winner to also be among the judges' selections.

Carothers, who won the Miss Texas Scholarship Pageant as Miss Plano, entitled her platform "With + Math = I Can." She won overall interview and overall talent at the state competition, where Miss Houston Margana Wood won overall swimsuit, overall evening gown, and collected \$9,500 in cash scholarships while placing as first runner-up.

Carothers has completed two years at Baylor University, majoring in secondary education with an emphasis on math. "I have always loved math. I have always loved school," she says. "School-supplies shopping was always my favorite day of the year."

In the talent competition, Carothers twirls three batons and a cane to "Hot Heavy Rag" from the 1975 Broadway musical *Chicago*. "It's 90 seconds of super-energy fun," she says.

The routine was choreographed by Shea Sullivan, a former Miss Oklahoma runner-up. She choreographed the 2009 movie *The Big Gay Musical* and both produced and choreographed the 2014 off-Broadway revival of *Pageant*, a musical in which an all-male cast portrayed females vying for the fictional Miss Glamouresse tiara.

The Miss America telecast will be hosted by Chris Harrison (of *The Bachelor* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*) and Sage Steele, of *NBA Countdown* on ABC and ESPN.

Among the celebrity judges will be Dallas entrepreneur Mark Cuban, actress Sara Foster (VH1's *Barely Famous*), singer-songwriter Cole Swindell, former Miss America Sharlene Wells Hawkes, Olympic gold-medalist Gabby Douglas, and musician/actress Laura Marano.

What: 2017 Miss America Competition

(broadcast live from Atlantic City, New Jersey)

When: 8 p.m., Sunday, September 11

Where: ABC

Details: missamerica.org, abc.go.com

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.



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Get a taste of Houston's dine-in theaters.

By Joanna O'Leary

Gone are the days when hungry moviegoers had to satiate their appetites with over-salted popcorn and jujubes. Houston is currently home to multiple theaters that offer patrons more than snacks, and some—perhaps in an attempt to compete with our city's stellar restaurant scene—are even going real (reel?) classy, y'all!

The original intersection of cinema and cuisine is the **Alamo Drafthouse**, which started in Austin and is now a nationwide chain with three area branches (Sugar Land, Mason Park, Vintage Park). The theater offers a full bar featuring local brews and spirits, and its regular menu is extensive. You can nosh on truffled butter popcorn, fried pickles, mozzarella sticks, and avocado before moving on to a pizza (with your choice of gourmet toppings including fried rosemary, brussels sprout, and chipotle cream sauce), fish and chips, hatch chile macaroni and cheese, or a burger. (Psst... those determined to stick to a diet even on movie night out should try the Drafthouse's beet-and-goat-cheese salad.) For a sweet, boozy ending to your meal, go for an adult milkshake like the "Grasshopper" with crème de menthe and crème de cacao, or the "Maker's Mark Milk Punch."

Downtown Houston became an even more attractive evening destination with the arrival of **Sundance Cinemas**. Unlike other dinner-and-a-movie outlets where food is served in the theater itself, Sundance has appetizers, entrées, and beer and wine available for purchase in the lobby that can then be taken in to the movie. One advantage of this system is the ability to assemble your entire cinematic picnic of sorts, so that you can graze as you please without having to order course-by-course and tolerate unpredictable service times. Menu highlights include the sweet, piquant pear and Gorgonzola pizza, the rich Parmesan breadcrumb-crusted mozzarella sticks, and the house-made potato chips. Also not to be



COURTESY STUDIO MOVIE GRILL

missed are Sundance's signature cocktails, the most creative of which are the "Doctor Jones" (pecan-infused whiskey, ginger beer, mole biters, lime) and the "Moonraker" (pear vodka, pineapple juice, jasmine syrup, and lavender bitters).

Thanks to its location in west Houston's bustling CityCentre, **Studio Movie Grill** is an ideal setting to kick back and take a breather between meals, shopping, and frolicking in the fountain (hey, why not?). In addition to booth seating and relatively smaller screening rooms that allow for a more intimate experience, the daily specials (such as \$5 Long Island iced teas on Tuesday) and \$25 prix-fixe menus (one starter, two mains) can really help with your date-night movie budget. Studio Movie Grill has familiar fare such as soft pretzels and pizza, plus some more intriguing bites like coconut chicken tenders. Their dessert menu—including frozen hot chocolate, brownie sundaes, and Nutella beignets—deserves special mention.

The most luxurious film experience can be found near the Galleria at **iPic**, where roughly \$20 buys you a premium VIP seat (covered by an on-call server) that is actually half of a two-person cubbie stocked with pillows and blankets. Enjoy a blockbuster while you sip designer drinks and eat deliciously untraditional movie snacks such as lobster rolls, buffalo-chicken spring rolls, and flaky, fresh-from-the-oven biscuits with ham, cheddar,

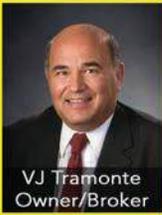
and maple butter. (And by the way, contrary to what some online reviews might claim, those bags of popcorn liberally dispensed by passing servers are free.)

Before or after the show at iPic, stop at **The Tuck Room**, a nearby gastrolounge designed by James Beard Award-winning chef Sherry Yard. The communal seating, attentive bartenders, and extensive shared-plate menu are especially helpful if you're herding a large group. Don't miss the potato and sweet-corn croquettes, ahi tuna poke with edamame and macadamia nut crunch, loaded tater tots with bacon ketchup, and our favorite, the "pappas bravas," a veritable mountain of meatballs resting on a bed of crisp fingerling potatoes. The Tuck Room takes its drinks just as seriously as its food, so try the "Norma Jean," a flirty collaboration of vodka, lemonade, and strawberries, or the "Bees Knees," a liquid tribute to the Lone Star State featuring blue corn whiskey, Texas wildflower honey, and Griffin Apiary black currant mead.

Whether you dream of pitchers of beer paired with the latest Marvel flick or a curated charcuterie plate alongside a rom-com, Houston has many appetizing options. Just remember to buy your tickets early, as these experiences tend to book quickly.

Joanna O'Leary is a freelance food and travel writer based in Houston. Her exploits are chronicled on brideyoleary.com.

📍 **Delicious Fare**
Studio Movie Grill in West Houston's CityCentre offers a plethora of yummy bites such as Chicken Fajita Quesadillas (pictured), Coconut Chicken Tenders, and Nutella Beignets.



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Words from the Corazón

Out Mexican slam poet Chibbi Orduña talks sexuality, culture, and more.

By Josh Watkins

Photo by Adam Rubinstein

The words of a poet often reveal their personal truths as they explore all aspects of life—including sexuality and race.

Chibbi Orduña's poetry does just that. It inspires those closest to him, as well as people he's never met. It inspires him to help others who are in need of an expressive space or voice. From creating his Laredo Border Slam to hosting the weekly Write About Now slam at Avant Garden, Orduña has poetry running in his veins.

Orduña found his own voice in 2005 after hosting an event at the University of Texas at Austin. It was presented by the Queer People of Color and Allies organization as a showcase for queer artists of color. He and Chris Lee, one of the slam poets at the event, hit it off immediately. "He was a cool guy—kind of crazy, but cool. He had a water bottle full of tequila, and I just thought, 'Perfect, you're my friend now.'" Orduña's ideas about poetry were completely changed after hearing Lee perform his poem "My Pussy Is Contagious." Orduña and Lee's friendship blossomed, as Lee symbolized "this queer man of color who has a voice in the community." So, Orduña started writing.

For most writers, inspiration is found in personal experience. "I write a lot of love poems, and my sexuality is my love, so it's always there. I don't try to mask it," Orduña says. Something as strong as sexual orientation can influence him even when he's not even conscience of it. "Being a man, being a gay man, being a Mexican gay man, working in retail, having a theatrical background, having the struggles that I had with addiction—they're always there [as different aspects] of who I am," Orduña says.

Coming out as gay, however, proved to be much more challenging than coming out as a poet. Growing up in Laredo, a border town heavily influenced by Mexican culture, also impacted his coming-out experience.

At first, Orduña's parents attributed his



Out Loud

Chibbi Orduña currently hosts or performs weekly at Avant Garden's Wednesday night poetry slam.

differences to being "artistic [rather] than an average baseball- and football-playing type of guy." But when Orduña's mom found notes that he'd been exchanging with his boyfriend, she went into a panic. He was only 13 or 14 at the time, and being sent to a therapist for a few months was not easy. Then he decided to play along and say, "It was just a phase, you are so right!" A few years later it would happen again, but this time his parents were much more proactive about it. Orduña remembers them saying, "We love you because you're our son, and that's not going to change. But we don't agree with this." Orduña reluctantly explained to them that "there's nothing I can really do about it."

His mom, who was pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology at the time, took to researching. Orduña says that she's always been a "digger," so she eventually came to the same conclusion that most people do: "It's not a disease and it's not something wrong. [You] don't go to hell, you love who you love because that's who you are." His mom had to help his dad get to the same understanding, as he was very much raised in a Mexican machismo setting where a man is a man and there's no way around it. Orduña says that one day it just shifted, and "everything was fine."

Today, Orduña has been with his partner for two years and says it's been great to travel

to Mexico and meet his extended family. "You know, I've never been bashful—if I want to hold my boyfriend's hand, I'm going to. I've always kind of unapologetically been me."

These experiences have inspired Orduña to present an honest voice in his poetry. It's common in slam poetry for an audience member to come up and say, "I needed to hear that." One of Orduña's biggest goals is to let other people know that "in these things that we go through, we're not the only ones." Considering himself a storyteller, Orduña's goal is to tell stories that need to be heard more often.

What Orduña is most proud of is founding Laredo Border Slam in 2010. He remembers it being "The Chibbi Show" for the first few weeks. After recruiting two or three poets and a few judges, he decided they were ready to have a "mini-slam." When it first started to catch on, they would pull audiences of 12 to 20 people. "I went back for their finals a few months ago—300 people in the audience." Orduña says it is gratifying to see how far Laredo Border Slam has come, and seeing all the poets who found that they *do* have a voice. He says that it's changed lives, giving people "the opportunity to have their own space and their own voice."

Having recently joined a slam team, Orduña says it's a lot different than performing solo. The biggest difference is "the family aspect." →



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WORDS FROM THE CORAZÓN

continued from previous page

Team members might give each other insights and constructive criticism, and even if just two poets are performing a piece, all five of them might have worked on it.

Orduña explains that although he's never been one to have lots of friends, his slam team has a strong sense of being a "bro-ship"—a bro-mance involving five guys. "We've really come together like brothers."

The biggest aspect of being on a team is the accountability that each member feels. "We practice three times a week, and you need to be prepared." Orduña says that it's forcing them all to do things they wouldn't normally do—things they aren't necessarily comfortable with. "The accountability and encouragement is making [them] better writers and performers."

Orduña says that being on a team is an experience you can't get by simply coming to a weekly slam and performing solo. He advises aspiring poets to "just write. A lot of times we want every piece to be epic, and it doesn't need to be. No matter how small or bad it is, as long as you write, you're doing something."

Orduña can be found hosting or performing every Wednesday night at Write About Now's weekly slam at Avant Garden.

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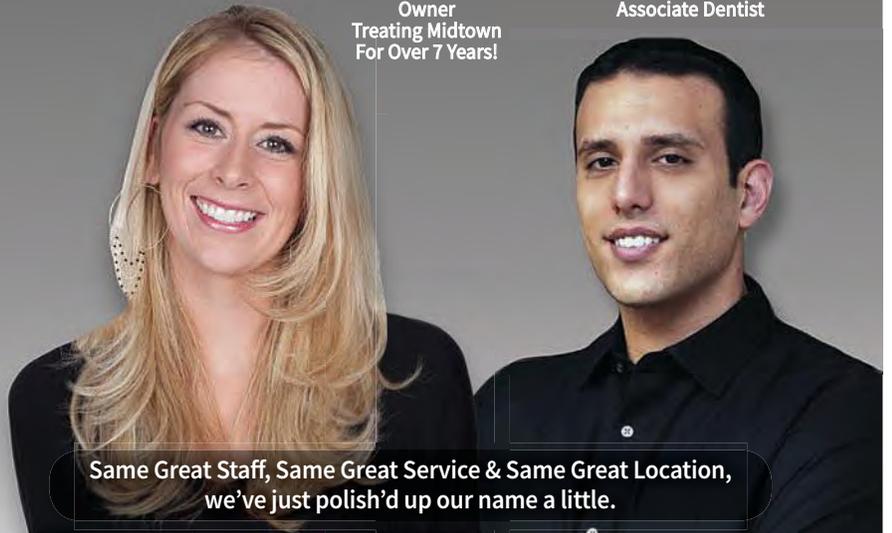
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FALL ARTS PREVIEW

continued from page 34

Die,” or Jerry Herman’s upbeat *Dear Abby* with “Take My Advice and Live!” or Andrew Lloyd Webber’s operatic *Aspects of Juanita* with “I’ve Heard That Song Before,” or Kander and Ebb’s sexy *Speakeasy* with “Color Me Gay”? The show is a campy, affectionate romp through our favorite mode of entertainment and the music of our lives—the Broadway musical. Maybe that sentence should have an exclamation point.

De Kus (The Kiss)

October 12–30

Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Pkwy.

This Dutch play by Ger Thijs, translated by Paul Evans, is autumnal but quietly warmed by the human heart. It’s a journey play, if you will, as two unnamed people on their own inner quests continually cross paths in the woods to confront, challenge, and console each other. “What if” is the question gently asked as the play proceeds. Will they help each other on their separate pilgrimages? A chance encounter can change a life in a heartbeat, can’t it? The 2015 American premiere was directed at St. Louis’ Upstream Theatre by Stages artistic director, Kenn McLaughlin. Now he brings this warm, intriguing philosophical puzzle and its leafy physical production to Houston.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

October 12–November 5

Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave.

Is there any other comedy that seems like it was written on cobweb? This gossamer play by Shakespeare is unique even among all his numerous unique works. It flits across the stage, feather-light, much like goofy Puck who gets everything wrong by putting magic love juice into the wrong people’s eyes, thereby setting in motion the many comic misadventures. Lovers who love someone else fall in love with those who hate them, and vice versa. Then there’s the subplot of Bottom the weaver and his yokels who are rehearsing their play in the mysterious woods. He’s turned into an ass, which enchants the queen of the fairies, thanks to Puck’s wayward shenanigans. The play’s all moonlight, exceptional, bewitching.

Handel’s Jephtha

October 15

Ars Lyrica

Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St.

Now here’s something you don’t hear every day—a rare Handel oratorio (his last, by the way), composed in 1751 as the Great Saxon was going blind and the genre of epic religious choral music was on the wane. Pious gods, kings, and Old Testament judges were kicked out of the theater by audiences who demanded hot pop tunes written by those incessant Italians and

French, who only wrote about sex. The Bible didn’t stand a chance. Jephtha is a militant judge of Israel who battles the Ammonites. In a rash vow, he promises to sacrifice the first person he sees after victory. Unfortunately, who should rush from the tent to greet the returning hero but his only daughter. Handel fills the ironic narrative with his usual sublime melodies and inventive orchestration, whether depicting war or abject sorrow. Ars Lyrica, Houston’s preeminent early-music ensemble led by harpsichordist and artistic director Matthew Dirst, will no doubt bring out all the intricacies and heavenly beauties of this rare score.

Dry Land

October 20–November 5

Mildred’s Umbrella

Studio 101, 1824 Spring St.

A finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, which honors new plays written by women, Ruby Rae Spiegel’s *Dry Land* (2014) receives its Houston premiere from Houston’s preeminent women’s theater company. Not that Mildred’s Umbrella is all-women, but it only produces plays that are decidedly from the distaff perspective. Spiegel’s 90-minute drama is definitely on that side as it details, in chilling clinical terms but without judgment, a teen attempting to have her friend give her an abortion. Neither knows what to do nor how to do what they don’t know. Set in a high school

OUR LINEUP WILL KEEP



locker room with a series of blackout scenes, wary friends Amy and Esther play doctor with alarming results.

David Sedaris

October 22

*Society for the Performing Arts
Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St.*

The pin-prick wit of monologist David Sedaris, always a favorite performer in Houston, should be particularly sharp this election season.

Don't stand too close if you're a Republican.

RandPaul's Drag Race:

Destination 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

October 22

*Resurrection Metropolitan Community
Church, 2025 West 11th St.*

It's about time! Those clever loonies from Halloween Magic (HM) are back for a 25th-anniversary production, and we're laughing before they even appear. Need I tell you that this edition is a send-up of the upcoming election? The outrageous clowns from HM have much to ridicule and mock, and the reunion of sorts includes directors Jerry Miller and Dennis Draper, Gilbert Perez (as Cuban bombshell Venezuela Maria Concepción de Los Angeles Valdez Vallejo González), and Gary Rodd, John Tucker, and Stewart Zuckerbrod as writers. Since 1988, HM's wickedly bitchy comedy revues have raised over \$1 million for HIV/AIDS service

organizations in Houston. Seats go fast, so order now. Premium tables, seating 12, are \$5,000; Star tables, seating 10, are \$1,500; and individual tickets are \$150. This year's beneficiaries are Lazarus House, Legacy, Pet Patrol, Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, and Omega House. A more worthy gala would be hard to find. And a funnier one? No way!

Wolf Hall (Parts I and II)

October 22–December 18

Main Street Theater, 2540 Times Blvd.

Now, this should be juicy. Based on the phenomenal novels by Hilary Mantel, adapted for the stage by Mike Poulton, this immersive two-part series about the life and times of Henry VIII, as seen through the ambitious eyes of equally ruthless Thomas Cromwell, is awash in Tudor intrigue, court backbiting, beheadings, and enough English Renaissance panoply for an entire PBS series. Hey, wait a minute, it was a PBS series. And it was just seen on Broadway last March via the Royal Shakespeare Company in a limited run that had the critics salivating like the wolves they are. You will be, too.

