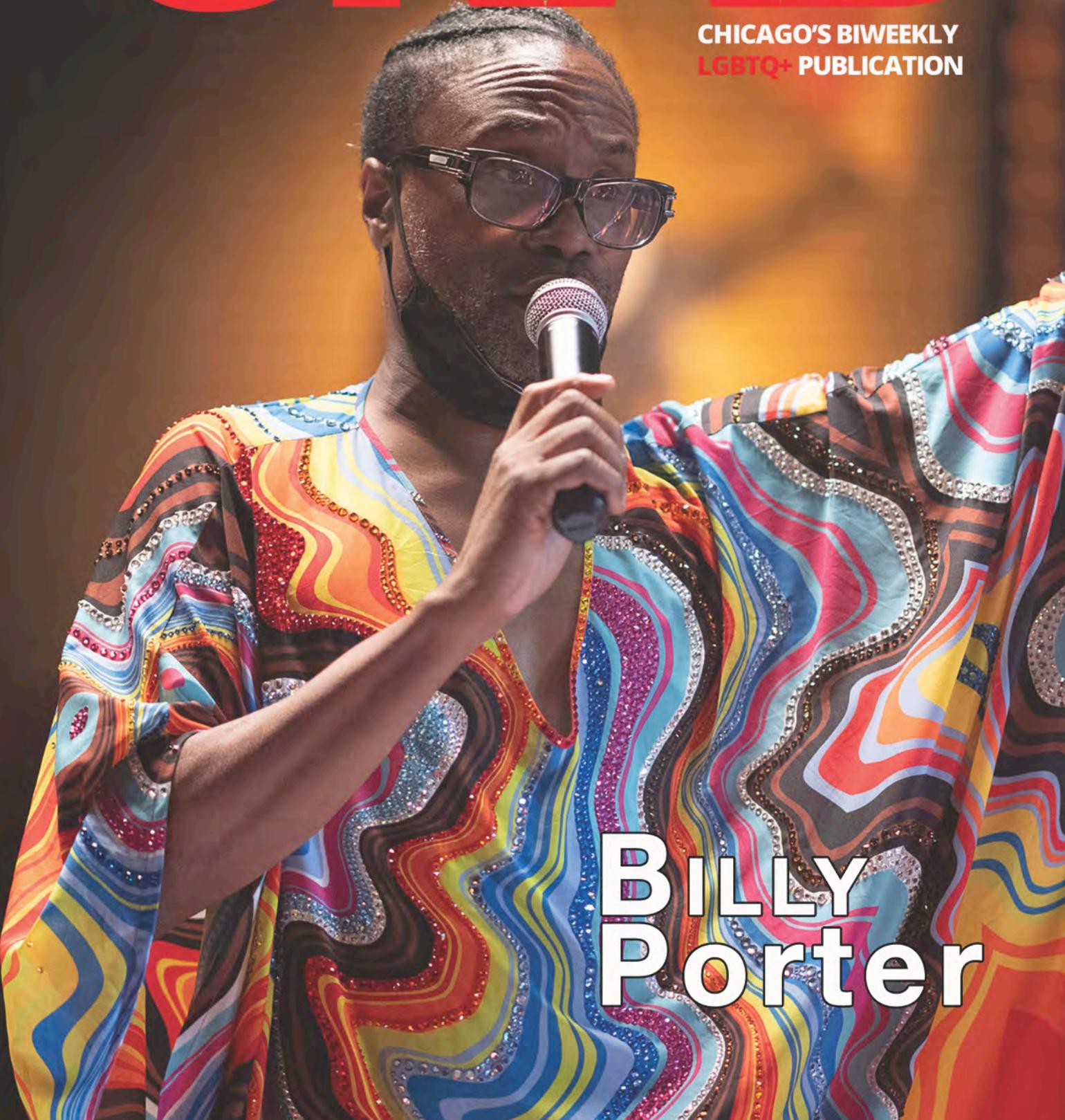


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GRAB MAGAZINE
3712 N. BROADWAY #315
CHICAGO, IL 60613
TEL: 773-707-2660
WWW.GRABCHICAGO.COM
WWW.GRABBYAWARDS.COM
EMAIL: GRABSTACY@GMAIL.COM

Publisher
 Stacy Bridges

Creative Director (Web)
 Miguel Ortuno

Contributors
 Chris Azzopardi
 Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss
 Erik Sosa-Kibby
 Holly Maholm
 Gregg Shapiro
 Terri Schlichenmeyer

Production
 Stacy Bridges
 James Gumb

Photography
 Bear Lens Photography
 KenBrown
 CHRIS K.

Sales
 Judy Kyle

Public Relations
 Nick Wille

NATIONAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE
 RIVENDELL MEDIA
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GRAB BILLY



Billy Porter Is the Change '80 For Brady' star on acting with legends, directing a drag queen's story for TV and his return to music

By Chris Azzopardi

You could say Billy Porter was born to play just about all of his roles. This, of course, is true of his portrayal of Pray Tell, the actor's Emmy Award-winning part on "Pose," and his star-making, Tony Award-winning role in Broadway's "Kinky Boots." And you definitely can't argue with the fact that he was put on this earth to bring racial and gender diversity to his Fairy Godmother part in 2021's modern retelling of "Cinderella."

The trend continues with Gugu, the iconic choreography he plays in "80 For Brady," a role he slips into with such natural ease that you might be asking yourself, "Billy Porter who?" When I tell him that having seen him as Gugu, he may now always just be Gugu to me, he embraces it: "You can call me Gugu," he says, laughing.

In "80 For Brady," Gugu is where Lady Gaga got her name from, so that makes Gugu immediately important to the whole gay world. He, with his smooth moves and flashy tracksuit, is also instrumental in the lives of four other ladies whose dream he helps to fulfill: Lily Tomlin, Sally Field, Rita Moreno and Jane Fonda, or rather their

characters (Lou, Betty, Maura and Trish, respectively).

In addition to "80 for Brady," the 53-year-old stage and screen actor stepped behind the camera to direct an episode of "Accused," an anthology series on Fox. The Porter-directed episode, called "Robyn's Story," features J. Harrison Ghee as a drag queen tangled in complicated legal drama after an escalating fling with a closeted man.

In our recent interview, Porter spoke about how his own life experiences inspired the episode, returning to his R&B roots for his upcoming album and why he thinks "80 For Brady" is the gayest sports movie ever made.

Chris Azzopardi: I want to know who Gugu is at night when he's not helping older women sneak into the Super Bowl.

Billy Porter: Gugu is fabulous. Gugu is a brilliant choreographer, director of superstar shows, and he sprinkles magical creativity all over the world.

CA: Who else has Gugu worked with, aside from Lady Gaga?

BP: Gugu's old enough to have worked with Michael Jackson.

CA: Well, I have to say I am not a football fan, but this movie made me think that perhaps I could be, if football always involved Sally, Jane, Lily, Rita, you and Tom Brady.

BP: "Gayest sports film ever made." That's what somebody said earlier.

CA: I think that might be true, honestly. I haven't seen a lot of sportsball movies, but...

BP: I've seen a few. It's the gayest.

CA: Thinking about the toxic masculinity in sports that I experienced as a gay person, this movie is turning sports on its head.

BP: I feel like I know that art has the power to transform hearts and minds, and what I loved about this when I read the script is it creates a space for us to have really complex and complicated conversations subversively without even knowing we're having them, and I think that's what art does so beautifully at its best, at its core. So it was very exciting for me to be a part of it for that reason. It's very queer and it's very positively queer in spaces that aren't so positive, historically, with



Photo Courtesy Paramount Pictures

queer subject matter or anything that's queer. So it's really lovely to see that collective humanity modeled through this piece. It really is lovely.

CA: Did you play sports as a kid?

BP: Honey, they tried to have me play something, tried a couple of things. I tried softball. I tried tag football, I think they called it. I got sacked one day and the wind got knocked out of me. I had an asthma attack and I never went back.

CA: This movie has four national treasures in it. What was your reaction when you knew you'd be in a movie with Jane, Sally, Lily and Rita?

BP: Well, when I lifted my chin up from the ground... these ladies have been an inspiration to me for decades. I am a student of life. I'm a student of the arts. I've studied, I've trained and I've watched these women in their careers and have been inspired not only by their work, but also how they move through life. The humanity, the philanthropy, the activism, all of those things. The 360-holistic approach that they've all had to their lives has just been inspiring and a blueprint for me in how I have tried to make choices and set up my own path. So it's been magical.

CA: Was there a particular moment that you shared together that was just something that you'll never forget?

BP: My favorite part of doing this was being able to sit in holding with all the ladies while they were setting

up the camera shots, because that was the fun part. That was the really fun part. We got to know each other, we got to talk, we got to kiki. They're fun and naughty.

CA: Had you hung out with any of them before?

BP: No. I mean, I knew Sally. Sally actually gave me my Tony Award [for "Kinky Boots"] on stage with Matthew Broderick back in 2013. She's really good friends with Tony Kushner and she has a place in P-town. I just happened to be

hope and loving kindness and compassion and all of that.

Do you have any Super Bowl traditions?

I don't really have any traditions — other than when the Steelers are in it. Because I'm from Pittsburgh, I watch it. I usually tape it so that I can see the concert. I call it "the concert."

I watched the episode of "Accused" that you directed. As somebody who has seen where a story like this can go, it did not go where I expected it to. Well, that's [series creator] Howard Gordon who saw the script and did the thing that allies are supposed to do and picked up the phone and called me because he knew that I was one of the people on this planet that could deliver that story in the way that it should be. And I'm grateful for that.

CA: Your stamp is certainly on it. What was it like to put your big queer stamp on an episode of a show that is otherwise not particularly queer-focused at all?

BP: It's one of those moments where you just... I stand in awe of

what has happened to me once I chose my own authenticity. I got a second chance. I failed as somebody else very early in my career, and I've decided to choose myself. And so when you watch that episode, it's a manifestation of that. It's a manifestation of living a true and authentic life, and I get to then be able to tell the story of what that feels like in a really real way. I love that they've taken the risk with this particular episode.

We need to have tough conversations. As artists, we get to get right in the middle and have conversations and create safe spaces to have conversations that otherwise are rejected. This is a Middle America show that's going to come on in Middle America on a Middle America network at a Middle America time. Folks will be changed



Photo Courtesy Fox

there one summer, a few summers ago, so we had tea together and watched a lunar eclipse.

What do you think is the affinity or the connection between gay men and older women?

I think queer people relate to anybody and anything that feels like an outcast. An underdog or an outcast, we always relate to because that's what we have to navigate from the moment we can comprehend thought. And so I think that alignment, it brings us together and makes us feel hopeful, helps in helping us continue to just breathe and put one foot in front of the other when we can see examples of, "Oh, it can be joyful." There are no time limits to your dreams. There is no time limit to anything. Ride your life until the wheels fall off with joy and

after watching this, and I am so grateful to be able to be at the helm of something like that.

