

# READER



## IN THIS ISSUE

### CITY LIFE

**03 Street View** *There's no aisle this Atlanta transplant can't shop from.*

### NEWS & POLITICS

**04 Joravsky | Politics** *How our current property tax system affects the greedy and the needy*

### FOOD & DRINK

**06 Restaurant Review** *Love is a tlacoyo at Xocome Antojeria.*

### WE ARE WITNESSES

**11 The Marshall Project** *In 15 direct-to-camera testimonies, the "We Are Witnesses: Chicago" series gives voice to Chicagoans affected by the justice system.*

**12 Dukmasova | Interview** *A retired cop on blowing the whistle on police misconduct*

**14 Trauma** *A survivor aims to transform the lives of prisoners through mental health workshops.*

**16 Comic** *How one mother launched a movement based on empowerment and healing*

### THEATER

**18 Shoe-in** *Breaking down The Nutcracker by footgear and other figures*



**20 Live Lit** *A Chicago hybrid keeps expanding, but keeps the DIY feel.*

**24 Choreography** *Ayesha Jaco's Black Samurai celebrates south-side martial-arts pioneers.*

**27 History** *Hannah Ii-Epstein's plays bring together Hawaiian patois and her personal history with drugs.*

**30 Set Design** *Arnel Sancianco creates space for emotional truth onstage.*

**48 Archives** *Sono Osato broke ground for Japanese American artists in a time of xenophobia.*

**52 Photos** *Hubbard Street dancer Connie Shiau sculpts out a space for identity and diversity.*

**55 Parables** *Loy Webb's sophomore play tackles the "take-a-knee" movement.*

**57 Play Ball** *The Chicago Theatre Softball League brings artistic rivalries from the stage to the field.*

**58 Plays of note** *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen explores gender, race, and class, The Band's Visit*

*offers a respite in rancorous times, and more.*

### FILM

**62 In Memoriam** *Farewell to Andrea Gronvall, a Reader contributor and much-valued colleague for more than 20 years.*

**63 Review** *Hustlers focuses on women doing horrible things for understandable reasons.*

**65 Movies of note** *Give Me Liberty is an exhilarating and autobiographical black comedy, and Raise Hell: The Life and Times of Molly Ivins shines a light on the columnist and all-around badass.*



### MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

**35 World Music Festival** *Its 18 free concerts, spread out over 17 venues, provide us with opportunities to get to know our*

*neighbors better—both across the street and around the globe.*

**67 Shows of note** *Tropical Fuck Storm, Samson Young, Saul Williams, and more this week*

**71 The Secret History of Chicago Music** *Pedro Bell made art to embody Funkadelic's revolutionary grooves.*

**74 Early Warnings** *Kim Petras, No Men, Richard Thompson, and more just-announced concerts*

**74 Gossip Wolf** *Saxophonist Hunter Diamond debuts four free shows' worth of new material at the Whistler, and more.*

### OPINION

**77 Savage Love** *Dan Savage answers the age-old question: to fist or not to fist?*

### CLASSIFIEDS

**78 Apartments & Spaces**  
**79 Jobs**  
**79 Marketplace**

ON THE COVER: ILLUSTRATION BY JOSEPH KAMEEN. FOR MORE OF KAMEEN'S WORK, GO TO JOSEPHKAMEEN.COM.

## NOTE FROM AN EDITOR

**ZEITGEIST HAPPENS:** we didn't exactly plan it this way, but nearly all the profiles and features in this special Fall Theater and Dance Issue reflect on boundaries, identity, and marginalization—issues that feel ever more relevant as the Trump administration's efforts to restrict and roll back the very concept of citizenship seemingly grow every day.

What's also present in these stories is the possibility of transformation, which is, after all, the entire point of the performing arts in the first place. There's Sono Osato, the Chicago-raised Japanese American dancer who rose to prominence playing an "all-American girl" on Broadway during World War II, even after her father was incarcerated by the U.S. government. Osato's story stands in dialogue with Max Thomsen's photos of Hubbard Street dancer Connie Shiau, who expresses her hope that "dance can become a bigger communicative vessel in this society to unite people."

Hannah Ii-Epstein explores the drug culture

that marked her youth in Hawaii while reclaiming the language of Hawaiian pidgin English in *Pakalolo Sweet*. Loy Webb, a native Chicagoan who transformed from theater critic at *New City* to making a sensational debut with her first play, *The Light*, to writing for television, comes home with *His Shadow* at Berwyn's 16th Street Theater, in which a younger brother and aspiring football player tries to find his own path through the darkness.

Family is often a powerful motif in drama and dance, and choreographer Ayesha Jaco has been building a piece through a residency with the Rebuild Foundation, *Black Samurai*, that honors the memory of her late father, Gregory, and his martial arts school that influenced a generation of young people on the south side. Arnel Sancianco, a set designer whose profile is rising, helps us find the emotional resonance in the onstage worlds he creates.

Chicago may still be the city of Second City in the minds of many, but it's also the hub of

"live lit"—that blend of literary essay, personal memoir, and performance made semifamous (at least locally) through shows such as Write Club, Essay Fiesta, and the Stoop. Write Club creator (and coiner of the phrase "live lit") Ian Belknap takes the pulse of live lit a decade or so into its initial burst of activity, and concludes that it's the imperative "to pay our collective heed" to each other's stories that still drives the scene.

It's what drives our arts and culture coverage every week, too, from reviews to features. Sometimes, it's important to imagine what it's like to step into somebody else's shoes and honor the behind-the-scenes labor. If you've ever wondered how the Joffrey manages to keep up with all those slippers (and who actually takes care of that task), we've got an infographic explaining that and more. The Joffrey is moving its production of *The Nutcracker* to a new venue next year. But though spaces and players change, the shows go on. —KERRY REID



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# CITY LIFE



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## STREET VIEW

### Gender bender

There's no aisle this Atlanta transplant can't shop from.

**"I'M VERY MUCH INTO ANDROGYNY.** I don't think clothes have a gender. If it fits me, I'll wear it," says Libyron Bryan, 28, who lives in South Chicago Heights. And "I'm all about moods," he says. "Today I'm 60s-inspired. Did you ever see the show *The Get Down* on Netflix? Lots of Bronx, summertime vibes." A fashion design major when he was at Atlanta's Savannah College of Art and Design, Libyron has always been into dressing well: "When I was a kid

my grandma used to take us out to thrift stores. We really learned how to fashionably put clothes together on a budget." Ever since he moved to Chicago last October, he's kept an eye on the local crowd through the shop window of the Aldo Outlet on Ashland, where he works: "Here you have a melting pot of different moods. You see people dressed for work, hipsters, people who just don't give an eff about what they put on. Some of the homeless people have the best style. I see them and I'm like, 'Hey, that's a look!'" For Libyron, the right attitude is what matters most: "Confidence is key. You could have the ugliest outfit on, but if you rock it with confidence everyone will love what you're wearing. You could sport a trash bag like that!" See more of his musings and outfits on Instagram at @ironic\_behaviors. —ISA GIALLORENZO

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The Ricketts siblings, from left: Pete, Tom, Laura, and Todd CHICAGO CUBS BASEBALL CLUB LLC/STEPHEN GREEN

## POLITICS

# A tale of two tax bills

How our current property tax system affects the greedy and the needy

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

**T**he lesson for today is about taxes—property taxes, to be exact.

Consider this a helpful primer for Mayor Lori Lightfoot as she figures out which taxes to raise to close the city's gaping \$838 million budget gap.

Spoiler alert!: Use discretion when raising property taxes, Madam Mayor, because people hate paying them, though not always for the same reasons.

Some people hate them because they're inherently greedy people and want to keep all of their money for themselves.

Others are more willing to share for the common good, but they're too broke to keep pace with the taxman—or tax person's—ever-increasing demands.

As an example of the first type, consider Todd Ricketts of the fabulously wealthy Cubs-owning Ricketts clan. As an example of

the other, consider my neighbor I'll call Randy, a retiree on a fixed income.

Before we delve into our case studies, a thing or two about property taxes . . .

Basically, your property tax bill is determined by the assessed value of your property multiplied by the tax rate.

The tax rate is the same for all property owners. So the major variable is assessment. The more your property is assessed for, the more you pay in property taxes.

Cook County assessor Fritz Kaegi determines your assessment based on a computer calculation of sales of similar properties in your neighborhood.

If Kaegi says your property is worth \$100,000 and the tax rate is 10 percent, you would pay \$10,000 in property taxes.

See, that wasn't hard! You too can be a property tax expert.

One more time—the big thing to remember is the lower your assessment, the less you pay in property taxes. And that brings us to Todd Ricketts.

In 2010, Ricketts and his wife tore down their relatively modest home in Wilmette and replaced it with a bigger one. For the sake of this story, we'll call those houses Baby Huey and Big Daddy.

Obviously, Ricketts's assessment should have increased, because Big Daddy is worth more than Baby Huey. Especially since Big Daddy's a "5,000-square-foot North Shore home nestled on a meticulously landscaped lot complete with a Japanese-style garden," as the *Tribune* put it.

However, Ricketts neglected to tell the then-assessor, Joseph Berrios, he'd replaced Baby Huey with Big Daddy. As far as the assessor's office knew, Ricketts was still living in Baby Huey. Thus, the assessment on his home was lower than it would have been.

If you want to take it to the next level, Ricketts's neighbors in Wilmette had to pay more in property taxes to make up for the fact that Ricketts was paying less than he should have been.

Not trying to cause trouble in paradise—just saying.

By the way, I know all of this thanks to an excellent series of articles by Hal Dardick, ace reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* who's definitely not getting invited to the owner's box at Wrigley Field anytime soon.

As a result of Dardick's articles, the county's launched an investigation to determine whether Ricketts was being intentionally misleading. Or whether it was all just an innocent oversight, as Ricketts sees it.

In the meantime, Ricketts has paid \$60,000 in back taxes. And from here on out, he'll have to pay taxes on Big Daddy, not Baby Huey.

At this point, I think everyone else in Wilmette should treat Hal Dardick to lunch—I mean, his stories have sort of lowered your tax bills, if you think about it.

I should point out that, among other things, Todd Ricketts is the finance chairman of the Trump Victory Committee, which, as the name suggests, is the fund-raising arm of President Trump's reelection campaign. Man, I think they should raise his taxes just for that.

For the sake of fairness, I must point out that well-to-do Democrats have also been known to play games with property taxes.

A couple of years ago, Governor Pritzker got into trouble when the story broke he had re-

moved the toilets from his Gold Coast mansion to get a lower assessment.

In fairness to Pritzker, I should point out that his opponent—Governor Rauner—had his own tax-beating dodge. He claimed a homeowner's exemption on two properties, even though the rule says you can only claim it for one.

So when it comes to rich guys dodging the taxman—it's Republicans two, Democrats one.

This brings me to Randy, my lovely neighbor on the fixed income.

Since 1993, she's lived in a humble single-family home in North Center. A year ago, she got an assessment notice from the county and realized her annual property tax bill was likely to double, rising from about \$8,700 to more than \$16,000.

As a retiree on a fixed income, she couldn't just write out a big-time check like Ricketts did.

She appealed to the county assessor, asking for a lower assessment. But the assessor turned her down. So she went to seminars, and talked to experts and eventually she discovered that the county has an exemption for longtime homeowners who make less than \$65,000 a year.

Plus, there's a rebate of at least several hundred dollars for homeowners over the age of 65. Like the senior citizen discount at the Evanston movie theater, it's just one of the benefits of geezerhood. Man, if I knew getting old was so much fun, I'd have done it years ago!

The good news is that Randy wound up only having to pay roughly \$10,000 in property taxes. That means she gets to stay in her home and won't have to sell it.

And it means Mayor Lightfoot will have to look elsewhere for the rest of Randy's \$6,000 or so tax bill to fill that \$838 million budget gap.

Here's the larger lesson: No more hikes in property taxes, Madam Mayor—unless you can figure a way to limit them to the superrich.

The time has come to think of more progressive forms of taxes so the city can pay its bills and meets its obligations without making residents like Randy sell their homes.

Like, a head tax. Or a commuter tax. Or a city income tax. Or a LaSalle Street tax. Or a special tax on Cubs owners who raise money for Trump.

Otherwise, the only people who will be able to afford to live in Chicago will be rich guys like Todd Ricketts. **✎**

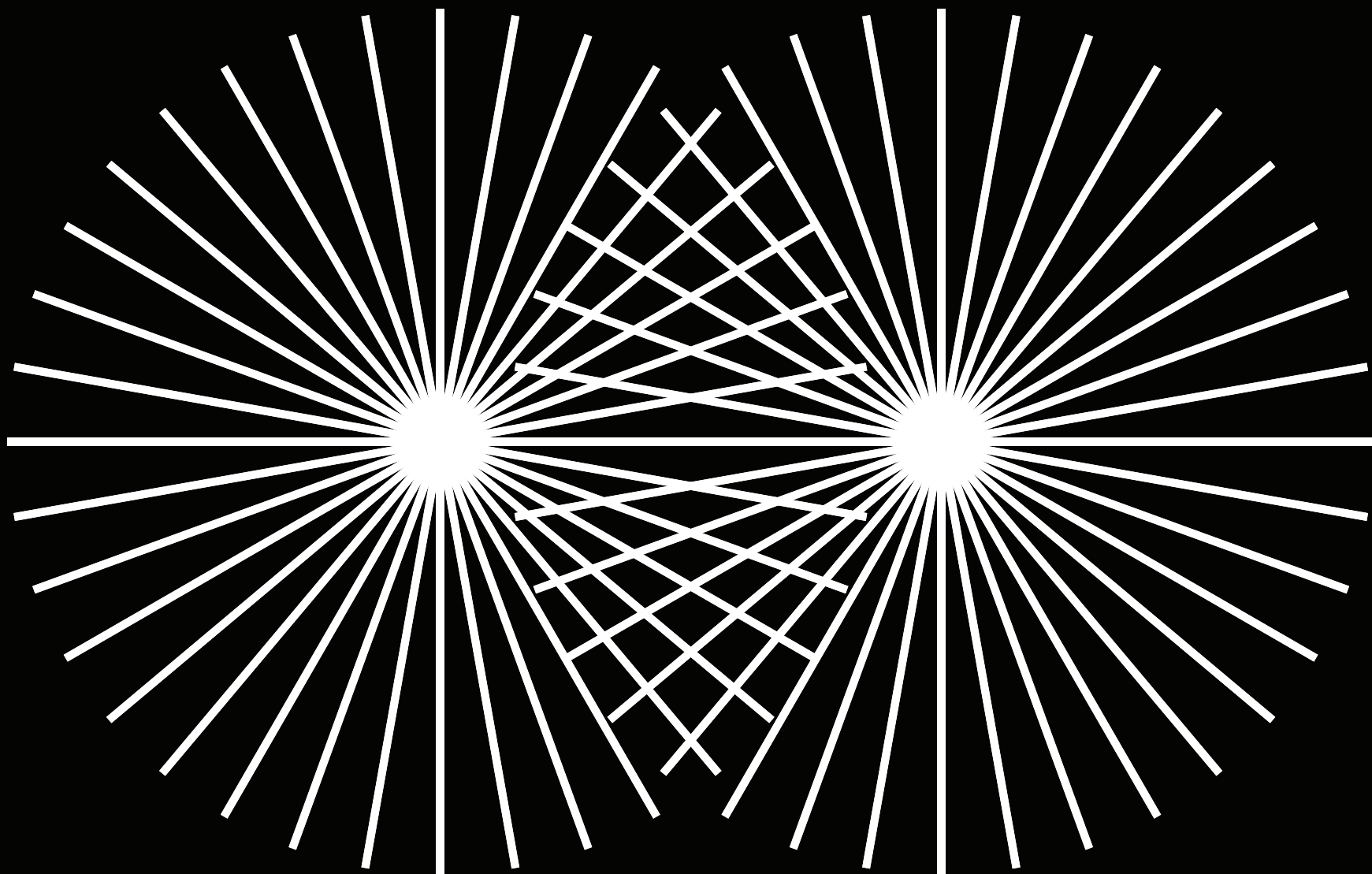
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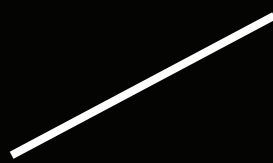
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## RESTAURANT REVIEW

# Love is a tlacoyo at Xocome Antojeria

After a six-month hiatus, these extraordinary Archer Heights antojitos are back.

By **MIKE SULA**

**W**hen Bertha Garcia was a kid, she used to help her aunt sell barbacoa on blue corn tortillas at an open-air restaurant on the road just outside La Marquesa National Park. Situated between Mexico City and the satellite city of Toluca, it was a rustic, woodsy spot where they also made bone marrow tacos grilled on the plancha with marjoram, earthy epazote, or minty yerba buena. They also griddled tlacoyos, which, back then, were ovoids of the same masa azul, hand-patted and stuffed with creamy requesón cheese and mashed fava beans, topped usually only with guajillo salsa, onions, and cheese.

The common denominator was blue. “Everything was masa azul,” she says. “They had a farm that was growing blue corn.”

Tlacoyos, which predate the arrival of the Spanish in Mexico, aren’t what they used to be, according to Garcia, who cooks them to order at Xocome Antojeria in Archer Heights. These days, she says, from the capital to Puebla, Morelos, Veracruz, and Oaxaca, tlacoyos are supersized, piled with all kinds of meats, vegetables, and dairy embellishments. But it’s a distinction without a difference to customers who come from say, Jalisco or Michoacan, states beyond the usual range of the tlacoyo. “They say ‘What is this?’” she says. When she explains that it’s like a huarache, only smaller, they’ll usually order two.

Tlacoyos are just as uncommon in Chicago as they are in Jalisco (and Durango, Chihuahua, and Sonora), so not long after ➔

Taco de chicharron and taco de squash blossom  ANJALI PINTO

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continued from 6

Garcia opened early last summer, she was championed by local food writers who didn't recognize just their distinction amid the city's wealth of regional Mexican cuisine but also the palpable sense of care—OK, jeez, let's say love—that she puts into all of her food. Love was all around when it came to Xocome Antojeria.

And then, suddenly, six months after opening, Garcia was gone, back to Mexico to tend to her sick father. She'd handed the business off to a part-time employee, who switched meat suppliers and raised the prices, and by the time her father had recovered and she'd returned home, the new boss had had enough: "He told me he didn't want the place because he was not making the money." Garcia's father, then recuperating in Texas, urged her to get back in the game.

On June 7, the one-year anniversary of her original opening date, Garcia, along with the help of her son David Rodriguez, relaunched Xocome Antojeria. Rodriguez, you may re-

Pambazo with chorizo and potato ANJALI PINTO



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Bertha Garcia  
 @ ANJALI PINTO



member, is the former fine-dining chef behind Humboldt Park's Chicken Pollo Shack, which is its own sensation. But he'd been working with his mom since the beginning, helping to execute her extraordinary menu of tacos, tamales, tortas, and other antojitos that don't begin with the letter T.

On its face—apart from the tlacoyos—it's not a menu that stands out from those of

hundreds of taquerias sprawled across the city. But the foundation of Xocomé—a Mayan malapropism that alludes to “fresh fruit”—is masa. Garcia picks up her fresh blue corn masa every other day from Chepe's Tortillas in Cicero, her yellow masa daily from nearby El Popocatepetl Tortilleria.

At 6 AM she's steaming tamales formed from the yellow masa and thickening her →

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# FOOD & DRINK

continued from 9

chocolatey champurrado along with it, readying for the 8 AM breakfast rush. Both yellow and blue masa are deployed for the breakfast tacos. As vehicles for eggs and beans—or eggs and cactus, eggs and chorizo, eggs and salsa, or eggs and tomato, onions, and peppers—these extraordinary tortillas have a ghostly, griddled crispiness yielding to an equally delicate, almost cakelike softness that nearly renders the fillings irrelevant.

But Garcia and son aren't known for slacking on those, either. The original griddled-to-order filet mignon, simply seasoned to match the uncomplicated splendor of the tortillas, has returned, along with the carnitas, chicken, cabeza, squash blossom, and chicharron in salsa verde, all applicable to the masa in all the forms it takes: quesadillas, sopes, and of course the tlacoyos.

In tune with the times, Garcia builds pyramids of protein, lettuce, onion, tomato, cotija, and lashes of crema on the flat, chewy masa, its equator a thin layer of refried pintos rather than favas or black beans.