**How to Succeed in Business
Without Really Trying**

October 25–November 6

*Theatre Under the Stars
Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St.*

Frank Loesser's career really took off after a

lucrative freelance stint in Hollywood penning a slew of hit songs for Betty Hutton, Dorothy Lamour, and his Academy Award-winner for Esther Williams, "Baby It's Cold Outside" from *Neptune's Daughter*. Known for his sparkling, surprising lyrics, his music was finally heard on Broadway in *Where's Charley?* (1948), then in the Pulitzer- and Tony-winner *Guys and Dolls* (1950), then in *How to Succeed* (1961), another Tony winner for him. *Succeed* tells the story of J. Pierrepont Finch's Mad Men-era rise—in two weeks—from window washer to the top of the corporate ladder. He's a cad, a bounder, and utterly charming as he walks over everyone before love lays him low. "I Believe in You" is his mantra as he looks at himself shaving in the mirror.

Faust

October 28–November 11

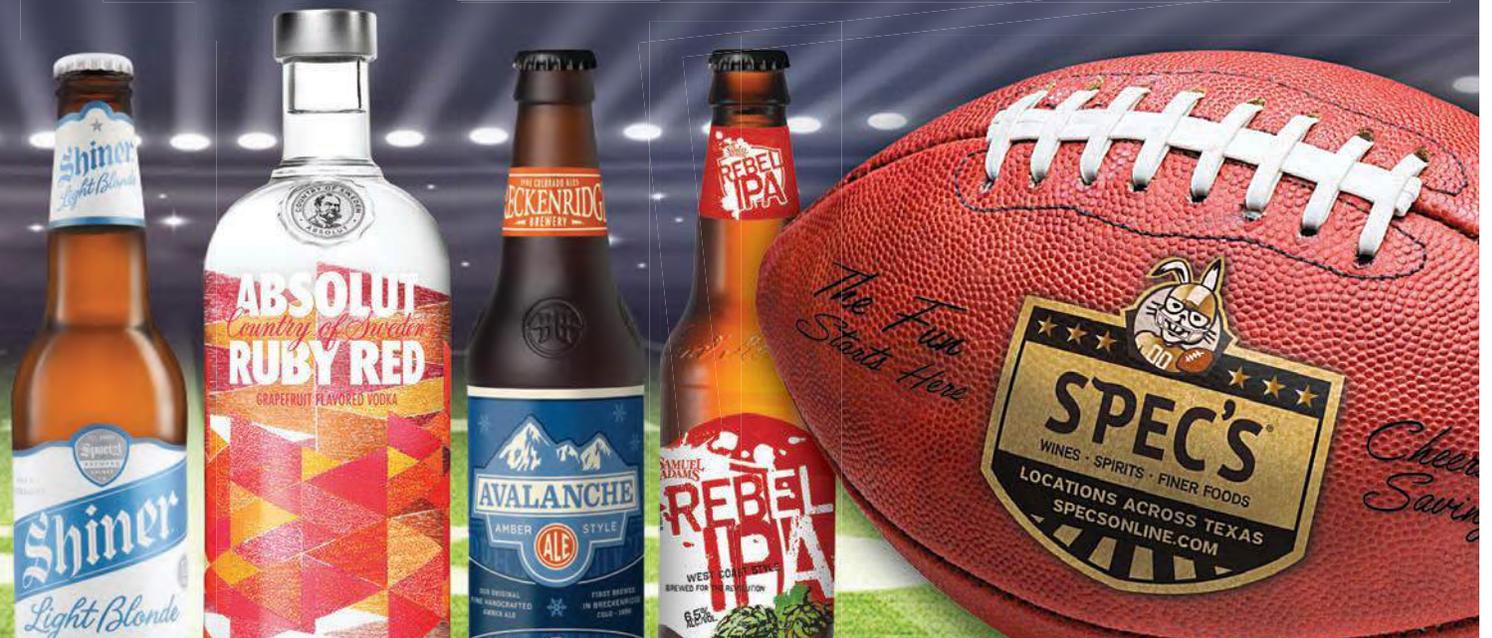
Houston Grand Opera

Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave.

Long before *Les Mis*, *Lion King*, and *Wicked*, there was a musical that struck a chord in the national consciousness. It broke all box-office records and had people singing its tunes endlessly. French composer Charles Gounod (famous for writing a Bach-knockoff version of *Ave Maria*) struck operatic gold with this tale from Goethe about the aging, depressed philosopher who sells his soul to the devil for

continued on page 103

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OUTSMART's Top LGBTQ Hispanic Leaders of 2016

Celebrating these individuals and their positive impact in Houston.

By Megan Smith

Sylvia Rivera, the revolutionary Hispanic trans woman who helped lead the 1969 Stonewall Riots, made waves again in 2001 when she addressed a group of LGBTQ folks in New York City: "I'll be the first one to step on any organization, any politician's toes if I have to, to get the rights for my community," she declared.

Her words ring true for many in the LGBTQ Hispanic community—resilient Chicana feminists, those challenging their culture's ingrained

machismo standards, and those who understand the power of *familia*. To honor these influential community members, OUTSMART reached out to our readers for nominations of LGBTQ Hispanic leaders who make an exceptional impact in Houston. Below, we speak with a sampling of the nominees about their current work, what keeps them moving forward, and—in honor of this being our arts and entertainment issue—their artistic outlet of choice.

Eric Edward Schell

For Houston transplant Eric Edward Schell, art is activism. The openly gay photographer and former musical-theater performer is the



face behind the new "P.R.I.D.E. Portraits: Photographs Representing Individuals Deserving Equality" project. "I made a bold goal of photographing 10,000 people around

the U.S., with individuals' stories attached," Schell says of the project. "The photograph sale proceeds from each photo shoot will benefit a charity in the LGBTQ community. The mission for this project is simple. People will see these photographs, read these stories, and say to themselves, 'That person is relatable to me,' and be prompted to educate themselves about our community. Furthermore, the project will help amplify the concept that we are strong, we are diverse, we are proud, and we are human." Schell learned to give back to his community at an early age, volunteering along with his mother with San Francisco's homeless population. "I have always tried to help others, but sometimes my finances haven't allowed me to do so monetarily," Schell explains. "Thankfully, everyone has time to give away, if they look hard enough." He recommends getting involved with HIV advocacy in Houston. "I think

we need to raise awareness that free testing is available all over the city," he says.

Rosy Mota

While Rosy Mota's artistic skills may be confined to adult coloring books, she's enthusiastic about Houston's cultural arts scene—from attending shows at Miller Outdoor Theatre to viewing the latest exhibit at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. She's also passionate about keeping her fellow Houstonians (and Americans) happy and healthy. Since 2013, Mota has worked as the program manager of Enroll America, the leading nonprofit that—through outreach and education—connects uninsured customers to health insurance, and connects organizations to training on Affordable Care Act best practices. "In my position, I connect people without health insurance from many communities, [including] the Latinx community, to access to healthcare via the Marketplace/Affordable Care Act, or with local clinics that offer free or low-cost health services," Mota explains. "Through this effort, I have learned and seen that minimizing healthcare disparities within communities and improving access to adequate care really does save lives." In October 2015, Mota further targeted her health-access activism to the LGBTQ community by joining the board of the Lesbian Health Initiative (LHI) and, in December 2015, assuming the role of secretary for the organization. "The LGBTQ Latinx community lags behind in many ways," Mota says. "Not because of talent or merit, but rather, [because of] a lack of access to resources



like healthcare services, quality education, job training, and political representation. My advice for LGBTQ Latinx individuals is to become engaged through volunteering, civic engagement, or becoming a member of (or starting) an organization that represents you and your beliefs, and to make your voices heard."

Juan Lerma

Be it through sun salutations, headstands, or acrobatics, Juan Lerma likes to express himself through the art of yoga. "I finally fully committed to my practice in 2016, and I love it," Lerma says. Several years before beginning this physical and spiritual journey, however, Lerma devoted himself to a different passion—higher education. Since May 2014, he has served on the board of Out For Education, helping to provide college scholarships to LGBTQ youth in the Houston area. Prior to serving on the board, Lerma was a proud recipient of an Out For Education scholarship during his college career at the University of Houston Bauer College of Business. "I have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to seek higher education, and have come to understand and experience the benefits of it," Lerma says. →

TOP 10 LGBTQ HISPANIC LEADERS

continued from previous page

“Higher education is the key component to creating change and successful collaboration and understanding with others who have different points of view.” Lerma was also selected to be a part of the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce’s Emerging Leaders Institute, which links the city’s up-and-coming leaders with the corporate, business, and civic communities. It was this involvement that led him to be nominated to Mayor Sylvester Turner’s LGBTQ Task Force in June 2016. My parents



Lerma

◉ Ana Andrea Molina

Proud undocumented Latina trans woman Ana Andrea Molina says art and Latin culture run through her veins. A native of Matamoros, Mexico, Molina is the founder, director, and co-



Molina

ordinator of the Organización Latina de Trans en Texas (OLTT), a group that protects, supports, and advocates for the Latina transgender community in Texas. “Being a trans woman and survivor of violence and drugs, activism is what gives me a real purpose in life,” Molina says. “In the case of undocumented trans Latinas, we are living in a time of serious uncertainty, as we run the risk of being detained [for something] as simple as a traffic case, and placed in ICE custody.” Through her work with OLTT, Molina has collaborated with the youth-led immigrant organization United We Dream, as well as Gender Identity (which creates an affirming space for the empowerment of gender-diverse people) and the Texas Organizing Project. “The laws created in our community against undocumented Latina trans women cause a domino effect,” Molina says. “What happens to one happens to all of us. I really hope we manage to join forces for [future issues that affect] our people and communities.”

◉ Joey Guerra

Growing up, Joey Guerra acted in his school plays and sang in his middle-school choir. Now, as the music critic for the *Houston Chronicle*, writing is Guerra’s art of choice. “I think we all—as cheesy as it sounds—want to make a difference in some way,” he says. “For me, as a journalist, that means telling the stories and showcasing the talent of groups that are still frequently ignored or mishandled by mainstream media: Latinos; the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning communities; and the city’s huge drag community. I strive to make sure everyone is covered equally and accurately. There’s so much talent in Houston throughout those communities. It’s



Guerra

important that they get recognized.” Guerra has volunteered for the Houston Pride Festival and helped run the annual Pride Superstar LGBT singing competition for the past decade. He also warns against apathy toward activism.

“I think complacency is a huge issue,” Guerra says. “Social media can do amazing things, but it’s also turned people into ‘keyboard’ activists. Get up, get out, and actually *do* something. Don’t just Facebook about it.” →

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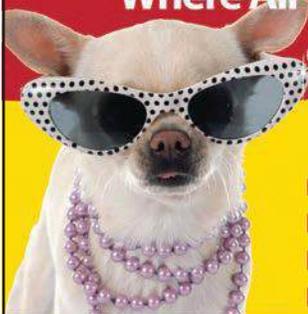
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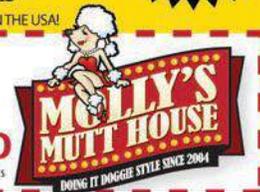


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TOP 10 LGBTQ HISPANIC LEADERS

continued from page 62

⊕ Iris Rodriguez

The arts are near and dear to Iris Rodriguez. Though she has many identities—firefighter, U.S. Army sergeant major, volunteer, Mexican, immigrant, University of Houston Downtown graduate, and lesbian—most don't know she's also a graduate of the Art Institute of Houston. She even had her first art "showing" in fifth grade when she drew caricatures of her school's teachers on the chalkboard. "Ever since I could remember picking up a pencil, I drew on walls, sidewalks, painted my sister's dolls—most anything I thought needed a little bit of color," Rodriguez says. Her creative career path took a turn, however, when she found firefighting. Rodriguez was the first Hispanic woman hired by the Houston Fire Department and, for the past 23 and a half years, she has served as captain of the department, as well as a role



Rodriguez

model for girls everywhere. "At fires when you take off your gear and the bystanders see that you are a woman, it is almost the only thing that takes their attention off of the fire for a moment," she says. "Even today you hear, 'Oh! I didn't know girls could be firefighters...' And you smile." Rodriguez went on to be an adjunct instructor at Houston Community College and teach the first all-female Fire Science course in 2010. She has also devoted volunteer time to the Houston Human Rights Day Festival, Rice University, Youth for Human Rights, Camp Houston Fire, and serves as Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church's Hispanic liaison. "We've made progress on a national level, such as the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, women serving in front-line combat positions, and the right to marry—and we should be proud of our accomplishments," she says. "However, there is still a laundry list of important issues in our community. For example, HERO, healthcare for LGBTQ folks, education, equal pay for women and minorities, immigration reform, youth LGBTQ homelessness in Houston, the constant struggle to keep women's abortion rights protected, gun violence, Black Lives Matter, and the inequality in our justice system are just a few things that I think we can still make progress on. Someone is always in need. There is always a pet that needs petting, a child that needs to be read to, or someone needing to borrow your understanding ear."

⊕ Elia Chino

After watching numerous friends pass away in the early '90s from the growing AIDS crisis,



Chino

Houston trans woman Elia Chino knew it was time to get involved. In addition to volunteering with AIDS patients at Ben Taub Hospital and with AIDS Foundation Houston, Chino formed Fundación Latinoamericana de Acción Social, Inc. (Latin American Foundation for Social Action, or FLAS) in 1994 and currently serves as the organization's executive director. "In those days in Houston, so many people were dying from complications of AIDS in friends' houses because they were afraid to talk about AIDS to their family, partners, and community," she says. "I am able to be strong and continue to fight each day, in memory of all those hundreds that died in my arms." As an initiative of FLAS, Chino has now ventured into the videography scene, creating educational soap operas on YouTube. "I think the most important issue in our community is the health disparities, es-

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pecially in mental health,” Chino says. “Many people suffer from mental health [issues], but due to fear and discrimination, they do not seek help. I encourage everyone to get informed on how we can get involved [by helping] agencies or local groups who advocate for mental health and learning how to assist people who suffer from any type of mental-health issue.”

Guillermo De Los Reyes

“I think I am a closeted dancer who works as [an out] professor,” laughs Dr. Guillermo De Los Reyes. This associate professor of Latin American Culture and Literature at the University of Houston was once part of a Mexican theater troupe that gave him the opportunity to travel to Lithuania. He has also been a part of dance groups that perform modern, Latin, and contemporary dance. Now, the former student has turned educator. De Los Reyes was instrumental in forming the university’s first LGBT Studies minor (the first in the state of Texas)



De Los Reyes

in 2008, and he also helped to found the LGBT Resource Center on campus. “Both initiatives have been paramount for our UH community and also to our Houston community at large, because we serve and collaborate very closely with our local community,” he explains. De Los Reyes has also been involved with the Houston Area Rainbow Collective History; is a local partner with GLAAD (where he helps make sure that Houston’s Hispanic media channels depict the LGBTQ community in a proper way); has worked with the LGBTQ Task Force to serve as a pro bono expert witness in asylum cases for LGBTQ individuals from Mexico; and helped find Spanish-English bilingual volunteers for the 2014 Creating Change Conference in Houston. “My main source of inspiration is my students,” De Los Reyes says. “They are the future of our city, our state, and our country. Thus, I want to have a more just society for them.”

Maria Gonzalez

As a lesbian Chicana, Maria Gonzalez wants to make the community safer for vulnerable individuals in the LGBT community, as well as for herself. She has been an officer of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus since 2002, having served as president, vice-president, and currently as chair of the screening committee. Gonzalez also serves as treasurer of the Texas Transgender Non-Discrimination Summit,

an organization working on more supportive and inclusive trans policies in schools and universities. “The most vulnerable members



Gonzalez

of our LGBT community are our trans [siblings], as well as our youth community,” she says. “Within our trans community, women of color are the most targeted, and organizations that work with them need our support. There is currently a crisis in our transgender women of color community, and that is where I encourage people to work. Our youth community, especially our homeless LGBT youth, also need our support at this moment.” Artistically, Gonzalez is a co-editor of the creative works being produced by the project Voices Breaking Boundaries. “Many of these artists are from the LGBT community,” Gonzalez explains, “but also are voices rarely heard in mainstream creative areas.”

Janet Gil

Houstonian Janet Gil likes to celebrate her Hispanic roots through dance. “Salsa, →



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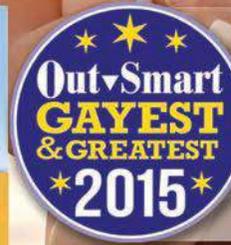
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TOP 10 LGBTQ HISPANIC LEADERS

continued from previous page

merengue, and cumbia dancing are my favorites," she says. Gil first got involved with community activism as a senior at Quest High School. There, she was assigned to find



a human-rights issue she was passionate about and work to improve it. "I, along with other students, did research on human-rights issues such as women's rights, children's rights, genocide, and LGBT rights. We made it our mission to educate others within our community about these issues," she says. Gil was awarded an Out For Education scholarship and, as a college student, held several officer positions (including president) of the school's gay-straight alliance. During her second year in college, Gil volunteered for former mayor Annise Parker's re-election campaign. This involvement led her to donate time to other pro-equality candidates and campaigns such as Jason Cisneroz, council member Stephen Costello, and the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance. Now, Gil serves as elections chair and is a screening-committee member for the Houston Stonewall Young Democrats. "The current and

constant discrimination that our community faces is what inspires me to continue to do the work that I do," she says. "I do not believe that anyone deserves to be treated unfairly. We are all human beings made of the same flesh and blood, and as citizens of this country, we deserve to be free to express ourselves and love whomever we want to. We should not have to live in fear because of who we are."