CA: What do you hope those viewers walk away with after they see this episode?

BP: I think the biggest thing that I'm hoping for, and in all of my work, is to be reminded of our collective humanity. There's a dehumanization that's prevalent in this world right now, and I'm hoping that my work can remind people of our collective humanity, because that's what heals.

CA: You've been in front of the camera and behind. What is different about both for you? Are you more comfortable doing one over the other?

BP: It's not about more comfortable or less comfortable. It's just about exercising another creative muscle. My mind never stops, so directing uses every single piece of my being. It activates all of it, and I love that. Acting has its own thing, and I love it when I get to be in front of the camera. It's another way of communicating humanity. I love them both.

CA: What can you say about your new music?

BP: The single, "Baby Was a Dancer," has been pushed to March. "Children" came out last year. "Stranger Things" came out around the election. The album is called "Black Mona Lisa." I'm really excited to return to my original roots as a singer. My first R&B album came out back in '97. A lot of people don't know that. I'm just really excited



Photo Courtesy Paramount Pictures

about this work. I got a chance to work with Justin Tranter, one of the greatest music writers of our time. I'm really excited about the work. I'm really excited about the message. I'm really excited to be able to put myself out in that way again.

CA: With February being Black History Month, could you draw on your long career as a Black person in this industry and tell me what changes you are noticing, for better or worse?

BP: I think that's a great question because I want to start with the change that has already happened. We, as human beings, are sort of hardwired to only speak of the negative, always take in the negative more than the positive, always push out the negative more than the positive. If you watch the news, it bleeds; if it bleeds, it leads. There's not a lot of focus on the positive things that have happened in this journey. Me sitting here talking to you is the positive in the moment and in the space that we're in. The fact that I can exist in my own authenticity in this world and show up the way that I do is the change. That's the change.

I encourage all of us to lean into what's positive about what's happening right now on this planet. I think about this Biden

administration. Just do a deep dive on what has really been going on. There's a lot of good stuff. We've made a lot of good strides. A lot of stuff is great, and we have a long way to go. And so the hope for me is that we can take the time to regenerate ourselves through acknowledging the positive. We can revive ourselves. We can take a moment of self-care so that we can recharge and come back out swinging.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Chris Azzopardi is the Editorial Director of Pride Source Media Group and Q Syndicate, the national LGBTQ+ wire service. He has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi

GRAB D SMITH

Homeless After the Music Business Rejected Her, This Trans Director's First Film Just Premiered at Sundance Rightfully, D. Smith is calling this moment in her career 'literally a comeback'

By Chris Azzopardi

The same music industry that initially embraced D. Smith when she was presenting as a man turned against her when she transitioned. She lost her house, her car and her music studio. This was 2014, the year Smith, who has produced songs for Lil Wayne, Keri Hilson and Ciara, says she was “forced out of the music industry.”

Just seven years after exiting that industry, Smith is making a splash with her directorial film debut at one of the world's preeminent film festivals. This achievement is even more remarkable considering the director who discovered a passion for filmmaking during the pandemic decided to go DIY for her first film, “Kokomo City.”

The film is an uninhibited, fearlessly sexual documentary that explores what life is like for four Black transgender sex workers — a true watershed moment in trans-centric filmmaking.

And this is where Smith's story gets especially emancipatory: “Kokomo City” just premiered as an official selection of the NEXT section at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival



Photo by D. Smith

to early critical acclaim. “One of the most exciting non-fiction entries to this year's Sundance is a radical, on-the-ground pulpit from which four Black trans sex workers talk their shit,” wrote Jacob Oller for Paste Magazine. The site BlackGirlNerds.com called it “transcendent genius.”

And to the music industry folks who turned against her — Smith recently completed work on a new song, “Man's World,” for an album Katy Perry is currently recording. As for her directorial debut, Smith described the experience of being at Sundance with the film as “literally a comeback.”

Chris Azzopardi: What happened to you during the era in which you were shut out of the music industry for being transgender?

D. Smith: I was pretty busy as a

producer. I was working with a lot of people, and it's so crazy. I've done a lot of hip-hop, and people see me dressed [as a man] one day, and then the next day I'm wearing eyeshadow. And guys, people just didn't know how to handle it, or they didn't want to handle it. They were embarrassed. And I was pushed to the side. Phone calls weren't returned, emails weren't returned, and I just stopped working. And in less than two years, I completely went broke.

CA: Do you feel there's an undercurrent of internalized homophobia in the hip-hop world?

DS: Even outside that world, there's a lot of homophobia and transphobia, period. And it sounds like you experienced that.

Oh yeah. Firsthand. But what's so crazy is that your music has



Photo By Liyah Mitchell

nothing to do with how you present yourself. So the fact that people stopped working with me musically because of the way I started to look as if it affected my music... it actually enhanced my music, because I started to feel more like myself. And it backfired. People literally just stopped calling me for work and caused me to be homeless. So [I'm] kind of getting on my feet now.

CA: And now you're here at Sundance with your directorial debut. What're you feeling right now?

DS: Oh, I feel... and this sounds cliché, but I feel tremendously empowered. I also am very aware of my position and I respect it, but I've also worked very hard for it. But I just want to use this energy, this moment where I am, to just keep telling great stories and creating music.

CA: When you say position, what do you mean? Because to me, it seems like even with this movie, you being at Sundance, this was not an easy film to get made.

DS: No, no. I mean, I made it by myself. By position, I mean, I'm being acknowledged for my work. How can I say this without sounding arrogant? I did it by myself, most of

it. And that took a lot of my life, my time. And nothing's guaranteed, right?

So to be acknowledged for something that I've done with my talent, my God-given talent... that's what I mean by my position. I don't take it for granted, and I understand where I am right now in my life. So I just want to maximize the opportunity and inspire people.

CA: This being your directorial debut, I was curious about the first time that you picked up a camera and what that experience was like for you?

DS: Someone purchased the camera for me and that in and of itself was very moving for me, because this wasn't a rich person. This is someone that really made a sacrifice to make that happen. And when I got the camera in my hand, I knew something good was going to come out of it.

During the pandemic, I was walking around the city with my phone just taking pictures of different elements or angles in the city, shooting in black and white. And I was inspired to shoot with this technique and movement. And the documentary came to me. I'm thinking, here I am shooting photographs, but I'm broke. It's like, how can I make this work for me?

And also, how can this be something impactful?

CA: How did the idea of spotlighting Black trans sex workers come to you?

DS: Well, I've never had to do sex work, but what inspired me was when I was homeless, sleeping on people's couches for two years. I'm thinking, "Gosh, I have a lot to show for myself. And it's still not good enough. I have great music to show for myself and a great reputation in the music industry. And it still wasn't enough." People judged me and disconnected from me because of my identity. And I started to think about trans women and how difficult is it for them that don't even have the amount of talent that I have? And I'm still in a worse position than they are. At least they have their own house, they have their own vehicles. But it inspired me to tell their story.

CA: How did you decide to make some of the artistic decisions that you did for the film? For instance, shooting it in black and white, the music and the overall edgy tone. There's nothing shy about this work. It's like, if we're going to talk about sex, we're going to talk about sex.

DS: That's right. But that's what we do in real life in person. We do that,



Photo By Dominique Silver

even if it's in the privacy of our own homes. So when we go into documentary form, why is it watered down when we're all doing it in private? It just seems really reductive and it doesn't feel fulfilling.

And the black and white, I shot it because it represents truth. It's just simple, but it's also classy, classic and timeless, and it looks really elevated. And I thought that dichotomy with the girls, with their street personas and their lingo, that it'd be great to have these girls in a raw form shot in black and white.

CA:What do you think is something that has been historically left out of the conversation regarding sex workers that made it even more important to include in this film?
DS: Well, the fact that they're doing it. And there's a lot of trans girls that are public figures or celebrities that are still having to do sex work because it's hard for them to get jobs.

CA:I don't think most people would assume or know that.
DS: Oh yeah, it's the truth. So these girls are really breaking that old narrative that we are OK, or we are fine because we dress in gowns, or we have a great wig. But the truth is, a lot of girls, a lot of trans women,

have to subject themselves to sex work, and that's the reality.

CA:I mentioned the rich storytelling in "Kokomo City," and there are some really great moments but also some devastatingly real-talk moments. What's something that is said during the doc that has stuck with you?

DS: The fact that during some of their calls, some of the sex workers tried to blackmail the clients, or rob them, and that was a shocker. But I'm not surprised because sometimes girls feel like they're not getting paid enough, or maybe they feel like the guy is going to gyp them from pay. So it's all these details and possibilities that can happen when a trans woman puts herself in these situations or in the hands of these men. It's unsettling.

CA: What do you hope this doc conveys about the way Black trans women sex workers are perceived?

DS: This film is about Black trans women, but it's also about Black people. How we treat each other and the lack of love for each other. So I hope that it's a waking up for Black people as a community. And I hope there's a level of shame that comes with this film for some Black people

that feel like they could have done or should do more to get to know trans people or be kind to trans people.

CA:Are you finding that these women are being accepted more than you expected them to be?

DS: Yeah. Because a lot of times people, especially in the media, they like to create this narrative that trans women are against Black women, and Black women don't like trans women. And it's been more Black women who are championing this film than anything. I'm so shocked, to be honest with you. They're so supportive and like, "Oh my god, I love this film. This has to go." And so, yeah, this is thrilling.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Chris Azzopardi is the Editorial Director of Pride Source Media Group and Q Syndicate, the national LGBTQ+ wire service. He has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

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Important Facts About DOVATO

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

What is the most important information I should know about DOVATO?

If you have both human immunodeficiency virus-1 (HIV-1) infection and Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection, DOVATO can cause serious side effects, including:

- **Resistant HBV.** Your healthcare provider will test you for HBV infection before you start treatment with DOVATO. If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B, the HBV can change (mutate) during your treatment with DOVATO and become harder to treat (resistant). It is not known if DOVATO is safe and effective in people who have HIV-1 and HBV infection.
- **Worsening of HBV infection.** If you have HBV infection and take DOVATO, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking DOVATO. A "flare-up" is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before.
 - Do not run out of DOVATO. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your DOVATO is all gone.

- Do not stop DOVATO without first talking to your healthcare provider.
- If you stop taking DOVATO, your healthcare provider will need to check your health often and do blood tests regularly for several months to check your liver function and monitor your HBV infection. It may be necessary to give you a medicine to treat hepatitis B. Tell your healthcare provider about any new or unusual symptoms you may have after you stop taking DOVATO.

For more information about side effects, see "What are possible side effects of DOVATO?"

What is DOVATO?