Most of what Garcia makes is from scratch—but not everything. For her pambazo, another Mexico City specialty, she sources the telera roll from the wholesale Highland Bakery. It's unique in its ability to stand up to the saturation of lava-colored guajillo sauce, and more than capable of containing its ample payload of chorizo and potatoes for an unusually stable version of the sandwich.

When I spoke with Garcia, I all but begged her to start offering her aunt's bone marrow tacos. It doesn't make much sense to her businesswise, but she is thinking of bringing in another vividly colored rarity, this one a specialty of her hometown.

Toluca is famous for its chorizo verde, ground pork seasoned to an emerald-green hue with cilantro-charred poblanos, jalapeños—and, most importantly—pepitas. It's elusive in Chicago, but back in Toluca, Garcia's cousin and aunt sell chorizo verde tortas. She has the recipe, and she's thinking about putting them on the menu. But that's only one of many reasons to pay attention to what's happening in this little storefront on



White corn tlacoyo with nopales  
 ANJALI PINTO

Archer Avenue. As summer turns to fall and Garcia switches out her cucumber water for her made-from-scratch tamarind agua fresca, all the love for Xocome Antojeria is back. **FI**

[@MikeSula](#)



Live Music  
All Weekend

## 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary LAKEVIEW EAST of the FESTIVAL **ARTS**

Saturday, Sept. 14

Sunday, Sept. 15

MAIN

11:15a ..... Holly  
 12:30p ..... The Band Calderisi  
 2:00p ..... lePercolateur  
 3:30p ..... Sam Trump & Acoustic Audile  
 5:00p ..... Radio Free Honduras  
 6:30p ..... Simply Elton  
 9:00p ..... The Bama Lamas

11:30a ..... Spare Parts  
 1:00p ..... Gerald Dowd  
 2:30p ..... Ellen Miller Blues Explosion  
 4:00p ..... Rod Tuffcurls  
 & The Bench Press

GARDEN

11:00a ..... Mississippi Gabe Carter and  
 Memphis Mhoon  
 12:00p ..... The Lonesome Organist  
 1:15p ..... Zorana  
 2:30p ..... Bitney/Bach Trio  
 4:00p ..... Naomi Ashley Band  
 5:30p ..... Joe George

11:00a ..... Steve Hashimoto Duo  
 12:15p ..... Stan Karcz  
 1:30p ..... Today's Trade  
 3:00p ..... Corey Dennison Band  
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## NEWS & POLITICS



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### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## ‘We Are Witnesses: Chicago’

In 15 direct-to-camera testimonies, this video series gives voice to Chicagoans affected by the justice system.

By **THE MARSHALL PROJECT**

**T**he stories in “We Are Witnesses: Chicago” are not meant to soothe, but rather to agitate, to poke and prod our assumptions, to force us to wrangle with the way justice looks in Chicago. With candor and directness, these men and women speak to who we are as a city and who we are as a nation. They speak of forgiveness and of second chances. They

speak of anguish alongside joy. They speak of vengeance pitted against forbearance. In their stories, they each in their own way pose the question: *What is justice?* It is a question we all need to contemplate.

It seems only right that here in Chicago—home to Studs Terkel, who saw the poetry in the language of everyday people—people tell their own stories. In this collection of videos,

we hear from them directly. A former warden and a former gang member. The parents grieving the loss of their daughter and a cop grieving the loss of fellow officers. A judge and a prosecutor alongside a man and a woman each involved in a violent crime. When we watch their stories, we can’t look away.

It’d be a mistake to think of these stories as just about Chicago—for here, in the country’s center, we find all the fissures present in the American landscape, and here we can take stock of how we’re doing. It’s a place where the violence has sapped the spirit of individuals and of community, where the laws are uneven and where the relationship between the police and communities of color is permeated by mistrust. Chicago, for better or for worse, is America’s city.

Richard Wright, who lived in Chicago, once wrote that we “can starve from a lack of

self-realization as much as (we) can from a lack of bread.” The men and women in these videos, each of whom has been touched by our criminal justice system, are inching us along to that self-realization. They’re asking us to listen, to mourn those they’ve lost and to celebrate those who have refused to give in. They are asking us, at least for a moment, to stand in their shoes, to see the world through their eyes, to understand what it means to persist in seeking what is right and just. These stories—full-throated and heartfelt and true—feel necessary, especially at a time when our city and our nation have fallen short. Wright observed of Chicago: “There is an open and raw beauty about the city that seems to either kill or endow one with the spirit of life.” That tension courses through these stories. Sit back—and listen. —**ALEX KOTLOWITZ**

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## NEWS & POLITICS

### INTERVIEW

## 'I'm the bad guy now'

A retired cop on blowing the  
whistle on police misconduct

By **MAYA DUKMASOVA**

**B**ill Dorsch joined the Chicago Police Department in 1970, made his way into the detective rank, and stayed on the job until 1994. That was the worst year in the city's history for homicides. Though he could have kept working, Dorsch retired, in large part, he says, because his colleagues became increasingly hostile to him after he blew the whistle on misconduct by Detective Reynaldo Guevara. Since leaving the department, Dorsch has worked as a private investigator and has helped exonerate almost two dozen people convicted in cases built by Guevara. He spoke with the *Reader* about what he did on the job and what the job did to him.

*This interview has been edited and condensed.*

### Where did you grow up?

I grew up on the northwest side of Chicago, Jefferson Park. During my childhood [it] was pretty much crime free except for a few very significant crimes, and one of them was a well-known case, the murder of three young boys—Tony and John Schuessler and another boy named [Robert] Peterson. I was friends with the Schuessler boys.

### Why did you become a police officer?

I was working at a stock brokerage downtown and had been there about two years, and I realized it wasn't a place for me. There were others in my neighborhood that were becoming policemen, perhaps that influenced me. Once I did get into it I enjoyed every day. I was assigned out of the academy to the 20th District in the Uptown area. I went from a short time in uniformed patrol into the tactical units. Then I went to gang crimes and then to the detective division.

### Did the job conform to your expectations?

It can be repetitive boredom every day until someday everything blows up right in front of you. I responded to crimes of violence. It was a lot of guns, a lot of narcotics. I had a lot of friends who were injured and some were killed on the job . . . I had a rude awakening. I came from that lily-white, crime-free area, and I quickly learned of who the bad elements were and how to combat them.

### What influence did your work have on your views on race?

None, honestly . . . I didn't judge people by their race. If I arrested a person and he was white or Black or Hispanic, that's not why he was arrested. I understood a lot of these kids didn't have a choice, they became gang members because of geography. You were being identified by other gang members as the enemy because you were born on one street.

### Do you think the city itself made the problem worse?

I didn't see the city as the detriment. As a child, I knew: clean up your room. I had chores to do and responsibilities and taking care of things in the family. My dad was a disabled vet from WWII who'd lost his right arm, but he worked for the U.S. Treasury Department and on his salary he could feed and educate six children. It was tough but we never went hungry. My father couldn't do some things, and I was the oldest male in the house and I had to help him. In the community you have to give something back. You just can't take from the community. . . . Even when I was down and out and feeling bad I knew it was my responsibility to make things better.

### So you blame the community?

I'll tell you one thing, as a homicide detective working in the worst areas of the city, the Hispanic or Black ghetto areas, I was always

## NEWS & POLITICS

amazed that you'd have a young man shot and killed and we're trying to solve the crime and never get a phone call from the family saying, "What's going on? Have you gotten any closer to closing the case?" It was rare that we'd get an inquiry.

If you got a brother shot and killed down the street, you probably know who was involved. There's a fear within the young men in the Black and Hispanic communities of being identified as snitches, and they would be obviously in fear of reprisal.

### How did the drive to clear cases, to have good statistics for bosses to report, affect your work?

I remember many times in tactical units making a good burglary or robbery arrest and the detective division would use that arrest to clear other cases, other burglaries or robberies that had occurred. Sometimes it'd be ridiculous the number of robberies they'd clear based on the one arrest we made.

Talk to any beat cop today and if he's honest with you he'll tell you: When we get sent to a crime we know what the case reporting and charging should be. They write the report and the sergeant will say, "We don't want a robbery, turn this down to a theft." So now when [Eddie] Johnson and every superintendent go up to do their news conference they can say crime is down. You've got cases lingering where guys were shot but it's not classified as a murder, it's still under investigation so it's not added to the statistics.

### Are you saying the murder rate that's reported is lower than it actually is?

I'd say so, maybe by about a dozen but still.

### Should the city worry about the damage to its reputation from having too many open cases?

No. The amount of murders is a reflection on the population, not on the Police Department. It's a reflection on the people in the community and their perception of right and wrong and how they live their lives. I don't know that the job is ever gonna get easier. I think you should be honest about the statistics, about where they occur.

### How did the job affect your mental health?

I've had several shootings in my career, and only the first time did I get asked if I wanted to go see a department psychiatrist. And I went one time and that was it. I knew what my

job was, I knew what the dangers were.

### Did it affect your relationships?

I didn't even want to tell people I'm a policeman. My closest of friends knew, but I didn't want to bring the job home. Left it at work. I didn't want to traumatize my kids. There was a significant amount of drinking between some officers. I wasn't one of them. If you're on the job long enough you think the only people who understand you are other policemen.

### Do you believe that? Are you a subscriber to the idea of a "thin blue line"?

The things that happen out there you can't believe. I'm a young patrolman in the 20th District. We get assigned to a domestic disturbance. [The victim] has marks and we know the guy needs to go to jail. She's in the parking lot, sitting in their car, and he looks at her and says, "Bitch, wait until I get out of jail. You think you got beat now? I'll beat your ass when I come out." She puts her car in gear and floors it and intentionally crashes into a telephone pole and kills herself. Policemen see this stuff . . . I was able to push it aside daily. I tried to.

### Do you feel it's hurt your reputation with old friends or colleagues from the department to work in the wrongful conviction sphere?

Definitely. I'm not looked at as I was before, I'm the bad guy now. Since 2011 I've testified over a dozen times in court and in depositions. I've probably gotten over 20 people out of prison who are innocent, and I'm just as proud of that as the good arrests I made. Unfortunately, I guess I'm the only one that challenged [Guevara], and by doing that I challenged the whole organization.

### Has the ostracism been worth it?

I know right from wrong. I couldn't perceive what good you did by putting an innocent man in jail for something he didn't do. I know it's the perception of some officers: We know he's a bad guy, so we're gonna slam him on this [other thing]. That's not justice, that doesn't work for me. The case of the Schuessler boys being killed in 1955 and the real offender not being arrested until '94—that's justice. Maybe you never solve it, but who did you help by locking up the wrong guy? You think the family feels better knowing you locked up the wrong guy?

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## SURVIVAL

# Living with trauma

Celia Colón aims to transform the lives of prisoners through mental health workshops at the Cook County Jail.

By **ANDREA MICHELSON**

**W**hen Celia Colón was 16, she saw a friend get shot in the head right in front of her. She says she felt sad in her heart, but in that moment, she didn't cry. "I thought, *what is wrong with me?*" she says. "I thought I had a heart that didn't bleed."

It wasn't until she volunteered with a hospice program while in prison in 1998 that Colón learned she had post-traumatic stress disorder. She says the program taught her to exercise empathy and emotional detachment toward the terminal patients she served, and also introduced her to a team of psychologists and social workers who helped her address her own trauma for the first time in her life.

Colón, 43, is a survivor of physical and

sexual abuse, which began at the hands of her mother's boyfriends when she was a child. Her mother suffers from mental health issues, and as a result, Colón grew up feeling unloved and uncared for. "And it's not because my mother didn't want to," she says. "She just didn't know how to."

At age 12, Colón witnessed her mother's boyfriend beat her so badly that she was left unconscious. The incident led Colón and her family to flee from Florida to Chicago, where her grandparents lived. But the six-unit apartment in South Chicago they moved into turned out to be a gang headquarters. She told some of the local girls what she had been through.

"I gained their trust, and they took me under their wing," Colón says. "I had this

huge community. . . . But the downfall is that I also witnessed a lot of violence I shouldn't have seen."

Growing up around gang violence exposed Colón to another wave of trauma. She says during that period of her life, she went to more funerals than parties. The violence came to a head when she was involved in a fight at age 18 that landed her 15 years in prison for attempted murder.

Colón's story is not unique. A 2010 report by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority found that 98 percent of female inmates surveyed had been physically abused, and 75 percent had experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime. The same report found that 60 percent of those women could be potentially diagnosed with PTSD.

In the three Illinois correctional facilities where Colón served her sentence, there were no rehabilitation programs in place to address the trauma that had led her there. Rather, the trauma continued—Colón is one of the many faces of prison rape. As previously reported by the Marshall Project, the Bureau of Justice Statistics has estimated that more than 200,000 inmates are sexually abused in American detention facilities every year.

Colón says she was lucky to participate in the Women Helping Others hospice care training at Dixon Correctional Facility, which "changed her life" and helped her return home with a new mind-set. But when she was later out on parole with a new job that allowed her to travel the world, she felt unsettled.

"I started thinking about all the women that I had left behind, who had stories just like mine or even worse," she says. "I decided that I would use my voice for more than just me."

When she was released early after serving more than six years of her sentence, Colón became a motivational speaker and advocate for women's safety in prison. She founded an initiative called Giving Others Dreams, through which she facilitates mental health workshops for inmates in the Cook County Jail.

Colón says the workshop she designed consists of three sessions. In the first session, she teaches inmates how to create a support system for when they are released and distributes information about mental health services and hotlines. The second session centers on self-discovery and goal setting. After choosing a goal to accomplish, in the final session, the inmates create vision boards for their two-year plans. "That's where the magic happens for me," Colón says.

As the workshop ends, some inmates speak about "who they are, who they were, and who they plan to be." Sometimes Colón shares her own experiences; other times it is too painful. She says the officers have told her that the workshop completely transforms the inmates' perspectives and how they treat each other.

Transformation is the goal of Colón's outreach, and she says it's the only thing separating her from the women and men who remain behind bars. "Because of all the trauma, a lot of our dreams are buried inside of us under our pain, under our mistakes," she says. "We forget how powerful we are." **✎**

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# REWRIITING

LISA DANIELS SHARES HOW HER SON DARREN'S MURDER LAUNCHED A MOVEMENT BASED ON EMPOWERMENT AND HEALING.

MY SON DARREN WAS JUST A GOOD PERSON, A SPIRITUAL BEING, MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, AS WE ALL ARE.

DARREN ADORED HIS CHILDREN, WAS A VERY INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR LIVES.

AND HE ADORED HIS MOTHER. HIS LOVE FOR ME MADE ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF — LIKE I MUST BE PRETTY OK IF THIS KID LOVES ME SO MUCH.

NOBODY GETS THROUGH THIS LIFE WITHOUT HAVING CHALLENGES, AND WE'RE ALL LIVING OUT OUR TRAUMAS, LIVING THROUGH OUR BROKEN PLACES.

DARREN DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO HEAL AND RECOVER FROM THINGS THAT WERE HURTING HIM. THAT'S WHAT SHOWED UP IN THE ACTIONS THAT COST HIM HIS LIFE.

DARREN'S MURDER WAS A ROBBERY DISGUISED AS A DRUG DEAL.

HE WAS SHOT AND KILLED IN THE SOUTH SUBURBS OF CHICAGO ON JULY 22, 2012.

A COUPLE DAYS AFTER THE MURDER, I READ THIS NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT DARREN'S DEATH AND THE HEADLINE JUST SAID HE WAS A MAN WITH FELONY AND DRUG CONVICTIONS. THEY DIDN'T EVEN MENTION HIS NAME UNTIL THE SECOND PARAGRAPH. I THOUGHT, *ARE YOU KIDDING ME?*

THE ARTICLE DEPICTED HIM AS JUST ONE THING — A CRIMINAL. BUT A PERSON WHO'S COMMITTED A CRIME IS MORE THAN JUST A PERSON WHO'S COMMITTED A CRIME. THAT WAS DARREN'S NARRATIVE. AND I JUST THOUGHT, NOPE. NOT ON MY WATCH.



# THE NARRATIVE

AS TOLD TO SARAH WATTS

DRAWINGS BY LUCIUS WISNIEWSKI

DARREN'S NARRATIVE HAS BEEN REWRITTEN IN HIS AFTERLIFE. HIS LEGACY WON'T END IN THE DRIVEWAY HE DIED IN.



I STARTED THE DARREN B. EASTERLING CENTER FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN DECEMBER 2016. WE PROVIDE BEHAVIORAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR WHO HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY HOMICIDE OR INCARCERATION DUE TO GUN VIOLENCE. WE WORK TOGETHER TO MOVE PAST THE HURT AND THE PAIN THAT ARE ENCOMPASSED BY HAVING THAT EXPERIENCE.



THE OBJECTIVE OF ALL THE WORK IS TO REWRITE THE NARRATIVE FOR DARREN'S LIFE AND OTHERS WITH SIMILAR EXPERIENCES.

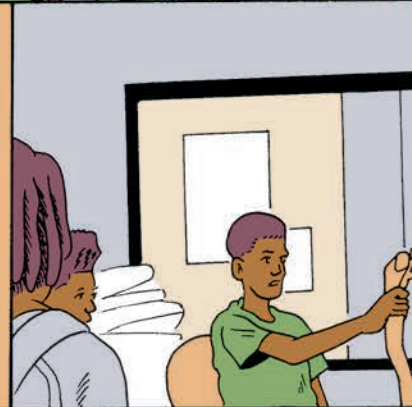
THE MEDIA GIVE US A ONE-DIMENSIONAL VIEW OF EVERY YOUNG BLACK MAN WHO DIES AS A RESULT OF GUN VIOLENCE IN THIS CITY— THAT THEY WERE GANG-INVOLVED, THEY CAME FROM A POOR FAMILY AND BAD BACKGROUND, AND THAT'S JUST NOT TRUE.



ALL OF THE WORK WE DO IN THIS ORGANIZATION SERVES TO HUMANIZE PEOPLE AND HELP REWRITE THEIR NARRATIVE. I TELL PEOPLE, YOU ARE NOT JUST THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE, OR THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER EXPERIENCED. YOU ARE A HUMAN BEING, A SPIRITUAL BEING, MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.



IT ALL TIES BACK TO DARREN— HE WAS ALL OF THESE PEOPLE, AND ALL OF THESE PEOPLE ARE HIM: HURTING PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO HEAL AND RECOVER FROM WHERE THEY ARE IN THEIR PAIN.



DARREN DIED IN THAT. PEOPLE WHO WE HELP AT THE CENTER ARE HERE IN THAT. BUT WE CAN CHANGE THAT NARRATIVE.

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE.



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READER



## Of shoes and sugarplums

The Joffrey Ballet's shoe manager walks us through some numbers.

By KAYLEN RALPH

**AFTER TWO DECADES** of performances at the Auditorium Theatre, the Joffrey Ballet will move its company to the Lyric Opera House at the conclusion of the 2019-2020 season, making this year the last holiday season during which Christopher's Wheeldon's version of *The Nutcracker* will grace the Auditorium Theatre's stage. Ahead of this big step forward for the company, Gregg Benkovich, shoe manager for the Joffrey Ballet, helped crunch the numbers on the overwhelming numbers of slipper- and pointe-shoe-clad smaller steps (as well as assemblés, pirouettes, and arabesques) that will have preceded the move next season.

**\$130,000**

The Joffrey's annual shoe budget. According to Benkovich, this figure can vary depending on the season's lineup. "Last season was really heavy because in addition to pointe shoes and slippers, we had a lot of boots that we needed for *Anna Karenina*."

**25%**

The percentage of the budget that goes toward the Joffrey's annual production of *The*

*Nutcracker*. "Once you have those shoes, you can get a few years' use out of them—not the pointe shoes or slippers—but there are some specialty shoes in *The Nutcracker* I use for at least two or three years before I replace them," Benkovich said.

**25-30**

Pairs of shoes each company ballet dancer goes through from the start of rehearsal to closing night of *The Nutcracker* each season, "so that they can pick and choose," Benkovich said. "Once they have a pair of shoes and they break them in, they decide 'Oh, these are performance shoes, so I'm going to put these aside.' And others might just be rehearsal shoes. If you find a really, really good pair of shoes then you just wear the hell out of them because you're never going to get the same shoe twice—they're all handmade."

**2**

Pairs of shoes a performer dancing an intensive role such as Queen of the Fair or Marie will want on hand for each performance.

**29**

Number of performances of *The Nutcracker* in the 2019-2020 season. The first curtain rises for a matinee on November 30.

**1995**

The year Robert Joffrey's version of *The Nutcracker*—originated in 1987—was first performed in Rosemont.