⊕ Linda Morales

Latina lesbian Linda Morales has been a lifelong supporter of music, dance, art, and theater. For the past several decades, she's also paved the way for much-needed change in the LGBTQ community. In the '80s, when HIV/AIDS was first identified, Morales served as president of Gay and Lesbian Hispanics Unidos (GLHU). "Because the HIV epidemic was attacking the Hispanic community, I led GLHU to form a special committee charged with educating Hispanics about the disease," Morales says. "This committee formed what later became the largest HIV/AIDS agency helping all LGBT residents in Houston." Recognizing the need to represent Latino LGBT issues on a national level, Morales helped form LLEGO, an organization focused on addressing health, immigration, and political issues. In the '90s, Morales joined forces with a few other brave individuals, and as lead plaintiff, challenged Texas' homosexual conduct law,

Texas Penal Code 21.06. Though the law was not overturned, this action paved the way for many successful legal challenges to come, including the landmark *Lawrence v. Texas* case in 2003. Currently, Morales works for the Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation (AFL-CIO), helping her union brothers and sisters build power to improve and change workers' lives. Recently, she joined together with other labor leaders to start a Pride@



Work organization to recognize LGBTQ contributions in the labor movement. "What inspires me to continue to do the work is the inequities in our society that still exist," Morales says. "Until we

are all treated with respect and love, there is much work still to be done to right the ills of our societies." To help with such progressive causes, she stresses the importance of electing Hillary Clinton as president in November. "The office of the president determines U.S. Supreme Court [nominees], National Labor Relations Board appointees, and just about everything that affects our lives as LGBTQ people," Morales says. ■

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Mixing the Culture Pot

Growing up gay and
Austro-Mexican in Houston.

By Josh Inocéncio

I drive west on I-10 to Houston, the sleepy sun stinging my eyes as he climbs down the horizon. Worse than any fog, these luminous rays blind me, blurring the road ahead. I utter one of the few incantations I know: “Huitzilopochtli. I do not appreciate your attacks from the west. You are envious of my yearning for that cave, that primordial womb, Chicomoztoc. But I am Coyolxauhqui’s son, and moon-fire sustains me.”

My family’s roots in Houston reach back to at least the 1930s, when my grandfather José, a native of Michoacán, Mexico, immigrated to Texas to construct railroads and cultivate strawberries with his father, Jesús. During World War II, my grandpa enlisted in the United States Army and was deployed after the war to Austria where he met my grandmother, Fritzi. Born in Vienna, the bombings across her homeland had displaced her before she settled in Linz, Austria, with her parents and younger siblings. In the devastation of a war-torn continent, my grandparents kindled new love, crossed the Atlantic, and raised seven children, including my dad, in Houston, Texas.

This family lineage colors my earliest memories. Grandpa José died from a heart attack nine years before I was born, but Oma Fritzi told me her tales about Austria and Mexico, fashioning fantasy images in my child’s mind of the far-off lands from which my ancestors emerged. Lands where Saint Bernards bounded through avalanches to rescue lost wanderers, lands where *La Virgen* granted prayers for those whose knees dug deep into her earth. I heard these stories along with the fairy tales Oma read me, and all of them ignited my love for crafting narratives through performance.

Growing up as an Austro-Mexican, cultural awareness was always present. I knew which languages I wanted to learn, and I had family members with whom I could practice. I learned our recipes that were passed down orally through generations and still converge in cultural harmony during the holidays when we eat



A Man of Many Identities

Austro-Mexican Houstonian Josh Inocéncio visits the pyramids in Jalisco, Mexico. Below, Inocéncio performs in *Purple Eyes*, his one-man play in which he explores the machismo of his Mexican family through a queer lens.

tamales for dinner and Linzertorten for dessert.

But these cultures and their myths—from countries much older than the United States—also shepherded my sexual orientation as a gay man. While living away from Houston in the swampy Florida flatlands during graduate school, I learned to embrace my sexuality as a cultural core that bound together my ethnicities. My research included queer indigenous identities in the Americas, commonly referred to in English as “two-spirit,” indicating a person who is born with masculine and feminine spirits in balance. As Chicana author Cherrie Moraga writes in *Still Loving in the (Still) War Years*, “It was evident then, as it is now, that there are some of us born this way, possessing pronounced male and female attributes, and this possession is not a curse, but a blessing with its own integral power, which requires respect from our community.” Both historically and in the remaining indigenous communities, these individuals fulfill necessary roles, such as mediating between genders and cultures. Far from simply being appropriated, the history of these same-sex-loving and gender-bending individuals lives on in my bloodline.

That history also gave me the courage to come out and claim my identity.

My Mexican heritage, then, is inseparable from my sexuality. When I was younger, I took spicy peppers and Taquería Arandas for granted. But when I wandered away from these Texas lands, closeted still and nostalgic for my childhood upbringing, I discovered how my ethnic inheritance and sexuality co-extend. Like the Houston ports that shaped me, I’m a bridge-maker—a soul in which different →



MIXING THE CULTURE POT IN HOUSTON

continued from previous page

languages, customs, and memories meet. If I don't open the border to them all, who will?

The sun god Huitzilopochtli dismembered his warrior sister Coyolxauhqui, but she returns in pieces as the moon, fully formed once a month. I'm tied to her phases, balancing the waves of my restless ancestors. The moon teaches me to blend the memories. The women in my family have carried our history. Oma. Tante Lola. Tía Agapita. Tía Maria-Helena. As Coyolxauhqui knows, we spend a whole life remembering.

With each generation preserving fewer fragments, I perform to remember. Last year I wrote and performed my first solo play, *Purple Eyes*, on my family's Mexican and P'urhépecha history. Now I'm working on the second play, *The Little Edelweiss; or An Immigrant's Fairytale*, which revisits Austria and the queer precedents in my Germanic blood. The third play, *Chocolate Gravy and White Jesus*, will focus on my mother's side of the family, which is mostly from the mystic culture of Appalachia in rural Kentucky. These plays will form a trilogy in which I perform both as myself and as ancestral figures from each of my three backgrounds.

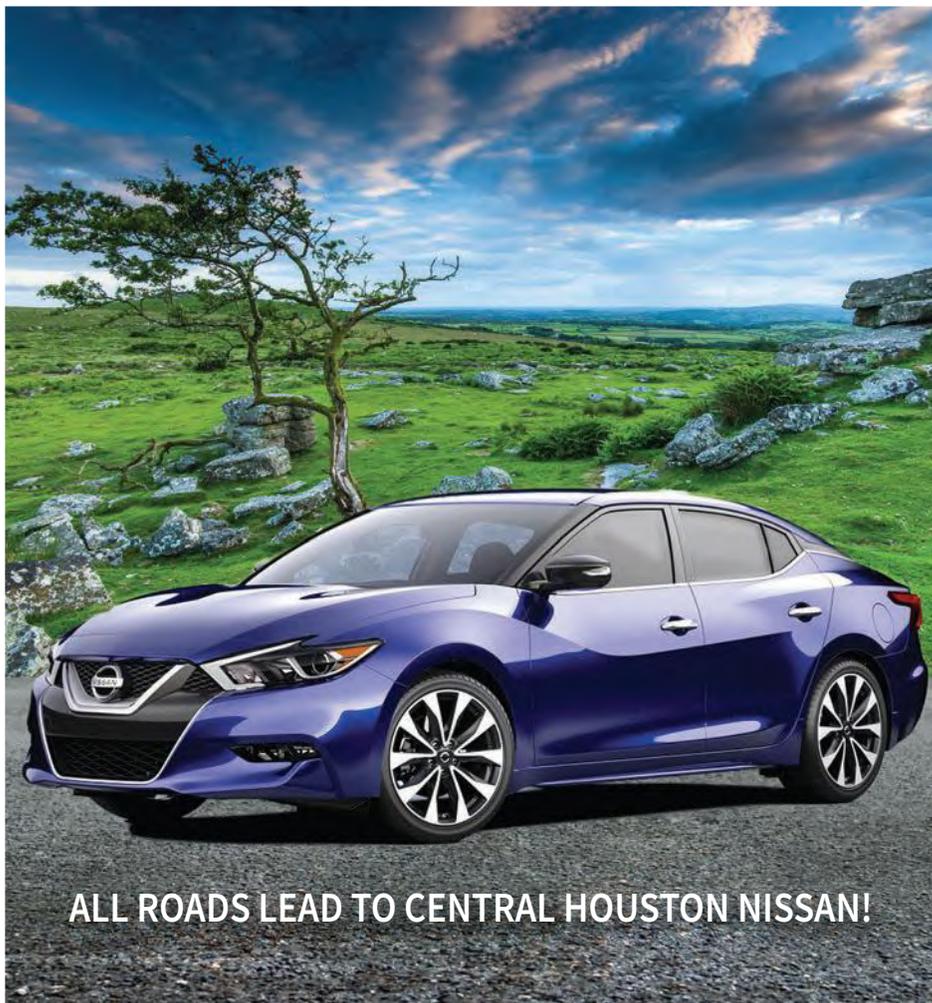
To write *Purple Eyes*, I collected memories from family members willing to share their stories about Texas and Mexico. I assembled these stories into a performance piece that includes passages of *machismo* from four generations of Inocencio men—from my great-grandpa Jesús, to my grandpa José, to my dad Joel, and finally to me, an inheritor of their experiences and a conjuror of my own.

I'm embarking on a similar journey to write the next plays. As a theater artist and cultural worker, I'm crafting these stories that emerge from pockets of the United States to illuminate the narratives of immigrants who have chiseled out a mosaic of American identities. Reawakening these histories through staged encounters with ancestors is, for me, a path to redressing the homophobia, sexism, and racism that have corrupted all our lineages.

Beyond performing, I've also begun sharing my writing process in workshops so that other individuals, from both artistic and non-artistic backgrounds, can create solo plays based on their own ancestral memories. In a society that encourages us to forget our cultural histories, remembering is an act of survival. But revisiting our ancestors' stories fulfills the human need for engaging with sacred myths and discerning our purpose in the world.

Let the balancing begin, my friends.

You can contact Josh Inocencio about his workshops at josh.inocencio14@gmail.com or view his *Purple Eyes* website at thepurpleeyes.com. You can also view his personal website with other projects at joshinocencio.com.



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Immigrants v. The World

Lawyer Raed Gonzalez discusses electoral politics and LGBT discrimination.

By Josh Inocencio

Originally from Puerto Rico, Raed Gonzalez has crafted a career here in Houston as an immigration attorney dedicated to defending immigrants and refugees from all over the world. Over the last 18 years in Texas' largest city, Gonzalez has argued and won three Supreme Court cases (all pro-bono) that have fundamentally changed how courts interpret immigration laws in the United States. In addition to those successes, Gonzalez has cultivated an inclusive firm that welcomes LGBT immigrants, and particularly transgender individuals who still experience severe discrimination both in their home countries and in the U.S. legal system.

But Gonzalez didn't always practice immigration law. After finishing his law degree at Inter American University of Puerto Rico, he moved to Houston to study and practice health law. While he initially sought out medical-malpractice cases (largely because many people in his family were doctors), he ultimately decided to pursue a legal career that offered more "personal satisfaction."

His lucky break came when the law firm he worked for presented him with an asylum case that they believed wouldn't go anywhere—and was scheduled to be heard in court the next day. "This is a real case," Gonzalez recognized after reviewing the details. Over the course of an evening, he studied and prepared what he needed to defend a Lebanese immigrant seeking to stay in the United States.

"I fought and fought and fought, and I won. When [the court told the immigrant] he had



Fighting for Justice

Immigration attorney Raed Gonzalez (front) has cultivated an inclusive firm that welcomes all LGBT immigrants, including transgender immigrants who face transphobic discrimination and violence in their home countries.

won, he just looked at me and started crying. He stood up and hugged and kissed me on both cheeks," remembers Gonzalez. "'Thank you for saving my life,' he said. I never realized what I could do as an immigration lawyer."

From that moment, Gonzalez only took on immigration cases, working at several law firms around Houston before eventually opening his own. "I started five years ago with a desk and a part-time secretary, and now we have 12 attorneys," he says. "We're not afraid

of fighting."

While Gonzalez represents immigrants and refugees from all over the world, he estimates that around 80 percent are from Latin American countries—mostly Mexico, followed by El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. These nationalities have thriving communities in the Houston area, and they have all experienced unwarranted vitriol this year from the Republican Party's standard-bearer, Donald Trump. →

continued from previous page

“I’m really expecting a sweep [this November],” says Gonzalez, predicting not only a Hillary Clinton win for the White House, but also a win for Democrats in the Senate and the House.

While Gonzalez argues that President Obama’s executive actions in 2014 were “perfectly legal,” he emphasizes that the former Secretary of State will need cooperation in both congressional chambers to effectively pass immigration reform.

“We should be prioritizing criminals and terrorism and all these threats to Americans,” Gonzalez says, instead of going after people on the street corner who own a taco stand, pay taxes, and have three children who are U.S. citizens. In his experience, the main reason that people move here to work and support their families is “because the economy in their country is dying.”

Alternatively, if Gonzalez’ electoral predictions don’t hold and Trump wins the presidency, the prospects for undocumented immigrants living in this country will be grim. “He will never be able to accomplish [many of his campaign promises], but he’s talking to the ignorant and the people who don’t know the law,” Gonzalez reassures, dismissing his talk of a border wall or the mass deportation of 11 million undocumented immigrants. “But,” he warns, “there’s going to be a lot more enforcement, because [immigration] offices aren’t going to have discretion to decide which cases to prioritize.”

On the other hand, Trump’s candidacy has provided a kernel of hope as more and more immigrants are seeking to naturalize so they can vote in November. Gonzalez’ office even offered free consultations to facilitate the rise in citizenship requests.

But regardless of which candidate wins this November, there are still challenges within the U.S. legal system for LGBT immigrants. While the situation for gay and lesbian immigrants has drastically improved now that the Supreme Court recognizes same-sex marriage, there are still hurdles for orphaned children in need of caretakers who are being brought across the border by gay uncles and lesbian aunts. However, according to a recent *New York Times* report, even this has improved as asylum qualifications for Central American refugees have expanded to allow more caretakers and guardians to remain with refugee children.

Sadly, the discriminatory practices toward transgender immigrants haven’t abated as much. “It’s very tough to educate an immigration judge about the particular threats and challenges of the [transgender] community,” Gonzalez says. Even worse, he adds, is that immigration judges frequently do not distinguish between sexual orientation and gender iden-

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tity, treating them the same without attention to the unique prejudices against transgender people.

For example, in 2006, an immigration judge treated defendant Edin Carey Avendano-Hernandez, a transwoman from Mexico, as if she were a man, even though she had transitioned. Avendano-Hernandez entered the U.S. as an undocumented worker but was deported after injuring someone while driving drunk. Because she committed a felony, she was jailed and deported. Then she returned to the United States to seek asylum from transphobic violence in Mexico. Last year, in the opinion for *Edin Carey Avendano-Hernandez v. Loretta E. Lynch* written by Judge Jacqueline H. Nguyen of the Ninth Circuit, a panel found that not only did the immigration judge in the previous case use incorrect pronouns, but also that the Board of Immigration Officials “erred in assuming that recent antidiscrimination laws in Mexico have made life safer for transgender individuals, while ignoring significant record evidence of violence targeting them.”

As this case demonstrates, there is a lingering misconception that because many Latin

American nations, like Mexico, are improving governmental policies for LGBT rights, those communities now enjoy greater stability. The opposite is frequently true, as greater legal protections have actually provoked a violent backlash against gays, lesbians, and particularly transgender people.

Yet, with opinions like Judge Nguyen’s, the legal culture in the United States is changing. “Many LGBT immigrants are unaware that the law can protect them,” Gonzalez says. “They come from countries where this is a sin, where everybody has rejected them because of religion and they are afraid to come out.”

With these realities in mind, Gonzalez has strived to create a space where everyone feels welcome—especially since some law firms still discriminate against LGBT immigrants.

“We have to treat everybody equally,” he adds. “It’s all about equality. It’s right there in the Constitution, and nobody wants to read it.”

Josh Inocencio is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine, a playwright, and a freelance writer. Read all of his OUTSMART articles at outsmartmagazine.com/author/josh-inocencio.

Make It Official, Texas!

Affordable legal services for the transgender community.

San Antonio lawyer Justin P. Nichols, a member of the LGBT community, increased his activism for transgender rights during the fight to pass San Antonio’s equal-rights ordinance protecting sexual orientation and gender identity. Soon after the San Antonio City Council passed their version of a measure similar to Houston’s failed ordinance, Nichols and his firm launched “Make It Official San Antonio,” to provide pro-bono legal services to transgender individuals seeking to legally change their names. While lawyers often charge upwards of \$2,000 for that service, Nichols realized that, given the achievements over the years, there is no longer a reason to charge so much.

“Initially, it was pro-bono for young people, and I realized it isn’t that hard,” Nichols remembers. “We can do this inexpensively. These small legal maneuvers do not need to be cost-prohibitive for our community.”

The San Antonio campaign received such an overwhelming response from the transgender community in Bexar County that Nichols has created “Make It Official Texas,” which now serves trans individuals all over the Lone Star State. While clients outside of Bexar County must still travel to San Antonio and pay a \$500 filing fee, Nichols’ efforts have significantly eased a once-arduous process for transgender Texans. And the good news is that Nichols can even assist clients born outside of Texas.

“I never expected it to be such an emotional process,” Nichols relates. “I’m a better advo-

cate for transgender rights because of these clients.”

There are a few remaining hurdles, especially the Texas Vital Statistics’ constant quibbling over “gender” and “sex” on birth certificates, but Nichols is successfully wading through these legal intricacies. And for clients who qualify, it is even possible to waive part of the \$500 filing fee. In addition, Nichols’ firm sometimes serves as a miniature travel agency, providing low-cost housing options and even arranging group accommodations to further limit hotel and gas expenses. Thus far, he has experienced incredible success with clients throughout Texas.

On the web page for Make It Official, which is located on the Nichols Law Firm website, prospective clients can download all the necessary paperwork that they will need to bring to San Antonio in order to change their legal names.

“Houston is starting to pick up really fast,” Nichols muses. He encourages Houstonians unfamiliar with his services to come to San Antonio as soon as they are able.

“To the trans community: you already are who you are; let’s just go through the process and get the paperwork done,” he admonishes. “We want to make this process as smooth, affordable, and accessible as possible.”

—Josh Inocencio

To contact the Nichols Law Firm about a legal name change, visit thenicholslawfirm.com/makeitofficial.php or call the firm at 210.354.2300.