DOVATO is a prescription medicine that is used without other HIV-1 medicines to treat human immunodeficiency virus-1 (HIV-1) infection in adults: who have not received HIV-1 medicines in the past, or to replace their current HIV-1 medicines when their healthcare provider determines that they meet certain requirements. HIV-1 is the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is not known if DOVATO is safe and effective in children.

Please see additional Important Facts About DOVATO on the following page.

Ask your doctor about staying undetectable with fewer medicines in 1 pill.

Important Facts About DOVATO (cont'd)

Who should not take DOVATO?

Do not take DOVATO if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine that contains dolutegravir or lamivudine.
- take dofetilide. Taking DOVATO and dofetilide can cause side effects that may be serious or life-threatening.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before using DOVATO?

Tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have or have had liver problems, including hepatitis B or C infection.
- have kidney problems.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. One of the medicines in DOVATO (dolutegravir) may harm your unborn baby.
 - Your healthcare provider may prescribe a different medicine than DOVATO if you are planning to become pregnant or if pregnancy is confirmed during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.
 - If you can become pregnant, your healthcare provider may perform a pregnancy test before you start treatment with DOVATO.
 - If you can become pregnant, you and your healthcare provider should talk about the use of effective birth control (contraception) during treatment with DOVATO.
 - Tell your healthcare provider right away if you are planning to become pregnant, you become pregnant, or think you may be pregnant during treatment with DOVATO.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. **Do not breastfeed if you take DOVATO.**
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
 - DOVATO passes to your baby in your breast milk.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Some medicines interact with DOVATO. Keep a list of your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

- You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with DOVATO.
- **Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider.** Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to take DOVATO with other medicines.

What are possible side effects of DOVATO?

DOVATO can cause serious side effects, including:

- See "What is the most important information I should know about DOVATO?"

What are possible side effects of DOVATO? (cont'd)

- **Allergic reactions.** Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop a rash with DOVATO. Stop taking DOVATO and get medical help right away if you develop a rash with any of the following signs or symptoms: fever; generally ill feeling; tiredness; muscle or joint aches; blisters or sores in mouth; blisters or peeling of the skin; redness or swelling of the eyes; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue; problems breathing.
- **Liver problems.** People with a history of hepatitis B or C virus may have an increased risk of developing new or worsening changes in certain liver tests during treatment with DOVATO. Liver problems, including liver failure, have also happened in people without a history of liver disease or other risk factors. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your liver. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark or "tea-colored" urine; light-colored stools (bowel movements); nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis).** Too much lactic acid is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms that could be signs of lactic acidosis: feel very weak or tired; unusual (not normal) muscle pain; trouble breathing; stomach pain with nausea and vomiting; feel cold, especially in your arms and legs; feel dizzy or lightheaded; and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Lactic acidosis can also lead to severe liver problems,** which can lead to death. Your liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and you may develop fat in your liver (steatosis). Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the signs or symptoms of liver problems which are listed above under "Liver problems."
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female or very overweight (obese).**
- **Changes in your immune system (Immune Reconstitution Syndrome)** can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having new symptoms after you start taking DOVATO.
- **The most common side effects of DOVATO include:** headache; nausea; diarrhea; trouble sleeping; tiredness; and anxiety.

These are not all the possible side effects of DOVATO. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

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GRAB DE'SHAWN

Thrills and chills in West Mills: An interview with De'Shawn Charles Winslow

By Gregg Shapiro

Readers know that a writer has created an effective murder mystery when they are kept guessing, and then are utterly surprised by the revelation of the guilty party. Prize-winning gay author De'Shawn Charles Winslow does precisely that in his second novel "Decent People" (Bloomsbury, 2023). Like his debut novel, "In West Mills," the follow-up "Decent People" is set in the same fictional North Carolina town, still segregated in the mid-1970s. The triple-murder of three siblings has the town abuzz, and as we are introduced to the various townsfolk, we discover that many had reason to commit the crime. Additionally, Winslow takes on race and queerness with an expert hand, expanding the reach of the story. De'Shawn was kind enough to make time for an interview in January 2023.

Gregg Shapiro: Being a North Carolina native yourself, what were the challenges and rewards of creating a fictional town such as West Mills, as you did in your 2019 debut novel "In West Mills," and to which you have returned in your new novel "Decent People" (Bloomsbury, 2023)?
De'Shawn Charles Winslow: Since the real town of South Mills, North Carolina is so familiar to me, it was really easy to create a slightly different version of it as "West Mills." Returning to it for a second book was fun because it allowed me to add some minor details that I hadn't in the first book. It's rewarding in that most of the setting work is already done for me.

GS: West Mills is the very definition of a small town, right down to its population of 1,000 people.

Was your North Carolina hometown of Elizabeth City as small?

DCW: Elizabeth City is a little bigger because there's a university and a coast guard base there. But it still has that small-town vibe.

GS: The title of the novel comes from the 13th chapter when Savannah's father Ted refers to the Harmon family as "decent people." Did you already have the title when you were writing the novel or did what Ted says inspire you to use it for that purpose?

DCW: The final title was an amalgamation of clunky titles I pitched to my editor, all of which were trying to capture the idea of somewhat nice people doing awful things – things they believed were for the common good. The original title was "Pharaoh's Army," based on a scene with Lymp and his mom. But once I edited that conversation, the title no longer worked.

GS: Family, in particular siblings, including the Harmons, Jo and Herschel, and Troy and Terrance, are central to the novel. Do you have siblings, and if so, how does

your relationship with them compare to those in your book?

DCW: I have many siblings, and though we aren't super close, we don't have any issues with each other [laughs]. My interest in siblings is more so based on the fact that I know so many people who have full and half-siblings. It's so common where I'm from that it's almost strange when a person doesn't have any half-siblings.

GS: As Jo says about West Mills, "everyone's got a secret." But secrets don't stay secret very long the way townspeople spread gossip. "Decent People" is set in 1976, many years before social media. Does that have anything to do with why you set it then?

DCW: I chose the year mainly because of a triple accidental drowning that occurred in South Mills in the mid '70s. I learned about the drowning from my mother and aunt. Originally, the Harmons were



Photo By Julie R Kereszte

going to be those drowning victims, but I changed it to a triple murder because I wanted a louder engine for the novel. The other reason 1976 worked well is because in "In West Mills," La'Roy is born 14 years prior. It was the perfect year logistically.

GS: "Decent People" is full of period references including the TV shows "McMillan & Wife" and "Laverne & Shirley," the 1971 Camden riot, model Donyale Luna, actor Calvin Lockhart, kidnapped heiress Patty Hearst, and even Body on Tap Shampoo. Was it fun for you to fit those elements into the storyline?

DSW: Google is such a lovely thing [laughs]! But I also watch old TV shows that often include lots of pop culture references.

GS: At its core, "Decent People" is a murder mystery. Do you have a favorite mystery writer from whom you find inspiration?

DCW: I haven't read enough mysteries to have a favorite yet. Most of my mystery consumption comes from TV. I grew up watching shows like "Murder, She Wrote," "Matlock," and "Father Dowling Mysteries," with my parents. And during the early months of the pandemic, I found myself watching some of those and other detective shows, new and old. I do plan to read more mysteries, though.

GS: Queerness is also an essential part of "Decent People." Jo's brother Herschel is gay, Eunice's son La'Roy is gay. In fact, Eunice takes La'Roy to see Dr. Harmon to have "the gay removed." Is this your commentary on conversion therapy?

DCW: Absolutely. I wanted to point out that conversion therapy can come in various forms. Sometimes it's simply always telling a child to walk differently, speak differently, laugh differently, and so on. Sometimes the conversion attempts are so passive that one might not even realize they're experiencing it until years later.

GS: You also make a point of talking about how Herschel left North Carolina and moved north to a place where he could live his life without fear or threat of violence. You also left North Carolina for New York. Please say

something about that.

DCW: When I first left my hometown, I went to a larger North Carolina city where there were many openly queer people and places for us to be who we were. Those were some very liberating years. I remember my first time going to a gay bar like it was just last week. I wasn't old enough to be there, of course. But in those days, people turned their heads and let 19-year-olds in [laughs]. They knew we were just looking for community.

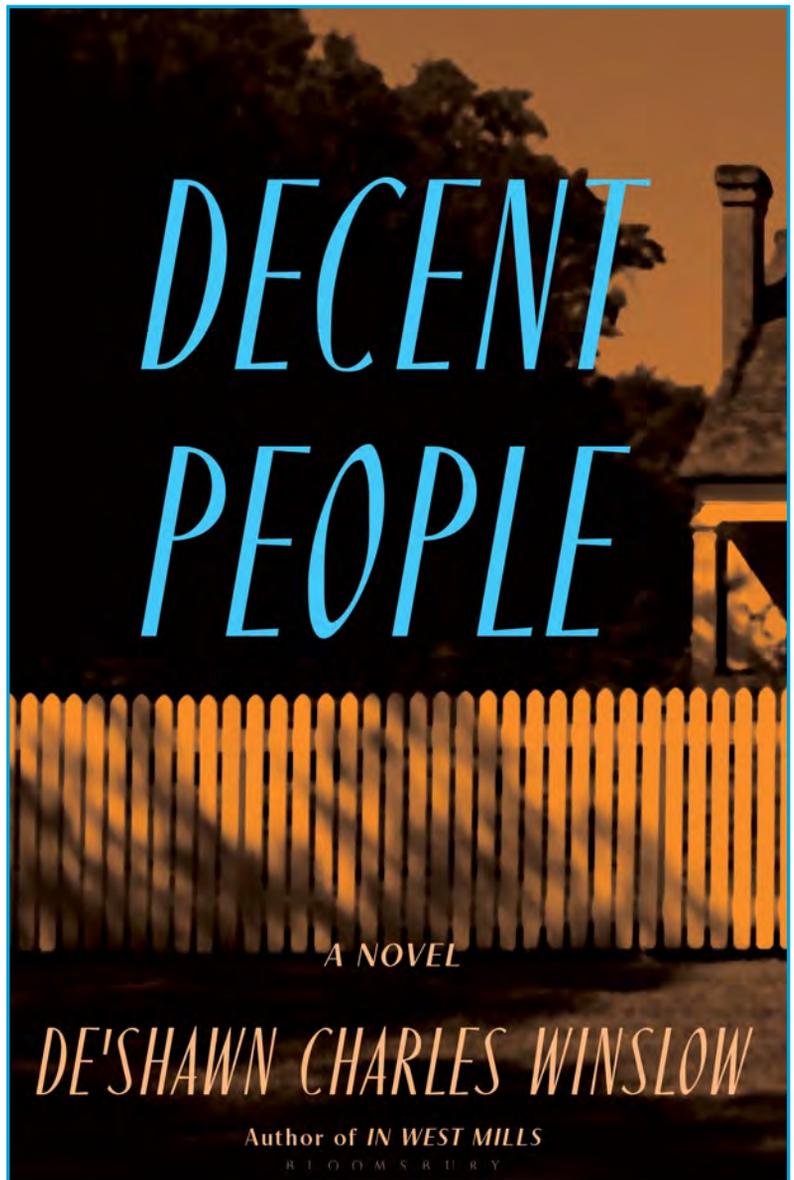
GS: "Decent People" is very cinematic. If there was a movie version who would you want to play Jo? Eunice? La'Roy?