**3**

Number of times Christopher Wheeldon's reimagined version of the ballet—made specifically to be performed in the Joffrey's Auditorium Theatre—has been performed in Chicago, where it made its world premiere in 2016.

**2019**

The last year *The Nutcracker* will be performed at the Auditorium.



**\$780,000**

The amount spent on shoes for the Joffrey's various renditions of *The Nutcracker* since 1995 (not adjusting for inflation).

**1**

How many Joffrey employees there are dedicated to procuring and distributing shoes. "It's just me," Benkovich said. "Once I give the shoes out, I don't see them again until [the dancers] turn them back in. I don't put the ribbons on. I don't do any of the personal stuff, that's all stuff they do themselves. I just hand the shoes out."

**60%**

The percentage of Benkovich's job he said consists of ordering shoes and distributing them in a timely way.

**4**

The number of new dancers joining the company this year.

**13**

The number of countries from which the current Joffrey company members hail.


**17**

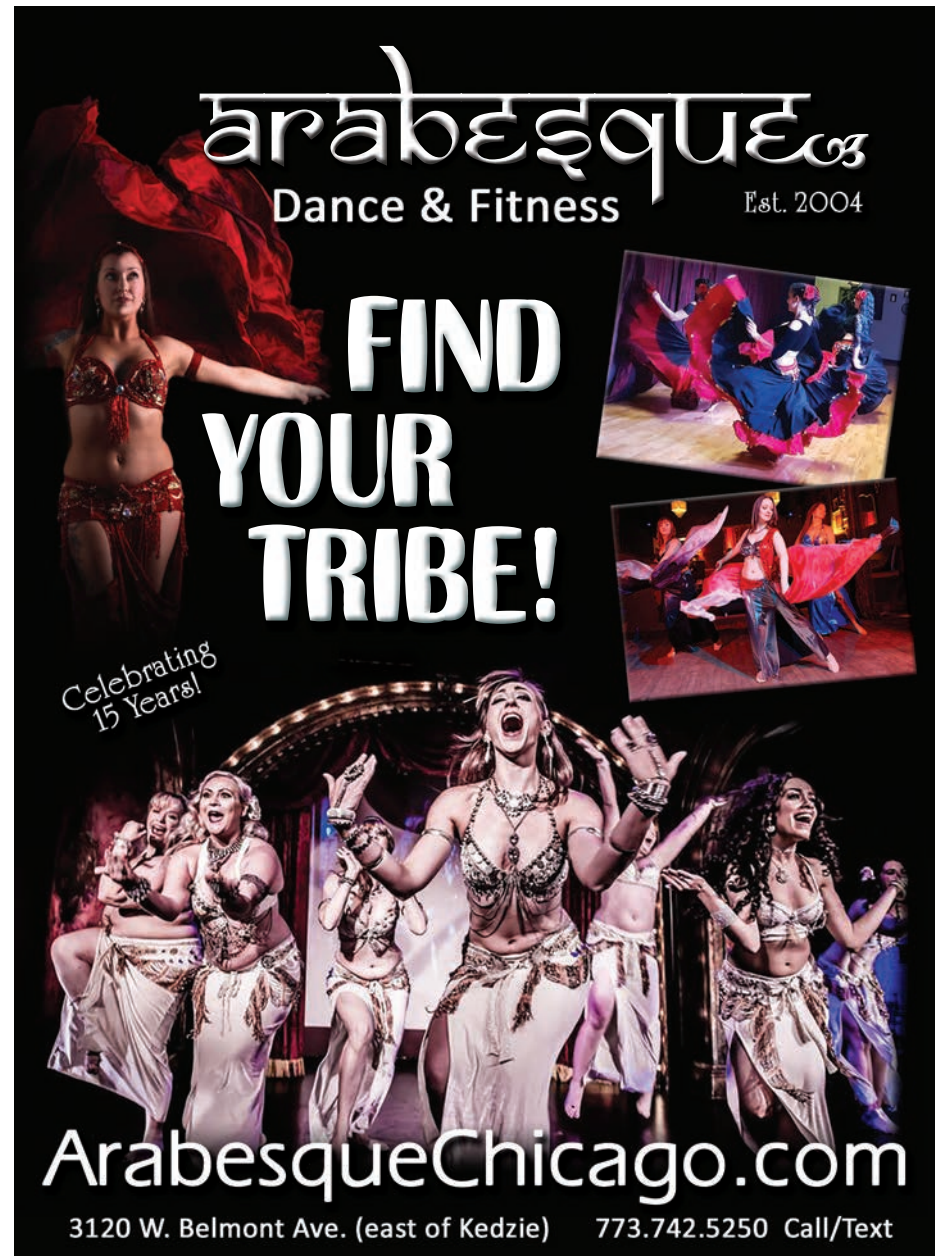
The age of the youngest member of the Joffrey's current company.

**10**

The age at which Jonathan Dole, one of the four new main company members, first danced in a performance of *The Nutcracker*, which was the first ballet he ever saw, and the first in which he performed after auditioning for the role of Fritz a few years later.

**59**

The number of children cast in Robert Joffrey's version of *The Nutcracker* (in addition to a full company). There are 47 in Wheeldon's current version. 



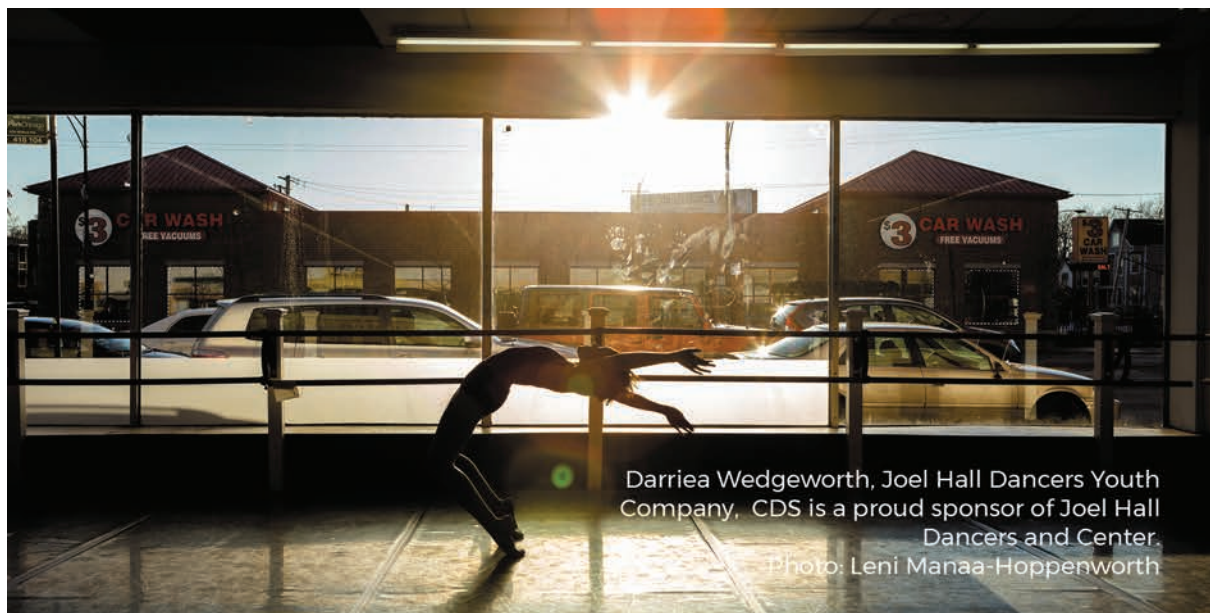
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# Live lit keeps the communal campfire going

The DIY essay-performance hybrid remains potent in the face of transformations and losses.

By IAN BELKNAP



I coined the term “live lit” over lunch with Keith Ecker in 2011. We were at Kopi Café in Andersonville, discussing a fix for the minor problem we shared: that the existing term “storytelling,” emphasizing as it did both “narrative” and “speech,” did not encompass what we were both attempting with the shows we’d founded. My show, *Write Club*, monthly at the Hideout, and his, *Essay Fiesta*, monthly at the Book Cellar, both emphasized writing at least as much as delivery, and featured essays, not stories. The coinage was not a huge deal—I’m not trying to engage in mythmaking, here. It was like being present for the dawn of the aglet, maybe: not a lightning-strike eureka! moment, but more like a single-nod “huh, might be helpful” type of thing.

*Write Club* will turn ten years old in January 2020. Keith went on to cofound a short-lived and (to me, at least) badly missed live show called *Guts & Glory* with the now world-famous Samantha Irby (*New York Times* best-selling author of the collections *Meaty* and *We Are Never Meeting in Real Life*, writer on Hulu’s *Shrill*, etc.). That show started in the back room of the (also, lamentably, now former) Powell’s Books on Lincoln Avenue in

2012, then moved to Schubas when the bookstore closed in 2014. The final *Guts & Glory* show was in 2015—the reason I came to call it “the only storytelling show that matters” at the time was its ethos of emotional risk. If you know Irby’s work, then you know there is no topic that is off limits, and Ecker sought always to match this fearlessness in his own writing and curation. The sense that seemed to govern the show was “if you’re not shitting yourself before you get up there, then you haven’t done your goddamn job.” Keith is currently in a master’s program for nursing at Rush University Chicago. To mark this decade or so that so many of us have devoted to this live-lit stuff, I thought I’d do a kind of communal gut check with some of the show producers I admire.

As with any “scene,” a term I loathe, live lit in Chicago has seen its upheavals and rivalries, its shake-ups in leadership and departures from its ranks. The scene’s moment of media attention (in terms of the flurry of articles that were appearing for a couple years with a “feast your eyes on this Hot Young Thing named Storytelling” quality to them) has mostly faded—due in part to the fact that the explosive growth in the shows being →



Keith Ecker; Ian Belknap, photographed at *Write Club* at the Hideout • DANA NORRIS; EVAN HANOVER

# FALL @ THE AUDITORIUM

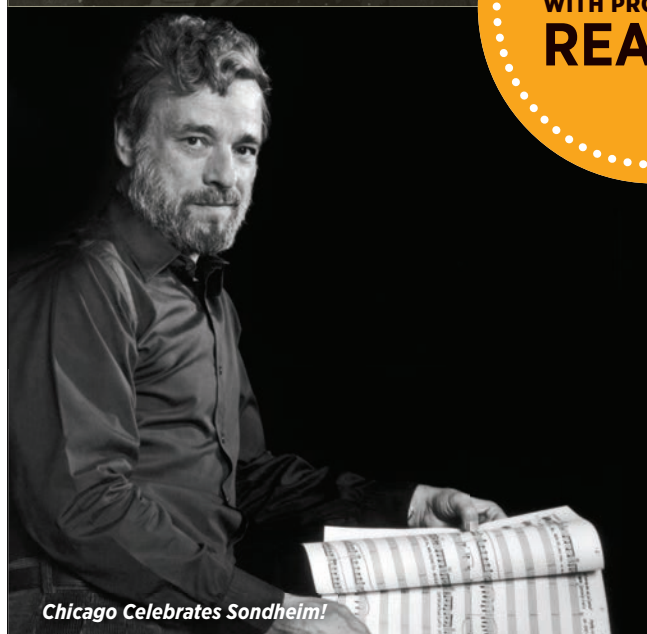


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PORTRAITS**



**continued from 20**

launched has leveled off, and also because these shows are now an existing feature of the cultural landscape, so there's no "trendspotting" energy to expend upon it. Despite a lack of coverage, there remain people passionate enough about making it happen that it's now possible to attend a live-lit show—in a tavern or a cafe or a bookshop—every night of the week. There are enough folks to say things into microphones, and enough to sit listening to them, that the scene abides.

But, as Carly Oishi, cofounder of Miss Spoken, monthly at Gallery Cabaret, puts it, it's hard to see what a "next level" looks like: "there's really no upward mobility. There's no means to an end." By which she's referring to the limitations inherent in any DIY form like this one: there's no "professionalized" echelon to move on to, in the way that a band can go from playing bars to theaters to stadiums, or a sketch performer can go from iO or Second City to touring to mainstage to TV. There is no such trajectory for the writer-performer in live lit, or, for that matter, for the curator-producers of these shows, since even though there is demand, there is no market. It's not even a glass ceiling, with gatekeepers blocking access—it's a ceiling of fog where that "next" thing is not even visible. The stepping stones don't lead upward, they go in a circle.

There is the persistent "Chicago problem" afflicting all art forms here—the phenomenon of "hone your chops here, then flee to a 'real' city to make your money," which has come to feel like an inevitability, almost. There's also what I've come to call the "gateway drug problem," where folks do live lit for a while, get really good at it, and then move on to some other form, either because the product of their labors is more enduring, or they can more readily monetize it, or both. Examples of this tendency include Irby, noted above (though she'd regard herself more as having started as a blogger who kind of fell backwards into performing live lit, which is partly just her tendency to underestimate her own vast gifts as a riveting performer); Shannon Cason, an early storytelling breakout who has pivoted into podcasting, primarily; and Christopher Piatt, whose show the Paper Machete (weekly at the Green Mill) has migrated away from its live-lit roots to become much more of a variety show or, as he characterizes it, a "rock and comedy showcase," which always includes at least a music act, stand-ups, and sketch acts.

In an e-mail, Piatt reflected on the radical shifts in the culture since live lit took off: "In 2010 . . . there was no Medium.com, no Instagram self-promotion, podcasts were mostly

made by real media companies and Marc Maron, Netflix [still] mailed DVDs to your house. . . . It would not have occurred to me that it could be acceptable to ask a 25-year-old human person to write a scorching piece of hyper-current satire of a breaking news story at 11 PM on a Friday and expect gold by 3 PM the next afternoon. Because the generation of comedy writers who would make this a standard Machete experience were in high school in 2010."

So those of us who persist in producing and performing live lit are left to answer for ourselves: Why continue? What is the payoff? A thread that came up repeatedly, even from those acknowledging the thankless grind of booking and promotion and the looming prospect of burnout: community. As wide-eyed as that may sound, in this blighted, rancorous age, there is much to be said for gathering—in shared space, in real time—to listen well to one another, to pay our collective heed, as one of us tries to tell some truth about their own life.

Jeremy Owens, founder of You're Being Ridiculous (quarterly at various venues) says: "I think what really keeps me in the game is the connection to the Chicago writing community I've gained. I love doing the show and the space it gives other artists to create." Lily Be, who founded the Stoop (monthly at Rosa's Lounge) is a Chicago producer of Story Collider, a national storytelling show about science, and a coeditor of StoryNews, a site featuring personal narratives that relate to events in the news, who notes: "we're opening up doors to things. I'm not trying to introduce people to be[come] performers, but to hear people say, like, 'I eulogized my mother because I took your class,' or hear someone say 'I knew my grandma was gonna die, and the importance of asking her some questions before she died, rather than sit in her room at hospice, and just watch them take care of her.' You know, I'm saying you're creating these new worlds for people that are just, like, 'Oh, damn. I had no idea that just putting you onstage once would do that.'" As Keith, who regards his current absence from live lit while in school as a "hiatus," puts it: "I believe in the power of stories to foster connection. This is particularly true when it comes to stories that deal with trauma, directly or indirectly, because I think many people carry the weight of their own traumatic experiences, and hearing that someone else understands your pain can be therapeutic for performers and audience."

Janna Sobel, founder of Here, Chicago, a quarterly potluck and storytelling event at Stage 773, framed it this way: "It's such



Crowd shots of the show *Here, Chicago* © MARA WILLIAMSON

a generosity from the audience, to give a storyteller our attention, that's the first gift [of these kinds of shows]: to sit quietly and listen to one individual up on the stage. And so I want people in Chicago who take these stages, if it's once or if it's on a regular basis, just to really take that honor. Hold it seriously in their hands, think about their story, practice it ahead of time. Bring something that is going to give people something, an opportunity to learn something, or something hard-won that you've learned that you could share, and then other people don't have to live through the hardship to learn it."

Where we do need to up our game: inclusion. We all agree—each producer I spoke to or e-mailed cited the need for greater diversity on live-it stages. It's improved greatly over the past decade or so, for sure, but improvement does not constitute completion, so as a community of producers, we must seek out and invite performers and audiences of color and LGBTQ people (as Jeremy put it: "Queer people shouldn't have to wait around until Pride Month to tell a story") and people with

disabilities. We need to push beyond the comparative ease of "harvesting" performers and audiences from the north side to reflect the great expressive and cultural richness south of the Loop, and as Lily asked: "Where are the poor people? This country is 30 percent poor people. And I don't see them [at these shows.] And if they are there, they don't feel comfortable talking about it."

If we are to progress, or even simply to endure, our shows must cleave to what live lit remains at its essence, which is after all what makes it exciting: a readily accessible means of direct public self-expression, a forum for truth telling and revelation without adornment or pyrotechnics. One of the great virtues of live lit is its "low prestige factor," in that the barriers to entering as a practitioner are really, really low: none of us who produce these shows need your CV, there are no conservatory programs where you can earn an MFA in live lit, there is no "dues paying" in the sense of doing a shitload of open mikes before you're deemed "ready." If you want in, all you need to do is ask. **FI**

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DAVID SAMPSON/COURTESY OF REBUILD FOUNDATION

## Choreographer Ayesha Jaco honors her father in *Black Samurai*

Celebrating a vibrant community of dance, music, and martial arts.

By IRENE HSIAO

“T o this school . . . we bring our history, our culture. Our pain, our suffering as a people, is all in here. The army says, ‘Be the best that you can be.’ We try to be the best artists that we can be,” says Lawrence Donley in Robert Wyrod’s 2002 documentary *South Side Warriors*. Describing his practice at the Tornado School of Martial Arts, a karate school on the south side of Chicago, he says, “It exhilarates me. It makes me become actually who I am. I’m a warrior and spirit, a fighter for my people. . . .”





A work-in-progress performance of Ayesha Jaco's *Chississippi Mixtape* at Links Hall  
 DAVID SAMPSON/ COURTESY OF REBUILD FOUNDATION

I will let no one come upon me to try to take that away."

Founded by Gregory Jaco after he returned from military service in Vietnam, the Tornado School was one of several inner-city schools that led the wave of America's fascination with Asian martial arts in the 1970s and '80s. Raised in the Robert Taylor Homes in Bronzeville, Jaco began studying martial arts as a boy. "Living in a housing project, if you were going to be anything other than what the project was manipulated to turn people into, it took a strong will and a lot of discipline," recalls Jaco in the same film. "A lot of young men found that discipline in gangs. Those of us who didn't want to go into the illegal trades . . . found that [the martial arts] provided us with military strength . . . [and] gave us family." Though Jaco trained in judo for the 1980 Olympics (which the U.S. ultimately boycotted), he is especially remembered as a teacher and community leader who brought the discipline, respect, and physical practice of martial arts to countless youths over decades on the south and west sides of Chicago.

"*Black Samurai* is an ode to my father's martial arts legacy," says dancer and choreographer Ayesha Jaco, referring to the late summer segment of her yearlong residency at the Rebuild Foundation. With additional support from the Chicago Dancemakers Forum, Jaco is investigating the migration history of her own and other Chicago families, as well

as the ways they have transformed Chicago into a home. "I am a Chicago native, born and raised in the East Garfield Park community, where there were high rates of violence in the 90s. My mother and father made sure we were always engaged in activities, that we had an artistic component. Martial arts was a must. All my siblings and I got our black belts," she says. "Right next door to the Stony Island Arts Bank was one of my father's dojos. It's an empty lot now, but it was an oasis for youth and families in the 1980s. And you can't talk about the Tornado School of Martial Arts and not talk about Shonuff Dance Studio—a school of West African dance that served as a training ground for many dancers and leaders in Chicago dance, including Najwa I, founder of African dance company Najwa Dance Corps, and Andrea Vinson, its current associate artistic director, as well as Muntu Dance Theatre's artistic director, Amaniyea Payne.

Just as these schools on the south side formed a vibrant crossroads of martial artists, dancers, and musicians (perhaps best characterized by how Gregory Jaco, who was also a percussionist, bagpiper, and saxophonist, would cross the hall from dojo to dance studio to drum for classes), Ayesha Jaco's project combines a whirlwind of oral history talk circles; documentary making in partnership with her brother, Grammy-winning rapper Lupe Fiasco; and workshops, philanthropic projects, and performances at the ➔

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As part of the research for *Chississippi Mixtape*, Ayesha Jaco and photographer Nicole Harrison discuss the role of their families' migration from Mississippi to Chicago in shaping their artistic practices. © DAVID SAMPSON/ COURTESY OF REBUILD FOUNDATION

continued from 23

Stony Island Arts Bank, the Dorchester Art and Housing Collaborative, and the MCA—including *The Chississippi Mixtape*, a 35-minute montage of dance and oral history performed by dancers ages 11 to 39 to a soundscape by sound and visual artist Damon Locks, inspired by the migration of Jaco's mother's family as sharecroppers from Mississippi to Chicago. "The dancers had homework—they were charged with bringing their family history into the piece," she says.