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Know Your Voting Rights

Houston attorney Abbie Kamin stresses the need for more voter education.

By David Goldberg

When Abbie Kamin was 13, she felt a call to action. While on a trip to Washington DC with the Post Oak School, Kamin convinced her teachers to drop the pre-planned activities for the day and take their middle-school group to protest—at the Supreme Court. It was December 2000, and *Bush v. Gore* was being decided. “It was the first time I ever saw a massive protest and social action taking place, and it changed my life forever,” Kamin says. “2000 was the perfect example of an election where every person’s vote mattered, and there was something terribly wrong with the election system.”

Now, as an attorney at Brazil & Dunn, the 29-year-old firebrand works to defend the rights of Texans whose ability to vote has been obstructed by restrictive laws. With Election Day looming in November, Kamin once again faces an election that could change the identity of the nation. This time, she and her associates are preparing to galvanize Texas voters who have been most affected by the state’s discriminatory laws: people of color and transgender citizens. Based on recent developments at the municipal and state level, Kamin’s work is needed now more than ever.

In early August, Texas’ 14th Court of Appeals denied a transman’s request to change his assigned gender on his driver’s license. Though the petitioner was able to at least change his name on the ID, he cannot confirm his true gender in the eyes of the state, and he risks being denied access to vote in November,



Breaking It Down

As part of her work with the Campaign Legal Center, lawyer Abbie Kamin worked to help people who had difficulties registering to vote after Texas passed stricter voter ID laws in 2011.

thanks to absurd voter laws that Texas lawmakers enacted in 2011.

After a year in which right-wing organizers effectively dismantled the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, and the safety of minority Americans is more threatened than ever by a discriminatory GOP, conservative politicians now wish to block trans Houstonians and people of color from exercising the definitive right of all Americans—the right to vote.

State laws require voters to present one of seven forms of photo ID, such as a passport or driver’s license. While such demands don’t sound too severe, they can present endless complications to low-income voters, or to trans voters whose gender identity cannot be fully validated by the state. Texans who aren’t able to provide up-to-date ID must endure a labyrinth of bureaucratic nonsense to vote at the polls. For example, if voters cannot provide an up-to-date driver’s license, they must reapply at the Department of Public Safety using secondary documents, including a birth certificate. And for those who don’t have birth certificates, the complications double.

“I would challenge anybody to navigate the system that has been set up [without] a car or

a birth certificate or \$300 to spend,” Kamin says. “It’s not as easy as one would think if you don’t have all the underlying documents that are required.”

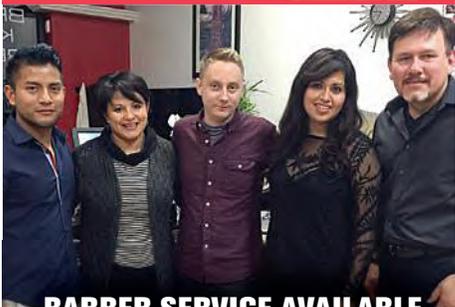
In 2014, Kamin worked with an engineer named Anthony Settles, who was blocked from voting because his name was changed in 1964 when he was 14. Because the clerk’s office was not able to locate his birth certificate, Settles was left cornered and disenfranchised. And while the idea that this bureaucratic morass could change election outcomes may seem like a wild conspiracy theory, evidence in a 2011 lawsuit indicated that nearly 600,000 Texans (mostly people of color) would not be able to vote under the strict laws.

“[Republicans] knew exactly what they were doing when they passed this law, and they were highly effective at doing it,” Kamin says. They wanted to diminish and suppress the minority vote, because minorities in this state tend to vote for Democrats. And they use fear tactics to drive discrimination, and that’s not what our state is. Houston is the most diverse city in the country. The laws that are being passed at the state level do not represent what our city is about.” →



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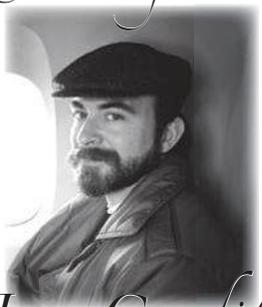
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KNOW YOUR VOTING RIGHTS

continued from previous page

So for the estimated 125,000 trans Texans, voting booths have become a major source of anxiety. In order to confirm one's gender on a state ID, a trans person would have to provide the DMV or DPS with a court order verifying that they completed gender confirmation surgery. Those who cannot afford surgery or don't want it could be in trouble. And even if their IDs pass muster in the eyes of the state, they still face uncomfortable questioning or confrontation from poll officials.

Fortunately, Texas finally took a step forward—or, at least, one less step backward—in late August, when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit passed a motion to relax the state's brutally harsh law. If that court order is enacted without issue—which is unlikely—Texas voters without necessary ID could present alternative documents such as bank statements to prove their identities, and sign affidavits admitting that they had difficulty obtaining the required forms of identification.

But Kamin fears that even if voting requirements are fully relaxed, it may be too late for Latino, black, and trans voters to learn their rights and get to the polls. "Okay, the law has changed," she says. "But how much public education is the state going to pay for? How much training is the state going to implement for poll workers? There's already been so much confusion with the law. Now to change it again to make it easier to vote is great, but we'll not be successful unless the state puts the money and education and training into it. It's a scare tactic and an intimidation tactic. There is evidence that people didn't go to the polls because they didn't think they had the right ID, even though they did."

If the state government is unwilling to educate its voters about their rights, the best thing for those voters is to educate themselves. To learn which documents are required in this November's election, voters should check the Department of Public Safety site at dps.texas.gov. Trans voters should check the National Center for Transgender Equality site at transequality.org.

As for Kamin, she will continue to fight the election laws and try to convince minority Texans that their voices count. "When you [suffer discrimination] based on your race, or have an additional hurdle to overcome based on your gender, I cannot imagine what that is like," she says. "People say that they feel like their state and their country don't want them and that they're not accepted. What I'm committed to is making sure that not only is everyone accepted, but that everyone has equal rights in this country. Your rights are your rights, and they are equal under the law."

David Goldberg is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

Parties, Platforms, and Planks

Where Democrats and Republicans stand on healthcare.

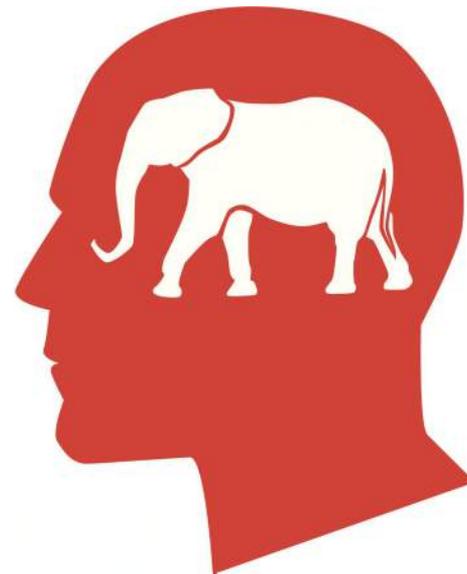
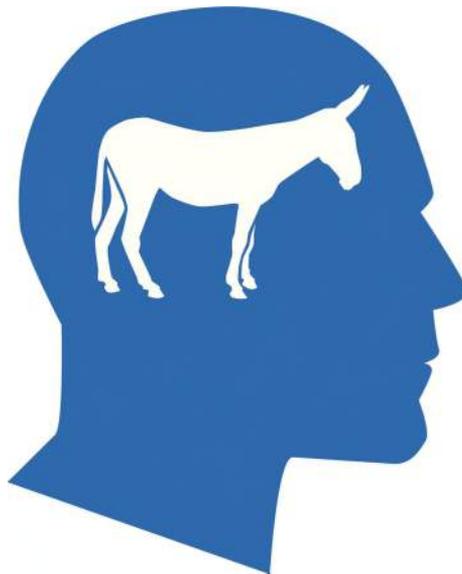
By Januari Leo

“Hillary Clinton is a liar who displays no warmth.” “Donald Trump is an egomaniac who spews hatred with little consideration for repercussions.” Turn on the news (or open up social media) for less than five minutes and expect to be inundated with words and images that reinforce these statements. Politics has grown exponentially more divisive, and much of this centers on personalities while completely ignoring important policy questions.

Fortunately, policy issues still play a role in shaping party platforms—those lofty statements of principles, goals, and strategies crafted by party leaders. In its preamble, the 2016 Republican platform states that it is “a handbook for returning decision-making to the people, a guide to the constitutional rights of every American, and a manual for the kind of sustained growth that will bring opportunity to all those on the sidelines of our society.” By contrast, the Democratic preamble states that “cooperation is better than conflict, unity is better than division, empowerment is better than resentment, and bridges are better than walls.”

Both party platforms spend time on healthcare. The Affordable Care Act (ACA, or “Obamacare”) has been a cause célèbre since its passage in 2010, and it receives ample attention in both platforms. Republicans vow an immediate repeal upon the election of their presidential candidate (assuming they maintain control of both the House and the Senate), stating that Obama’s plan “imposed a Euro-style bureaucracy to manage its unworkable, budget-busting, conflicting provisions.” In its stead, the Republican plan would “reduce mandates, promote price transparency, limit federal requirements on both private insurance and Medicaid, and allow consumers to buy insurance across state lines.”

Democrats are “proud to be the party that passed Medicare, Medicaid, and the ACA,” and believe that “healthcare is a right, not a privilege.” In addition to continuing to champion



the ACA, they seek to give power to the states to create innovative healthcare solutions through waivers, curb surprise billing that can lead to excessive medical debt, and keep fighting until Medicaid expansion has been adopted in every state.”

The LGBT community is featured in both parties’ healthcare planks, both implicitly and explicitly. The Republican platform has garnered considerable attention for stating that they “support the right of parents to consent to medical treatment for their minor children,” which has been seen as condoning controversial conversion therapy. Religious-freedom laws have been gaining traction across the United States, and the GOP explicitly believes that “America’s healthcare professionals should not be forced to choose between following their faith and practicing their profession.” These laws, like the ones passed in Tennessee and Mississippi earlier this year, make it legal for health professionals to deny treatment to clients who violate their personal beliefs. Democrats, in contrast, “support a progressive vision of religious freedom that respects pluralism and rejects the misuse of religion to discriminate.” They pledge to address discrimination and barriers in reproductive healthcare based on gender, sexuality, race, income, and disability.

Prior to the conventions, a group of HIV/AIDS advocates and activists from across the U.S. met with Democratic candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton to gauge their

commitment to achieving an AIDS-free generation. The result was the inclusion of an HIV/AIDS plank in the Democratic platform that encourages the implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, increased research funding for the National Institutes of Health, and a cap on pharmaceutical expenses. The Republican platform does mention AIDS in the global context of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), but not domestically. However, there is a plank on reforming the Food and Drug Administration, including passing legislation that gives people with terminal illnesses the right to try medicines that have yet to be approved. This is notable, as this concept was a key and contentious part of the early fight to speed the development of HIV/AIDS medication. (Initial requests for comment from Republican candidate Donald Trump’s campaign have yet to receive a serious response.)

Before entering the voting booth this fall, it is critical to move beyond the cult of personality and try to understand the policies that each party is putting forward for the country. The party platforms are easy to read, and broad in their scope. The last day to register to vote is October 11; early voting begins October 24, and Election Day is November 8. It’s time to look beyond the candidates and find out where each party stands on the issues.

Januari Leo is the director of public affairs at Legacy Community Health’s Montrose clinic.



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Spoken Like a True Texan

Author Marianne Williamson talks politics, gay America, and growing up.

By Shirley Knight

“I feel strongly about gay marriage,” Marianne Williamson says. “I don’t think gay people deserve to be married because they’re gay. They deserve to be married because they’re American. ‘Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ if you’re American—what else is there to discuss?” Williamson is a best-selling author and sought-after speaker who garners national and international attention.

“I am a romantic about America,” she says. “Take gay people—despite America’s problems, how can you compare being gay here to being gay in Uganda?” For her, the American dream is that any of us “can live our lives as long as we’re not hurting anyone else.” In 2014, Williamson ran for congress in California. It was her first campaign and a professional politician won the race, but Williamson says the experience didn’t leave her cynical about politics.

“Every generation of Americans has to rediscover our passion for democratic possibility. ‘Exceptionalism cannot be bequeathed from one generation to another,’” she says. She also exhorts people to appreciate “the blessings of American democracy and liberty, and the extraordinary sacrifices made by people throughout our history to ensure those liberties.”

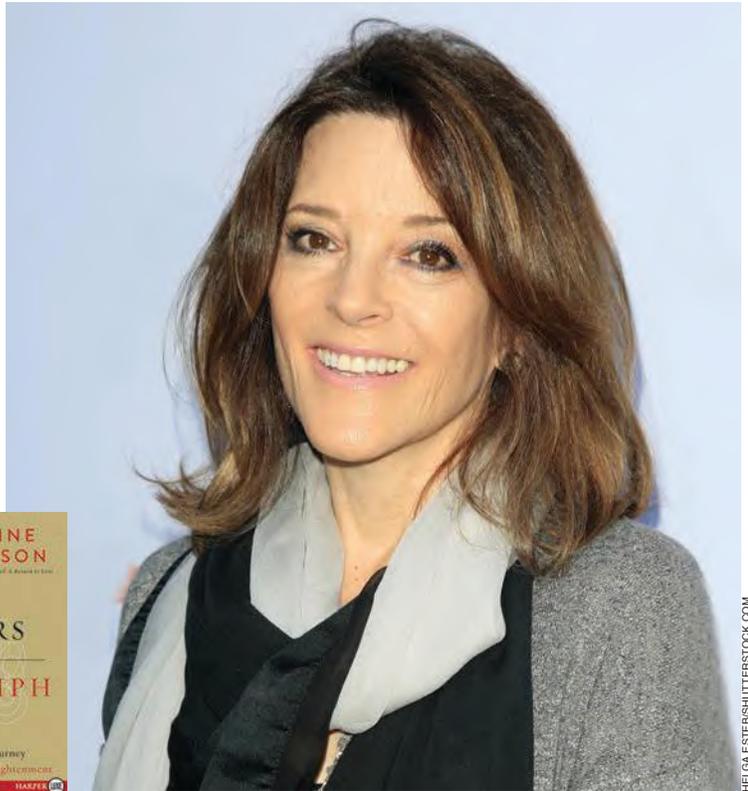
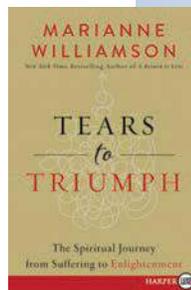
To those who are disillusioned by or disinterested in politics, Williamson says, “Not voting is a vote. When there’s low voter turnout, Republicans win. When there’s high voter turnout, Democrats win, in general. If you think that by not voting you’re rebelling against the system, you’re fooling yourself. If you’re not voting, you’re voting Republican. And in this election, if you’re not voting, you’re voting for Trump.”

Six of Williamson’s books have been on the *New York Times* best-seller list, including four

“Barbara Jordan came from Texas. Ann Richards came from Texas. We’re out there saying what we think.”

Totally Texan

Spiritual teacher, author, and lecturer Marianne Williamson praises her hometown of Houston for being a progressive city. *INSET: Williamson’s latest book.*



that reached number one. *Newsweek* magazine has named her one of the 50 most influential baby-boomers. Her message includes encouraging people to find and follow their own internal guidance. “[You might] feel passionate about animal rights,” she says. “Well, that’s your assignment. Another person feels passionate about filmmaking—that’s their assignment.”

“Issues are going to come up in your life where you need to forgive,” she says, “where you need to atone, where you need to take responsibility for your life, where you need to clean up some mess in your life, where you need to make some apology, make some amends, deal with some character defects. And the more you purify your own heart, the more you will know where you can and should make a difference.”

In her talks across the country, Williamson is encouraging people to “stop answering the call of the cell phone and start answering the call of the ages. We are so bombarded with distracting impulses today,” she says. An alternative is to get involved in “great and noble

things. To read a great novel, to listen to great music, to cultivate enrichment does something to you,” she says. “There’s a lot of information available today, and whatever great and noble thing you’re interested in, you can find it.”

Williamson was born and raised in Houston, where she attended public schools: Mark Twain Elementary, Pershing Middle School, and Bellaire High School. Her father was an immigration lawyer, and her mother was involved in volunteer work. “Houston was a smaller city when I was growing up here,” she says. “It wasn’t this sprawling metropolis that it is now. It was big enough to be sophisticated, but small enough to feel containable.”

“Houston is a totally cool world-class city,” she says. “It’s a progressive city. It doesn’t at all fit some of the stereotypes that some people have about Texas. When people say to me sometimes, in my work, ‘You don’t seem like a Texan,’ I have said, ‘No, I am totally Texan. This *is* a Texan. Barbara Jordan came from Texas. Jim Hightower came from Texas. Ramsey Clark [the U.S. attorney general under President Johnson] came from Texas. Ann Richards came from Texas. This is Texan. →



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SPOKEN LIKE A TRUE TEXAN

continued from previous page

We're out there saying what we think.”

In the early '80s, Williamson left behind singing gigs at Rockefeller's nightclub and a bookstore she owned in the Heights and moved to Los Angeles. There, she continued practicing and teaching a set of books called *A Course in Miracles*, which led to her becoming closely aligned with the gay community. It was a time when many young gay men were getting sick and dying. "I think it's important to keep stories alive," Williamson says. That time period is "the story of the bravery, the love, and the power activated. Gay America was not a politicized force before the AIDS crisis. We would not have gay marriage today were it not for the AIDS crisis, because that is what led to the politicization, the Human Rights Campaign, and so forth."

Another lasting effect is that "AIDS profoundly impacted the mainstream medical model in the United States," Williamson says. "When AIDS began here, Western allopathic medicine had nothing to offer. We celebrate and are grateful for the fact that today it does, but it took them time. When all these people were told, 'We have nothing to offer, you're going to die,' they didn't just go home to die," Williamson explains. "That's when people began seriously investigating all sorts of alternative healing

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methods. The word then was 'alternative,' then it moved to 'complementary,' and now it has landed where it belongs at 'integrative.' The whole integrative medical model emerged the way it has in the United States, and has become such a staple of our mainstream understanding, because of a particular crisis where allopathic medicine had no more cards to play."