Savannah? Ted?

DCW: I believe Sheryl Lee Ralph would make a great Jo. Another interviewer mentioned that, and it has stuck with me. I think Anika Noni Rose would be great for Eunice. I haven't thought about actors for other characters much.

GS: Have you started working on or thinking about your next writing project?

DCW: I have recently decided what my next book will be about. All I'll say for now is that it'll be set in the '80s and in a real-life, North Carolina town. All brand-new characters. I'm excited about it.



GRAB A HAMMER

Jackhammer

The popular north side bar, at 6406 N. Clark Street, reopened on Thursday, Jan. 26, after being closed for almost three years.

By Ross Forman

Jackhammer continues to preserve and celebrate the culture of leather, fetish, BDSM and kink – and the cold beer is pouring once again.

Jackhammer co-owners **Mike Sullivan** and **Mark Robertson** are thrilled, Sullivan said.

“It’s been a labor of love and the road was certainly a bumpy one,” Sullivan said. “Opening weekend (at the end of January) was amazing and we are so grateful for everyone who so warmly and excitingly welcomed Jackhammer back.”

Jackhammer was closed from March 16, 2020, to this past Thursday. “At the time (of the closing), we were told the shutdown would be for two weeks. That did not age well,” Sullivan said.

During the stretch closed, the

owners renovated, driven by the goal to create a space that honors the past while also creating a Jackhammer for the future, one that welcomes the entire LGBTQIA+ community to explore their kinky selves, Sullivan said.

Jackhammer certainly looks different than it did on March 15, 2020.

“When we bought the bar and the building in 2018, after a foreclosure sale, we knew that there had been years of deferred maintenance and repairs that needed to be addressed,” Sullivan said. “So, customers will see updated bathrooms and bars throughout the space, and new furniture and video screens, including a 60-square foot video



wall with 120 individual panels, plus a new, much higher capacity HVAC system, in a space with a modern, industrial vibe. We’ve also installed new state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems throughout the bar, and rebuilt the patio, with garage doors off the back of the rec room, the area (formerly) known as the sports bar.”

And, Sullivan added, “Throughout the bar we’ve installed art that showcases our leather and fetish history, including a large collection of posters from many of the International Mr. Leather contests over the past four decades. Our downstairs features a mural from Wil Velez, who did the mural in The Sofo Tap, the painted stairs at Meeting House Tavern, and much of the artwork that hangs in 2Bears Tavern Uptown.”

The Hole is still open. “The Hole is built to be a space for people to explore their leather, fetish, BDSM, and kink sides in a safe, no attitude setting, a place for people to come and be their true selves,” Sullivan said.

Sullivan said “a very substantial” financial investment was made for Jackhammer’s new look. “We invested for the future, so Jackhammer does not become another leather and fetish space lost,” he said.

Jackhammer is part of 2Bears Tavern Group, along with The SoFo Tap, Meeting House Tavern and 2Bears Tavern Uptown. The 2Bears



(L) Mike Sullivan & (R) Mark Robertson

A muscular man with a beard and a tattoo on his left hand is posing in a window. He is wearing an orange jockstrap and has his right hand on his hip and his left hand shading his eyes. A large, orange, stylized chair is in the foreground. The background shows a modern building with many windows.

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Photos By Anthony Meade



Group works at all locations, so customers will see familiar faces from those other local hangouts. Opening Jackhammer increased their staffing needs by almost 40 percent, Sullivan said.

"Folks should come out and experience Jackhammer for themselves ... there's so much new to see, he said. "We want to create a leather and fetish space for the future, that adapts as our community grows and changes, but still remembers our past."

Sullivan confirmed that, in the coming months, Jackhammer will be rolling out a number of recurring events, including rotating tea dances, cigar and whiskey socials, a DILF after-party, and more.

Ross Forman is a Chicago native, Ross Forman has written about the local and national LGBT scene for more than 10 years, particularly sports reporting, as well as feature stories, business profiles and breaking news. Ross also has written for several mainstream media outlets, such as the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times and

the Daily Herald, among others. Ross won the 2013 Lisagor Award for the Best Sports Story of the Year: "Esera Tuaolo: Coming back from darkness." An accomplished, prolific and professional photographer, his work has appeared in multiple media outlets and even on Christmas cards for celebrities.

*This Article Courtesy of **GoPride.com** and was Originally published on **ChicagoPride.com***



GRAB SILAS

Silas House ascending

By Gregg Shapiro

It's embarrassing to admit, but I've only read two of prolific gay writer Silas House's novels. But what amazing books they are.

"Southernmost," from 2018, is a devastating novel about a flood, family, and forgiveness, that is nothing short of unforgettable. Equally powerful, and prescient, is House's newest novel "**Lark Ascending**" (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2022), a dystopian (and queer) tale of survival against all odds. Silas House was gracious enough to answer a few questions about the novel at the beginning of 2023.

Gregg Shapiro: In your 2018 novel "Southernmost," you addressed the destructiveness of religious fanaticism, and you've returned to the subject in the dystopian "Lark Ascending" (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2022) with The Fundies (fundamentalists) and The Nays (the UK version of Fundies), whose campaign of "misinformation and discrimination" led to the collapse of both nations. What can you tell me about the draw of that subject?

Silas House: I was raised in a strict Christian fundamentalist sect wherein most of the teachings were about judgment instead of love. It was especially homophobic, sexist, xenophobic, and racist. I got away from that as a teenager but now I hear the same rhetoric being spouted by people in the highest seats of power, whether it's members of Congress, recent presidents, or popular comedians and musicians. I find it pretty terrifying that so much of the country sits by quietly while this new wave of bigotry sweeps across the land. I think it's getting worse and so it's a pressing issue for me. I've seen up close the damage this kind of thinking can do and to see the narrowing separation of church and state in our country is something that I feel compelled to

write about. It is one of the things I know best, and it makes sense to me to use what I know best when it serves the human story at the heart of a novel.

GS: The tone of the book, including the lack of "mature language," as well as the way the way you addressed sexual situations, made me wonder if you intended it for a YA readership?

SH: No. It's just that I knew my characters weren't really people who talked in a particularly coarse way. Occasionally there is a coarse word here and there but overall, that's just not in their way of thinking; it's just who they are. Lark is pretty young when he and Arlo are together – from the time he's 18 until he's 20 – and he's an old man – in his 90s – telling the story back, so it just didn't seem realistic for him to be describing their

physicality together in stark, blatant details. To me, it was much sexier to have him allude to that. One of my favorite passages in the book is a really tender sex scene: "To taste and be tasted. Every part of us humming and alive. If you are very lucky it happens occasionally that your body fits with someone else's in such a way that you feel you are not two separate people but one being, that you've gone beyond the physical." Personally, I think it lessens the erotic when a writer blatantly names body parts and goes into clinical detail about sex scenes in a book, and particularly for this couple I really wanted the tone to be tender and innocent. They're not people who grew up hearing a lot about sex or seeing it the way teenagers do today. Their whole lives they've been surviving war and hunger in a world with no electricity, so they're quite innocent. I had to factor all of that in



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who grew up hearing a lot about sex or seeing it the way teenagers do today. Their whole lives they've been surviving war and hunger in a world with no electricity, so they're quite innocent. I had to factor all of that in when trying to capture Lark's voice accurately. With that said, I have heard some teachers already say they're going to use "Lark" in their high school classes, so I do think it can crossover between YA and the adult markets.

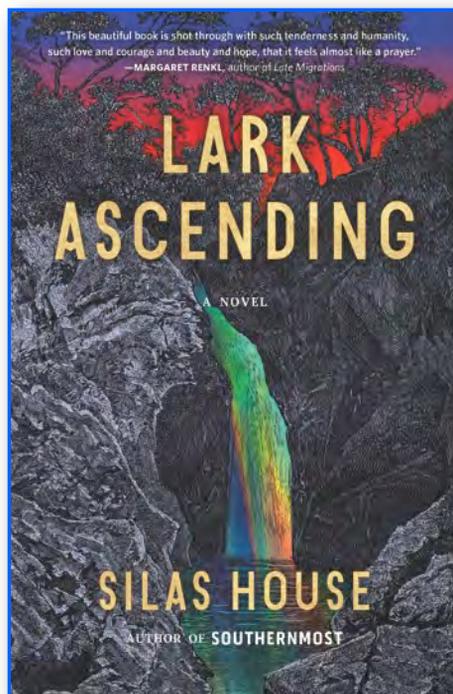
GS: As a gay writer, you don't shy away from queerness in "Lark Ascending," including references to Lark's aunt and her wife, as well as his own aforementioned attraction to and relationship with, Arlo.

SH: I think too often queer main characters only show up in books that are queer books in big neon letters. I wanted to write a book wherein the novel itself is not necessarily all about being gay, but it features a gay main character, and it features LGBT issues. I don't know of another adventure story – and that's mainly what I consider this book to be, genre-wise – that features a gay main character, so I love the idea of that. In the book, LGBT existence has been outlawed by this new regime. But the best way to show that was through human stories so it was important to have gay characters and people whose lives are endangered because of these new laws. Also, it's a story about losing everything: everyone you love, your country, your rights, so it made sense to me to encapsulate all of that loss through the POV of one main character. Trans people's rights are increasingly endangered, especially, and gay people still don't have full equality – there are many states where it's still absolutely legal for someone to kick us out of a restaurant for being gay, and to cite that as the reason. Just last month the Department of Homeland Security announced the biggest domestic terror target was LGBT gatherings. More and more we're being held up as the group to fear by fear-mongering politicians and preachers. So even though this book is set twenty years in the future I feel like a lot of this anti-LGBT legislation is already in motion. I'm also a gay

man who wants to write about my own experience, so a lot of Lark's lens on that is close to home for me.

GS: Seamus, the beagle, is as prominent a character as his human counterparts. Do you have a dog or dogs in your life, and if so, what do they mean to you?