Teaching forms a central component of Jaco's work. "I had seen my father's model

of building character, discipline, cultural awareness in young people. I wanted to do the same with dance," she says, speaking of her work with After School Matters and in her home community. "The arts were a platform of expression for me, and I wanted to give that back to young people. I attribute it to the Ghanaian tradition of Sankofa: in order to move forward, you have to look back. You have to honor what came before you. From my family's migration story, and the legacy my dad and Shonuff Dance Studio left behind, it's my duty to tell those stories and take things to the next level." 📷

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## Hannah Ii-Epstein's long, strange trip

The playwright's stories about drug use in Hawaii draw on her own history.

By JACK HELBIG

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Hannah Ii-Epstein hunches over when she talks, her voice soft and vaguely otherworldly, but her eyes are sharp and deep, and she looks you straight in the eye as she speaks, picking her words with a care that makes it clear she packs meaning in every syllable she emits. Her plays are the same way. Their stories unfold with a misleading informality, accentuated by the fact that most of Ii-Epstein's characters speak Hawaiian pidgin English, the creolized mix of English, Hawaiian, Cantonese, Japanese, and other Asian and Pacific Island languages that is spoken by everyday Hawaiians. But beneath the easy patois pulses an urgent intensity; in an instant, in her tales, hearts are broken, hope is destroyed or regained, lives are destroyed or redeemed. In her last play, *Not One Batu*, a former meth addict loses it all, including custody of her son, when she starts using again.

Ii-Epstein is just finishing up a trilogy of plays about drug use in her home state of Hawaii. *Not One Batu* premiered in 2018 in Chicago, produced by Nothing Without a Company, the theater company she runs with her wife, Anna Rose Ii-Epstein. The next →

  
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Scott Hanada as Uncle Makana in *Not One Batu* © MATTHEW GREGORY HOLLIS

continued from 27

installment, *Pakalolo Sweet*, about Hawaii's underground marijuana economy—"We call it the traditional market," Ii-Epstein jokes—opens this month. And Ii-Epstein is currently putting the finishing touches on the last of the three plays, *Aloha Fry-days*, "about hallucinogens," she explains, "that are easily accessible in Hawaii—LSD, peyote, mushrooms, and a flower that grows in Hawaii, angel trumpet flower."

Ii-Epstein knows of what she speaks. She spent her adolescence in the drug worlds she now chronicles. "I was addicted to meth," she recalls. "Meth because it was cheap and easy. But really I was addicted to snorting drugs—whether it was cocaine, meth, or Ritalin, anything I could put up my nose."

Growing up on the north shore of Oahu in a town called Waialua, the daughter of a Hawaiian mother and a Jewish father, Ii-Epstein started abusing drugs and alcohol as a way of coping with the trauma of being repeatedly sexually abused by an uncle. Eventually the

uncle was prosecuted, after Ii-Epstein confided to her brother about what was happening and her family intervened. "We went to court when I was 17," she tells me. "Where he took a plea bargain. He still has yet to offer me an apology without any if/ands/buts."

But while the abuse was happening, the drugs were a way to mute the pain. "From when I was 12 years old to 17 years old, monthly using turned into weekly and eventually daily," Ii-Epstein tells me. "Again, this was all the drugs, any drug I could get my hands on. I started using meth when I was about 17."

Like the characters in her plays, Ii-Epstein's life then totally revolved around her drug and alcohol use. And this continued for years, through middle school, high school, and after. Finally, one day, at 19, Ii-Epstein looked around and saw how she and her friends were living. "We were living a homeless lifestyle," Ii-Epstein says, "jumping houses, staying with whoever's friend's parents were not there that weekend." She was also seriously tweaking, picking her skin until she was covered with



*Not One Batu* © MATTHEW GREGORY HOLLIS

scabs, which she then also picked, staying awake for days at a time.

"I realized that I wasn't OK," Ii-Epstein recalls. "That I wasn't physically OK and I was not mentally OK. So I went home."

"I spent the first week in bed with the sweats," Ii-Epstein continues, "having flulike symptoms getting clean. Like Honey Girl's story in *Not One Batu*, I couldn't eat without [smoking] pakalolo. I eventually could leave the bed and would walk to the beach and spend hours laying in the sand like a *honu* (sea turtle) and getting in the ocean to heal, to wash myself clean. But it took the patience, support, and unconditional love of my parents and my brother for me to even get clean and then to stay clean."

Even after getting clean, it took years for Ii-Epstein to find herself. She moved to Chicago when she turned 21. "An ex-girlfriend moved me here," she smiles. "All I was doing was surfing and working at a movie rental store, and she wanted to come here to school. I was like, why not, I am not doing anything. So I took the plunge without having visited before. The first winter was magical. I had never seen snow before. I had only seen it in movies. It was superfun for me."

Several years after moving to Chicago she met someone who would change her life, her now-wife, Anna Rose Ii-Epstein. "I met Anna [then Anna Epstein] at 3:30 in the morning walking home from a bar," Ii-Epstein reminisces. "We started talking and hit it off. Exchanged e-mails."

It was Anna who introduced her to the other members of a nascent theater ensemble she was part of (the company later named


itself *Nothing Without a Company*), and it was through that company that she met playwright Ike Holter, who encouraged her to write plays because, as he told her, "We need more women and people of color writing plays." She and Holter cowrote Ii-Epstein's first two plays, *Episodical 1.1: Triggered by Triangles* and *Episodical 1.2: Stunned by Stars*.

Carson Becker, another playwright and Ii-Epstein's teacher at Columbia College Chicago, encouraged Ii-Epstein to begin writing in her native Hawaiian pidgin English. "I didn't know you could do that," Ii-Epstein laughs. "That's a thing? It blew my mind."

Her first attempt at writing a play in Hawaiian pidgin English resulted in *Not One Batu*, which in turn inspired her to write two more plays documenting a world she left long ago.

Today Ii-Epstein describes herself as "California sober": "That means I only use marijuana. I don't drink. I don't use any other types of drugs. I am addicted to sugar and caffeine, and I do smoke cigarettes—I hope to cut it off in a few years."

Still, Ii-Epstein is aware that keeping clean and sober is a lifelong pursuit. "There is not one day that goes by that I don't think about using," she says. "I wake up every morning and tell myself that I won't use today. I don't leave my house if I'm feeling less than 50 percent, because I know the first thing I'd do is get some drugs. I don't go to bars or parties if I'm feeling crappy in any way. I keep myself out of situations where I would ever consider using. I have to trust myself, and if I'm not having a good feeling, I walk away. Instead of drugs, I'll binge-watch really bad TV shows."

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Lottery Day © LIZ LAUREN

## The emotional architecture of Arnel Sancianco

The busy set designer has two major shows opening this fall, but he stays focused on finding the gritty truth.

By **KERRY REID**

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**B**ack when he was an aspiring actor in the University of California-Irvine's undergrad theater program, Arnel Sancianco joined some classmates at an In-N-Out Burger. "And one of my friends, jokingly, with all love, was like, 'It's gonna be really hard for you, Arnel, because they don't write roles for Asians.'"

That comment may have pushed Sancianco out the window of his thespian dreams, but it opened a doorway to what has become a burgeoning career as a set designer. He finished his undergrad degree in the honors stage design program at UC-Irvine and then landed in Chicago, earning his MFA at Northwestern in 2017. This past year has been particularly



Photograph 51 © MICHAEL BROSILOW

notable, with his sets for Ike Holter's *Lottery Day* at the Goodman's Owen Theatre, *The Total Bent* with Haven Theatre at the Den, *Photograph 51* at Court, and *Something Clean* (a coproduction of Sideshow and Rivendell) at Victory Gardens' Richard Christiansen Theatre all catching my eye and approval.

He's designing two big shows opening this fall: *The Color Purple* at Drury Lane (directed by his frequent collaborator Lili-Anne Brown) and a new adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* at Writers Theatre. But no matter the size of the space or budget, the question Sancier asks at the start of every design process is "What does the audience need to experience?" Because if the audience doesn't care, then why are they here?"

Sancier's physical vocabulary evokes →

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*Something Clean*  
 JONATHAN L. GREEN

**continued from 31**

rich emotional timbres, often before we've heard a word of dialogue. For example, Selina Fillinger's *Something Clean* (clearly inspired by the Brock Turner case) anatomizes the broken world of a couple whose college-age son is in prison for raping a woman by a campus dumpster. In addition to figuring out how to fit a real dumpster on the small stage, Sancianco filled the rear wall with common household implements—a vacuum cleaner, a laundry basket—sliced in half and painted a sickly gray-white, suggesting a world bleached of wholeness and vibrancy.

For *Photograph 51*, he designed bookending spiral staircases that framed the gloomy lab where Rosalind Franklin, who helped discover the double helix structure of human DNA, labored in the shadow of her male colleagues. Sancianco notes that he couldn't find many images of Franklin's actual lab, and he knew he'd also have to design a set that could accommodate projections of Franklin's groundbreaking title discovery. But he and director Vanessa Stalling also decided that Franklin's world should suggest a series of interior windows through which she was constantly

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Something Clean © JONATHAN L. GREEN

being monitored by her peers. “We knew that this is a story about a marginalized person who is suddenly put into a position of power where every person around her is waiting for her to fail. I know exactly that feeling,” says Sancianco.

Marginalization and boundaries also figured into *Lottery Day*, the final chapter in Holter’s seven-play “Rightlynd Saga,” set in Chicago’s fictional 51st Ward. Sancianco created a facsimile of a new condo looming over the

backyard of the gentrifying ward’s matriarch. He also drew a map for the Goodman lobby display of the imaginary neighborhood.

As a transplant from San Diego, he’s found his own imaginative road map through Chicago theater in venues large and small.

“New York is the face of theater, but Chicago’s the soul,” Sancianco says. “Chicago’s where you get to the nitty-gritty and the painful and also the romantic and the beautiful.”

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The Garifuna Collective perform Sunday, September 22, in Humboldt Park as part of the Global Peace Picnic. © JEREMY LEWIS

The *Reader's* guide to  
**World Music Festival Chicago**

Its 18 free concerts, spread out over 17 venues, provide us with dozens of opportunities to get to know our neighbors better—both across the street and around the globe.



Ethiopian singer Mahmoud Ahmed (in white) performs at Pritzker Pavilion during the 2015 World Music Festival. © PATRICK L. PYSZKA

**T**he World Music Festival is Chicago's best music festival. You can enjoy it without dealing with tens of thousands of people at once, or being immobilized by a sweaty shoulder-to-shoulder crowd. The WMF lasts 17 days, so you won't miss it all if you get sick on the wrong weekend. When it presents music in a public park, it doesn't wall off the grounds—everyone is welcome. And many of the festival's 17 venues are clubs or concert halls, with all the amenities that implies. Every one of its shows is free.

No other event gives so many of Chicago's diverse populations the joy of a concert that says "home." The World Music Festival is full of reminders that our species developed music tens of thousands of years before written language.

Founded in 1999, the festival has been

shrinking since founder Michael Orlove and his staff were laid off in 2011. It declined from 52 shows to 41 in 2012, then dropped to 36 in 2014. This year it consists of just 18, down from 21 last year. But as the WMF has gotten smaller, it's also weaned itself of a disappointing dependence on local acts that Chicagoans can see year-round. In 2012, locals made up the majority of its bookings—an all-time high—but this year they're about one in seven.

That means the others have all traveled to be here—some from as far away as South Korea, Argentina, Armenia, or Niger. The most exciting artists include several who play fusions new and old: Congolese group Kokoko!, for instance, combine home-built guitars and scrapyard percussion with slick programmed beats, while venerable Peruvian band Los Wemblers de Iquitos simmer a brew of cumbia, surf rock, and 60s psychedelia

(they appear as part of a Millennium Park Latinx showcase called ¡Súbelo!, which can mean "enjoy!" or "turn it up!"). Other acts carry forward antique traditions more or less undiluted: they include many performers at Ragamala, the marathon of Indian classical music that opens the festival, and the Yandong Grand Singers, who specialize in the eerily gorgeous polyphonic "grand song" of the Dong minority in southwestern China.

Most notable in the latter category is Gamelan Çudamani, a thrilling, hypnotizing metallophone orchestra from the Indonesian island of Bali. The chance to see a Balinese gamelan in Chicago is a rare privilege—and offering a warm welcome to an ensemble from the world's most populous Muslim-majority country is also a fine way for our sanctuary city to give the finger to the white supremacists running the country.

Of course, the World Music Festival can't stop the federal government's campaign of cruelty against immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and Black and Brown people in general. But because the WMF encourages curiosity, empathy, and connection, it stands in symbolic opposition to a regime that positions nonwhite cultures as targets for fear, resentment, and hatred. When we invoke a "universal language," we sometimes mean music—and the rest of the time, we mean love.

—PHILIP MONTORO

**WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL CHICAGO**  
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Ragamala performer Saraswathi Ranganathan; Francisco Rosada Rosario of Pirulo y la Tribu; Los Wemblers de Iquitos ©PATRICK L. PYSZKA; CHARLIE BILLUPS; JOSHUA COGAN

## FRIDAY13

**RAGAMALA: A CELEBRATION OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC** Presented in collaboration with *People of Rhythm*. This event continues into the morning of Saturday, September 14. Fri 9/13, 6 PM-8 AM, Preston Bradley Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, all ages

If you've never seen Indian classical music performed live, you should—and Ragamala's 14 hours of performances are an ideal introduction. If you're already a fan, Ragamala will be a star-studded night to remember—and it'll give you the rare chance to hear ragas performed at the traditional hours for which they were written. You'll see a sea of hands moving in unison in the audience as they keep *tala*, making rhythmic gestures to count meter along with the musicians. Feel free to join in. Onstage, expect constant variation, exquisite detail, and dazzling speed. Most of the ragas to be performed are poems in conversation with gods, which will create a sacred vibe. Many of the players come from renowned musical families with long lineages, and they represent both of India's major traditions: the northern Hindustani, whose smooth, slow, stretched-out style seems to relish the spaces between notes, and the southern Carnatic, characterized by quick dancing melodies with lightning melisma. This long night's vibrant performances should provide magical moments of meditation and an ecstatic journey into dawn beneath the Cultural Center's stained-glass dome. —LESLIE ALLISON

**6-7:15 PM Josh Feinberg with Kunal Gunjal and Amit Kavthekar** Hindustani legend Amit Kavthekar plays *tabla*, a pair of tuned drums that sing surging vowels like a human voice, harmonize with each other, and mesh in stunning crescendos that blend into one long tone. The *tabla* player's fingers generate dense and evolving waterfalls of groove out of impossibly subtle movements. Kavthekar will accompany American sitarist Josh Feinberg, as will young Maharashtrian virtuoso Kunal Gunjal, who plays the *santoor*, a 100-string hammered dulcimer with a warm, bubbling, melodic sound.

**7:45-9 PM Akshara Music Ensemble** New York City's long-standing Akshara Music Ensemble, led

by Carnatic musician Bala Skandan (who plays the double-headed pitched barrel drum called the *mridangam*), shakes up the tradition. Skandan composes dynamic, creative new works based on the foundations of Indian classical music for a blend of Carnatic, Hindustani, and Western classical and folk instruments. Akshara's lineup for this set also includes violinists Arun Ramamurthy and Dave Eggar, hammered dulcimer player Max ZT, bansuri player Jay Gandhi, and *tabla* player Nitin Mitta, several of whom will perform in other Ragamala sets.

**9:30-10:45 PM Jay Gandhi and Nitin Mitta** With the sky outside now completely dark, the stage will clear for this duo of Akshara Music Ensemble members: New York-based Jay Gandhi (who plays the Hindustani bamboo flute or *bansuri*) and *tabla* icon Nitin Mitta, born in Hyderabad and now living in Rhode Island (he's also collaborated with visionary jazz pianist Vijay Iyer).

**11:15 PM-12:30 AM Prasanna, Bala Skandan, and Samyuktha Sreeram** When midnight arrives, it'll be greeted by the shredding of the trailblazing Prasanna, who adapts Carnatic music to the electric guitar. He's joined by New York-based *mridangam* player Bala Skandan of the Akshara Music Ensemble (see above) and by teenage American musician Samyuktha Sreeram, who's stunning on the ancient clay-pot percussion instrument called the *ghatam*.

**1-2:30 AM Nandkishor Muley and Ambi Subramaniam with Mahesh Krishnamurthy and Raj Deshmukh** Nandkishor "Nandu" Muley, from an established musical family in Gujarat, sustains the night's energy on *santoor*, collaborating with Carnatic violinist Ambi Subramaniam, *mridangam* player Mahesh Krishnamurthy, and *tabla* player Raj Deshmukh.

**3-4:30 AM Roopa Mahadevan, Rajna Swaminathan, and Arun Ramamurthy** This set is definitely worth staying up late to see. California native Roopa Mahadevan is a master Carnatic vocalist, with a voice praised throughout India and the U.S. for its strength, depth, and agility, as well as a trained *bharata natyam* dancer, with a generous,

magnetic stage presence. Her singing will be propelled by one of the few women *mridangam* players in Carnatic music, Rajna Swaminathan (also a composer), and her ever-evolving vocal line will intertwine with the violin of Carnatic and jazz performer Arun Ramamurthy, a member of the Akshara Music Ensemble (see above).

**4:45-6 PM Samarth Nagarkar with Amit Kavthekar and Ramachandra Joshi** Hindustani vocalist Samarth Nagarkar sings with harmonium player Ramachandra Joshi and the aforementioned Amit Kavthekar, who returns to bring the sun up with his *tabla*.

**6:15-8 AM Saraswathi Ranganathan with GS Rajan, Ravi Iyer, and Ganapathi Ranganathan** Ragamala's grand finale sends listeners off into the day with local hero and veena player Saraswathi Ranganathan. The veena is the ancient ancestor of the sitar, with a range similar to that of the cello and a timbre like a human singer or slide guitar. Ranganathan will collaborate with composer and Carnatic flutist GS Rajan, Philadelphia-based *ghatam* player Ravi Iyer, and her younger brother, Ganapathi Ranganathan, on *mridangam*.