Williamson says, "I think a part of conscious and mature living is the development of a sense of responsibility to your ancestors—to those who came before you, as well as to those who will come after you—to know the history of your tribe and to claim appropriate pride in the bravery of your people." Williamson says it's important to keep in mind "both the things that need to be addressed and the things that have progressed. That's what keeps you from being cynical or angry, and to know you need to keep working."

"Any time there's social movement forward, there's pushback," she adds. "That's part of a mature understanding. It's unbelievable the progress that's been made, but we're not all the way there. The great cathedrals of Europe took hundreds of years to build. All of the artisans and the stoneworkers and the painters and the bricklayers knew that the work would not be completed in their lifetime, but their love lifted them up and carried them above their self-centered concern about whether or not they would ever see the job complete." She quotes Jewish philosopher Rabbi Tarfon who said, "You are not obliged to complete the work, but neither are you allowed to evade it."

Williamson says she remembers saying to people, "Before the AIDS crisis, you [probably] weren't known for voting for the underdog because it hadn't come home to you." At an immature level of social and political development, we vote for our pocketbook. At a more evolved level, we vote for issues of social justice because, as they say in Judaism, they might not be coming for us this generation, but it could happen at any time."

Williamson says our challenge now is "to develop political, educational, social, and economic systems that promote and foster the better angels of our nature." She says we are more than "economic beings who need to compete with each other to get ahead." Instead, we can see ourselves as being "in communion with other people and with the planet itself. I'm optimistic, long-term," she says. "Optimism is a moral imperative. Long-term, I know it's going to be glorious. I just know it is."

Marianne Williamson was in Houston on May 14 to speak at the Celebrate Your Life conference at Unity of Houston. Her most recent book, *Tears to Triumph: The Spiritual Journey from Suffering to Enlightenment*, which explores how we respond to times of depression, was released on June 14. For more information, see marianne.com.

Shirley Knight is the founder of awakenow.org.



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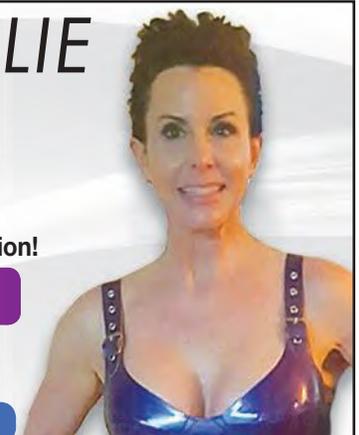
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Power in Community

The 24th annual Houston Transgender Unity Banquet honors leading activists.

By Terrance Turner

Photo by Dalton DeHart

On September 17, our community's largest annual transgender event will take place at the Marriott Hotel in north Houston. The Houston Transgender Unity Committee (HTUC) Unity Banquet, now in its 24th year, is a night where trans people and their allies can come together to honor the activists working on the community's behalf. The black-tie event also raises money for education scholarships, Houston Pride activities, the Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other endeavors.

The HTUC scholarship committee awards continuing-education funds to deserving candidates. The Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund application can be found at unitybanquet.com, and awards are granted throughout the year.

The procedure for selecting honorees to receive HTUC's community awards is considerably more involved. Robin Mack—who is on the HTUC board—explains the process of recognizing those who have made significant contributions to trans progress during the past year: "Anyone can nominate an individual or organization for a community award," she says via email. "In addition, we specifically reach out to selected community leaders and former award recipients to request their award nominations. After nominations are closed, the awards committee meets and decides who will receive the awards. Awards are not given in every category every year."

The HTUC's Apogee/Brenda Thomas Award is given to the individual whose work has been a high point for the trans community. The non-transgender individual who was the staunchest trans advocate over the past year receives the Champion Award, and similarly, a non-trans organization receives the Champions Award for its advocacy work. The Horizon Award honors an individual who is new to the community and is making a positive difference.

Mack says that there were over 200 people



Proud and Visible

L-r: *The Gender Book* author Jay Mays, TFA and HTUC board member Robin Mack, and TFA president and HTUC board member Monyque at last year's Trans Unity Banquet.

at the event last year. She adds that some people, who can't attend because they are traveling around the country (and the world), will send emails as they watch the event's live feed. This kind of travel, according to Mack, is common for those in the community: "A lot of trans people are engineers, they're IT people, they're business professionals, and they travel in and out of the country all the time." She elaborates that many trans people must work multiple jobs to cover the high cost of their gender-affirmation surgery. This is only one of the job-related issues that concern those in the community.

"Trans people are usually less employable," Mack says. "A lot of times, even if someone's super-qualified and has more degrees, they won't [be hired because employers] don't know what to do with them or how to deal with them."

Even when they are hired, trans people often face uncertainty—especially in Houston. "Since we don't have a Houston equality ordinance, [LGBT] people still stand to be fired," Mack continues. "Trans people have to deal with the cost of everyday living, plus surgeries and hormones, plus risking [legal complications and termination]." As someone transitions, he

or she may have trouble with changing their name on legal documents. This can cause difficulties with banks, mail services, utility companies, and particularly the government.

With no legislation in place to prevent wrongful job termination from occurring, trans people are at particular risk. Not only do they run the risk of being fired while transitioning, they may not be hired to begin with. Mack says that while the legal and social issues involved in transitioning don't bother some employers, some highly qualified trans applicants who have gone through many rounds of interviews still end up being passed over or fired.

Is the Unity Banquet meant to be a resource for those facing issues like employment discrimination? Not exactly, Mack says: "The banquet is a place where people can come together, share a meal, and mingle. They get to be a part of an experience." The formal event also allows people to present themselves as they truly are, she continues, even if they cannot dress as themselves in their own community: "They get honored and received as who they are, [from the moment they arrive] until they leave, which is magical." →

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POWER IN COMMUNITY

continued from previous page

Banquet attendees include at-risk youth, PFLAG members, and representatives from corporate sponsors like Shell. The diverse crowd also includes politicians, according to Mack. They may arrive with the intention of just making an appearance. But when they encounter the crowd—which she describes as fun, loving, and diverse—they stay. When they choose to stay, they learn. Information about support groups is also shared as part of the awards ceremony.

One of the honorees at last year's Unity Banquet was Dee Dee Watters, who was recently selected to serve on Mayor Turner's LGBT Advisory Board. "Dee Dee does a lot of selfless work, but nobody had really acknowledged her at a banquet," Mack says. "Like, a black trans woman of color? I mean, you might tokenize someone, but that's not how we do it, and that's not how it comes off. And so it's really powerful, because we talked about the work that she cares about, and we thanked her. It's as basic, but as fulfilling, as that."

What: The 24th annual Houston Transgender Unity Banquet

When: Saturday, September 17, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Houston Marriott North, 255 North Sam Houston Pkwy E.

Details: unitybanquet.com

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End the Stigma

The Walk for Mental Health Awareness Houston returns.

By Donalevan Maines

Photo by Dalton DeHart

A gong—not a gun or an air horn—will signal the start of the sixth annual Walk for Mental Health Awareness Houston on Saturday, October 8, in Stude Park.

“I am startled by loud noises because I have PTSD,” explains out founding director C. Patrick McIlvain, “so we have a soft mallet instead of a starter gun. We do not have a finish line, either; instead, we have the Arch of Breakthrough, where we drape you with a medal and make eye contact.”

Built and designed by Horse Head Theatre Company, the Arch of Breakthrough was named by out Judge Steven Kirkland, says McIlvain. “It acknowledges people achieving breakthroughs while out with us.”

The 5K walk, and the expo that follows, is the culmination of three days of events that will begin with a World Mental Health Day rally at 7 p.m. on Thursday, October 10.

The opening rally, held at the reflection pool in front of Houston City Hall, 901 Bagby Street, is the kick-start of a positive public-dialogue campaign, says McIlvain. “Houston City Hall will be illuminated in the official mental-health awareness color, lime green, as we raise the public volume on our #Positive-PublicDialog and walk to #EndtheStigma.”

The next day, a noon luncheon catered by Hickory Hollow will be held at United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Drive. Entitled “Passing Forward Our Positive Public Dialog,” this year’s guest speakers are Julena Alise Wynn, author of *Losing It: Mental Health Awareness*, and Aurva Kapoor, an instructor with the Art of Living Foundation.

“The luncheon emcee will be Ariana Montelongo de Valdivia,” says McIlvain.

Sign-in begins at 11:30 a.m., and luncheon tickets are \$30.

Pre-registration for the Saturday walk is \$25 for ages 12 and up, or \$30 at the event, when walkers begin showing up at 6:30 a.m.

Each walker chooses a participating



Break Through!

Participants from the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats pose with Walk for Mental Health Awareness Houston founder C. Patrick McIlvain (front, l) during the 2015 event.

mental-health-related nonprofit “Walk Agency” to benefit, with each agency receiving 90 percent of all funds raised on its behalf. McIlvain notes that they have almost doubled the number of participating agencies this year—including The Walk Houston, Body Love 4 All, Crisis Intervention of Houston, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder, the Montrose Center, Brazoria County Gulf Coast Center, United Health Partners, Prosumers Houston, Bee Busy Wellness Center, Houston Galveston Institute, Hope and Healing Center & Institute, Family Houston, The Harris School, Legacy Community Health, Northwest Assistance Ministries, Worklife Institute, Project Autism, and the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD.

McIlvain hopes this year’s walk will raise \$35,000, improving on last year’s total of more than \$27,000.

“Through our first five walks, we have assisted our walk agencies in raising over \$100,000,” he says. “We are an all-volunteer organization, and besides me, our biggest volunteer is Trinidad Garcia.”

This year, each walker will also get to participate in an art project by filling out a card

that says, “I do the walk because _____.”

“While they are walking, artist Reginald Charles Adams will incorporate the cards into an interactive ‘pop-up brain labyrinth,’” says McIlvain.

In addition, there will be an inflatable walk-through brain “to get people excited” about a feature that will debut next year called the Children’s Corner. That area will have youth activities that teach about developing a positive body image, positive self-expression, and anti-bullying strategies, explains McIlvain.

Already in place is a “pup tent” that Bayou City Veterinary Hospital sponsors for canines. “It’s staffed by the folks from Northside Dawgs, an education group that encourages responsible pet ownership,” says McIlvain. “All doggies must be on a leash with a collar.”

Guests will also be treated to health-food samples in the “nutrition court” assembled by Jenni Tranweaver of Jenni’s Noodle House. “Diet is so very important to us all, and more so if you are facing the daily challenges of any chronic illness,” explains McIlvain. “We want to show what a healthy meal looks like, how to prepare it, or where to go to get one.”

Alexis Kauchick, founder of all-organic Eternal Essence Candles, is coming from →

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END THE STIGMA

continued from previous page

Florida with products that she sells to support mental-illness research.

As always, former mayor Annise Parker will be present, but the plan is for her to pass the lime-green starting mallet on to mayor Sylvester Turner, her successor at City Hall, if his schedule doesn't conflict. "For people living with PTSD or schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, or fighting against panic-attacks and depression, we can make a difference," says Parker.

The Houston Walk "allows all of us to show our support for our friends and our neighbors, or even to stand up for ourselves," she adds. "It

gives us an opportunity to say publicly many of the things that we need to, in order to put more money, more influence, and more political muscle behind finding cures for these types of mental illnesses."

McIlvain says, "The walk is about creating a safe and welcoming event where there is no judgment about how we look, walk, talk, or any tics that we may express. It is a place that is held in high respect and made ready so all of our guests can receive all of the positive energy and empowerment that is due all humans."

You can get details at thehoustonwalk.org or 713.705.7058.

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

One Love. One Finish. One Step at a Time.

The Gay 10K celebrates being LGBTQ in Houston.

By Josh Watkins



In the LGBTQ community, inclusion is everything. That's why Stephanie Warren felt a need to found The Gay 10K, a run that will focus on "celebrating and raising funds to support the greater Houston-area LGBT community"—the first of its kind in the city. The run will take place on September 24 at Fish Plaza in downtown Houston.

Warren has always participated in runs for different causes and is proud to be able to use this run as a way to "stand up for what we believe in and for who we are." With a vision to give back, the team at The Gay 10K is asking the Houston community to suggest organizations that would benefit from such an event. They've chosen to conduct a Charity Challenge, so teams can represent an organization that is important to them.

"Speaking for myself," Warren says, "I am an adoptive mother. I want to help every gay and lesbian couple be able to start a family. I want to have healthcare and resources for those that don't have the means. We want the LGBTQ community to have outlets for those who feel bullied or unsafe."

Gay 10K co-founder Donna Early says that they hope to create an event for those who believe that we all deserve to actively pursue happy and healthy lives. Early, who came out late in life, says that in her generation, it was "much harder to be accepted as gay." Both of her parents passed away before she had the courage to come out, but with the help of her family, she's been able to embrace pride.

"My son, Tyler, and my partner of nine years, Jessica, encouraged me to be a part of this race, to finally be proud of who I am," Early says.

With a desire to hold the race yearly in Houston, the team also hopes to expand to other cities. The community plays an instrumental part in this, Early says, and with their support, the race will be able to grow into something "that will help raise awareness and spread LGBTQ love across the nation."

The race caters to anyone who supports or is a part of the LGBTQ community. "The [race is open to] mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, and friends of the LGBTQ community. You don't have to be gay to be a part of this race. You don't have to be a runner to be a part of this race. You just have to want to help better the LGBTQ community." In addition to the 10K, there will also be a 5K and a 1K for families.

The race is also looking for those interested in coming out to volunteer, sponsor, support a favorite charity, or just watch the race and enjoy the after-party.

What: The Gay 10K

When: September 24, registration at 6:30 a.m.; run at 7:30 a.m.

Where: Fish Plaza, 501 Texas Avenue
Details/Registration: thegay10k.com

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Getting Cheeky . . .

for a cause.

By Barrett White



We can almost guarantee that you've never dropped your pants for such a worthy cause.

Who knows why we have such taboo feelings about the many "below the belt" cancers. Perhaps because we just started talking publicly about *any* cancer in the last few decades, or maybe it's simply the nature of where on the body these cancers lie. In any case, celebrated Houston interior designer Kelly Amen's organization, Cancer Below the Belt, is on a crusade to end the stigma associated with the 12 cancers one can develop in *that* region.

Though Cancer Below the Belt is still very much in a grassroots stage, that has not deterred Amen from forging ahead with high-profile organizing and fundraising. Initial events at Char Bar and Ken Kehoe Interiors have featured photos of attendees posing with their pants dropped to the ankles—along with the rather cheeky hashtag #GetCaughtWithYourPantsDown.

Amen is not just a tireless servant for the cause, but also a survivor of prostate cancer. Cancer-free since 1993, Amen now works with sex counselor Meryl Cohen, nutrition coach Liz Gober, and fitness coach Sylvia Pennywell to promote awareness of testicular, ovarian, anal, cervical, and pancreatic cancer, to name a few of the 12 dangerous cancers that people of all genders are susceptible to.

"Test. Cancer kills more men under 25 than any other disease, but no one checks or talks about it," Amen says about the purpose of his awareness campaign.

Coming up this month, Cancer Below the Belt will be present at the Galleria storefront of longtime LGBTQ ally Mezlan. The high-end shoe boutique will host the organization twice, September 22 and 25, for two evenings of light-

A Cause with Sole

Cancer Below the Belt works to eliminate stigma surrounding the 12 cancers that can occur sub-waistline. On September 22 and 25, the campaign will host fundraisers at Mezlan in the Galleria.

hearted fun, valuable raffle-prize giveaways, and above all else, awareness. Original tapestry works by Amjid Gulzar, ornate rugs by AER Textiles, and fine art by Corey Scott will all be on display.

Throughout the night, one may purchase tickets to the raffle (\$10 for one or \$50 for 10) for prizes ranging from meticulously crafted pillows to upscale shoes from the host store.

Arriving at the event also promises to be entertaining, as ticket prices are \$100 per person or \$50 if you drop your drawers. The raffle giveaways will be held at both events, and a percentage of ticket and raffle sales will go to Cancer Below the Belt.

To the public at large, Kelly Amen urges, "Get tested. Look at the symptoms. Eat healthier, live healthier. Know the signs. Join us—drop your pants for the cause. Think about making a difference."

What: Cancer Below the Belt charity fundraiser

Where: Mezlan (in the Houston Galleria), 5015 Westheimer, Suite 2302

When: September 22, 6–8 p.m., and September 25, 4–6 p.m.

Details: \$100 per entry or \$50 if you participate in the pants-dropping fun.

More info: cancerbelowthebelt.com and mezlan.com

Barrett White is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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Childhood friends
Shawnee Sprenger
and Xiomara
Miranda say
'I do' at sea.

Inseparable

Shawnee Sprenger (l) and Xiomara Miranda first met in sixth grade. The women both attended Houston's Pin Oak Middle School.

By Henry V. Thiel

Photos by Robert Lopez, Dabert Photography

Shawnee Sprenger met her future wife, Xiomara Miranda, back in the sixth grade while attending a mutual friend's birthday party at Landry's on the Kemah Boardwalk. Even though they both attended Pin Oak Middle School, this was the first time the classmates had met. As fortune would have it, they sat next to each other and became best friends over fries and birthday cake.

"From that day forward, we never left each other's side," confesses Sprenger.

To their great disappointment, they ended up going to different high schools and lost touch, only to reconnect via Facebook the summer after their senior year.

"I was so nervous when I messaged her via Facebook on my birthday," shares Sprenger with glee in her voice. "She replied the next day, and we picked up where we left off."

"I asked her a few days later to hang, so we did," adds Miranda, who had been nicknamed "Z" by friends during her high-school years.

"I had never dated a girl," admits Sprenger, "but there was always this feeling that I

couldn't explain."

A few months later, their relationship turned serious while attending Vans Warped Tour, the longest-running touring rock music festival in North America. "While we were jamming to the music, Z embraced me by wrapping her arms around my waist from behind. From that moment," adds Sprenger, "we both knew things were going to be different.