SH: My beagle is always lying right next to me when I'm writing. I usually write on the couch so he can be near and often his big velvety ear will creep right over onto the keyboard of my laptop while I'm typing. So, Seamus is very much



based on him; this book couldn't have been written without my dog. My last book, "Southernmost," was all about empathy, and in that book, dogs were a motif for the presence of the divine. I think of "Lark Ascending" as being more about survival and the dog has a more active, prominent role. He really aids in Lark's survival, just by being such a good, comforting presence. He keeps Lark going. I believe that few things can teach us more about empathy than being around animals. For some people that's a horse, a cat, or a rabbit. For me, it's always been a dog. During the pandemic especially, I think a whole lot of people realized what a source of

comfort their animals were to them. Seamus is the one creature Lark can trust without fail in this book, and he loves him deeply because of that.

GS: Seamus causes Lark to think about the late poet Seamus Heaney. Heaney and W.B. Yeats are quoted in the book. What role does poetry play in your daily and creative lives?

SH: When I'm writing a novel, one of the first things I do is find the other forms of art that can feed the world I'm trying to build. I look to films, photographs, paintings, music, and poetry. Since this novel is set in Ireland it was a no-brainer to go straight to the great Irish poets, who have been such a huge part of the poetic tradition of the last 150 years especially. Besides Heaney and Yeats, I was also reading a lot of Eavan Boland; she's one of the greats for sure. Every time I would sit down to write I would read a poem by one of these three, and it always helped to put me in Ireland, to set the tone for the book. Irish poets tend to use a lot of folklore and history in their work, as well, and that was particularly important to creating the world of "Lark Ascending."

GS: In addition to being a novelist and playwright, you are a music journalist. Does that have anything to do with your inclusion of John Prine, REM, and other music references throughout the novel?

SH: I just cannot imagine a world without populating it with music. I cannot create characters without thinking about what their theme songs might be. I was also thinking about living in a post-electricity world and what songs from now would people still be able to sit around and sing without having heard recorded versions of them in their lifetimes. I knew that people would still be singing John Prine a couple decades from now, even if the songs could only be passed along from singer to singer. I knew that a song like "The One I Love" by REM would survive, and of course, the song is perfect for my main character because he is longing for the one he loves so keenly. Every song is chosen to serve at least a

couple of different purposes, and never just because I like a song. It has to speak to the scene at hand, it has to tell us something about the character, and it has to make sense in the context of the world-building. Readers can find the playlists to all the music mentioned in the book on my YouTube channel or my Spotify.

GS: In the second part of the book, Lark refers to himself as an old man, and later, in the third part, mentions that he is 90. What was the significance of aging Lark in the way that you did?

SH: I think one question a novelist must ask is why this story is being told now, and to whom. To me, it added to the overall theme of the book – survival, hope, and adapting to a new world – to have this old man telling his adventure story. Even though the book is set in the future, in a way their future is much more like our past – technology has pretty much been wiped out. There's no electricity, city utilities, etc. People are living in small, agrarian groups. So instead of being influenced by

media about the future I looked further back to adventure stories by writers like Jack London and Robert Louis Stevenson to create the overall feel of "Lark Ascending." I loved thinking about this old man on his deathbed being haunted by his first great adventure, when he was 20 years old, and the way he has never let go of that beautiful love he had for Arlo, 70 years before. To me, it really helps to drive home the idea of this love that is so thick that it transcends time.

GS: If there was a movie version of "Lark Ascending," who would you want to play Lark? Arlo? Helen?

SH: I didn't have any actors in mind at all while I was writing the novel but now that you've made me really think about it, Sharon Horgan would be my dream to play Helen; I adore her and especially her work on the TV show "Bad Sisters." Lark and Arlo are both so young that I can't really think of any actors who would portray them easily right now; perhaps Lark would be a great way to introduce an unknown actor. I

really love the idea of people going to a multiplex cinema to see a gay main character, pining for the love of his life, in an adventure-action film like "Lark Ascending" would be. I don't think it's ever been done before.

GS: Have you started thinking about or working on your next book project?

SH: I have a couple of different things in mind. One is set in 1986 and is about a boy being raised by his aunt and mother over the course of one tumultuous year. The other is the story of my great-great uncle, who was put into an asylum in the 1920s because he was gay. I found his admittance papers and the reason stated was "Unnatural Desire," so I've already got my title for that one.

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Daily Specials;	MONDAY	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$4StoliCocktails (Any Flavor). @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlies: Bingo 7 – 11 pm Dancing until close. D.S.Tequila Co: \$5 10oz Margaritas. Hydrate: Lips and Mascara Doors at 8pm Show at 10pm. Lark: Happy Hour 5-7pm, Bottles of Wine 50% off with dinner entree purchase. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 4pm, Dancers 8pm. North End: Open at 11am, \$5 Well Drinks. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm.Shakers on Clark: Comedy Night \$1 off Well Drinks and Well Shots. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Musical Monday Show Tunes 8pm-2am. Steamworks: Every 3rd Monday TM4M (Trans Men For Men) 8pm-2am. The Sofo Tap: \$4 Whiskey, Rye& Bourbon \$3 Miller Lite Drafts \$5Big Ass Long Islands, \$4 Tallboys,\$5Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. Touche: Euchre Night, Come out and Play 7-10pm Sports on our screens Club room Open!.</p>
	TUESDAY	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$6 Big Miller Lite Drafts \$3 House Shots. @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: TuneUp Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. D.S.Tequila Co: .50cent Wing Night 5pm-10pm, Must Purchase a drink for special. Dine in Only. Hydrate: TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: 50% Off Bottles of Wine with any Entree Purchase, Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm 50%off Bottles of Wine with purchase of an Entree. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$6 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$3 House Shots, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm.Shakers on Clark: Trivia Night: \$3 Domestic Beers. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. Steamworks: Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). The Sofo Tap: \$4 Premium Well Cocktails, \$4 Tallboys,\$5Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's) FreeDarts.Touche:Hardcore Cruisin' No Cell Phones/Wifi.</p>
	WEDNESDAY	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's),.\$4 Premium Well Cocktails. @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close.Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: Free Bingo, 50% Off Nachos & Totchos, \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks, Traditional Flavor only. Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm.Lark: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails. Buy One Pizza Get one half off Dine In OnlyLucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$3 Miller Lite Drafts, \$4 Stolis (All Flavors), \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am \$5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm Shakers on Clark: Karaoke Night \$1 Off Long Islands. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, All Things Taylor & Ariana 1st Wed of month, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Britney & Rihanna last Wed of month: all 9pm-2am. Steamworks: Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. The Sofo Tap: \$3 House Shots, \$4 Titos Coctails,\$6Big Miller Lite Drafts. \$5Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. Touche:Jockstrap Night. Free Clothing Check.</p>
	THURSDAY	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$5 Whiskey, Rye & Bourbon.@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. Charlie's: Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. D.S.Tequila Co: Bottomless Tacos! \$23.95 5pm-10pm , Must purchase a beverage for special. Dine in Only. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. Lark: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails . 7pm Extreme Bing with Vian Dejour. 50%off Nachos or Tatchos \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks Tradional Flavor Only.Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 You Call It's, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$5 Deep Eddy Cocktails Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. Shakers on Clark: Darts Night \$1 off Fireball, Jager, Malort and Well Shots, \$2.50 PBR Cans. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Let's Go Thursdays with Alex Kay & Friends 9pm-2am. Steamworks: Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. The Sofo Tap: \$4 Premium Well Cocktails \$4 TallBoys, \$5Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. Touche: Throwback Thursdays70's& 80's Music & Pom by BijouVideo.</p>

GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

FRIDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts \$3 House Shots. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p – 1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p – 1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p – 1am, 5th Fierce Fridays – Strut 10p – 1am, Dancing until close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** TGIF Special \$5 Effen Cocktails and \$4 Hornitos Shots. **Hydrate:** Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. **Lark:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails .Every Friday from **Meeting House Tavern:** \$5 Tito's, \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, TGIF Show Tunes 3-7pm, RuPaul's Drag Race Viewing Party 7-9:30pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9:30pm-2am. **The Sofo Tap:** \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts \$3 House Shots. \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** 1/20 Cowboy Round Up 1/27 Porn Poker Party.

SATURDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$5 Lagunitas IP Drafts \$5 Premium Well Cocktails \$12 mimosa Carafes. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-3am. **Charlie's:** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, The Main Event 10pm – 1am Dancing until Close. **Lark:** Lakeviews #1 Free flowing Brunch 11am-3pm **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$5 Signature Margaritas, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.). **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games with Sasha & Zamora Love 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. **The Sofo Tap:** \$4 Lost Coast Tangerine Wheat \$5 Signature Margaritas, \$4 Tallboys, \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** 1/21 Gear Night Dress Code in Clubroom BNC 6pm. 1/28 RIPE Party Dim Lights, Deep Beats, Go-go Dudes DJ Harry T.

SUNDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$5 Signature Margaritas \$12 Mimosa Carafes. **@mosphere:** \$6 Jack Products, \$4 Domestic Draft, House Shots \$2. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors Open at 11am, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-2am **Charlie's:** Queerod! Every other Sunday 5pm – 7pm, Singational Sunday Karaoke 7pm – 11pm Mas Leche 11pm – 1am, Dancing until close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** Coyote Ugly Drag Brunch \$50 all inclusive food and beverage package plus Drag Show. **Hydrate:** Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Divalicious brunch with Madam X 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm \$8.95 Martinis . **Lark:** Lakeviews #1 Free flowing Brunch 11am-3pm **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$3 House Shots, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Frosens, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Shakers on Clark:** \$1 Off Any Bloody Mary, Milagro Tequila Mixed Drinks, or Tito's Vodka Mixed Drinks. **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am **The Sofo Tap:** \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$6 Chicago Handshake, \$5 Prairie Vodka Cocktails, \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** Beer Bust \$2 Bud Light Drafts, Clubroom Opens 6pm, Movie Night 7pm.