## SATURDAY14

**ISÚBELO!—A CELEBRATION OF PAN LATIN MUSIC AND CULTURE WITH PIRULO Y LA TRIBU, LOS WEMBLER'S DE IQUITOS, AND CENTAVRYS** Sat 9/14, 3-7 PM, Jay Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph, all ages

**Pirulo y la Tribu** founder Francisco "Pirulo" Rosada Rosario is the son of Frankie Rosada, a Nuyorican flutist active in the city's salsa explosion of the early 70s. Within a few years, though, he'd settled in Puerto Rico, where Pirulo was born in 1977. Pirulo grew up in a subsection of San Juan's Oriente barrio called San José, where he began studying bass, oboe, and percussion at age ten; by 17 he'd started backing Puerto Rican musicians such as Giovanni Hidalgo, a jazz *conguero* who'd played with Dizzy Gillespie. In the 2000s he worked as a session

musician for influential reggaeton label White Lion Records, playing with stars such as Noriega and Tego Calderón—and Calderón hired him as a studio and concert drummer. Before Pirulo left that job in 2012, he'd begun to find success as a producer and musical director in his own right. He formed Pirulo y la Tribu by gathering a group of musicians who could combine gritty bomba rhythms, the call-and-response structure of Cuban son, and the vivid brass charts of Nuyorican salsa with a bit of hip-hop bombast. Pirulo y la Tribu play tight but stay loose enough to pull in unexpected sounds: on "Sabe Como E" (from their second album, 2017's *Calle Linda 2*), they open up a salsa groove to introduce a swinging, computerized reggaeton *rid-dim*. —LEOR GALIL

In May, state-run company Petroperu ceased delivery of crude to a refinery in Iquitos, Peru, after locals seized control of tanks at an oil-storage facility in the area. Reuters reported at the time that the region had seen "more than a dozen oil spills from Petroperu's pipeline in recent years." Tangled in the rain forest and set along the Amazon River in far northeastern Peru, the village of Iquitos is also home to **Los Wemblers de Iquitos**, an ensemble founded by Solomon Sanchez and his sons in 1968. Despite their distance from a major city, the band flourished during the 1970s, issuing a long string of LPs that infused *cumbia* (originally a folkloric Colombian dance style, characterized by a sort of on-the-one shuffle propelled by polyrhythms) with lysergic guitars and personalized flourishes drawn from life along the river. Los Wemblers worked to localize *cumbia*—they called their music "Cumbia Amazonica" or *chicha*—and on tunes such as "La Danza del Petrolero" they focused on the region's fractious relationship with the oil industry, which provides the potential for economic growth as well as for ecological disaster. Following Sanchez's death four decades ago, the band all but ceased recording. The musical brothers kept gigging locally, but it wasn't until old material by Los Wemblers appeared on the 2007 compilation *The Roots of Chicha: Psychedelic Cumbias From Peru* that they resuscitated their international career. The disc opens with a Los Wemblers tune performed by another group, and a few tracks later "Petrolero" kicks in—a sinuous dance cut equally indebted to the Ventures' tuneful surf, Peruvian and Colombian popular music, and pretty much all of early psychedelia. Beginning in 2016, a



Centavrvs; Lucibela; Girma Bèyènè (in the hat) with the band Akalé Wubé  AIX PERALTA; ALEX TOME; CYRIL FUSSIEEN

few new recordings followed, and on the brand-new long-player *Visión del Ayahuasca*, the 50-year-old band still reel off uncannily danceable numbers that touch on a surfeit of sadness and the capriciousness of love—all the while declaring “Los Wemblers para el mundo.” —**DAVE CANTOR**

**Centavrvs** consider what they play to be rock—they’re based in Mexico City, and as front man Demián Gálvez explained to Remezcla last year, Mexican audiences tend to classify any band that doesn’t make pop or regional music as rock. “Sometimes we play at world music festivals, especially in the U.S.,” he said. “But here we play at rock festivals.” The four-piece band are part of a World Music Festival lineup dedicated to Latinx music, but they could’ve just as easily visited Chicago to play Pitchfork or Riot Fest. They also push conventional definitions of rock, as a great band should: their second album, last year’s *Somos Uno*, combined an electrified take on Mexican rock with a message of unity. The title translates to “we are one,” but sonically Centavrvs are at least several: any given solo might be on guitar, synth, or trombone, and the songs draw from Latin genres such as salsa and cumbia, themselves born from musical mixing (the name “salsa,” after all, alludes to combining different ingredients to make a “sauce”). Like those genres, Centavrvs’s music calls for dancing, which is one way to honor the history the band draw from. They’re not trying to account for all of Mexican music, of course—it’s too diverse to tackle with just one project—but what they do know makes for a great ride. Centavrvs member Alan Santos summed it up for Remezcla in that same story: “We can’t say we sound like Mexico, we don’t,” he said. “It sounds like my Mexico, like Demián’s Mexico, like Paco’s and Rayo’s.” —**JUSTIN CURTO**

**LUCIBELA, GIRMA BÈYÈNÈ & AKALÉ WUBÉ**  
Sat 9/14, 7 PM (doors at 6 PM), the Promontory,  
5311 S. Lake Park Ave. West, 21+

**Lucibela** is technically a millennial, having been born in 1986, but you’d be hard-pressed to guess that from her sophisticated, been-through-many-lifetimes voice. The Cape Verdean singer has a tone that channels her late countrywoman Cesária Évora, a beloved ambassador of morna music, and she has acknowledged the lineage: on her website she says

that she wants to “carry on the work that Cesária began.” Her music is a gentle amalgam of several styles found either in her native islands or in Brazil—especially bossa nova, morna, and another Cape Verdean genre called *coladêra*, a relatively lively descendant of morna whose bright, fun songs often engage in light social satire. She seems to shine more on material that invokes the latter, including “Mi E Dode Na Bô Cabo Verde,” a shuffling tribute to the islands (with lyrics partly in Cape Verdean creole) from her 2018 debut album, *Laço Umbilical*. Lucibela has toured internationally since moving to Lisbon in 2012, but she began her career straight out of high school in the mid-2000s, singing at tourist hotels in the islands, where she learned to reinterpret bossa and jazz standards with her own Afro-Caribbean flavor. Her live shows are an extension of the lounge vibe she learned on those jobs, and she’s usually accompanied by an acoustic four-piece that keeps it mellow. —**SALEM COLLO-JULIN**

Ethiopian singer, pianist, and arranger **Girma Bèyènè** would probably never have teamed up with French band **Akalé Wubé** if it weren’t for *Éthiopiennes*. The celebrated compilation series, launched by French label Buda Musique in 1997, has introduced many Western listeners to the lively, flamboyant sounds of the Ethiopian golden age of the ‘60s and ‘70s, when a generation of musicians fused jazz, funk, soul, and pop with traditional Ethiopian rhythms, modes, and melodies. The eighth volume of *Éthiopiennes*, a various-artists album subtitled *Swinging Addis*, opens with the B side from a 1969 single Bèyènè released via Ethiopian label Amha, “Ene Negne By Manesh,” where sweltering horns swing with a loose, funky lounge keyboard. Bèyènè released just a few singles under his own name, finding more success with the Alem-Girma Band, which he founded in 1972 with Alemayehu Eshete, a vocalist sometimes called the Ethiopian Elvis (and the focus of *Éthiopiennes* volumes nine and 22). Much of Bèyènè’s work during the “Swinging Addis” era was in support roles, where the spotlight didn’t fall on him: he arranged more than 60 songs and collaborated on at least two dozen more. After an army coup early in 1974, which led to the establishment of a military dictatorship, the government began requiring all recorded songs to be submitted for approval prior to release. Much worse was on the way, and soon the country was wracked by forced resettlement programs, extrajudicial exe-

cutions, and deadly famines. Bèyènè found a way to escape: he went on tour with the Walias band in 1981, when it became the first modern Ethiopian ensemble to visit the U.S., and he defected instead of returning home, settling in Washington, D.C. He disappeared from the public eye for more than 25 years, but reemerged in 2008 when the seventh annual Ethiopian Music Festival, organized in part as a tribute to Bèyènè, invited him to perform. He moved back to Addis Ababa, and eventually young French band Akalé Wubé, which had started out covering *Éthiopiennes* tracks, coaxed him into the studio for what became the 30th volume in the beloved series, 2017’s *Mistakes on Purpose*. Bèyènè’s worn but gentle voice fits right in with the group’s smoky melodies and tight grooves. —**LEOR GALIL**

## SUNDAY 15

**GIRMA BÈYÈNÈ & AKALÉ WUBÉ, KAHIL EL’ZABAR ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE**

Sun 9/15, 7 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, 21+  
See Saturday, September 14, for Girma Bèyènè & Akalé Wubé. . . . .

At age 65, Chicago percussionist and composer **Kahil El’Zabar** is growing into his role as jazz elder. He joined the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians at 18, about six years after its founding in 1965; ten years later he became its chairman, a position he held till 1980. He’s served as a sideman for jazz icons such as Pharoah Sanders, Dizzy Gillespie, and Archie Shepp, but since the 1970s El’Zabar’s main musical concerns have been two bands of his own: the Ritual Trio and the **Ethnic Heritage Ensemble**, both of which have passed through many lineups over the decades. He’s stayed active in a variety of creative fields, and has devoted much of his energy to educating, promoting, and booking other artists. He worked as an associate arts professor at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln from 1987 till 1999, then at the University of Illinois at Chicago till 2004; his first book of poetry, *Mis Taken Brilliance*, came out in 1993 via Third World Press, the largest independent Black publisher in the States. In 1996, El’Zabar launched Traffic, an interdisciplinary performance series at Steppenwolf Theatre that he ran for almost four years; in 1998, he

became a partner in and artistic director for Loop-based jazz club Rituals. He also makes clothing, and his bandmates all wear his Afrocentric garb—as did Nina Simone, who hired him as a sideman and then discovered his talents as a designer. Outside jazz, though, El’Zabar remains a marginal figure, which inspired writer-director Dwayne Johnson-Cochran, a childhood friend of his, to ask why via the 2014 documentary *Be Known*—which includes the hushed “Wish I Knew” from the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble’s latest album, May’s *Be Known: Ancient/Future/Music* (Spiritmuse). Joined by Ian Maksin (cello), Alex Harding (baritone sax), and Corey Wilkes (trumpet, percussion), El’Zabar explores the meditative nuances of spiritual jazz; when his voice leaps from a tender murmur to a possessed growl on “Lost in Myself,” the whole band jumps with him.

—**LEOR GALIL**

## WEDNESDAY 18

**ENGLEWOOD/SOWETO EXCHANGE, JEREMY DUTCHER** Wed 9/18, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, all ages

The **Englewood/Soweto Exchange** is a joint endeavor of Chicago’s Old Town School of Folk Music and the Wits School of Arts at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. It creates a platform for young musicians from the township of Soweto and the neighborhood of Englewood to develop a songbook that articulates their shared experiences of city living, and to perform their work in the northern and southern hemispheres. Chicago saxophonist Ernest Dawkins, the Exchange’s musical director, has been bridging South African and North American jazz since 1999, when he first collaborated with reedist Zim Ngqawana. In videos of the Exchange’s recent performances in South Africa, Dawkins flexes his jazz muscle in exuberant exchanges with trumpeter Thabo Sikhakhane; with any luck this concert will also feature Sikhakhane’s forceful tone and patient postbop phrasing. The Exchange isn’t really a jazz group, though: in another video, Chicago rapper Artemis and African singer Keo Kolwane find common ground by exchanging self-affirmations over the smooth soul-gospel keyboards of local jazz 



Kahil El'Zabar of the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble; the Englewood/Soweto Exchange; Jeremy Dutcher © SHELDON (SHELLY) LEVY; ANDILE SIPHAMANDLE; MATT BARNES

► pianist Alexis Lombre. Though the Exchange plans to release a recording someday, for now the only way you can hear these musicians put it together is in concert. The group will also perform Saturday, September 21, at 2:55 PM as part of the free Englewood Jazz Festival in Hamilton Park, 513 W. 72nd. —**BILL MEYER**

Singer and ethnomusicologist **Jeremy Dutcher**, based in Toronto, belongs to the Wolastoqiyik people of Canada's First Nations, specifically the Tobique Reserve. His self-released debut, *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa* ("The Songs of the People of the Beautiful River"), places the swoops and glides of his powerful operatic tenor in dialogue with the songs and stories of his elders, recorded on wax cylinders in 1907. Those antique recordings had languished, forgotten in a museum, until Dutcher's mentor, Passamaquoddy song carrier Maggie Paul, recommended he seek them out. In attempting to learn the old songs, Dutcher began to compose pieces that interwove his voice with those of the elders and supported both with his piano playing—and the resulting album won the 2018 Polaris Music Prize, a 2019 Juno Award, and many other accolades. Dutcher will perform these breathtakingly beautiful pieces here in a solo setting, accompanying his charismatic singing on piano. The counterpoint he's written illuminates the artistry of the ancient songs, fulfilling Dutcher's aim (explained in an NPR Music interview) of placing First Nations music on the same level as European "high art." Dutcher identifies as queer, and his activism extends to that part of his identity as well—he's become a spokesperson for an indigenous futurism that foregrounds First Nations perspectives, including their regard for "two-spirit" people such as himself (the term refers to a wide variety of traditional, ceremonial "third gender" roles in indigenous American cultures). His songs also help preserve the nearly extinct language of his people—fewer than 100 native speakers of Wolastoq survive. —**CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON**

## THURSDAY19

**JEREMY DUTCHER** *Thu 9/19, 7 PM, American Indian Center, 3401 W. Ainslie, all ages*  
See **Wednesday, September 18**. . . . .

**LANKUM, YANDONG GRAND SINGERS OF CHINA** *Thu 9/19, 7 PM, Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th, all ages*

You don't have to dig too deeply into the Irish folk canon to find tales of destruction, riots, and love triangles that end violently, and fortunately **Lankum** embrace the eeriest and most disturbing aspects of this legacy. Lankum are a four-piece traditional Irish group who got their start in 2012 playing punk squats and dive bars around Dublin, and as they've moved to bigger halls they've retained their grit. On 2017's *Between the Earth and Sky* (Rough Trade), they play a mix of original tunes and traditional material such as "Sergeant William Bailey," an anti-enlistment song written during the 1916 Easter Rising that depicts the slow, lonely, self-inflicted demise of a despised army recruiter. Lankum's sound sometimes recalls that of Fairport Convention, with beautiful vocal harmonies by all four members. Singer, uilleann piper, and tin whistle player Ian Lynch and his guitarist brother Daragh (who gave Lankum their original name, Lynched), are joined by singer and harmonium player Radie Peat, who sings like Sandy Denny, and violinist and violist Cormac Mac Diarmada. They changed the band's name in 2016, sending around a press release that made plain their intentions: "We will not continue to work under our current name while the systemic persecution and murder of black people in the USA continues." The band's current name comes from the Irish Traveller ballad "False Lankum," a cautionary tale about a child murderer, and the Lankum original "The Granite Gaze" maintains this tradition of mining horror for wisdom with its moving lyrics: "We are the ones left behind / In swaddling bound with baling twine / They stole the marrow from our very bones / And we in turn, turned on our own." —**SALEM COLLO-JULIN**

Rooted group melodies split into eerie harmonies and then recede into unison. Catchy phrases engage in polyphonic darting and hocketing. Shim-

mering long chords drone and waver. Freely flowing rhythms resolve into steady, driving patterns. A lone voice erupts in bold, joyous elaborations. These are the sounds of "grand song," a folk-singing tradition that has shaped and sustained the lives of farmers in southwestern China for centuries. Choirs in each village of the Dong ethnic minority typically perform grand song at the drum tower (the hub of local social life) or informally in the home, and the singers pass down this tradition to their children or disciples. Grand song requires no conductor and no instruments. It's used to transmit history and culture, because the Dong do not have a written language of their own. The **Yandong Grand Singers**, composed of women and men from farming families from southwestern China, perform music that resounds with Dong ancestral voices but also strikes sparks with contemporary listeners around the world. The singers are represented by Michigan-based international-music agency Alma Artist Booking, and they've performed at festivals throughout China and in Germany and Japan. The Yandong Grand Singers' performances include exuberant theatricality and humor as well as moments of quiet reflection, and some of their material—"Cicada Song," "The Swallows Are Back"—calls to life the natural soundscapes of their native Yandong township. Other songs address love, relationships, or the interconnectedness between people and the environment. Grand song is not just beautiful music but also an encyclopedia maintained by oral tradition, and in 2019 UNESCO officially proclaimed it an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. —**LESLIE ALLISON**

## FRIDAY20

**MABANG!, YANDONG GRAND SINGERS OF CHINA** *Fri 9/20, 5 PM, Ping Tom Memorial Park, 300 W. 19th, all ages*

**Mabang!** often look the part of a Chinese folk-music group: their instruments include bamboo flute, *suona* (a piercing double-reed horn), *erhu* (a two-string violin), and *saxian* (a fretless three-string lute). And many of their songs begin with just that flute, perhaps, or some light strings. But then the drums and electric guitar kick in, the volume jumps up, and it becomes suddenly clear that you're listening to something else: Mabang! fuse southern Chi-

nese traditional music, rock, reggae, and more. The band's five members come from Guangxi, a mountainous region bordering Vietnam, and front man Hong'gang Ye sings in the Mandarin dialect Guiluhua, rooted in the area. Known as a cultural melting pot, Guangxi is home to the highest concentration of China's largest ethnic minority, the Zhuang, and is influenced heavily by Cantonese culture from bordering Guangdong. The group's most recent full-length release, whose title translates to *Breaking Out*, is a 2018 reworking of a self-titled album from a few years prior—cut down and rearranged, with a few new songs. After seven tracks of lively backbeats, reggae guitar rhythms, arena-size choruses, echoing dub excursions, and deftly lyrical solos on the group's various folkloric instruments, *Breaking Out* ends on a lighters-up ballad: on "I Understand," Ye is accompanied only by meandering, meditative acoustic guitar and a mixed chorus of backup singers, his soaring vocals cracking with passion. It's a beautiful way for Mabang! to point out that they can connect with audiences even without the kaleidoscopic genre fusion that makes their music stand out. —**JUSTIN CURTO**

See **Thursday, September 19, for the Yandong Grand Singers of China**. . . . .

**LANKUM** *Fri 9/20, 7 PM, Irish American Heritage Center, 4626 N. Knox, all ages*  
See **Thursday, September 19**. . . . .

## SATURDAY21

**MABANG!** *Sat 9/21, 7 PM, Mary Patricia Gannon Concert Hall, Holtschneider Performance Center, DePaul University, 2330 N. Halsted, all ages*  
See **Friday, September 20**. . . . .

**IKEBE SHAKEDOWN, ANA EWERLING**  
*Sat 9/21, 8 PM, Martyrs', 3855 N. Lincoln, 21+*

**Ikebe Shakedown** fuse funk, soul, Afrobeat, disco, scores to movie westerns, and more into sleek, horn-driven grooves. The foundation of the seven-piece instrumental band was laid at Bard College in Red Hook, New York, where several members





Lankum; the Yandong Grand Singers of China; Mabang! COURTESY THE ARTIST; COURTESY ALMA ARTIST BOOKING; POLLUX MUSIC OFFICIAL

met as students, and the full lineup took shape in 2008 after they relocated to Brooklyn. The airy, joyous energy of the band's music makes it feel like a sunset drive down a winding west-coast highway, far from the oppressive grind of the big city (which might be part of why the group has become a favorite at outdoor festivals such as Bonnaroo and Austin City Limits). Ikebe Shakedown recently released the full-length *Kings Left Behind* (Colemine), recorded at Brooklyn studio Hive Mind, which is partially owned by two Shakedown members, bassist Vince Chiarito and saxophonist Michael Buckley. The studio has given the band space to collaborate and experiment over the past couple years, and its casual creative environment has served them well: every member of the group contributed to the writing process for *Kings Left Behind*, shaping something fresh and fun in a subgenre fraught with retro re-creations. —JAMIE LUDWIG

Born in Chisinau, Moldova, in 1987, **Ana Ewerling** (formerly Muntaneau) began studying music at age seven—including solfège, piano, and jazz performance—and moved to Chicago in 2010. For the past four or five years, she's been involved in a series of local musical projects, including self-described "global dance music" band Beats y Bateria. Ewerling sings in Portuguese, Spanish, and English as well as her native Moldovan, but for this show she'll collaborate with Chicago pianist and arranger Patrick Donley on a set of predominantly Moldovan music scored for quintet—the vocals and piano will be accompanied by guitar, violin, *kaval* (a Romanian flute), and percussion. That's not to say the performances will be traditional or folkloric, however: though the material Ewerling has chosen from her homeland includes what she characterizes as peasant songs, she and her ensemble will treat it as jazz, adding touches from bossa nova, fado, and Balkan dance music. Blessed with a potent, crystalline voice and a striking stage presence, Ewerling delivers her unusual fusion with the utmost delicacy and elegance. —CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON

**AFROTRONIX, KOKOKO!** *With video mixing by Giroscopio. Sat 9/21, 9 PM, Chop Shop, 2033 W. North, 21+*

Before Chadian guitarist, vocalist, and producer Caleb Rimtobaye launched Afrofuturist dance

project **Afrotronix** in 2014, he'd spent the bulk of his career in the band H'Sao, formed in Montreal in 2001 with a couple brothers and a childhood friend from their hometown of N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. H'Sao foregrounds the harmonies of their massed voices, blending in popular Western genres such as R&B, gospel, and blues, but Rimtobaye was eager to find a new idiom—partly because the public pigeonholed H'Sao's work. "H'Sao was perceived as *world music*," he told Teller Report in January. "I wanted to make music less community and more universal." Afrotronix is his vehicle for exploring electronic music outside the group: he's brought together the sweltering guitar of Tuareg blues, the melismatic melodies of Senegalese mbalax, the spry polyrhythms of Afropop, and the ground-shaking beats of EDM. On 2017's *Nomadix* (Productions Sia), Rimtobaye makes sparing use of the blaring bass and power-up synths of stadium-ready modern dance music, mostly relying on the half dozen other genres that inform his animated production. He delivers his euphoric vocals mostly in one of the dozen languages of the Sara people, and he's got positivity for days. Drummer Lionel Kizaba reinforces Afrotronix's muscular dance rhythms for live performances, where Rimtobaye consistently wears a large white helmet that looks like a cross between a chambered nautilus and a Slinky—he says it's a futuristic version of the mask that Sara boys wear during the male initiation ceremony called *yondo*. As he told OkayAfrica in 2016, the headgear helps him focus on his music onstage (probably because it restricts his peripheral vision), and in turn that focus benefits his fans—he clearly wants every person in the crowd to spend the entire show dancing. —LEOR GALIL