"After the festival we went and hung out

"From that moment, we both knew things were going to be different."

by the pool. While eating hot fries together in the pool, Z asked me if I wanted to try being in a relationship with her," says Sprenger. "I of course said yes!"

By summer's end, school again separated the couple, with Miranda moving to Huntsville to attend Sam Houston State University and Sprenger starting at Houston Baptist University. For a year, they commuted back and

forth until Sprenger was able to transfer. They graduated together in 2013, moved back to Houston, and started a life together with their two dogs and a cat.

"We started talking more about our future together, and getting excited about what adventures we would take," says Sprenger.

Today, the 25-year-old medical assistants work in the Houston Medical Center, where Miranda is currently training to become a physician's assistant.

"We both knew that we were soul mates, and ready to write our story together," states Miranda.

"I started looking for rings a year later, and finally found the one," shares Sprenger. "I didn't want to order it online without seeing it in person, but the only store that sold the ring I wanted, Brilliant Earth, was located in San Francisco."

"We were going to meet family in Vegas a couple months before our sixth-year anniversary," Miranda says, "so I surprised Shawnee with the idea of driving to San Francisco to see the ring. We ended up driving eight hours straight, and immediately fell in love with →

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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from previous page

the ring.”

“Z ended up buying the ring,” says Sprenger as she fondles the ring on her left hand. “I couldn’t take my eyes off it!”

“For an early birthday present, Z took me to Panama City Beach, Florida, for a long weekend,” shares Sprenger. “On May 31, she took me out on a boat in the bay, and proposed at sunset. The whole weekend was so romantic!”

“On our sixth-year anniversary as a couple,” says Sprenger, “we went back to Landry’s in Kemah where we first met all those years ago, to celebrate over lunch. Z saw a banner for the FantaSea yacht that was docked at the boardwalk, so we went and checked it out.”

“We fell in love with the FantaSea,” says Miranda.

“We chose the Boardwalk FantaSea Yacht as our wedding venue because Heather, the wedding planner, was so accepting and excited for us, and it just so happened the yacht is owned by Landry’s, which is where we first met,” adds Miranda.

They chose July 3, 2016, because that was the anniversary of their first date.

“We had the captain of the FantaSea marry us, and our wedding was anything but traditional,” admits Miranda. “We wanted the day to be about the promise we were making



A Surprise at Sunset

Miranda (r) proposed to Sprenger while the two were vacationing in Panama City Beach, Florida.

to each other, and about having our closest friends and family there to celebrate with us.”

“The two highlights of the day—after actually marrying my wife—would have to be our first dance as a married couple, and my father-daughter dance,” Sprenger remembers. “The day went by so fast that I wish I could go back and re-live it. Everyone who was there truly made it a special day—the yacht crew, florist, wedding planner, photographer (our brother-in-law), baker, and our amazing family and friends.”

After the wedding, the brides enjoyed an amazing night in Hotel Icon’s Oriental Penthouse Suite. “I couldn’t have asked for a better night,” affirms Miranda. “Everyone, from the FantaSea to the hotel, was all so open and wel-

coming. It made our day that much more amazing. When the hotel staff saw us walk in with our gorgeous wedding dresses, they surprised us with a wedding gift and card congratulating us on the occasion. It was surprising how open and progressive everyone was about us. It was the perfect day.”

“Due to the fact that I ended up getting a new job before our wedding,” says Sprenger, “we pushed our honeymoon back to the fall. We love to travel, so we are still thinking about where to go. I can assure you, it will be somewhere we’ve never been, and somewhere overseas.”

Henry V. Thiel is a principal with The Epicurean Publicist. He loves yachts.

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**Perfect Touches**

A California Affair: Ken Mingus (l) and his husband, Robert Hammond, were married on May 6, 2014, in Palm Desert after being together for almost 20 years.

Howdy, Partner!

Robert Hammond and Ken Mingus two-step down the aisle.

By Henry V. Thiel

Robert Hammond and Ken Mingus met at the Brazos River Bottom Country and Western bar in Midtown on July 26, 1997. As Mingus tells the story, Hammond was standing near the bar with a tuft of auburn chest hair popping out of his shirt collar. It took a while for Mingus to build up the courage to approach Hammond, and when he did, he asked him if he would like to go out to dinner. Hammond replied that he would love to. The BRB remained their preferred date-night location for the next 19 years. They were even there the night it closed. “We had to have one more two-step around the dance floor where we got our start,” states Mingus.

For the next five years, Hammond continued to rent a room from a friend on the northwest side of the city, and Mingus lived in

Westbury Square. They spent weekends together since Mingus traveled for work almost every week. One afternoon in June of 2002, Hammond invited Mingus to look at a house that was for sale near his work. The Realtor met them at the property, and after an hour or so of looking around at the house, they decided to put in an offer. It was the only house they looked at, and the only one they could see as being “their” home. Less than a month later, they were settled in to what became a 10-year remodeling project.

Since this was the first time they actually lived together, they started dividing chores. Since Hammond did not enjoy cooking, that task fell to Mingus, who had been cooking since he was seven years old on his family’s dairy farm in Wisconsin. Hammond volunteered to wash the dishes, and he also decided to handle the laundry since he was more of a fashionista than Mingus. Together, they cared for their four-legged children.

Hammond began thinking about getting married when gay marriage became legal in California. When they were invited to visit friends and attend the gay rodeo in Palm Springs, Hammond asked Mingus if there was anything else he wanted to do while they were in California. When Mingus replied he could not think of anything, Hammond asked him to

marry him. Without any hesitation, Mingus said yes!

They were married in Palm Desert, California (Riverside County), on May 6, 2014. Ideally, they would have liked to have gotten hitched in Texas (since Hammond was born in Midland), but after being together almost 20 years, they decided not to wait for Texas to come onboard.

On their wedding day, their friends and best men, Mark Coleman and Sean Yarborough, joined them for a limousine ride to the courthouse. Hammond’s cousin Martin Smith, who lives in Cathedral City, California, was their wedding photographer.

Judge Diana Perez was so moved as she solemnized their vows that she got teary-eyed. Mingus and Hammond were so touched that they invited her to dinner the next time she was in Houston.

After the ceremony, they all enjoyed a late lunch at Melvyn’s, followed by a champagne drive through the beautiful desert before ending their wonderful day with cocktails at the Escena Golf Club in Palm Springs.

Once they decided to get married, they needed to decide what they wanted for their rings. Hammond and Mingus have completely different ideas about jewelry, but on this detail they were in perfect agreement: they both →

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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from previous page

wanted a simple, clean-lined gold band.

Over the years, they had each acquired a rather large amount of gold jewelry that they never wore. To make their wedding bands, they decided to melt down their unworn gold. Hammond contributed a special gold bracelet that his father had given him when he was 17 years old, and Mingus added a chain that his previous partner, now deceased, had given him.

With their chains in hand, they went to Shaw's Jewelers on West Gray at Montrose. They looked at several rings before deciding on a silver ring that they really liked, and asked a very helpful sales lady if Shaw's could make the same ring out of their gold chains. Two weeks later, they received their rings—along with a few dollars back from their deposit.

"The day of our wedding, we gave the rings to Mark and Sean to hold for us," states Mingus. "Having them stand up for us meant more to us than they will ever know. Every time we look down at our rings, they are a reminder of how far we have come to be here in this moment. Robert continually says it's the best bling he has ever worn."

Henry V. Thiel is a principal with The Epicurean Publicist. He would like to go ring shopping.

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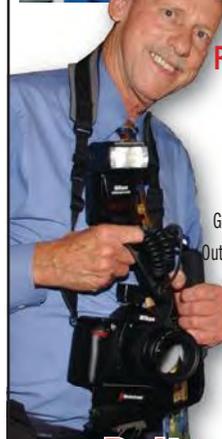


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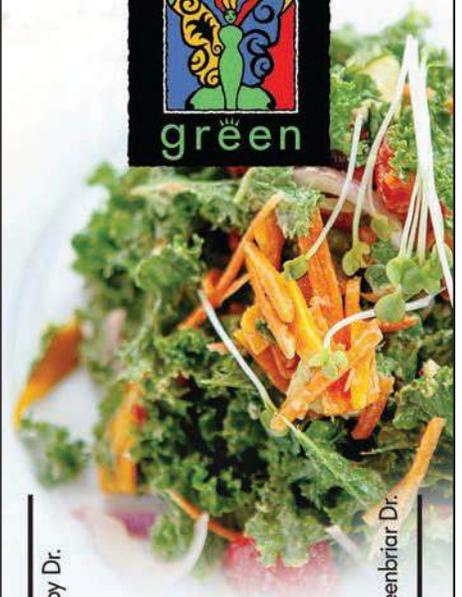
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Magical

Meryl Streep (seen here in the recent *Florence Foster Jenkins*):
what did her mother think of “the boys”?

▲ Meryl Streep

(*The Advocate*, 8/5/16, Levi Chambers and Daniel Reynolds)

The star of *Florence Foster Jenkins* recounted how both a gay man and a trans person influenced her at a very early age, informing her how the arts can be a safe haven for LGBT people.

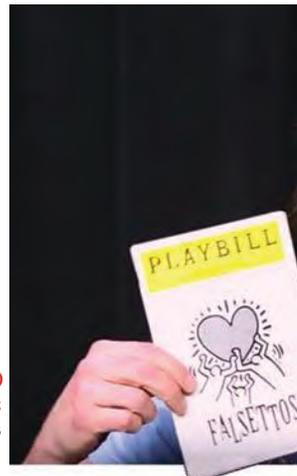
“My piano teacher and his lover lived in a little house in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey,” she said at a Los Angeles press event for the film at the Four Seasons hotel. “And I would go once a week to have my piano lesson.”

Streep went on to describe how, as a young girl, she found their house to be “magical” and “an entry into exotica.” She also recalled how her mother, though she never discussed the music teacher’s sexuality, impressed acceptance upon her.

“My mother, who was born in 1915, never said—‘the boys,’ she called them—she never said ‘the boys are gay,’ or that there was anything that she disapproved of. But it was just that this is a different life, and they were living under the cover of the love of the people who loved them.

“My music teacher in sixth grade in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, was named Paul Grossman,” she said. “And the next year he came back, and he was Paula.

“Who really did that then?” Streep remarked. “It was very, very unusual. And he came back to school. He had three kids and stayed married, but he was himself, and he led the chorus.”



Maybe, Maybe Not

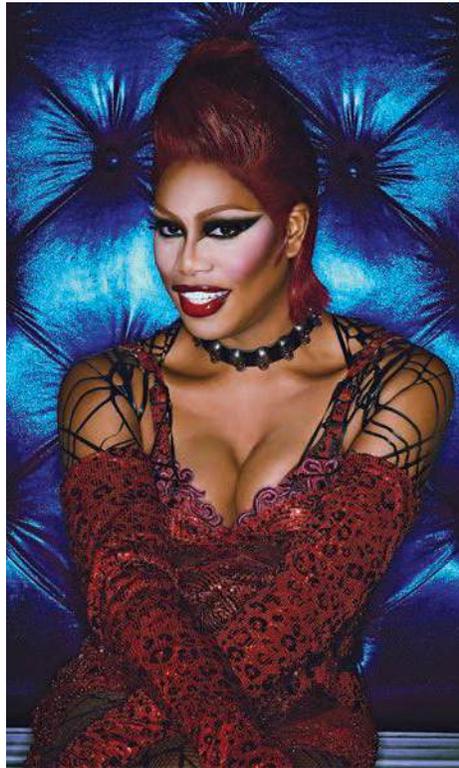
Christian Borle stars with Andrew Rannells
in the new production of *Falsettos*.



Clea DuVall ▶

(Out, 9/16)

“I’ve always sort of lived my life and never made a huge statement about [being gay],” she says. It’s just, like, leading by example.” Paparazzi pics of her and her girlfriend kissing surfaced in 2013, which she considered an invasion of privacy. “But I was also like, ‘Who cares?’ It’s not like I’m Reese Witherspoon. I’m just a character actor. As a kid, I would have really appreciated seeing that. That would have meant a lot to me. So the people it matters to, it matters for a positive reason.”



STREET: NICK WALL/PARAMOUNT PICTURES; DUVALL: HELGA ESTEES/GETTY IMAGES; COX: STEVE WILKIE/FOX; HAYNES: RAY MICKSHAW/FOX; BORLE: BROADWAY.COM

Over at the Frankenstein Place

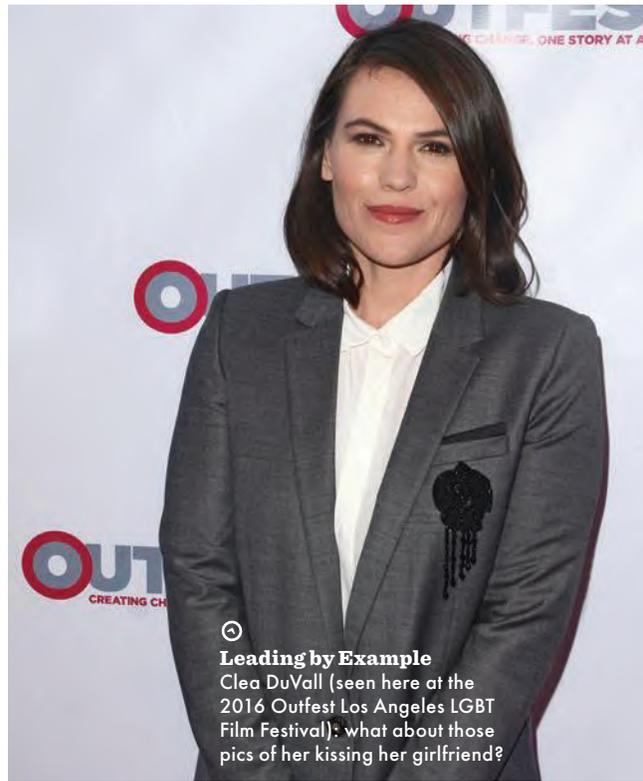
Laverne Cox plays Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, airing on Fox in October.

▲ Laverne Cox

(Out, 9/16, Mike Berlin)

Mike Berlin: Did you have concerns about taking on such a big role?

Laverne Cox: I’ve never been one to suggest an actor shouldn’t play a role because of their gender or race. All actors are trained to use their own experiences and techniques to become other people. Frank-N-Furter is an alien from the planet Transsexual in the galaxy of Transylvania. This is not *verité*. It’s a fantasy.



Leading by Example

Clea DuVall (seen here at the 2016 Outfest Los Angeles LGBT Film Festival): what about those pics of her kissing her girlfriend?

Christian Borle

(Out, 9/16)

Re: the return of the play Falsettos, which opens October 27 at the Walter Kerr Theatre in New York. It will star Andrew Rannells (TV’s Girls) and Christian Borle (TV’s Smash).

The classifications of sexuality are, what, in the thousands now? There’s a much more fluid spectrum, and within that, who’s to say? For example, I’ve been straight all my life. What happens when I fall madly in love with Andrew Rannells?



▶ Colton Haynes

(Out, 9/16, R. Kurt Osenlund)

“I’m the last person in the world who would say, ‘Oh, my dad—pity me,’ says Haynes, whose father, seven times married, split from [Haynes’ mother] Dana and was never close with him. “But I was told thay my dad killed himself because he found out that I was gay. So, of course, I lost it and was like, ‘How could you say something like that?’ And no one will ever really know the truth. But my brother and my mom went to pick up my dad’s stuff, and the only picture on his fridge was my eighth-grade graduation picture. So I was just like, *F--k*.”



Guilt Trip

Colton Haynes (seen here in Fox TV’s *The Grinder*): was he close to his dad?

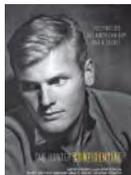


‘Parched’

Three ordinary rural Indian women discover their extraordinary courage.

Tab Hunter Confidential

Bristling at his image as just another pretty face and wanting to be taken seriously, Tab Hunter earned his stripes as an actor to become a major movie star and recording artist. But throughout his years of stardom, he had a secret. Hunter was gay, and spent his Hollywood years in a precarious closet that repeatedly threatened to implode and destroy him. Decades later, his dramatic, turbulent, and ultimately inspiring life story has become an explosive documentary feature. *Tab Hunter Confidential* traces



his dizzying rise to Hollywood super-stardom, his secret life in an era when being openly gay was unthinkable, and his ultimate triumph when the limelight finally passed him by and true love won. Available nationwide. Autographed copies available at tabhunter.com. —Troy Carrington



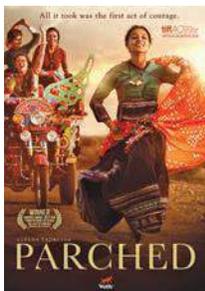
Love and Liberation

Surveen Chawla (front), Radhika Apte (l), Leher Khan (c), and Tannishtha Chatterjee in *Parched*, now available on DVD and VOD through Wolfe Video.

Leena Yadav’s new award-winning film *Parched* follows three rural Indian women in the village of Ujhaas as they break free from centuries-old traditions that have kept them in servitude.

Rani (Tannishtha Chatterjee) was married at a young age, but became a widow a few years later when her husband died in an accident. Her purpose since then has been to raise their only child, Gulab (Riddhi Sen). Rani is devout in following the ancient Indian customs and traditions, and she buries her own needs to do what is right by her son and her village. But then things begin to change for her when she forces Gulab to marry against his wishes.

Lajjo (Radhika Apte), Rani’s closest friend, is a young woman full of enthusiasm and positivity—even though Lajjo’s husband, infuriated by her infertility, takes out his anger through domestic violence.



Despite the abuse and the possibility of social banishment, Lajjo is still hopeful and determined to get pregnant, since it is something she deeply wants.

Bijli (Surveen Chawla) is a dancer and sex worker who is employed at a local dance company. Though the village women hate her, Rani has been her best friend for years—and through Rani, she and Lajjo are friends as well. Bijli is a beautiful and confident older woman who knows that her youthful days are coming to an end, which could leave her unemployed. Bijli is a voice of liberation for the women, since she is the only one in the trio who has seen a world outside of their village.