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	Artist	Title
1	Lola Audreys	Miami (Majestic Remix)
2	NIIKO X SWAE ft. Allie Crystal	Nothing On Earth
3	MK & BURNS	Better ft. Teddy Swims
4	VASSY x Bingo Players x Disco Fries	Pieces
5	Alok x Ella Eyre x Kenny Dope ft. Never D	Deep Down
6	Tove Lo	2 Die 4
7	RAYE	Black Mascara
8	Autograf ft. Tiina	High On That New Love
9	Lewis Thompson x David Guetta	Take Me Back (Radio Edit)
10	Tungevaag x Lovespeake	I Knew It Was You
11	Deorro	You Are Not Alone ft. Dear Sara
12	Tobtok & Adam Griffin	Overnight
13	Joel Corry & Tom Grennan	Lionheart (Fearless)
14	Dillon Francis x ILLENIUM & EVAN GIIA	Don't Let Me Let Go
15	Ryan Ennis & Sadie Rose Van	Take My Love
16	A Trak & Lee Foss ft. Uncle Chucc	Free (Radio Edit)
17	ILLENIUM & Teddy Swims	All That Really Matters
18	Tritonal & Eric Lumiere	Something Beautiful
19	Aviella & Conro	Way Back
20	Joel Corry x Becky Hill	History
21	Beyonce	CUFF IT (Tommie Sunshine & JUSTNKAYSE Clean Edit)
22	Tiesto ft. Tate McRae	1035
23	Hayden James	Good Life ft. Emie (Radio Edit)
24	Drake	Massive
25	JES	Is It True
26	Ownboss & FAST BOY	Left & Right (MXRCVRY Remix)
27	AWAKEND & CeCe Mix	Feel The Same
28	Shab	Sexual (Until Dawn Radio)
29	Fedde Le Grand & 22Bullets	Down
30	Alok x Sigala x Ellie Goulding	All By Myself

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SATURDAY 2.18

GEAR + BEADS NIGHT

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SUNDAY 2.19

BEERS + BEADS BEER BUST

\$2 BUD LIGHT DRAFTS AND SODAS ALL DAY

MOVIE NIGHT IN CLUB ROOM 7PM

MONDAY 2.20

MASK MAKER MAYHEM

MAKE YOUR OWN MASK 8PM-MIDNIGHT
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PRIZE FOR BEST MASK

TUESDAY 2.21

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GRAB ROGER

WAYS TO AVOID THE HIGH COST OF PROBATE

Q: I have been reading some estate planning books and they all suggest avoiding probate. I have a will that leaves everything to my partner but I worry that my assets will be tied up in Probate Court forever. Should I put his name on everything now to avoid that problem?

A: Some people have become concerned about avoiding probate at all costs. But you don't need to take extreme steps to avoid probate such as divesting yourself of direct ownership of all your property. Preserving control over your finances and property while alive and reducing the expense and complexity involved in transferring your property upon death should be the primary goal of your estate plan.

Probate is the legal process which begins at death when all your earthly possessions – from your home, car and investments down to your wrist watch – come under the control of the local probate court. The court's job is to make sure all debts and death taxes are paid and that your directions as set forth in

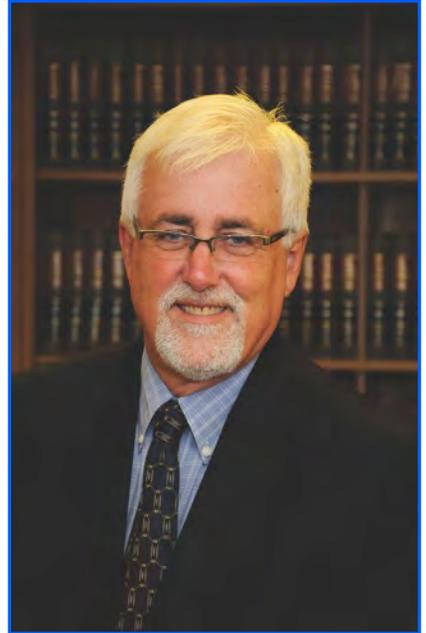
your will are carried out. If you have no will the law in Illinois will step in and write one for you, but everything still goes through the probate process.

Although probate should only take six months, more often than not it will go for at least a year and often for several years. Before the court process turns over your property to your heirs and loved ones it will extract five to ten percent of its value in court costs and legal fees.

Joint Tenancy. With joint tenancy two or more people equally own an asset whether it is a car, house or bank account (actually any property can be owned in joint tenancy). After the death of one joint tenant, the remaining joint tenant will continue to own the entire property. One drawback is that if you create a joint tenancy bank account by putting your lover's name on the account, he or she can take all the money and spend it for whatever they want. You must have complete confidence in the integrity and good faith of the person you are adding to your account. Try adding your partner's name to one account at a time and see how it goes.

Name a Beneficiary. If you name someone other than your estate as beneficiary of your life insurance, IRAs and employee benefits – such as 401(k) and pension and profit-sharing plans – that asset won't be subject to probate. And you keep complete control while you are alive.

Always verify who the named beneficiaries are for each asset that does not pass through a will. Individuals will often name someone other than their partners as beneficiaries on employee benefits such as life insurance or 401(k) plans. It is extremely common for clients simply to forget that a previous unmarried partner or parent is still named on an IRA or life insurance policy.



Totten Trusts. A totten trust is simply the name for a kind of bank account where one person deposits money in his or her name as trustee for another. The depositor reserves the power to withdraw all or part of the money at any time. Upon the death of the depositor the money in the bank account is paid to the named beneficiary of the trust, which could be the surviving lover, friends or family members. And you keep complete control while you are alive.

Lifetime Gifts. Property you give away during your lifetime can't come under the probate court's control. Rather than waiting for death for the transfer of your assets, make gifts while alive so that you can see your life partner, friends family members or charities enjoy the benefit of your gifts. One drawback is that you may have to pay gift taxes.

Roger McCaffrey-Boss is a graduate of Hamline University School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a member of the Chicago Bar Association. You can email him at RVMLawyer@aol.com. He suggests that you consult your own lawyer for any specific questions regarding the issues raised in this column.

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GRAB HOLLY

My Double Secret Pronouns

By Holly Maholm



I walked in the door at Donut Time, anxiously anticipating my first cup of coffee and peach fritter, when Xandra called to me. “Holly! Don’t get comfortable. I’ve got a big order I need delivered urgently to the high school. Here...” (she pointed to a package of two big boxes of donuts tied together with string). “Please take this out to the Office at the high school.” Hearing the desperation in Xandra’s voice, I didn’t argue. I carried the package out back, where I found one of the delivery chariots waiting for me.

In minutes I arrived at the high school, where I dropped off the package, then turned and began walking back to the chariot. But just as I was ready to reclaim my ride, a voice called to me from behind. I turned to see who it was.

Coming towards me was... what I can only describe as a “Rainbow Apparition.” It was a short, heavy-set* woman wearing a loose-fitting muumuu in tie-dye colors. Below her waist she wore a long skirt of red-and-white candy cane stripes, and her hair was equally colorful – blue on one side and pink on the other. Being

wholly unprepared for this ambulatory riot of texture and hue, I was stunned into silence. The woman walked up to me and spoke. (*polite euphemism for “morbidly obese land-whale”)

“You’re that transgender woman, the lawyer who’s representing the science teacher, aren’t you?” All I could do was nod my head yes. She went on. “I saw you dropping off the donuts, and I thought it must be you. I want to talk to you...” She glared at me, and I found my tongue.

“Yes, I’m the lawyer who’s representing Dave in the complaint before the school board. He’s pretty upset about the whole thing, and it would help if teachers like you – I assume you’re a teacher – I could give him your support.” I stopped, expecting to receive a much-needed pledge of sympathy and encouragement from one teacher to another. But I was to be both shocked and frustrated.

“You’re right, I am a teacher. I’m Kaylyn, English teacher, and my pronouns are they/them. But I’m not a supporter of the science teacher, just the opposite.” I could see she was building up a head of steam to tell me how very much mistaken I was.

“This high school used to be operated on the theory that the teachers were in possession of ancient and unchallengeable ‘Facts, Knowledge and Wisdom,’ and that it was their job to help the students learn as much of that legacy as possible. But that’s not what I and my fellow teachers believe ‘education’ to be. No. It used to be the teachers had all the power, cause they had all those old, outdated textbooks which were written up and collected by white racist oppressors schooled in the lies of the patriarchy. But not anymore!”

“Now, today, we teachers follow an educational philosophy which is 100 percent student centered.’ Meaning: We don’t go to any dusty book – or even Google – to discover what to teach. No. We just ask the students what they think... and guess what? They’re absolutely correct about everything! All the time! Why should we care what some dead white male had to say about ‘justice’ or ‘freedom’ or ‘human rights’ when we can just ask the students!

“We start with the

proposition that our students already know all they need to know, and the only thing they need from us is complete and unqualified ‘affirmation’ of whatever they say. Anything else would be nothing but systemic racism intended to enslave black and brown people and perpetuate the patriarchy.

“In fact,” she went on, “your science teacher client is one of the worst! Here was one of my students – who is a pan-sexual, non-binary, Arctic Fox Furry – who told their science teacher what their pronouns are, and then that teacher refused to affirm them! Don’t you see that by doing so, that teacher made them feel rejected and unsafe? And feeling unsafe causes them actual pain and suffering, which puts them at risk of feeling so unsafe that their reaction might be to kill their self! So, actually, your client is threatening their life! He wants to see them dead!”

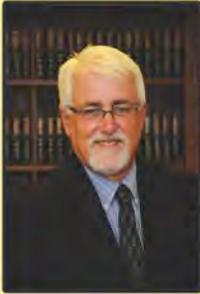
At that moment, I noticed Victor (disguised as a horse, and harnessed to the delivery chariot) had turned his head in my direction and was glaring an angry scowl at the teacher. Kaylyn resumed. “One last thing. I know your name, but you haven’t told me your pronouns...”

I replied, “Oh, I’m so sorry, but my pronouns are very private and personal to me, and although I’ve enjoyed our little chat, I don’t feel I know you well enough to share my pronouns with you just yet. I hope you understand.”

(To be continued)

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Holly’s book *Offered Magic: My Life Among the Unicorns* (now available on Amazon) which collects the first 126 episodes of Holly’s adventures involving both magical unicorns and her LGBTQ friends. Send a message to Holly at www.hollymaholm.com.