Congolese popular music has been dominated by imported Cuban rumba for decades now. But an alternative tradition of gritty electronica has thrived as well, stretching back to Bony Bikaye's new age clatter in the 80s and most famously exemplified by Konono No. 1's blaring "congotronics." Kinshasa band **Kokoko!** belong to this scruffy parallel lineage, creating a jarringly novel sound out of home-built guitars, old synths, and percussion instruments made from recycled plastic bottles, barrels, and scrap metal. Much as Bikaye teamed up with French composer Hector Zazou and Konono No. 1 partnered with Belgian label Crammed Discs, Kokoko! have benefited from European connections: one of

their members is French electronic musician Xavier Thomas, aka Débruit. The resulting synthesis of DIY bricolage and up-to-date tech on Kokoko!'s 2019 debut, *Fongola* (Royal Mountain), makes for scratchy, raw, cosmopolitan dance music, primed for international consumption but retaining a scruffy grassroots vibe. On "Azo Toke," lead vocalist Love Lokombe sing-shouts "Ko ko ko!" halfway between a rap and a chant, while on "L.O.V.E." the harsh one-string guitar of Dido Oweke seesaws over a junkyard full of wheezing and clattering while a chorus of female guest singers (or just one, heavily processed) repeats the title of the song, creating a distinctively Congolese take on the Shangri-La's' girl-group garage. The mix of smooth grooves and rusted, serrated beats is weirdly accessible and accessibly weird—a soundtrack for a hole-in-the-wall party with guests from everywhere. —NOAH BERLATSKY

## SUNDAY22

**GLOBAL PEACE PICNIC WITH THE GARIFUNA COLLECTIVE, KOKOKO!, AND HERMÁN OLIVERA Y SU ORQUESTA** *Sun 9/22, 2-6 PM, Humboldt Park Boathouse, 1301 N. Sacramento, all ages*

The Garifuna people trace their origins to the early 1600s, when two slave ships sank near the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent and the surviving West Africans assimilated with the local Caribs and Arawaks. Today the Garifuna primarily live in coastal communities in Central America, though a significant population has immigrated to the United States. Their total number is only around 600,000, and as a consequence many people don't know they exist. The **Garifuna Collective** aim to change that. A multigenerational ensemble founded in the late 90s by Belizean musician Andy Palacio, they've toured widely enough to bring the culture and sounds of the Garifuna people to more than 30 countries. Their 2007 debut album, *Wátina*, gave its gently percolating Garifuna rhythms, delicate guitars, and soulful, understated songwriting a contemporary feel with gorgeous studio production; it became a breakthrough success, earning Palacio the 2007 WOMEX award (along with *Wátina* producer Ivan Duran). Palacio died at age 47 in 2008 from stroke and heart attack, but the Garifuna

Collective have continued his mission, touring and releasing material that draws from traditional songs and modern sensibilities—including 2013's breathtaking tribute to Palacio, *Ayó*. Where that album is contemplative in tone, the brand-new *Aban* feels more celebratory and lighthearted. Focusing on the unity and resilience of the Garifuna people over time, it combines an even deeper dive into tradition with elements of dub and stripped-down electronics. The collective sing in the Garifuna language (spoken by fewer than 200,000 people), but you don't have to understand it to absorb their passion. —JAMIE LUDWIG

**See Saturday, September 21, for Kokoko!** ⋯

Born in 1959 in Newark, New Jersey, to parents of the Puerto Rican diaspora, **Hermán Olivera** quickly made a name for himself in the New York salsa scene of the 1980s. His gift for vocal improvisation enlivened several essential hits by the famous Conjunto Libre, co-led by percussionist Manny Oquendo—including the smokily sensuous mid-tempo "Decidete" and the barn burner "Elena Elena," where Olivera's brash, rapid-fire singing functions almost as another brass instrument. He went on to record with most of the big names in the genre, including Johnny Pacheco and Ray Barretto. In recent years he's been the lead for the legendary Eddie Palmieri's band, where he negotiates the progressive arrangements as effortlessly as he handles traditional material. Olivera has mostly recorded with other bandleaders, but he finally released an album under his own name in 2014: *La Voz del Caribe* (Salsaneo) is about what you'd expect from a veteran professional, which is to say it's a crash course in salsa. The title track in particular is an impressive showcase, with Olivera's polished vocals riding a sashaying groove. In live performance, Olivera's voice has lost a bit of its old razor sharpness, but he can still pack a lot of quivering emotion into a phrase and slide his way around a melody with ingenuity and soul. —NOAH BERLATSKY



Ikebe Shakedown; Kokoko!; Les Filles de Illighadad © ABIGAIL GILLARDI; COURTESY THE ARTIST; COURTESY POWERLINE AGENCY

## → WEDNESDAY 25

**HAITIANDANSCO, GURDJIEFF ENSEMBLE**  
Wed 9/25, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, all ages

Haiti is by far the most populous country in the Caribbean with a dominant French cultural influence, but that's not the only thing that makes it unusual in the region: its deeply rooted African religious influence is more Dahomey than Yoruba, which in large part accounts for the differences between Vodou and closely related faiths such as Santería and Candomblé. Cultural and religious traditions shaped by the African diaspora, whether in New Orleans, Puerto Rico, Brazil, or elsewhere, all give music and dance a central place in the worship of the sacred, and none of the dances is purely secular. The founder of this group, Dieufel Lamisere, a native of Port-au-Prince, has studied dance in many forms, among them jazz, modern, and ballet. His current ensemble, **HaitianDansCo**, combines those influences with folkloric and traditional dance, and has presented Haitian culture all over the Americas. The company is part of a larger organization called Dance to Save Lives, which teaches Haitian youth, raises money for infrastructure and education, and offers food, shelter, and career opportunities to young dancers in need. —**MONICA KENDRICK**

In 2008 Lebanese-born Armenian pianist and composer Levon Eskenian launched the **Gurdjieff Ensemble** to create “ethnographically authentic” arrangements of his country’s folk music. Eskenian filled its ten-piece lineup with virtuosos on traditional Armenian and Middle Eastern folk instruments, including the *duduk* (a double reed made from apricot wood, with a full, slightly nasal tone), the *kamancheh* (a bowed stringed instrument of Iranian origin, also called the spike fiddle, whose sharp, grainy sound can cut through dense arrangements), and the *santur* (a hammered dulcimer widespread in the Middle East and western Asia, which can pack dozens of pinprick notes into a couple seconds). Eskenian took the ensemble’s name from the 20th-century Armenian author, mystic, and composer G.I. Gurdjieff, who spent two decades traveling through the Middle East, central Asia, and northern Africa studying folk music. Gurdjieff owes much of his legacy to his collaboration with Russian compos-

er Thomas de Hartmann from 1924 to 1927: he dictated roughly 300 compositions based on that folk music to de Hartmann, who transcribed them in Western notation. Eskenian and company wanted to reintroduce the sounds that inspired Gurdjieff via a modern interpretation of his work, which resulted in the 2011 album *Music of Georges I. Gurdjieff* (ECM). For their next project, the Gurdjieff Ensemble honored another giant of Armenian folk music: priest, scholar, ethnomusicologist, and composer Soghomon Soghomonian, better known as Komitas. He first studied music in the 1880s at the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, the heart of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and became an expert in *khaz*, the notation system used in Armenian religious music. He also translated thousands of folk songs into Western notation, though his work all but ended with the profound trauma he suffered during the Armenian genocide in 1915. The state-owned college of music in the Armenian capital, Yerevan, is named after him—the Komitas State Conservatory is where Eskenian earned his master’s degree in piano. The Gurdjieff Ensemble’s smoldering, somber 2015 album, *Komitas* (ECM), brings detail, patience, and nuance to already powerful traditional sounds, amplifying their emotional resonance. —**LEOR GALIL**

## THURSDAY 26

**LES FILLES DE ILLIGHADAD, KIM SO RA**  
Thu 9/26, 7 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, 21+

To Western listeners unfamiliar with the music of Niger and the Sahel, **Les Filles de Illighadad** may sound like traditional performers. In fact, they’re adventurous innovators. The band’s cofounder, Fatou Seidi Ghali of the village of Illighadad, is one of only two professional female guitarists in Niger. She picked the instrument up from her brother around eight years ago, and by practicing in secret she taught herself to play in the dreamy, bluesy Tuareg style made famous by artists such as Tinariwen and Mdou Moctar. Half of her first album, the 2016 Sahel Sounds release *Les Filles de Illighadad* (“The Girls of Illighadad”), consists of intricate, liquid acoustic performances with her cousin, vocalist Alamoun Akrouni. The other half is a rousing 18-minute *tende* party—“*tende*” here referring to a

traditional goat-skin drum and the accompanying group dance, performed by young girls at court- ing rituals (or just for fun). *Tende* parties include yodeling chants and, judging by this recording, a lot of delighted laughter and mutual encouragement. Les Filles de Illighadad’s second album, 2017’s *Eghass Malan* (Sahel Sounds), is full of songs that combine the two styles. Ghali switches to electric guitar, which she plays over *tende*, hand claps, and background harmonies provided by Akrouni and a third woman (unfortunately unidentified in publicity materials). The result is a joyfully meditative celebration whose mood drifts between the poles of blissed-out psychedelic trance and rambunctious block party—it sticks closer to the first on the title song, and pushes toward the second on the rhythmically intense “Jori.” This Chicago concert by Les Filles de Illighadad is a rare chance to see one of the most quietly cutting-edge performers on the globe. —**NOAH BERLATSKY**

**Kim So Ra** plays the *janggu*, an hourglass-shaped drum that’s been part of Korean music for more than a thousand years. Played with bare hands, with sticks, or with one of each, it’s constructed with opposing heads so that it can simultaneously produce different pitches; in some settings, a drummer will also dance to encourage listeners to get on their feet and do the same. Kim is an officially designated ambassador of Korean folk music, but she’s not a rigid preservationist. During a visit to Chicago in 2014, she collaborated in turn with a group of dancers (as part of Links Hall’s Collision Theory series), classical guitarist Tim Johnson, jazz saxophonist Jeff Chan, and experimental rock trio Kwaidan—and no matter the setting, she found ways to assert the intensity of her alternately stark and frenetic playing. This time, though, Kim will present a set of relatively traditional material called “A Sign of Rain,” which shares its name with her most recent album. She’ll be accompanied by Lee Hye Joon on *piri* (a bamboo double-reed instrument similar to the oboe), Lim Ji Hye on *kayagum* (a zither related to the guzheng and koto), and fellow drummer Hyun Seung Hun, but the program also provides plenty of room for Kim’s rousing solo playing. —**BILL MEYER**

## FRIDAY 27

**GAMELAN ÇUDAMANI** Tickets required for entry; reservations encouraged via [harristheaterchicago.org](http://harristheaterchicago.org). Walk-up tickets available only on a first-come, first-served basis. Fri 9/27, 6 PM, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph, all ages

American international-music festivals have been criticized for their reliance on what *Reader* critic Peter Margasak has called “pan-stylistic performers whose sound rarely suggests anything more specific than ‘world music.’” This strategy is encouraged by issues of cost and accessibility—artists advancing specific, rooted traditions in other parts of the world are often more difficult and expensive to book than stateside acts pushing vague, crowd-pleasing fusions. Those issues are especially salient with gamelan music, which originated on the Indonesian island of Bali: it’s played by large ensembles using heavy, idiosyncratically tuned metallophones, gongs, and other percussive instruments and often accompanied by elaborately costumed dancers, so the logistical challenges of touring are formidable. Because many major American cities and college towns have at least one homegrown gamelan ensemble, it can be hard for organizers to justify the immense expense of bringing over a group from Indonesia. Fortunately this year Chicago’s World Music Festival has secured a singular Balian company, **Gamelan Çudamani**, by serving as an anchor for its U.S. tour and encouraging other stateside presenters to book it as well. Founded in 1997 and based in the village of Pengosekan, Gamelan Çudamani has distinguished itself from the many Balian gamelan troupes that exist mainly to entertain tourists: it’s a nonprofit organization that emphasizes the continuity between traditional culture and contemporary artistic practice. Çudamani has commissioned the manufacture of special instruments with a wider-than-usual pitch range, which allows it to play older compositions as well as contemporary pieces from around Bali, and it stores an extra set in Los Angeles to cut down on shipping costs. Many of the 19 current ensemble members grew up being taught by older members in community-based schools, and they’ve learned not only a virtuosic command of their instruments but also a light-handed dynamism that makes their perfor- ➤

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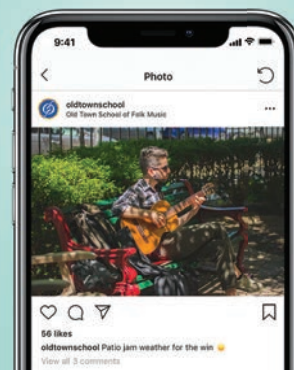


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Kim So Ra (at far right) and her ensemble; a dancer with Gamelan Çudamani; Chief Boima  COURTESY SORI; OSCAR SMITH; COURTESY THE ARTIST

► mances especially thrilling. Çudamani has just released its fourth album, *Bhumi*, through the non-profit Foundation for World Arts. —BILL MEYER

## SATURDAY28

**THOMAS MAPFUMO & THE BLACKS UNLIMITED, ALSARAH & THE NUBATONES, FUNKADESI, CHIEF BOIMA** Sat 9/28, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 2047 N. Milwaukee, 21+

Born in 1945, **Thomas Mapfumo** began his musical career singing covers of American rock and soul tunes in nightclubs around Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe (during those years, the country was called Rhodesia or Southern Rhodesia, and it was embroiled in a long transition away from British colonial rule). In the early 1970s, Mapfumo made a choice that would help transform the future of his country: he began playing original material that drew upon his roots, singing in Shona rather than English and setting his words to cycling, single-string figures that transposed melodies traditionally played on *mbira* (thumb piano) onto electric guitar. He dubbed his style *chimurenga* music (after the Shona word for a liberation struggle), and his metaphorical lyrics protested the white-dominated power structure. Mapfumo attained such popularity and authority that the colonial government attempted to ban his more confrontational songs and in 1979 jailed him without charge—though after three months of popular demonstrations in his support, the regime was forced to let him go. After Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, Mapfumo fixed his criticism upon Robert Mugabe's new government and its growing corruption. Unfortunately, Mugabe proved a more formidable and intractable foe (he ruled the country till his ouster in 2017), and “the Lion of Zimbabwe” went into exile in the late 1990s, eventually settling in Eugene, Oregon. Mapfumo wouldn't return to his homeland till 2018, when he visited for the first of a series of concerts, and he's still based in the United States. Though he's open to input from American sources—in 2000 he made a record with improvisers Wadada Leo Smith and Henry Kaiser, and in 2015 he jammed with Chicago blues harmonica player Billy Branch at Rosa's Lounge—he continues to sing mostly in Shona and call out the pow-

ers that be in music patterned after the sounds he heard growing up in the Zimbabwean countryside. —BILL MEYER

Born in 1982 to human-rights-activist parents in Khartoum, Sarah Mohamed Abunama Elgadi was forced to flee Sudan with her family during a 1989 military coup, and spent a few years in Yemen before civil war there prompted them to relocate to the United States in the mid-90s. She went on to study ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University, and after graduating in 2004 made her way to Brooklyn to pursue a career in music. There she met Egyptian American percussionist Rami El-Aasser, and their discussions about migration patterns and cross-cultural exchanges inspired them to start a band. She created the stage name “Alsarah” by attaching the Arabic definite article to “Sarah,” and questions of identity, home, and migration flavor the music she makes with **Alsarah & the Nubatones**. She calls what they do East African retro-pop, and on their 2014 debut album, *Silt*, they explore traditional East African sounds via original songs and classic material, in part to help the multinational cast of players learn more about Nubian music. On 2016's *Manara*, they expand beyond those parameters, infusing their sophisticated songwriting with melodies and textures from jazz, hip-hop, dub, and more. Alsarah is a charismatic front woman, and her vocal harmonies with her sister, Nahid, help give the band's songs an earthy, organic feel—though considering that both Nubatones albums have been remixed by dance producers, it's safe to say they're also chic enough for the hippest urban lounges. —JAMIE LUDWIG

Chicago ten-piece **Funkadesi** are perfect for the World Music Festival: many of their members come from far-flung countries, and since forming the band in 1996 they've sought out creative ways to incorporate folk and pop from those places. Rahul Sharma, who plays sitar, tabla, acoustic guitar, and bass, was born in the U.S. to East Indian parents who'd been raised in Kenya, while vocalist-percussionist Valroy Dawkins grew up in rural Jamaica, about an hour west of Kingston in the parish of Manchester. Funkadesi use reggae and bhangra as a foundation for their immersive grooves, frequently reinforcing reggae riddims with gentle, cycling tabla ornamentation while panoplies of disparate sounds zoom by overhead.

On their most recent album, 2008's self-released *Yo Baba*, they incorporate nimble West African guitars, loose-limbed salsa congas, and ebullient hip-hop breakbeats—and that's just on one song, “Crash da Party.” *Yo Baba* also detours into lean, straightforward blues (“Lonely Road”) and features an appearance by rapper Anacron (“Galsun”). Vocalist-percussionist Kwame Steve Cobb has performed in 70s funk group Boscoe and with Roy Ayers and Anita Baker (and released one of Chicago's earliest hip-hop recordings, the 1983 12-inch “Mastermind”), while guitarist-vocalist Abdul Hakeem has worked with the likes of Sly & Robbie, Herbie Hancock, and Philip Glass. Funkadesi's genre blending would probably be disorienting if the band weren't so tight—they've built a coherent, hard-to-pin-down sound that celebrates their cultural commingling. —LEOR GALIL

**Chief Boima**, born Boima Tucker, grew up in Milwaukee in the 80s in a close-knit community of immigrants from Sierra Leone and elsewhere in southwest Africa. He's traveled the world as a writer and DJ, focusing on digital music from all over Africa and the African diaspora, and his DJ sets reflect the dizzying variety of mixes, beats, and modes of production that he's come across in his research. Given the size of his musical vocabulary, it's almost impossible to guess exactly what sounds you might hear in a Boima set, but you could prepare by listening to the releases on his Intl Blk label, which he started in 2015 to distribute his own work and that of like-minded DJs. Judging by the latest from Intl Blk—the three volumes of *Cali Quilombo*, an eclectic compilation of Afro-Caribbean remixes of recent California rap—Boima's quest for musical knowledge hasn't slackened a bit. The remix of Tyga's “Taste” he did with Los Angeles DJ Foreigner (aka Adam Cooper) gives it a dancing-in-the-streets-of-Bahia flair—it even makes me like Tyga for a second. As a DJ, Boima has absorbed the distinctive rhythms and sounds of the places he's lived and traveled: after Milwaukee, he spent years in Oakland and Brooklyn, all the while making lengthy trips to Africa and South America and performing and collaborating with other producers influenced by the global south, most notably DJ/Rupture. Boima now lives in LA, and his appearances in Chicago have been rare—the opportunity to hear him mix live shouldn't be brushed off lightly. —SALEM COLLO-JULIN

## SUNDAY29

**WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL MEETS THE WORLD DUMPLING FEST WITH FIDEL NADAL FEATURING MR. PAUER, ALSARAH & THE NUBATONES, AND LOWDOWN BRASS BAND** Sun 9/29, noon-7 PM, Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand, all ages

Afro-Argentine reggae veteran **Fidel Nadal**, a descendant of Angolan slaves, was born into an academic family and has become a spokesperson for the lesser-known population of Black Argentines—approximately 5 percent of the population. Heavily influenced by Peter Tosh and Bob Marley, he dove into music in the early 80s and practically created Argentina's reggae scene. In 1985 he cofounded the legendary band Todos Tus Muertos, which mixed reggae, ska, and punk, and in the mid-90s he launched the more straightforward reggae group Lumumba. Since 2000, though, he's pursued a highly successful solo career. A charming, charismatic vocalist steeped in Rastafarian spirituality, he uses his lyrics to address the oppression and discrimination suffered by the descendants of Africans in the Americas—his tunes never lose sight of the diaspora, particularly the island sounds of Jamaica. Sharing Nadal's set is Miami-based, Venezuela-born DJ and producer Toto González, aka **Mr. Pauer**. He calls his multicolored tropical-pop dance music “electrónico,” taking cues from Latin American merengue and cumbia, Angolan kuduro, and island beats such as Guadeloupean zouk and Jamaican reggae. His shining, shimmering blend is just plain fun, and for this performance he'll augment it with live percussion and five backup multi-instrumentalists and vocalists. This is a set “pa los bailaores,” as the saying goes: “for the dancers!” —CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON

See Saturday, September 28, for **Alsarah & the Nubatones**. . . . .