In this evocative and vibrant drama, these three women unapologetically talk about men, sex, and life as they struggle under oppressive traditions. Together they begin to question this society that favors men, sends teenage girls to marry

violent husbands, and shames women for being educated and opinionated. Finally, on a fateful night leading up to the Dussehra festival, the women come together to take a bold step that will alter the trajectory of their lives.

“This story is my reaction to a misogynistic society that treats women as objects of sex, where their greatest role is to serve men,” says writer, director, and producer Yadav. “Giving my women characters a voice that observes, absorbs, and reacts was what drove me to write this drama about ordinary women who are driven to extraordinary ends.”

Beautifully shot by Academy Award-winning cinematographer Russell Carpenter (*Titanic*), *Parched* transforms these women’s struggles into an inspiring portrayal of liberation.

Parched is now available on DVD and VOD through Wolfe Video (wolfevideo.com).

B. Root is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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Tea-Dance Dudes

Tom Odell, Mike Posner, Miike Snow, Fitz and The Tantrums, and Tourist.

Camille Bloom *Pieces of Me*



Pieces of Me is an emotional love-letter written for those seeking empowerment and truth.

Bloom, who is openly lesbian, sings with a voice that rings rich yet ethereal. The 11-track album is an honest experience from start to finish. Bloom's vulnerable lyrics are written with such strength that one can't help but feel inspired and renewed. It is the perfect pick-me-up. *Pieces of Me* finds the words to say everything that you wish you could say. Listen to Bloom before everyone else does! Available September 9 from camillebloom.com and iTunes. —Josh Watkins

Original London Cast Recording *Close to You: Bacharach Reimagined*

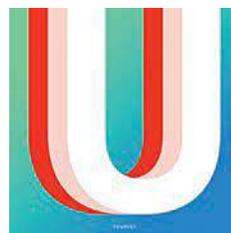
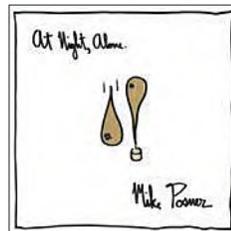
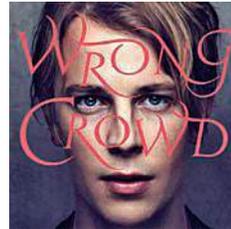


This is the recording of the hit *West End* show that began off-Broadway and featured musician Kyle Riabko's take on the genre-spanning catalogue of Burt Bacharach. It features over 30 hits, including such classics as "I Say a Little Prayer," "Walk on By," "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head," "The Look of Love," "What's New Pussycat?," and the enduring title track. Ghostlight Records (shk-boom.com). —Suzie Lynde

For the longest time, dance music was the domain of the gay community. Sure, there were straight artists who dared to work in the genre, including disco divas, producers, and musicians—especially in the years following the famous "disco demolition" led by schlock shock-jock Steve Dahl. Today, dance music is bigger than ever—and especially the kind made by straight men. (Meanwhile, Dahl is merely an unfortunate footnote.)

Remember how exciting it was when British blue-eyed soul singer/songwriter David Gray added electronic beats to his music on his groundbreaking 1999 album *White Ladder*? **Tom Odell** gets similar results on his marvelous new album *Wrong Crowd* (RCA). The title tune that opens the disc has almost everything you could ask for—fantastic lyrics, a persuasive beat, Odell's exceptional vocals, the right balance of guitar and keyboards, and whistling. The album's mesmerizing first single, "Magnetised," will also pull you toward the dance floor, so don't fight it. Ditto for "Silhouette," "Here I Am," and "She Don't Belong to Me." Of course, there's more to Odell than this—which can be heard on alluring numbers such as "Daddy," "Constellations," and "Jealousy."

Like Odell, **Mike Posner** is intent on proving that he can exist in both the electronic and acoustic music worlds, and he does a good job of verifying that on his second album *At Night, Alone* (Island). The first 10 music tracks on the disc feature Posner in more traditional musical settings. The six "bonus remix" tracks are where the album reaches its eventual peak. It's not that there were problems with the initial versions of "I Took a Pill in Ibiza," "Not That Simple," "Be as You Are," "Buried in Detroit," and "In the Arms of a Stranger" (when Posner sings "she smelled like Michigan," does he mean eau de failure and decay?). The thing is that Posner is at his



most effectual when backed up by awesome beats.

iii (Atlantic), the third album by Swedish dance threesome **Miike Snow**, is a fitting follow-up to the band's previous releases. The dance-oriented tunes, including "For U" (featuring Charli XCX), "My Trigger," "Genghis Khan," and "Over and Over," give listeners reasons (and room) to move. "I Feel the Weight" is light as (French band) Air, and the Stockholm soul of "Heart Is Full" all offer good examples of the trio's diversity.

Working under his own name, William Phillips scored a Grammy Award for "Stay with Me," the song he co-wrote with gay performer Sam Smith. Making music as **Tourist**, on his debut disc *U* (Monday), Phillips exhibits an even more exhilarating side of his talents. *U* is one of those rare dance-music albums that can be enjoyed as a source of movement and dance-floor expression, as well as simply being experienced as a set of innovative and agreeable tunes. From the garage-y "To Have You Back" and propulsive "Run" through the gently crashing "Waves," the rapid time-step of "Too Late," and the different direction of "Separate Ways," *U* marks the arrival of a welcome visitor.

With its eponymous new album on Elektra, **Fitz and The Tantrums'** third full-length album in six years, the band completes its evolution from retro soul-slingers to a full-fledged dance band. The album opener and first single "HandClap" is a good indication of what's to follow on dance-oriented numbers such as "Run It," the funky "Fadeback," the loping "Tricky," and the hot "Burn It Down." Not that Fitz and company have completely abandoned their roots, as is made clear on "Walking Target" and "Get Right Back."

Don't just sit there, find a dude and dance!

Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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‘The Joy of Swimming’

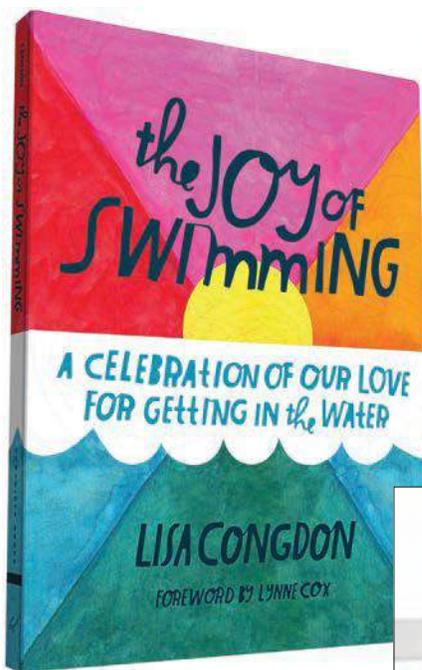
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Treehab Bob Smith



In this biting funny and often surprising memoir, award-winning author and groundbreaking openly gay comedian Bob Smith offers a meditation on the vitality of the natural world—and an intimate portrait of his

own darkly humorous and profoundly authentic response to a life-changing illness. In *Treehab*—named after a retreat cabin in rural Ontario—Smith muses how he has “always sought the path less traveled.” He rebuffs his diagnosis of ALS as only an unflappable stand-up comic could (“Lou Gehrig’s Disease? But I don’t even like baseball!”) and explores his complex, fulfilling experience of fatherhood. Stories of his writing and performing life—punctuated by hilariously cutting jokes that comedians tell only to each other—are interspersed with tales of Smith’s enduring relationship with nature: boyhood sojourns in the woods of upstate New York and adult explorations of the remote Alaskan wilderness; snakes and turtles, rocks and minerals; open sky and forest canopy; God and friendship—all recurring touchstones that inspire him to fight for his survival and for the future of his two children. Aiming his potent, unflinching wit at global warming, equal rights, sex, dogs, Thoreau, and more, Smith demonstrates here the inimitable insight that has made him a beloved voice of a generation. He reminds us that life is perplexing, beautiful, strange, and entirely worth celebrating. University of Wisconsin Press (uwpress.wisc.edu). —Troy Carrington



The Joy of Swimming
by Lisa Congdon
2016, Chronicle Books
(chroniclebooks.com)
141 pages • \$18.95



Author Lisa Congdon

People say you’re all wet. Maybe that’s not the nicest thing you’ve ever heard, but hey! if something’s true, it’s true, right? Yep, you love being in a pool, lake, pond, the ocean, a puddle—it doesn’t matter. And in *The Joy of Swimming* by Lisa Congdon, you’ll meet like-minded people in swimsuits.

At the tender age of eight, Lisa Congdon learned to love swimming when her mother signed her up for swim team near their California home. It was fun, but it was work, and her interest in swimming declined: life got in the way, school demanded time, injuries happened. It wasn’t until college, after she came out as a lesbian, that Congdon resumed the sport in earnest, and it connected her to the better parts of her life.

Swimmers, as she shows in this book, come in all shapes, sizes, and ages. Gertrude Ederle, for instance, was just 20 years old when she swam the English Channel in under 15 hours, a record

she held for a quarter-century. Johnny Weissmuller, who later played Tarzan in the movies, was the first person to swim the 100-meter freestyle in less than a minute. Roxanne Winston thinks more black swimmers should “feel inspired to join the sport.” Kimberly Chambers almost lost her leg in a freak accident, but she still swims. Chel Micheline finds that being in the water frees her from spina bifida.

But swimming isn’t just about a cool dip in the lake. Dog paddling can be embarrassing (unless, of course, you’re a dog!), so you’ll want to know a few basic strokes, and the science and history behind them—which Congdon explains. You’ll learn a “very brief history” of swimming pools here, too, including where the largest one is lo-

cated; you’ll read an itsy-bitsy bio on the bikini; and you’ll get quick facts on swimming and the Olympics.

Find out why you’ll want to cover your eyes if you visit an Icelandic locker room. See how even Michael Phelps is slow, compared to a sailfish. Get the real definition of a “swimming hole.” And find out why some people take bandages along when visiting a public pool in Japan.

Seriously, can you ever have a summer without at least one great big cannonball, dead-center in the water? If your answer is to the negative, then this is a perfect poolside book for you.

Using old ads, interviews, and her own drawings as illustrations, author Lisa Congdon offers readers a bit of quirk to enjoy in their summer deck chairs. *The Joy of Swimming* has the feel of a sketchbook or a haphazardly kept scrapbook with mini-memoirs of the famous and never-famous, trivia, Olympic facts, statistics, and random thoughts. That messiness is really appealing, and you’ll come to love this book after a few laps around its pages.

Dip your toes in, if you dare, or just dive right in. The water’s fine, and so is this book—for mermaids, athletes, or just fans of the old waterin’ hole, *The Joy of Swimming* will make a big splash.

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was three years old, and she lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

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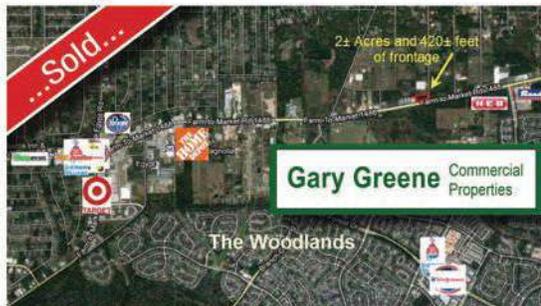
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Attention All Community Based Organizations

The LTR Lewis Cloverdale Foundation, Inc. was formed through the testamentary generosity of Bob Lewis. The Board of Directors is pleased to announce it will be accepting 2016 Grant Applications beginning September 1st and ending November 2nd, 2016 for Grants from \$1,000 to \$100,000. For further information about the criteria and method of applying please go to our website at:

www.LTRLewisCloverdale.org

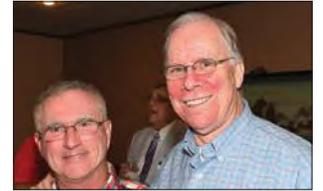
The Board of Directors and I look forward to working with you in the years ahead to honor the memory and generosity of Bob Lewis and his family.

Terrance P. Baggott, *Chairman*

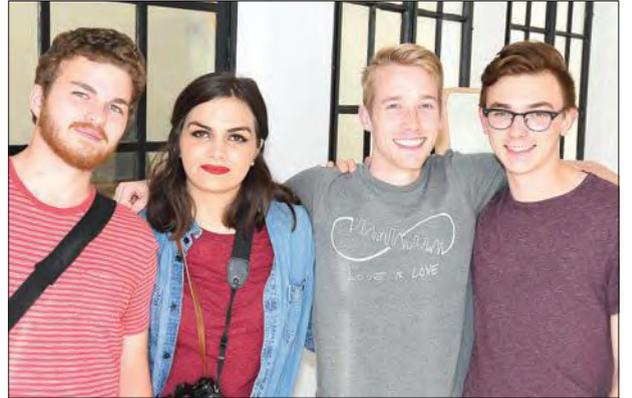
OUT THERE

Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar

EPHA AUGUST 2016 DINNER MEETING & ELECTIONS at CHINA GARDEN
August 16, 2016



P.R.I.D.E. PORTRAITS OFFICIAL PROJECT LAUNCH (ERIC EDWARD SCHELL) at WEST STUDIOS
August 20, 2016



DIANA FOUNDATION AUGUST 2016 SOCIAL & KICKOFF for THE NEW YEAR - "60's"
August 21, 2016



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another chance at life. Needless to say, it doesn't go well, although young Faust gets to sport with Helen of Troy during the scandalous "Walpurgis Nacht" ballet. The opera is filled with tunes you've heard in the background of your life, although you may not have realized their origin: the famous "Waltz," Marguerite's "Jewel Song," and her spectacular ascension into heaven. *Faust* is what is known as Grand Opera, a five-act behemoth, and it deserves every accolade. The best role, of course, is Mephistopheles, a true boulevardier with his cape, medieval tights, and feathered hat. He leads Faust into hell with a demonic laugh, and forever after the French have taken him to their bosom.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame
October 29

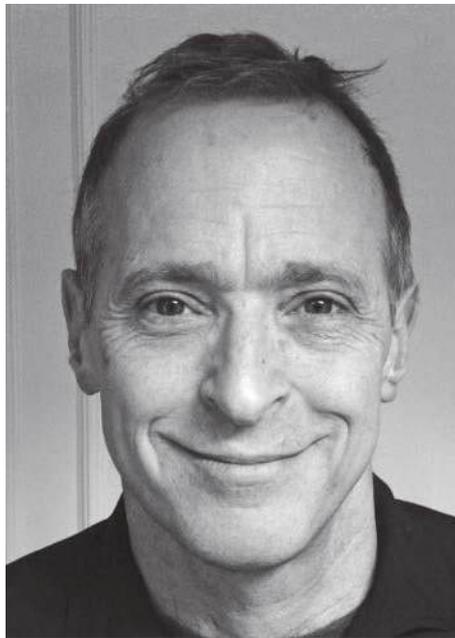
The Grand 1984 Opera House
2020 Postoffice St., Galveston

During his heyday, Lon Chaney was the most famous of silent-screen stars. Known as the "man of a thousand faces," his sympathetic portraits of horror—usually a misunderstood man driven mad by unfeeling society—struck a chord with moviegoers. A master of makeup, he'd distort his body in all manner of contortions that now seem unreal and masochistic in today's world of CGI and green-screen. But Chaney went the full monty. Although he portrayed a frightening *Phantom of the Opera* (1925), his most memorable character was Quasimodo in *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923), Victor Hugo's eponymous medieval bell-ringer. He metamorphosed himself into a living gargoyle for the role, and the film, with its gargantuan sets and massive cast of thousands, turned out to be Universal Pictures' most profitable silent movie. Rob Landes, organist and artist-in-residence at Houston's St. Luke's United Methodist Church, provides the atmospheric live soundtrack to this most atmospheric film.

Five by Tenn
November 4-12

Dirt Dogs Theatre Co.
MATCH, 3400 Main St.

Houston's newest theater troupe (there's a new one every month, Yay!) presents some rarities from America's most idiosyncratic playwright, Tennessee Williams. Drugs and alcohol, and a roller-coaster sex life, slowly took its toll on the genteel southerner (who was always more Blanche than Stanley) while certain themes—his personal archetypes—swirled through his writing like lifelines. These five one-acts, written between the classics *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) can't compare with that universal A-list, but it's still an education in itself to experience Williams re-work



An Evening with David Sedaris

One of America's favorite humorists brings his sarcastic wit and wisdom to Houston. (SEE PAGE 59.)

his demons of memory, ghosts, and recrimination. The plays are *The Long Goodbye*, *Portrait of a Madonna*, *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*, *Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen*, and *Something Unspoken*.

Jersey Boys
November 15-20

Broadway at the Hobby
Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St.

There is no finer "jukebox musical" than this mother of them all from 2005. There is none so thought-out, so exquisitely crafted, so full of theatricality, so full of heart. Who knew that the story of the classic rock 'n' roll band The Four Seasons held so much stage beauty? All the guys' songs are here, in chronological order, yet placed within the context of their rise, fall, and rise with such dexterity, such finesse. The show is so utterly pleasing, so enjoyable, that you never for a moment think that these songs have been with us, spinning in our brains, since the '60s (unless you've been around that long). No mere nostalgia trip for Baby Boomers, everyone can relate to the show's joy, show-biz magic, and sheer fun. "Oh, What a Night" indeed.

The Nutcracker
November 25-December 27

Houston Ballet
Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave.
Out with the old, in with the new. Ben Stevenson's beloved Christmas ballet, boldly embroidered by designer Desmond Heeley's evanescent Victoriana snowscapes, has been a Houston Ballet staple for almost three decades and the one production most young'uns grew

up mooning over, dreaming about becoming ballerinas or spinning Russian Gopaks. Well, that production is gone with the winter wind. In its place will be artistic director Stanton Welch's new and equally spectacular version of Petipa and Ivanov's immortal tale of little Marie and her magical voyage to the land of the sweets. Tim Goodchild has designed the fresh opulence (yes, Virginia, there's still that Christmas tree that grows through the roof.) And of course, Tchaikovsky's most radiant score retains its eternal freshness and vigor. You can hear the snowflakes swirl in the ethereal celesta. Mr. Welch knows exactly what a daunting task he faces in retiring such a landmark, but don't ever underestimate his prodigious talent in stagecraft and theatricality. His new *Nutcracker* may also be dancing into the future for the next 29 years.