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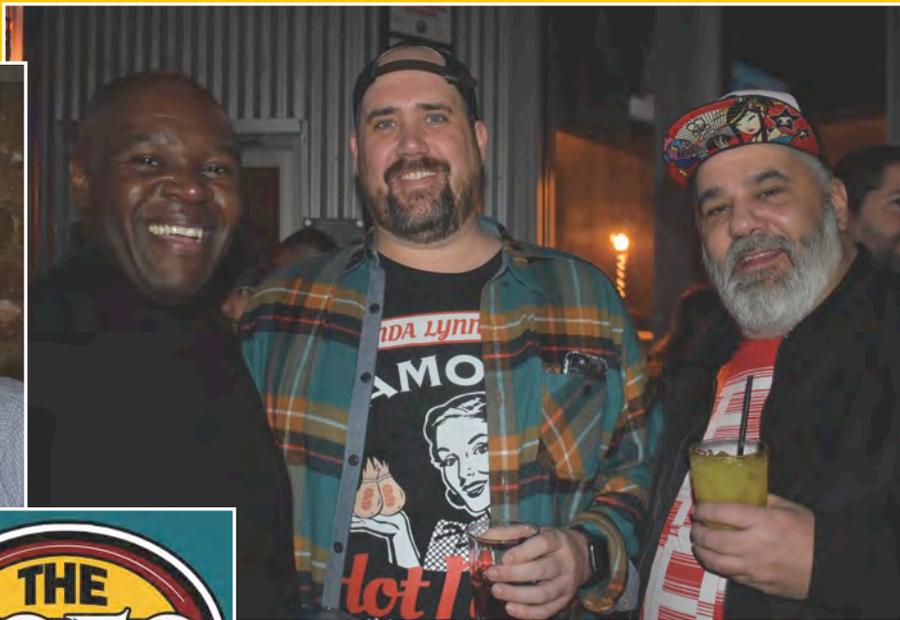


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Patrick and his wife, Kim Soo Nagle, Patrick moved to Buena Park over 30 years ago and now resides with his family in Lakeview.
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- ✓ Partner with federal law enforcement to curb gun violence
- ✓ Promote proven crime prevention programs

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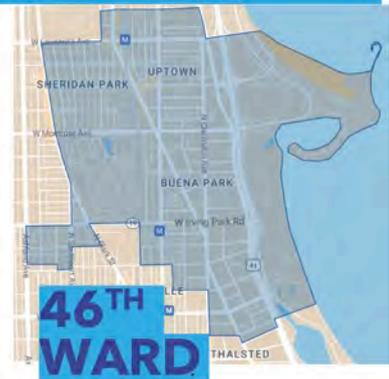
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GRAB A PLANE



Dolder Grand

Alpine Adventure Switzerland

By Rick Karlin

Switzerland is known for many things, Heidi, fondue, cuckoo clocks, and skiing. It also has a strong LGBT community. Believe it or not, all these things coalesce in Arosa Gay Ski Week. The annual gathering is very popular in Switzerland, but mostly unheard of outside of the country, even among skiers. Switzerland's tourism department want to change that, and recently welcomed a group of American travel writers to promote LGBT tourism in Switzerland, as well as Arosa's gay ski week. After arriving in Zurich on a Swiss Air flight from Miami the members of our junket is handed a jam-packed week-long itinerary. In addition to Arosa ski week, we have tours of Lausanne, Bern, and Zurich. All the while staying at five-star hotels and dining at top-rated restaurants.

Fabio Zurmuehle from the Swiss Tourism meets the junket members at the airport and hands us our Swiss Travel Pass, which is fabulous way to tour the country. It allows unlimited travel by bus, boat, and train and includes premium panoramic trains, as well as local public transportation in more than 90 towns and cities as well as free admission to more than 500

museums. The phone app the comes with the pass also alerts you to nearby sights and landmarks. It's like having your own tour guide 24/7.

We immediately hop on a train to Lausanne and thanks to the city's efficient Metro system, we've barely had to step outside until we come to the stop closest to our hotel, the Lausanne Palace. A grande dame of a building, it first opened in 1915 and whispers old world luxury. Rooms are large and charming, especially for an older hotel. After we check in, we have an hour or so to settle into our rooms and enjoy the stunning views of the sun setting across the lake in France (Evian), with more mountains in the distance.

A short walk along the lakefront takes us to La Couronne d'Or, a landmark cafe in the city since 1895. You can almost feel the history. After dinner we take the Metro to the Moxy Hotel which hosts a weekly "Oh My Gay" Sunday tea dance. The DJ leans heavily on old school '70s and '80s disco hits.

The next day, we visit to the Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts and lunch at Café de Grancy, followed by a guided tour of the city. There's just a bit of time

to recharge and we're off for dinner at Brasserie de Montbenon.

The next morning, we check out of the hotel and store our bags before heading out to the Olympic Museum. If you are a fan of the Olympics, there is much to appreciate here. We then hop a train for a day trip to Bern. Our first stop is a delightful lunch at the Restaurant Falken with Nik Eugster, from the EuroGames, and Michael Nägele, from Pink Alpine, who explained plans for the EuroGames taking place in Bern in July (EuroGames 2023 Bern - July 26 - 29 2023)

After lunch, we head for a guided tour of a unique exhibit at the Natural Historic Museum of Bern. "Queer - Diversity is in our nature" shows how "normal" the gender spectrum can be. Given the atmosphere in the U.S. now, it was a joy to see children as young as 5 years old being taken through the exhibit by their parents.

We hopped the train back to Lausanne, where we pick up our luggage and transfer to another train to Zurich.

A two-hour train ride gives us an opportunity to rest in our first-class car. Our Zurich home is the five-star



Kit Kat
lounge & supper club



Photos By Anthony Meade



Dolder Grand, perched on a mountain ledge on the edge of the city. A short walk from the train brought us to the funicular (a cross between a tram and an escalator), which takes us up the mountain to the elegant hotel. With its elevated location, it provides magnificent views over Zurich, the lake, and the Alps. It is one of Zurich's most famous landmarks. We settle into our rooms and the reconvene at the hotel's award-winning Restaurant Saltz for dinner.

The next day's activities included a tour of the National Museum of Zurich, lunch at Restaurant Hiltl (founded in 1898, which claims to be the oldest vegetarian restaurant in the world), and a walking tour of the city culminating in a climb to the top of Karlstower of the Grossmünster Church (187 stairs!) In the evening, a ride down the funicular and a trolley delivers us to the trendy Restaurant Markthalle, a delightfully casual bistro tucked underneath a stone bridge. After dinner we grabbed a nightcap at Heldenbar, which looked exactly as you would imagine a gay club in Europe to look. Lots of eccentrically dressed, unbearably thin folks, with severe make-up and interesting eyewear. The next morning, we were on to our main destination, Arosa. We bundled up and headed to the train station.



Dolder Grand

A short ride on one train takes us to our connection for Arosa, home of gay ski week. We relax and dish during the nearly three-hour train ride up the mountain to Arosa. There we are met by the hotel's shuttle and taken even farther up the slope to the Tschuggen Grand Hotel. A haven high above everyday life with 128 colorful rooms and a unique view of the Arosa mountains. Tschuggen's Bergoase spa, designed by architect Mario Botta, is a Swiss landmark. After we check in to our luxuriously appointed rooms (certainly worthy of its five-star rating), I join my junket buddies for our ride to the Tschuggenhütte, a sunny terrace,

right in the middle of the ski area, where we enjoy a light lunch. Arosa Gay Ski draws more than 600 participants. There is something for everyone, even non-skiers. Classical music concerts, sunbathing at the Tschuggen hut, and après-ski, pool, ice-skating and disco parties! Event passes are geared for everything from a full week of activities to day passes. Every day there are different culinary restaurant suggestions to make your stay even more enjoyable. With more than a dozen gay-friendly partner hotels, weekly rental apartments and chalets there's something for every wallet.

The next item on our agenda is listed as "short stroll on a prepared winter trail" to the gondola station. The "trail" of compacted ice and snow and rises at a 40-degree incline for about 500 feet. We made it to the big gondola at the Weisshorn summit, the highest peak in the Arosa region that can be reached by cable car. It's 8,704 feet above sea level. For perspective imagine seven Empire State Buildings stocked atop one another.

Lovely views, but I was distracted by the cute snow bunnies, many of whom dress in little more than underwear. I also marveled as I watched a man ski down the mountain with a parasail on his back. About halfway down the slope he unleashed the sail, took off over the trees and wove back and forth in the skies.

The fondue dinner at Restaurant Burestübli in the Hotel Arlenwald is



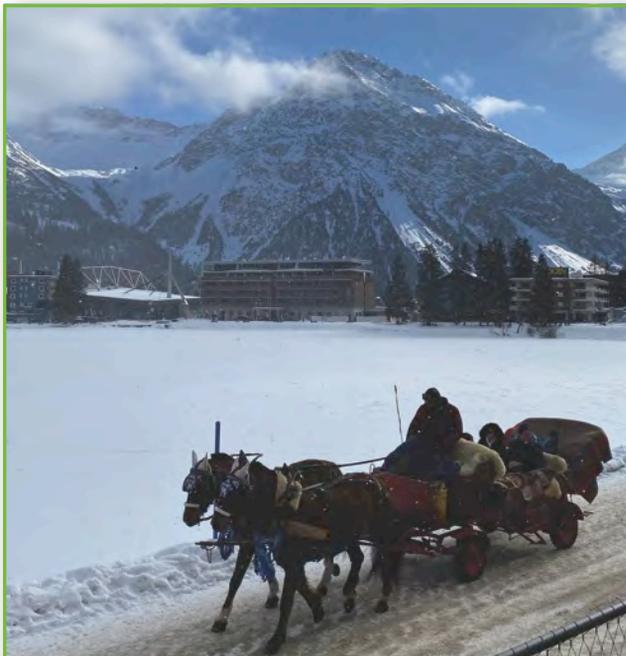
one of the most popular events of Gay Ski week. Last we share mulled wine in the cozy village gathering place, language differences don't prove a problem and soon we are chatting with other tables and passing food and wine back and forth. After dinner everyone piles out onto the streets which have been cleared for a sledding event. I had fantasies of me sitting in a sleigh, all comfy and warm. Oh, no! These are little rickety wood sleds no more than a few inches off the ground. Hundreds of alcohol-impaired folks rocketed down an icy street. All I could see in my mind were those commercials for old people with brittle bones. I passed and took a bus back to the hotel. To the best of my knowledge, there were no disasters. The big event the next day was the Ski Drag Race. Normally, everyone takes a snow shuttle up to the Carmenna mountain hut for the race,



but a lack of snow the night before meant that those wanting to watch from the top of the mountain and mingle with the queens would have to hike a mile and a half up to the summit. I've seen drag queens. I've seen snow. I can imagine them together. I passed on the hike and the up-close look. Our last night in Arosa was capped off with dinner in the cozy Alpenblick

mountain restaurant. To get to Alpenblick, guests take a shuttle up to a trail near the end of the town. Then board a snowmobile "bus" that takes groups of six along twisting paths with steep drop offs, to the top of the peak. Inside Alpenblick the staff was warm and friendly and the five-course meal is presented

in an unusual style; any course can serve as a main and other tailored accordingly. Wine flowed liberally and we only left because the last shuttle was scheduled and we had to get back to change for the White Snowball farewell party at Haus Kursaal, featuring a "Heels on Ice" drag show, lasers, hot dancers, and famous international DJs. Saturday morning, we checked out of the hotel, grabbed a shuttle to the train station for a two-hour ride down the mountain to Bad Ragaz and our last night in Switzerland. Talk about the cherry on the cake! All the hotels we stayed at were five-star rated, but The Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, is also home to one of the best healthcare centers in Europe and offers a unique health and spa experience in addition to the luxury of a five-star resort. It's been around since 1242 and is where the world's wealthiest people come to relax, recover, and rejuvenate. As an added surprise and the perfect ending to our trip, we were each treated to use of the private spa and a signature aromatherapy massage. The following morning, we checked out of the hotel and boarded a train back to Zurich. A couple of transfers later we were at the airport about take home a lifetime of memories and a suitcase full of dirty laundry.