**Lowdown Brass Band** started in the early 2000s, around the time southern rappers ushered crunk into the mainstream, and on Facebook the Chicago group say they play “brass,” “street funk,” and “crunk”—an adequate shorthand for their earthy, danceable music, which embeds hip-hop, funk, soul, and R&B into the traditional New Orleans



Fidel Nadal; Lowdown Brass Band © FERNANDO MESSINO; RENTAUSKAS

second-line street-parade style. Their lineup usually consists of two drummers and a sousaphonist in the rhythm section, plus three trombonists, two saxophonists, and two trumpeters up front. About four years ago they recruited local rapper Billa Camp, who's nudged Lowdown closer to hip-hop for 2018's self-released *Lowdown Breaks*: rounded brass notes

arrive in concise, precisely repeated patterns that replicate the feel of looped samples, and on "Don't Wait! Right Now!" the horns briefly lock in with a boom-bap breakbeat. Billa Camp's group the Dread and veteran rapper Ang13 are among the guests on the mike, though Lowdown's instrumental parts bump so hard that you don't really miss the vocals

when they're absent. Midway through "2nd Line Hop," the trombones mimic the booming brass sample that anchors Pharoahe Monch's "Simon Says," a clever nod that demonstrates the band's deeply rooted affection for the genres they're combining. Even better, they sound like they're having a blast doing it. —LEOR GALIL

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- 10.6 PAULA COLE
- 10.7 ERIC HUTCHINSON
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- 10.11 VIVIAN GREEN
- 10.13 BILAL
- 10.14-15 HIROMI
- 10.16 TYRONE WELLS
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SEP  
16



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# The complete schedule of World Music Festival Chicago

## FRIDAY13

**RAGAMALA: A CELEBRATION OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC** *This event continues into the morning of Saturday, September 14. 6 PM-8 AM, Preston Bradley Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, all ages*

**6-7:15 PM JOSH FEINBERG, KUNAL GUNJAL, AND AMIT KAVTHEKAR**

**7:45-9 PM AKSHARA MUSIC ENSEMBLE**

**9:30-10:45 PM JAY GANDHI AND NITIN MITTA**

**11:15 PM-12:30 AM PRASANNA, BALA SKANDAN, AND SAMYUKTHA SREERAM**

**1-2:30 AM NANDKISHOR MULEY AND AMBI SUBRAMANIAM WITH MAHESH KRISHNAMURTHY AND RAJ DESHMUKH**

**3-4:30 AM ROOPA MAHADEVAN, RAJNA SWAMINATHAN, AND ARUN RAMAMURTHY**

**4:45-6 AM SAMARTH NAGARKAR WITH AMIT KAVTHEKAR AND RAMACHANDRA JOSHI**

**6:15-8 AM SARASWATHI RANGANATHAN WITH GS RAJAN, RAVI IYER, AND GANAPATHI RANGANATHAN**

## SATURDAY14

**ISÚBELO!—A CELEBRATION OF PAN LATIN MUSIC AND CULTURE WITH PIRULO Y LA TRIBU, LOS WEMBLER'S DE IQUITOS, AND CENTAVRYS** 3-7 PM, Jay Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph, all ages

**LUCIBELA, GIRMA BÈYÈNÈ & AKALÉ WUBÉ** 7 PM (doors at 6 PM), the Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave. West, 21+

## SUNDAY15

**GIRMA BÈYÈNÈ & AKALÉ WUBÉ, KAHIL EL'ZABAR ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE** 7 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, 21+

## WEDNESDAY18

**THE ENGLEWOOD/SOWETO EXCHANGE, JEREMY DUTCHER** 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, all ages

## THURSDAY19

**JEREMY DUTCHER** 7 PM, American Indian Center, 3401 W. Ainslie, all ages

**LANKUM, YANDONG GRAND SINGERS OF CHINA** 7 PM, Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th, all ages

## FRIDAY20

**MABANG!, YANDONG GRAND SINGERS OF CHINA** 5 PM, Ping Tom Memorial Park, 300 W. 19th, all ages

**LANKUM** 7 PM, Irish American Heritage Center, 4626 N. Knox, all ages

## SATURDAY21

**MABANG!** 7 PM, Mary Patricia Gannon Concert Hall, Holtschneider Performance Center, DePaul University, 2330 N. Halsted, all ages

**IKEBE SHAKEDOWN, ANA EWERLING** 8 PM, Martyrs', 3855 N. Lincoln, 21+

**AFROTRONIX, KOKOKO!** With video mixing by GiroscoPIO. 9 PM, Chop Shop, 2033 W. North, 21+

## SUNDAY22

**GLOBAL PEACE PICNIC WITH THE GARIFUNA COLLECTIVE, KOKOKO!, AND HERMÁN OLIVERA**



Sarah Mohamed Abunama Elgadi of AlSarah & the Nubatones NOUSHA SALIMI

## FRIDAY27

**GAMELAN ÇUDAMANI** Tickets required for entry; reservations encouraged via [harristheaterchicago.org](http://harristheaterchicago.org). Walk-up tickets available only on a first-come, first-served basis. 6 PM, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph, all ages

## SATURDAY28

**THOMAS MAPFUMO & THE BLACKS UNLIMITED, ALSARAH & THE NUBATONES, FUNKADESI, CHIEF BOIMA** 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 2047 N. Milwaukee, 21+

## SUNDAY29

**WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL MEETS THE WORLD DUMPLING FEST WITH FIDEL NADAL FEATURING MR. PAUER, ALSARAH & THE NUBATONES, AND LOWDOWN BRASS BAND** Noon-7 PM, Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand, all ages

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Sono Osato in a 1936 publicity photo. COURTESY NEWBERRY LIBRARY

## Dancing on eggshells: the story of Sono Osato

A Japanese American dancer with Chicago roots built a groundbreaking career during World War II against the backdrop of xenophobia.

By GRACE DUMELLE

Published in 1947, *Chicago Japanese-American Year Book* takes the reader into a time capsule of an ethnic community feeling its way after the government of Japan had waged war against the United States. The U.S. government had responded by forcibly removing Japanese American citizens and aliens from the Pacific coast, where the majority lived, and consigning them to detention centers in remote areas.

Chicago became the most popular destination for “resettlers” after World War II, according to the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*. The incarcerated had lost their homes and busi-

nesses due to the absurdly short deadline—six days’ notice—for winding up their affairs. Here was a city with plenty of jobs and social service organizations ready to help.

Besides ads and listings, the *Year Book* features short mentions of prominent community members. One of these reads: “Beauteous Sono Osato, talented Japanese American ballet dancer returns to her hometown a ‘star’.” She is the daughter of Shoji Osato, well known photographer, and a prominent Japanese pioneer here in the Windy City. Miss Osato left Chicago and earned fame in the Broadway production, ‘On The Town.’” The story of Sono and her family, pieced from the Newberry →



Sono Osato recreates her solo part as Scheherazade's chief concubine in her father's Chicago photo studio.

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continued from 49

Library's Ann Barzel Dance Research Collection and other sources, has many parallels today.

Xenophobia, for one thing. Shoji Osato was working as a newspaper photographer in Omaha when he was assigned to photograph Frances Fitzpatrick for the society page. Sparks flew between the Japanese immigrant and the Japanophile. They eloped to Iowa, because Nebraska law forbade marriage between Asians and whites. In the heat of the moment, Frances likely did not know or care that she lost her U.S. citizenship by marrying an alien. (A 1907 federal law mandated that any American woman who married a foreigner took the nationality of the husband.)

Sono was born in Omaha in 1919, the first of three children, and the family moved to the north side of Chicago in 1925. She started ballet classes in the Loop after school. Berenice Holmes became her teacher. Sono speaks highly of her in her 1980 autobiography *Distant Dances*. Holmes treated her with respect, like an adult, and patiently worked to correct her technique. Sono danced in Holmes's student troupe with Ann Barzel, who later became dance critic for several Chicago newspapers and collector of all things terpsichorean.

It was Holmes who arranged for her pupil to audition for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo on the last night of its engagement at the Auditorium Theatre. The director, Colonel Wasily Grigorievitch de Basil, declared, "We'll take her for three years." At 14, she sailed for Europe sans famille and a new life of drama onstage and off. It was a fantasy come true for the freshman at what is now Lincoln Park High School.

Absorbing knowledge from the top dancers and choreographers of the day, Sono progressed from the corps of *Swan Lake* and *Firebird* to small solo parts. Her first was as a Chinese barback in *Union Pacific*, the tale of the 19th-century race to cover the west with railroad tracks. Another was the chief Odalisque (concubine) in *Scheherazade*. The biracial blending evident in her face led to pronouncements such as this one in *Vogue*: "With her back-sloping chin, her oddly planed face, this . . . girl has a curious beauty just removed from homeliness."

Sono pushed against the confines of classical ballet and society's perceptions. She left Ballet Russe and joined what became American Ballet Theatre. There she explored modern ballet and made connections with such dancer-choreographers as Agnes de Mille and Jerome Robbins. Her career took off just as the United States entered World War II. "I danced

in a daze," she recalled of her performance the evening of December 7, 1941. An angry audience reaction did not materialize, but the management suggested she change her name for the impending tour of the south. For the early days of the war, she was billed as Sono Fitzpatrick.

Stage names, however, had no weight with the U.S. government. The passport division informed her she could not go to Mexico on the company's tour in summer 1942. No person of Japanese ancestry could leave the country. That left her without a job until the fall. Sono had barely resumed working and touring when the government barred her from entering California. Following the president's Executive Order 9066, all of the state was a military exclusion zone for those of Japanese ancestry. Stranded in the midwest, she went home to her parents in Chicago, only to find that her father had been interned.

Shoji Osato likely attracted the attention of the U.S. government because of his promotion of Japanese culture. In 1938, he had duly registered his work as publicity and advertising agent for the Japanese Board of Tourist Industry and the Japanese government railways. This brought him about \$4,500 plus expenses annually. An additional source of income was the Japanese Tea House and Garden in

Jackson Park. According to Alice Murata's book *Japanese Americans in Chicago*, Shoji purchased the garden and donated it to the Chicago Park District. Frances Osato operated the teahouse with a staff of Japanese American women dressed in kimonos.

Sono and Frances visited Shoji on the south side, where he was held in a former mansion with some German nationals. An armed guard sat with them to monitor their conversations. Shoji couldn't attend Sono's New York City wedding in April 1943. The indefinite internment turned out to be ten months. He looked forward to joining Frances in New York, where she had moved to be a clothing designer. But she wrote him that he could not live with her. One motivation seems to have been her long-standing unhappiness in the marriage. Another may have been a prudent distancing of herself so as not to call attention to her own alien status.

The couple's daughter, meanwhile, branched out on Broadway. *One Touch of Venus* featured Sono as principal dancer in de Mille's choreography to Kurt Weill's score. The hit production played to capacity crowds. She received an inaugural Donaldson Award (voted on by her theatrical peers) as "Best Dancer in a Musical (female)."

Then she originated the role of Ivy Smith in

the musical *On the Town*. Ivy is chosen Miss Turnstiles and publicized as the epitome of all things American. A sailor on shore leave sees her poster on the subway and enlists his buddies' help in finding her. The show captured the pulse of contemporary New York City in its choreography by Jerome Robbins, book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, and music by Leonard Bernstein. "It was amazing to me that, at the height of a world war . . . a Broadway musical should feature, and have audiences unquestioningly accept, a half-Japanese as an All-American Girl," Sono wrote in her book. "I could never have been accepted as Ivy Smith in films, or later, on television. Only the power of illusion created between performers and audiences across the footlights can transcend political preference, moral attitudes, and racial prejudice."

Shoji Osato was able to see his daughter perform in the acclaimed show. He walked to her dressing room with a cane after suffering the first of two strokes. Sono not only made him proud, but the Japanese American community as well. One of their own appeared on a national stage and in the pages of major publications such as the *New York Times* and *Harper's Bazaar*. In that time and place, Sono Osato cast a small point of light in her people's darkness. ■



Show photo of Japanese temple on Wooded Island. The Osatos' teahouse and garden included restored buildings from the World's Columbian Exposition. © PERCY H. SLOAN; THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY; CHICAGO

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# Sculpting identity—and diversity—through movement

Hubbard Street dancer Connie Shiau

By **MAX THOMSEN**

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**W**ith a drive to perfect technique, Connie Shiau of the Hubbard Street Dance Company pushes herself physically and mentally to achieve her high standards. Her hope is “that dance can become a bigger communicative vessel in this society to unite people.”

Born in Florida, Shiau was raised in Tainan, Taiwan, where her mother first took her to a dance studio at the age of eight. She was fascinated with the physicality of dance. She moved to New York at 18 after being accepted at the dance conservatory at SUNY Purchase College. She joined Hubbard Street in 2018.

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“My journey has sculpted and is continuing to sculpt my identity as an artist and human being,” Shiau says. “The definition might not be defined yet and might never ever be, but the big strokes that are there are inspiring me to keep digging and searching for who I am and what my role is in this society.” →



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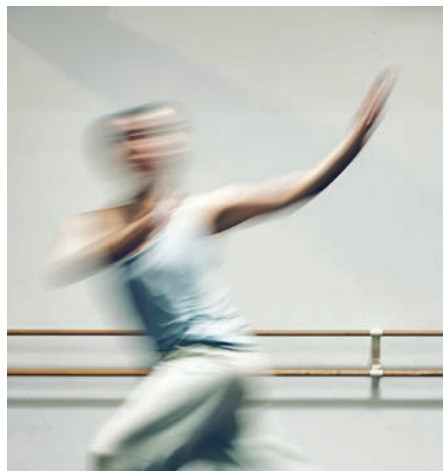


Photo: Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre dancers in *Between Us*, courtesy of the company.


continued from 52

Shiau says she wants to explore the expectations of women in relation to the physical expression of their bodies and social behavior.

What Shiau likes most about Chicago:  
“Diversity, community. Chicago pushes for growth and change.”



Shiau keeps a notebook from which she draws inspiration, mapping movements as they come to her, sometimes in response to words or patterns she writes down.

Shiau's upcoming solo for the Chicago Dancemakers Forum also drew inspiration from Christine Blasey Ford's testimony at last year's Senate confirmation hearings for now Supreme Court justice Brett Kavanaugh. 

# Loy Webb writes parables of finding light in dark times

*His Shadow* tackles sibling rivalry and the price paid by athletes who 'take a knee.'

By CATEY SULLIVAN

## **His Shadow**

Through 10/12: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM; also Sun 9/22 and 10/6, 3 PM, 16th Street Theater, 6420 16th St., Berwyn, 708-795-6704, 16thstreettheater.org, \$30 reserved, \$22 general, \$18 Berwyn residents, low income, and military.

**B**ack in 2016 when she was still practicing law in Chicago, Loy Webb spent four hours every other Saturday mentoring teen girls. It wasn't potential lawyers crowding unused rehearsal rooms at the Goodman, eager to talk with Webb. The young women wanted to know about theater criticism, from analyzing sound design to cleaning up dangling participles. Webb spent a year with the Young Critics program, helping a team of non-male critics usher in the coming generation. When she bowed out to focus on her own aspirations as a playwright, it was an auspicious shift.

In 2018, Webb's drama *The Light* opened at Chicago's New Colony theater. A New York →



Loy Webb © COURTESY 16TH STREET THEATER

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*His Shadow* © DAVID SKORPEN

#### continued from 55

City premiere at the Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater followed. This month brings Webb's much-anticipated sophomore effort, *His Shadow*, running through October 12 at Berwyn's 16th Street Theater. The one-act follows 18-year-old Jalen "Teeny" Evans and his [off-stage] brother Jarell "Juice" Evans, the latter a pro football star, the former determined to make a name for himself. Violence—physical, collateral, historical, emotional—interrupts both their athletic careers.

Webb is based in Los Angeles now, where she's writing vampire adventures for AMC's *NOS4A2*, which has been renewed for a second season in 2020. She made time between horror deadlines and *His Shadow* tech rehearsals for a chat about football, protests, and meeting her sheroes.

#### ***His Shadow* taps into the ongoing story of athletes being punished for protesting: taking a knee, turning a back, raising a fist. Were you inspired by current events?**

It's not like I looked around and was like, 'Now I need to write a play about taking a knee.' I started it because I am a huge football fan, but with the protests going on I wasn't able to watch. It would be irresponsible for me to put a play about football onstage without getting into all the stuff going on around it in real life.

It's both depressing and inspiring. [Colin] Kaepernick still doesn't have a job. That's awful. The inspiration part comes from the fact that despite the consequences, athletes are still taking a stand. At the [July] Pan American games in Lima, two athletes [U.S. fencer Race Imboden and hammer thrower Gwen Berry] got probation for a year for tak-

ing a knee or raising a fist. They tried to kill Kap's movement, but it continues to grow.

Teeny's life goals have always been about football, about following his famous older brother. He learns life is bigger than these singular, specific goals we set for ourselves.

#### **Wardell Julius Clark is directing. [Ed. note: Clark is an actor and director whose credits include *Dutch Masters* at Jackalope and *The Shipment* at Red Tape.] Why him?**

He understands me. It's almost like a sixth sense we have. In the earliest days when I was trying to figure out what this play was, Wardell said, "It's a parable." That was huge, understanding the piece as a parable. I wanted a story that was specific and that could fit in any time and place. Once Wardell called it a parable, that was much more clear to me.

#### **You've included the "Black national anthem" ["Lift Every Voice and Sing"] in the dialogue—sung by a white woman.**

That song has uplifted generations of freedom fighters, generations of Black people who have fought for our rights. I've never heard it in a play before. I wanted to illustrate that there are allies from other races in this fight.

#### **You were a practicing attorney for years in Chicago. Now you're writing about vampires in Hollywood. How else has your life changed of late?**

I feel like more people are aware of my work and who I am. After *The Light* played off-Broadway, I had people telling me how much the show inspired them. I have college students asking me to send them monologues. I write to point toward hope. I want my work to be a neon sign in the darkness: This way out. This way to hope.

*NOS4A2* is my first TV writing job. It allows me to stretch. I never thought I'd be writing about horror. But I read the book and I was like, "OK, I'll give this a try." The protagonist is a young woman vampire with kickass superpowers. And she's got a badass African American sidekick.

#### **Celebrity encounters?**

I met Regina King at a documentary about Toni Morrison. It wasn't a premiere at some big famous theater—it was a couple blocks from my house. She was just wearing regular people clothes, watching the movie. I was with [playwright] Dominique Morisseau, who's my writing shero. She introduced us. Afterwards, I kind of lost it just a little bit.

#### **Do you have other sheroes?**

[*Vida* showrunner] Tanya Saracho is one of my inspirations. I literally patterned my career after her. I read all her interviews, to see how she did it—starting as a playwright in Chicago and moving to television. Come to find out, the *Vida* writing room is next to the *NOS4A2* room. I was walking to the bathroom one day and there's Tanya in the hallway. I stopped her and told her the story of how I patterned my career after her—she was so kind. We took a selfie. 📸





A Red Orchid Theatre's Chicago Theatre Softball League team. COURTESY CTSL

## Bare-knuckled theatrics

The Chicago Theatre Softball League celebrates 41 years.

By JOHN LISBON WOOD

Again, as it has been for 41 summers, it's "once more into the breach" for the Chicago Theatre Softball League and their unique Chicago brand of this goodly sport of the weighted orb. Who will emerge crowned with the leafed wreath of starry triumph? The Starving Comedians, wunderkinds of wit; the steeled spirits of Writers Theatre; the risk-taking Strawdogs company; the cloak-and-dagger suspects of Murder Mystery; the Factory's stalwarts; the sturdy Blue Man Group; or the ever-inventive iO (once known as "ImprovOlympics")?

With unbridled passion and grit, using the 16-inch clincher (played with bare hands) that has imparted many a crushed knuckle as it collides with this "too, too solid flesh," the players march on. An exception is granted for the "lovelies," as Nelson Algren called his adored Chicago women, who have the option of using a glove. This style of softball is only played in one place: the City of Broad Shoulders.