Into the Woods
December 6-18

Theatre Under the Stars
Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St.

Could this be chilly Stephen Sondheim's most empathetic musical? It's always been an audience-charmer, as our favorite fairy-tale characters (Cinderella; Jack with his beanstalk and cow; Little Red Riding Hood; Rapunzel, a misunderstood witch; and a baker and his wife who want a child) interact with each other in act one, then come to maturity in act two when their dreams come true. Happily-ever-after endings aren't assured in this Sondheim (music and lyrics) and James Lapine (book) Tony winner from 1987. Be careful what you wish for.

Loretta Lynn
December 18

The Grand 1894 Opera House
2020 Postoffice St., Galveston

Hard to believe, but the queen of country music has never performed at the island's opera house where every other musical performer has been heard over the years. Never too late, I say. "Full Circle" is her new album, and it's an appropriate title for this indomitable singer who has been the voice of country music since she twanged through her first record, "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl," in 1960. One of the most lauded of all singing stars, this coal-miner's daughter from Butcher Hollow, Kentucky, has been there and done that. Long may she reign!

D.L. Groover writes on the arts for the Houston Press, OUTSMART magazine, Arts & Culture, and Dance Source Houston. He recently received a national award for his theater criticism from the Association of Alternative Newsmedia (AAN), and has previously won three statewide Lone Star Press awards for the same. He is co-author of the irreverent appreciation Skeletons from the Opera Closet (St. Martin's Press), now in its fourth printing.

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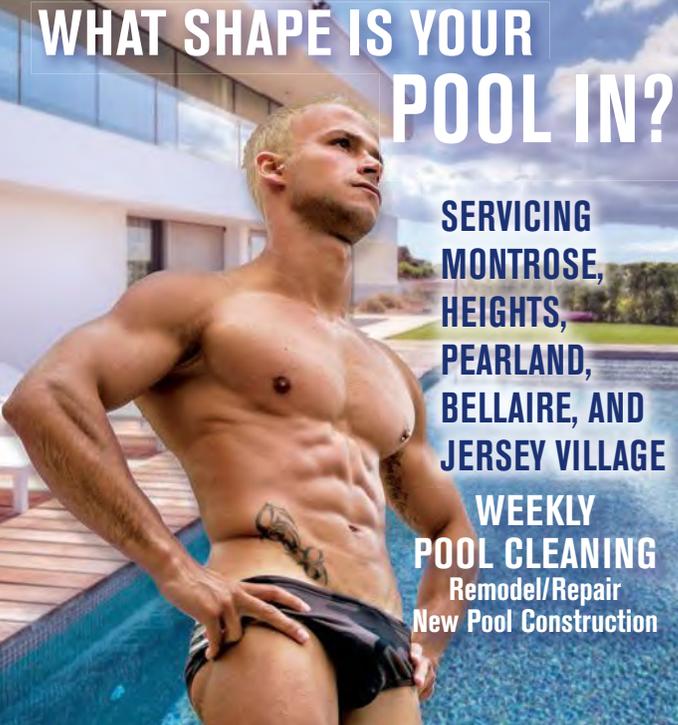


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Darrin Davis Joins OUTSMART as the New Sales Manager

Darrin Davis has joined OUTSMART magazine as its new sales manager. A native of Huntsville, Alabama, Davis is a proud member of the Auburn University Alumni Association. He moved to Houston over 13 years ago, and two years later met the love of his life at JR's Bar and Grill—after telling friends it was impossible to find love in a bar.

His husband, partner, and best friend for the past 11 years is Mario Gudmundsson, who is a native Houstonian. Davis and Gudmundsson live in Midtown with their two cats, Haley and Jordan—both named for Auburn University, as Davis' rule is that all children and pets must have Auburn names. The two men share a passion for the arts and are active on numerous committees and boards, from Ars Lyrica to Houston Grand Opera and the Houston Symphony.



Darrin Davis

Davis' passion for helping others has led him to serve on numerous nonprofit organizations aiding the homeless, and he also serves on advisory committees for affordable housing.

Asked about his new role, Davis stated, "I have never been as excited to work with a team as I am with OUTSMART. Not only is this an award-winning publication, but also I'll be working for something greater than myself. Houston has an amazing asset in OUTSMART. No other city that I've visited has such a loved and thoughtful LGBT publication. Who wouldn't want to get up every morning for that?"

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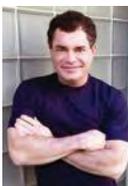
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BLUR

This multi-level dance club features a patio upstairs lounge and balconies that overlook Pacific St. Ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wed., 18-year-olds are welcome on Thurs., resident DJ Lorenzo spins Wed.-Sat. nights, DJ Pollo spins Karumba Latin night on Sun. Happy hour 8-10pm; free cover before 11pm. 710 Pacific St. • blurbar.com.

CLUB 2020

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CLUB CRYSTAL

If you miss the now-closed Inergy, you'll find many of its former staff, management, and décor at this two-room Latin/hip-hop club. Sunday evening drag shows rule the roost. 6680 Southwest Frwy, next to Colorado • 713.278.2582 • crystaltheclub.com.

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With house emcee Kofi, OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest reigning drag champion, this Montrose standard offers drag and strip shows throughout the week, karaoke Thurs. and Sun., plus pool tables, male dancers, and award-winning cocktails. 808 Pacific St. • jr'sbarandgrill.com • 713.521.2519.

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The eclectic British pub is known for its craft beers as well as for the burgers. Most weekends you'll find up-and-coming local bands rocking the house. 2010 Waugh Dr. • rudyardspub.com • 713.521.0521.

SOUTH BEACH

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The only LGBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thurs.-Sat. Smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979.823.6174 • halobcs.com.

Galveston

23RD ST. STATION

A new face on the Island bar scene is here. The bar features a neighborhood-bar feel with octane. Drink specials daily and the weekend is filled with pulsing music, hot dancers, drag shows, and a Sunday Tea Dance. 1706 23rd St. • 409.621.1808.

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A neighborhood bar, the Island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The private patio includes a swimming pool. On Sat. and Sun. nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409.765.9092.

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, this popular northside spot also offers DJs Thursday-Saturday. 247041 I-45N Suite 103 • 281.298.9035 • ranchhill.com.

THE ROOM BAR AND LOUNGE

One of only two LGBT hangouts in North Houston/Spring, this bar and video lounge has a laidback atmosphere where everyone is welcome and everyone is friendly to each other. The Room Bar and Lounge offers something for everyone, including daily drink specials, karaoke, free pool, drag shows, and live DJs several nights a week. 4915 FM 2920 • roombarspring.com • 281.907.6866. ■

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Bad Habits

... becoming aware of them.

With the strong Mercury retrograde through September 26, two eclipses, and the last Saturn/Neptune square, this month promises to be a busy one! Pay attention to the details. Avoid purchasing cars and electronic equipment. It is a good time to rethink your plans before you finalize them at the end of the month. • There is a solar eclipse on the 1st in Virgo, and the lunar eclipse is on the 16th in Pisces. These planetary combinations will make us more aware of bad habits that need to be improved. We will also be more open to helping people.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). Because of the eclipses this month, you are paying more attention to your health and work habits. You are working on getting things more organized at home and at work. Your relationship energies, both business and personal, are improving and really should be better through September 2017. This is an excellent time to be planning for additional education or considering some long-distance travel. Relationships take over your focus by month's end—a super time to make contact with others who can help or support you in any of your endeavors.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). As the month opens, it should be an easier and smoother time for you overall. Your creative skills are very strong this month, and being around creative people or children can really help your attitude. They have a freedom you will want to emulate. Continue to work on getting your financial affairs in order. Toward the end of the month, work and health habits take over your focus, and it's a perfect time to get your workplace organized. And finally, relationships are being activated right at the end of the month—a much better time to meet someone new or to recommit to your partner.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). There is a lot of tension in the air for you this month, primarily because your ruler, Mercury, is retrograde in the family and home area of your horoscope. It's a great time to rethink past actions, but the worst time to start new plans. Aim for that rethinking to happen at the end of the month. Pay special attention to your relationships this month. This is a very good time to visit a bed and breakfast and have a business meeting about the future direction of your partnership. Or a visit to your therapist could also help. You are a bit lighter at the end of the month, but you continue to keep the pressure on yourself.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). Keep your eyes on the details this month. Make a list, or set reminders on your smartphone. There is a lot to manage this month as you organize and move forward on your plans. With Mercury retrograde in your area of communications, you should pay particular attention to what you say, question what others actually hear from you, and follow up on what people say they are going to do. Stay on your health and exercise regimen. Relationships take the spotlight at the end of the month. You and your partner will need an adventure!

LEO (July 23–August 22). This month you are paying close attention to your finances. With Mercury retrograde in the money area of your horoscope, you will have the chance to clear up any errors that were made in the past. Follow up on your creative projects. They had been slowing down, but they're regaining speed this month. If you have children, this could be a time when they really challenge your job as a parent. Make sure you nurture your own inner child so all the love doesn't go one way! By the end of the month, you are feeling much freer and focusing on making your home more beautiful.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). This is a big month for you. With both eclipses and the Mercury retrograde occurring in your sign, you are doing some massive rethinking this month. You are focused on getting your old projects finished. Communication, especially with your partner, is so very important. You are continuing to work on improving your home environment. There are lots of opportunities opening up for you. Be prepared to put your new plans into action right at the end of the month. Your temper will be shorter this month, so find a positive outlet for that.



LIBRA (September 23–October 23). As the month opens, you are in a rest-and-retreat mode. There is a lot of potential out there for improvements in career and relationships, but you are in an incubation time. Keep your schedule very flexible during the second and third weeks of September. It may take extra time and effort to get your daily chores taken care of. Your temper will be shorter, so remember to count to 10! By the end of the month, you are ready for the world. There are a lot of good things coming your way via work and relationships!

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). Reconnecting with friends and organizations is a priority for you this month. That would be good for you, both for business and for extending your support connections. Getting your finances orga-

nized continues to be a strong item on the menu this month. Don't let your fear block your actions. Developing a plan and sticking with it will let you regain your sense of control. By the end of the month you are ready to retreat a little. Your spirituality is being activated, so this would be a good time for a retreat!

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). This is a busy month for you. You are particularly focused on your career or social obligations while you work on new long-term plans for yourself. You are not as flexible and easygoing as you normally see yourself. You are taking things more personally and are likely to respond in that way. Some exercise, or starting on a health regimen, would help channel some of this energy in a positive direction. By the end of the month, you are being easier on yourself. It is a great time to connect with friends or social organizations.

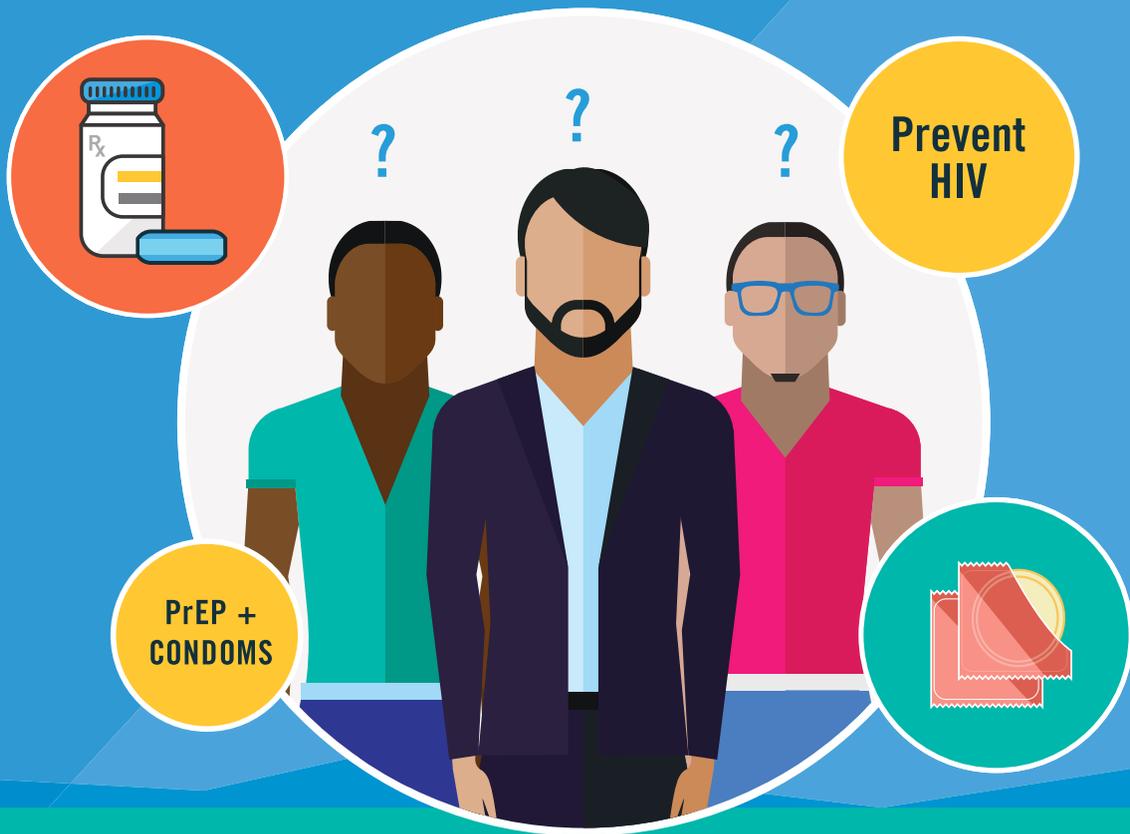
CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). If you've been looking for a good month to step back and take it easy, this is the month. Your energy levels have not been very strong, but that is all about to change as we get to the end of the month. If you do travel during this time for a vacation, choose a place you have been to before. Get plenty of rest, as you will need it. At the end of the month, you are more than ready to get your plans into action. This can be a great time for a new job, or even for a new career setting. You are feeling more courageous and willing to take a risk on investing in yourself.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). This month you are reviewing your long-term financial goals, and also looking for greater intimacy with your partner. With relationships, this could be an excellent time to get away with your partner, attend a couples workshop, and finally get past some issues that have been holding you back from being really open. Toward the end of the month, you are ready to step away from your intense feelings and just do some things for fun. It's a great time to travel, attend some lectures, or do some blog writing. You may have to set some new boundaries with friends this month.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). With the eclipses and the retrograde affecting your relationship horoscope, you will be clearing up many problems that you've neglected in the past. For some, this will be a time of renewing commitments. For others, this may be the end of the road. You are also getting clear about your career directions. It's best not to act on any of those plans until the beginning of October. Your courage to act gets stronger as we travel through September. A career focus takes over at the end of the month.

Read Lilly Roddy's 2016 forecast at OUTSMARTMAGAZINE.com. For more astro-insight, log on to lillyroddy.com.

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**IT'S TIME TO TALK
PrEP.**



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OUT IN HOUSTON



The Montrose Softball League Association's Mafia Softball team held its "Sing-A-Long Show Tunes" fundraiser on August 14 at Guava Lamp. Pictured are (back) **Chris Barry, Ben Childress, Chris Hunckleer**, (front) **Ken Mathis, Michael Sample**, and **LoRon Charles**.



The grand opening reception for Myth Kafe was held on August 22. Pictured are **George Petrou, Paige Moore**, CM **Robert Gallegos**, CM **Karla Cisneros**, and **John Virden**.



White Linen Night in the Heights was held on August 6. Pictured are **Barbara Martin Wheat, Bryan Taft, Jeannie Mills**, and **Mike Wheat**.



On August 11, Colonial Blue held a concert to coincide with the release of OutSMART's August Music Issue at Pearl Bar. Pictured are lead singer **Stephanie Rice** and Pearl Bar owner **Julie Mabry**.



On August 20, photographer **Eric Edward Schell** officially launched his P.R.I.D.E. Portraits series. Pictured are **Hugo Perez, Joan Schell**, Schell, **Juanita Mayora, Rick Schell**, and **Alma Rivas**.



GLAAD held a sneak preview of the *State of Change—Texas* mini-documentary on August 9 at the Montrose Center. Pictured are **Ana Andrea Molina, Fran Watson, Amanda Turner, Janet Quezada, Alexandra Bolles**, and **Ross Murray**.



The Diana Foundation held its August social and kickoff on August 21. Pictured are **Michael Leibbert, Nathan Wright, Penelope, Pete Beausoleil, Lana Blake, Deyzah Opulent-Mirage, Chloe T. Crawford**, and **Tanner Williams**.



Out & Equal and My Gay Houston held their monthly happy hour on August 17. Pictured are **Mike Craig, Will Dawson, Sarah Sudhoff, A.J. Mistretta, Martin Valdez**, and **Jill Renick**.



The Houston GLBT Political Caucus held its endorsement meeting for the general election on August 6. Pictured are Harris County Judge **Vince Ryan** and **Ray Hill**.



EPAH held its dinner meeting and elections on August 16 at China Garden. Pictured are **Tim Martinez, Brent Braveman, Michele Laprade, Mike Ryan, Cindy Cuellar, Denise O'Doherty, Nicole Mackey, Steve Bretthauer**, and **Dan McCommis**.



Artist **Jumper Maybach** held a screening of *Jumper Maybach The Movie* on August 16. Pictured are **Alan de Herrera, Maybach, Arielle Lipsen, Mary Sinderson**, and **Adam Feldman**.

DIANA

COUNTRY DINNER WEEKEND

SATURDAY / OCTOBER 1 SUNDAY / OCTOBER 2

DIANA COUNTRY DINNER & DANCE

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

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FEATURES

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11:30 AM - 2:00 PM

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TICKETS

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FEATURES

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