GRAB A BOOK

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

"The Girl I Am, Was, and Never Will Be" by Shannon Gibney c. 2023, Dutton \$18.99 245 pages



It's okay. You'll just make it up. Not the right toys when you were a kid? No problem, you had your imagination. No impressive friends to brag on? You can always pretend to know the rich, famous, or infamous. Boring job, cheap house, hoopy car? It's fine, you can conjure whatever you want and who cares? As in the new book, **"The Girl I Am, Was, and Never Will Be"** by Shannon Gibney, it's all a fantasy anyhow.

There are facts. Provable, honest facts.

Shannon Gibney was born January 30, 1975 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. So was Erin Powers. Both were daughters of a Black petty criminal, and a white lesbian mother who struggled to give them up.

Another fact: Shannon was Erin, before she was adopted.

Shannon grew up in a middle-class white family with two brothers, a good education, toys, vacations, and stability. She had a "short relationship" with her birth father when she was an adult, and a longer (but shaky) one with her birth mother, which made her wonder what life might have been like, had she been raised as Erin...

When Erin was nineteen, she learned that her mother was dying of breast cancer, and wasting what life she had left. At ten, Erin had to learn to get along with her mother's latest girlfriend; and she had to listen to racism from the white side of her family. Also at ten, she saw a spiraled portal and another girl who looked like her, but she didn't entirely understand it.

Every year on her birthday, her mother mourned an adoption she never wanted to happen.

When Shannon was ten years old, she was cruel to a boy who liked her, and she wasn't sure why. When she was nineteen, her parents loaned her

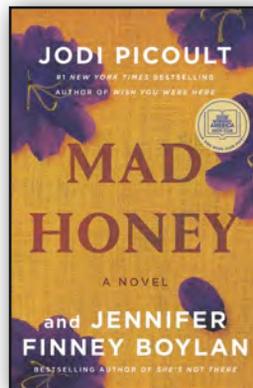
their car so she could visit her birth mother and her birth mother's partner. And at 35, she was reminded of the legacy her mother left her, one she must be "diligent" about for the rest of her life.

A dozen pages or so into "The Girl I Am, Was, and Never Will Be," author Shannon Gibney wrestles with the nature of lies, explaining that her book does, and does not, use "manufactured literary devices." In other words, get ready for one really weird read.

And it remains as such, until you understand what's going on: the story here is fiction mixed with fact, an imaginary life framed by a real one. "Erin" is the fiction, as Gibney imagines her life as a series of struggles, personal and otherwise, living with her birth mother. "Shannon" is Gibney's story of finding out who she is and where she came from. The tales merge and diverge, neither with a lot of sense until you're well past the halfway mark of this book.

Can you stick with it that long? Readers ages 15 and up might at least try; you'll lose a little time adjusting to "The Girl I Am, Was, and Never Will Be," but don't worry. You'll make it up.

"Mad Honey" by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan c.2022, Ballantine Books \$29.99 464 pages



You've never been one to follow all the buzz.

Gossip is not very reliable anyhow, and you have better things to do than celebrity-watch. This star does that, and that star's embroiled in scandal, nobody has any privacy anymore. Nah, that ho-hum has never been your thing. As in the new novel "Mad Honey" by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan, the hive is rarely right.

If you move slow enough and don't make any sudden moves, honeybees are generally peaceful creatures. Olivia McAfee knows this,

and that's why she often visits her hives without a protective suit: she's relatively sure she won't get stung.

That's not the case when it comes to her son, Asher. A senior in high school, her eighteen-year-old can be prickly sometimes, and sometimes, stings are a part of parenting a teenager. This, Liv knows, is one of those times: Asher's in love, and it's not going well.

Nineteen-year-old Lily Campanello arrived in town with her mother at the end of the summer and she and Asher have had a stormy relationship since they started going out. Liv hates to see Asher so upset, but she knows that love is complicated. She loved Asher's father, despite that she spent too much time hiding the bruises she got from him.

Asher knew he'd messed up.

When he found Lily's father, a man she hadn't seen in years, he'd meant to surprise her but the surprise was on Asher: Lily was angry and she wouldn't exactly say why. She just walked, almost ran, away and she wouldn't talk about it. She wouldn't even answer Asher's texts and now he was getting angry. Should he worry about her, or just go to her house?

He chose the latter.

It was the middle of the night when the police came for him. They handcuffed Asher before they gave him his shoes, and hauled him away without a coat on a freezing night.

Olivia McAfee knows that mad honey is the result of bad foraging. It should be sweet, but it's deadly. By the time you realize that, there's no going back.

You know how your mind tries to figure out the ending of a book long before you're even a third of the way there? Curiously, that doesn't happen with "Mad Honey." The story is too enjoyable not to savor and besides, you know what's going to happen anyway, right?

Or not.

Nope, authors Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan sneak a two-fer surprise inside this book: the first one explodes with the force of a beehive full of nitroglycerin. The second is that you'll still be left feeling smug enough to think you know how this culminates. Or not, but still: more distractions, more mini-explosions unspool with the right frequency to keep you happily eager to see how wrong you were.

This is one of those novels that's done before you're ready for it, leaving you slack-jawed when you close the back cover. "Mad Honey" is pretty sweet. Read it, and you'll be very happy.



Photos By Anthony Meade

ATMOSPHERE



**THE DEN THEATRE
PRESENTS COMEDIAN
JANEANE GAROFALO
MARCH 10 & 11, 2023 ON
THE HEATH MAINSTAGE**



The Den Theatre welcomes back comedian **Janeane Garofalo** for four stand-up performances on March 10 & 11, 2023 on The Heath Mainstage, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

Actress and comedian Janeane Garofalo has been an American institution since she burst on the scene in 1992. Janeane has had many memorable and critically acclaimed roles in films such as *The Truth About Cats and Dogs*, *Wet Hot American Summer*, *Ratatouille*, *Steal This Movie*, *Reality Bites*, *Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion*, *Mystery Men*, *The Ten* and *The Cable Guy*. Janeane also co-authored the best seller "*Feel This Book*," with Ben Stiller.

Janeane was a cast member of the Emmy Award-winning *The Ben Stiller Show* and played the role of Paula, the acerbic talent booker, on *The Larry Sanders Show*, for which she received an Emmy nomination. During the fall of '94, she joined the cast of *Saturday Night Live*. Some of Janeane's other television work includes two specials for HBO, FOX's 24, *Mad About You* and the final season of NBC's *The West Wing*, where she played Democratic campaign strategist Louise Thornton.

In addition to acting in film and television, Janeane is an outspoken activist, spoken word performer and stand-up comedy entertainer known and respected around the world. She was instrumental in the successful launching of the first liberal radio network, *Air America Radio*, where she hosted her own talk show, "The Majority Report." A lightning rod for controversy, Janeane's well-informed opinions and unflinching honesty have inspired laughs, as well as striking a chord with the left, right and everyone in between.

Tickets are currently available at thedentheatre.com or by calling (773) 697-3830.

**Killer queen: A Tribute yo
queeniller Queen: A Tribute to
Queen March 16th at The
GENESEE THEATRE**



All the way from the UK, *Killer Queen: A Tribute to Queen*, with PATRICK MYERS as front man, will grace The Genesee stage March 16th!

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No detail is overlooked in this captivating night of classic arena rock. Brian May's own website even declared: "This guy is not to be missed"!

Tickets and more information are available at <http://www.GeneseeTheatre.com>

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Shattered Globe Theatre is pleased to conclude its 2022-23 season with the U.S. premiere of *London Road*, an experimental and innovative new musical featuring book and lyrics by **Alecky Blythe**, music and lyrics by **Adam Cork**, direction and choreography by **Elizabeth Margolius** and music direction by **Andra Velis Simon**. *London Road* will play April 21 – June 3, 2023 at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

Determined and tenacious, the residents of Ipswich, UK mobilize to overcome the immense fear and media circus that unfolds following the serial murder of 5 sex workers in their small town. This experimental and innovative new musical is based on a true story, using verbatim dialogue

recorded during interviews with the people of Ipswich. Brought to the American stage for the first time ever, *London Road* is an uplifting story that reveals how a devastating tragedy can spark empathy and engender community resilience.

Tickets Now on sale at sgtheatre.org/london/, by calling (773) 975-8150 or in person at the Theater Wit Box Office.

**THE DEN THEATRE
ANNOUNCES COMEDIAN
FAHIM ANWAR
FRIDAY, MAY 12, 2023 ON
THE HEATH MAINSTAGE**



The Den Theatre has announced comedian Fahim Anwar, playing two stand-up performances Friday, May 12 at 7:15 pm and 9:30 pm on The Heath Mainstage, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

Fahim Anwar is a Los Angeles-based standup comedian, actor and writer. Fresh off the release of his second standup special *Hat Trick*, filmed at the world-famous Comedy Store, *The New York Times* has listed Fahim as a "Most Promising Future Star." He's appeared on *Conan*, *Late Night with Seth Meyers* and performed at the prestigious *Just for Laughs Festival in Montreal*. His recent Film / TV credits include *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* opposite Tina Fey, *Neighbors* and *Drunk History*, to name a few. Fahim served as head writer and starred on a sketch show special for Comedy Central with his comedy group (GOATFACE) which includes **Hasan Minhaj** from *The Daily Show*, **Aristotle Athiras** of SNL and **Asif Ali** of *WandaVision*. Off the success of the sketch show special, Fahim was named by *Variety Magazine* as one of "2019's Comics to Watch," and was invited to be a guest on "*The Joe Rogan Experience*" podcast, as well as "WTF" with **Marc Maron**.

Tickets are currently available at thedentheatre.com or by calling (773) 697-3830.

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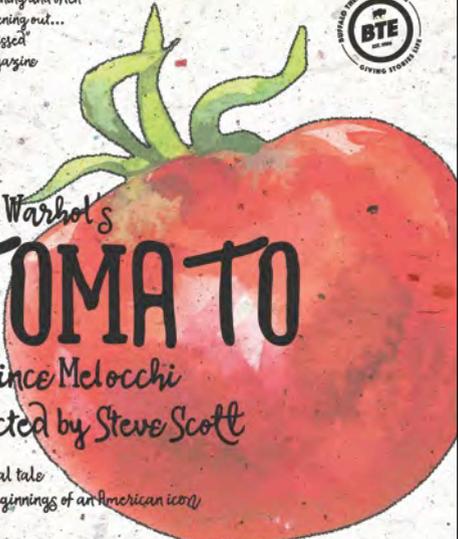


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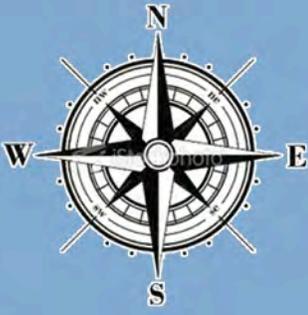
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