Over the decades the Chicago Theatre Softball League has become much more than just a high-spirited competition. The league has evolved into a community bonded by affection and kinship. You need look no further than the posts on the League's Facebook page, where thanks and prayers are offered up for an injured damsel, donations requested and given for a player's funeral expenses for his father, a proffer of gratitude for helping raise a fine daughter in this, his League family. Operative word: family. *Henry V.*: "Onward brave soldiers!"

### CHICAGO THEATRE SOFTBALL LEAGUE

The All Star Game concludes the league season on Monday, September 16, 6 PM, at Clarendon Park, 4501 N. Clarendon.

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## OPENING

**RR** A pas de deux of trauma  
Terry Guest's *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen* explores the crossroads of gender, race, and class.

When you think of the staggering levels of violence that members of the LGBTQIA+ community continue to endure (or, even more tragically, don't survive), the title of Terry Guest's 90-minute two-hander, produced by Story Theatre, feels like a blow. Guest explores the impact of trauma survived not just once or twice, but as a regular occurrence over decades, passed down through generations and carried in the very genetic makeup of African Americans. In the troubled, defiant, unapologetic life of Black, HIV-positive drag queen



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Courtney (government name: Anthony), he's created a character who lives and dies at the intersection where race, sexuality, class, and gender collide. He stacks the deck further by setting the story in the sweating red clay of Georgia, layering centuries of slavery and white supremacy into the contemporary context. Directed by Mikael Burke and starring Guest as Courtney/Anthony and Paul Michael Thomson as his white "redneck" lover Hunter (drag name: Vickie), the drama could use a ruthless edit. Guest creates indelible scenes, but some are repetitive, and exciting 20 minutes would make for a leaner, more hard-hitting drama.

There are more than a few moments of sublimity, including a breathtaking pas de deux to Shirley Brown's "Woman to Woman." There is also an exquisite deconstruction of lip synch acts that follows their trail from Beyoncé to Josephine Baker to the countless ancestors who came before. The big picture the play paints in words and drag dance involves centuries of "history, acknowledged, questioned and redefined." You need look no further than the *New York Times*'s 1619 Project to understand that's exactly what history needs right now. —CATEY SULLIVAN *AT THE WAKE OF A DEAD DRAG QUEEN* Through 9/22: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark, [thestorytheatre.org](http://thestorytheatre.org), \$15.

**RR** Let's get lost  
*The Band's Visit* offers a respite in rancorous times.

*The Band's Visit*, which cleaned up with ten Tony Awards in 2018 (including nods for David Yazbek's score, Itamar Moses's book, and David Cromer's direction), seems at first to be an unlikely Broadway smash. It's a small story about small moments—all of which can easily be swallowed up on a bigger stage. Having seen the wise and poignant magic this show revealed in New York, I was both excited and trepidatious about how it would stand up on tour.

I needn't have worried—and not just because the role of Tewfiq, the leader of the traveling Egyptian police orchestra that finds itself in the wrong Israeli town overnight, is played by Sasson Gabay, who originated the part in Eran Kolirin's 2007 film. (Gabay replaced Tony Shalhoub on Broadway.) The secret to this production is that it doesn't shout for your attention, just as the characters don't demand your sympathy for their seemingly stunted lives in Nowheresville in the Negev desert.

Gabay's Tewfiq and Chilina Kennedy's Dina, the cafe

owner who arranges housing for the wayward musicians, anchor the production. There are sparks between them, especially in the hypnotic "Omar Sharif," where Dina recalls the allure of Egyptian films and music as romantic escapes from dusty reality in her youth. But loss and regret are never far away. Yazbek's score, much of it played live by the actors in the onstage band (utilizing, among other instruments, oud, cello, and clarinet), mixes a variety of Middle Eastern influences with a dash of a pop sensibility. It's joyous, sad, knowing, and wistful all at once. By the time the ensemble joins together in the closing "Answer Me," the tears were rolling without shame, just as they did the first time I heard it. —KERRY REID *THE BAND'S VISIT* Through 9/15: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph, 800-775-2000, [broadwayinchicago.com](http://broadwayinchicago.com), \$39-\$106.

**A new brain**  
A tumor changes a woman's nihilism to joy in *Be Here Now*.

For those of us who roll eyes at the accoutrements of Big Woo, Bari in Deborah Zoe Laufer's *Be Here Now* might be our antipsychic guide. From the opening



*The Band's Visit* 📍 MATTHEW MURPHY

scene, where she silently resists the soothing instructions of a yogi, we know she's a tough nut. And who can blame her? She's on the verge of failing to finish her dissertation on nihilism, she's stuck in a small town where the only job she can get is at a "fulfillment center," packaging cheap made-in-China Buddhas (with the tags ripped off so the bosses can pretend to be selling Tibetan goods), and she can't find a buyer for her dead parents' house because . . . well, small town, no prospects.

But two things happen to throw Bari (Rebecca Jordan) out of her "smug gloom," as her coworker, Patty (Deanna Reed-Foster), aptly characterizes it. First, she meets Patty's quirky cousin, Mike (Joe Wiens), a sort of Manic Pixie Dream Boy with dark secrets. Then she starts having seizures that leave her aglow with positive thoughts (and horny as hell). Should she seek treatment for the tumor causing the seizures (which will kill her if not removed), even if it means returning to her joyless past?

Lauer's play, directed with a sure hand by Sandy Shinner for Shattered Globe, tries too hard to land its rather obvious points about making the best of life, no matter what. (Mike has achieved notoriety for his gift at literally building houses out of trash, for example.) The cast, especially Wiens, commit to the sometimes twee material with intelligence and empathy, even though the characters end up feeling more like archetypes than fully fleshed-out people. It's enjoyable, but not memorable or deep. —KERRY REID [BE HERE NOW](#)

*Through 10/19: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Sat 10/19, 3 PM, Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-975-8150, shatteredglobe.org, \$42, \$35 seniors, \$25 under 30, \$15 student rush day of performance.*

**RR** *A Midsummer* midlife debauch David Greig's comedy crosses *Before Sunrise* with *Once* and a dash of crime and violence

Who hasn't had a weekend of drunken debauchery in Edinburgh? For those who haven't, *Midsummer* (A *Play With Songs*) by David Greig, directed by Randy White and produced here by Greenhouse Theater Center and Proxy Theatre, is a fast-paced, funny look at love, life, and the ache of aging. It is the story of Helena and Bob, how they met, got drunk, and the crazy weekend that followed—basically *Before Sunrise* meets *Once*.

Delightfully dancing between a first- and third-person narrative, often breaking the fourth wall, Chaon Cross and Patrick Mulvey are outstanding as the two lovers. They sing songs (written by Gordon McIntyre of Scottish indie band Ballboy) about hangovers, bondage, and broken hearts, alternating among guitar, ukulele, and keyboard, and all with stellar Scottish accents.

Helena and Bob have secrets and regrets. In their 30s, they find themselves wanting to make a change. Their banter with each other, and with the audience, is playful and thoughtful. There is great philosophy ➔

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# THEATER

► amid the decadence of their weekend. There is also a disastrous wedding, a Tesco bag full of cash, low-level criminality and violence, a wild visit to a nightclub, and the most hilarious sex scene I have seen onstage.

*Midsummer* explores the hope we all share that we can change our lives, that we are not all destined to be eternal screwups. Set designer Mark F. Smith and lighting designer Brandon Wardell create moments of magic and wonder that reflect the show's energy and tone. Full of laughs and tinged with hope, it will leave you wanting more time with these great characters. —**JOSH FLANDERS** **MIDSUMMER (A PLAY WITH SONGS)** Through 10/6; Wed-Fri 8 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln, 773-404-7336, [greenhousetheater.org](http://greenhousetheater.org), \$20-\$25, \$15 students and military.

## After rehab, what's next?

A woman struggles to reconnect with her family while battling opioid addiction in *Shadows of Birds*.

Since OxyContin's rollout in the mid-90s, the opioid crisis has grown at a harrowing rate, with recent stats reflecting more than 130 U.S. deaths daily from drug overdoses. It's a hard one to internalize unless you know someone affected; Glass Apple Theatre's latest production works to localize and humanize the epidemic through the lens of one midwestern family. A world premiere written by Richard James Ziemann and Joel Z. Cornfield, this one-act sensitively explores the consequences of addiction for both the addict and her family.

Under Cheryl Snodgrass's direction, Tara Bouldrey embodies the character of Nicole down to the tips of her constantly fidgeting fingers. Just out of rehab and estranged from her family for the past five years, Nicole is consumed with a variety of fears: that her mother, played by a heartbreakingly codependent Elizabeth Rude, will never forgive her; that her counselor, played by a wise and world-weary Sydney Genco, won't call her back; and that her addiction will resurface and destroy her fragile grasp on life.

At their best, the intimate moments that follow illus-

trate how damaging opioids can be to both individual psyches and entire family structures. Some humor, a necessity to punctuate the darkness, lands awkwardly, but Lori Lee does her best to provide an outsider's perspective as wacky Aunt Susan. Nicole's angry and bitter brother Kyle (Bobby Bowman) could use more stage time to build true empathy for how her addiction has put his life on a permanent pause. —**MARISSA OBERLANDER** **SHADOWS OF BIRDS** Through 9/22: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 2 PM, Edge Theatre, 5451 N. Broadway, 800-838-3006, [glassappletheatre.com](http://glassappletheatre.com), \$25.

## Something Rotten! is just good enough

The musical Shakespearean spoof is fun but not fabulous.

Set in 1595 during the glorious reign of Elizabeth I, this 2015 musical romp (book by John O'Farrell and Karey Kirkpatrick, music and lyrics by Karey Kirkpatrick and Wayne Kirkpatrick) begins with an opening number, "Welcome to the Renaissance," so rousing and energetic, packed with clever lyrics and great dance moves (choreographed by Alex Sanchez), we expect the rest of the production, directed by Scott Weinstein, will blow the roof off of the Marriott. It does not.

Oh, the story is amusing enough, if a little silly—two brothers, trying to write a hit show in London, enlist the help of an eccentric soothsayer to steal Shakespeare's next hit before he can write it. And some of the songs that follow almost reach the heights of the first number ("God, I Hate Shakespeare" just kills). But the characters are flat. Many of the songs are just forgettable. And the show's climax, a crazy pastiche of musical theater jokes, is underwhelming.

The fault may lie, partly, with the production, filled as it is with just-good-enough performers who do their jobs (remember their lines, don't trip over the furniture) but leave us wanting more. The exceptions are Alex Goodrich, quite winning as a young man yearning for love and success, and Adam Jacobs, who really rocks as Bill Shakespeare, superstar. Still, though *Something*



*Midsummer* @ MICHAEL BROSILOW.

*Rotten!* is almost always entertaining, the way an old reliable sitcom can be, you don't leave the theater thinking, "Wow! that was great!" —**JACK HELBIG** **SOMETHING ROTTEN!** Through 10/20: Wed 1 and 7:30 PM (1 PM only Wed 10/9 and 10/16), Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 1 and 5 PM; also Thu 10/10 and 10/17 and Sun 10/20, 1 PM, Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Dr., Lincolnshire, 847-634-0200, [marriotttheatre.com](http://marriotttheatre.com), \$50-\$60.

## RR Get fisch-slahappy at *Spamalot*

Mercury Theater's production of the Monty Python musical is a sheer, silly delight.

Whether or not you're familiar with the beloved British humor of the Monty Python universe, *Spamalot* is guaranteed to be a rollicking good time. Adapted from the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, the musical version follows King Arthur in his quest to assemble

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Spamalot BRETT BEINER

the Knights of the Round Table and find the Holy Grail, and the plot quickly takes a hard left turn into silly “fisch-schlapping” madness.

Bawdy, yet never offensive, this jolly show is a comedy master class, combining wit, satire, absurd non sequiturs, lowbrow humor, slapstick, corny puns, and impeccable comic timing into a dizzying madcap great evening. The fantastically talented ensemble dazzles with sharp dance numbers and ridiculous comedy sequences that make you laugh until your belly hurts. Jonah D. Winston plays a lovably daft King Arthur, attended by his loyal and hilarious manservant Patsy, played by Greg Foster. Their chemistry in the audience favorite “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” (originally introduced in Monty Python’s *The Life of Brian*) is irresistible. Meghan Murphy brings down the house as the Lady of the Lake, impressively satirizing and executing hoary vocal musical theater tropes with aplomb in “The Song That Goes Like This.”

Python fans will delight in the familiar jokes, the amazing set by scenic designer Angela Weber Miller, and the outrageous costumes by designer Tim Hatley. Director L. Walter Stearns stages numbers like “I Am Not Dead Yet” masterfully. Karl Hamilton, Adam Fane, and David Sajewich shine in an over-the-top riotous scene as Sir Lancelot, Herbert, and Herbert’s Father, respectively. —**SHERI FLANDERS** *SPAMALOT* Through 11/3: Wed-Fri 8 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Mercury Theater, 3745 N. Southport, 773-325-1700, mercurytheaterchicago.com, \$40-\$80.

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An open gathering for sharing memories of Andrea will be held on Sunday, September 15, from 1 to 2 PM in the Mendelson Gallery at Temple Shalom, 3480 N. Lake Shore Dr. Contributions in Andrea's memory may be sent to Temple Shalom, 3480 N. Lake Shore Dr., Chicago, 60657, where she was a longtime devoted member.



Andrea Gronvall, bottom right, with the crew of *At the Movies*, where she was a producer for 17 years.

© COURTESY NANCY DE LOS SANTOS

between, she filed several dozen long reviews and even more capsules, ranging from Hollywood blockbusters to art-house documentaries, and everything in between.

Prior to her work as a critic, Gronvall worked for 17 years as a producer for *At the Movies* with Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert (and later Ebert and Richard Roeper). Like Siskel and Ebert, she had a deep love of movies and thorough knowledge of movie history. She had particular expertise in French movies and in animated films, but she wasn't a snob. In the time we worked together, I don't recall her ever panning anything outright; she was a close observer of the films she wrote about and was always able to find a redeeming factor. About last year's weepie *Life Itself*, which she gave two stars, she wrote, "I've seen *Life Itself* twice already, and I may even watch it a third time someday, not because it's perfect—it isn't—but because just as with my own life, I like to revisit the high points."

Gronvall's own personal interests ranged far beyond movies. Among the subjects of our writer-editor correspondence: 19th-century romanticism, Jewish religious practices, the Holocaust, the philosophy of Hannah Arendt, how to work with performers with developmental differences. She was a deeply thoughtful and serious person. The only time that correspondence ever turned angry was when she went off on a rant against the dangers of relying solely on information provided by the Internet Movie Database and Wikipedia. (Characteristically, she later apologized if her vehemence lapsed into discourtesy.)

I'll miss her for her writing and for her intelligence. But most of all, I will miss her kindness and her generosity of spirit. As a colleague, she was always courteous and considerate, always made her deadlines, and always had a word of praise or encouragement. We only met in person once, but I considered her a friend. I'm sad that we won't be able to continue that friendship over coffee as we were planning to, and I'm sad that I won't be able to read any more of her work. I'm also sad for the larger Chicago film community. It just lost one of its greatest champions. **FI**

🐦 @aimeelevitt

## IN MEMORIAM

# Remembering Andrea Gronvall

Farewell to a *Reader* contributor and much-valued colleague for more than 20 years.

By AIMEE LEVITT

Andrea Gronvall, a longtime film critic for the *Reader*, died of natural causes on September 4 in her apartment in Margate Park. As best as I can tell from our online archives, she filed her first review in 2004, of the documentary *Presence*, a portrait of the Swedish photographer Georg Oddner. Her last, of the new Keira Knightley espionage thriller *Official Secrets*, was in last week's paper. In

**HUSTLERS ★★★**

Directed by Lorene Scafaria. R, 110 min. In wide release.

**FILM***Hustlers***REVIEW**

## *Hustlers* focuses on women doing horrible things for understandable reasons

In Lorene Scafaria's latest, women take control of their lives by exploiting finance bros who exploit the common man.

By **LEAH PICKETT**

Generally speaking, cinephiles love onscreen gangsters. As the writer-director of the gangsteresque dramedy *Hustlers*, Lorene Scafaria, recently told the *New York Times*, “we can name 1,000 of those characters by their first and last names. We’ve enjoyed them.” Indeed, *Hustlers* feels akin to the crime films of both Martin Scorsese (*Goodfellas*, *Casino*) and Adam McKay (*The Big Short*, *Vice*).

This movie too is zingy, surreal, and wildly entertaining. The key difference between it and the many great films that depict men doing horrible things for understandable reasons—love, money, power—is that *Hustlers* asks, why not women?

Inspired by a real-life crime spree and a 2015 *New York* magazine article by Jessica Pressler that examined the ringleaders behind it, *Hustlers* follows Destiny (Constance Wu): a

novice in stripping who gets wise to the culture in Manhattan during the flashy mid-aughts. Newly employed at a club flush with Wall Street bros and cash in 2007, Destiny meets her mentor, Ramona (Jennifer Lopez), in a sequence that merits an updated definition of “legendary.” In the reflexive way that embattled women often recognize and embrace each other, Ramona envelops Destiny in her chin-chilla coat and teaches her the tricks of their trade—all of which boil down to how to best keep a man wanting and thus spending more.

Then the Great Recession hits, and many of the men who caused it vacate the clubs into which they’d once poured their ill-gotten gains. The financial crisis dovetails with Destiny becoming pregnant by a deadbeat boyfriend, retreating to Queens, and struggling to support her beloved grandmother and baby daughter with little more than a GED. In 2010, Destiny returns to the hollowed-out club of her heyday and to her friendship with Ramona, who has fresh recruits (Keke Palmer, Lili Reinhart) and a new plan. To expedite their usual process of teasing money out of

corporate suits, the quartet resorts to “fishing” for men, spiking their drinks with a blend of ketamine and MDMA, and maxing out their credit cards. “It’s stolen money,” Ramona tells Destiny, referring to their top clientele’s robbing of millions of people of their livelihoods. Why not steal it back?

The viewer’s proxy for this bonkers scheme is a journalist named Elizabeth (Julia Stiles), who interviews Destiny and Ramona individually in 2015. When Destiny starts waxing nostalgic about happier times, Elizabeth cuts in with, “Let’s get back to the drugging.” Her eyes widen at the audacity and absurdity of it all. When Destiny offers her a cup of tea, she hesitates before sipping. These comical cues feel necessary, but also a bit grating. Getting viewers to like male characters who kill people, sans apologia, has never been difficult, but persuading them to like female characters who hurt men is an altogether different beast. *Hustlers* chips away at that weird double standard, but stops short of obliterating it. The piling on of consequences grows thick in the end, eliciting viewers’ sympathy for a contrite ➔

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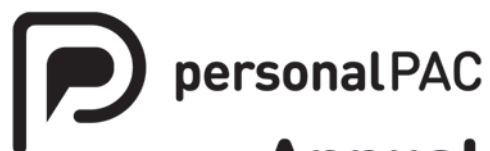
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## FILM



*Hustlers*

**continued from 63**

and seemingly reformed Destiny above all. Yet the first half of the film is more effective in generating empathy. We get to know and like these women before their actions turn rotten—and even then, their motivations are clear.

*Hustlers'* opening shot tracks Destiny from the dressing room through the strip club on her first night of work to Janet Jackson's "Control," which sets up the gaze through which the audience will view the narrative while revealing the protagonist's primary goal: Destiny wants to hold the reins of her own life. As she tells Ramona, who also is a single mom to a young daughter, "I don't want to rely on anyone for anything." Theirs is a platonic love affair, as Destiny's dreams ignite as she observes Ramona's fierce independence and entrepreneurial streak.

"When did things start to get out of control?" Elizabeth asks Destiny. "Ramona was always in control," Destiny replies. When these two are together, the men in the room tend to fuzz at the edges. "We are hurricanes," Ramona whispers in Destiny's ear. The men in their path are collateral damage. So when the women's world spins from dollar-drenched dreaminess into a no-hands-on-the-wheels nightmare, Destiny is at first too high in the whirlwind of their creation to register the change.

If they'd been born into better circumstances, if their lives had taken other turns, or if society functioned differently, these women might be working on Wall Street. Instead they start at the bottom of the strip club hierarchy, with club managers, security, and DJs taking deep cuts from their nightly earnings. But Ramona sees the scoreboard from above. Everyone is hustling, to varying degrees of success. "This whole country is a strip club," she says to Elizabeth in her interview. "You've got people tossing the money and people doing the dance." Ramona's mix of mama-bear cuddliness and long-sighted, feline ferocity

cements her place on film history's list of notable heavies. Her opening quip to Destiny, "Doesn't money make you horny?" encapsulates her worldview. Her code is capitalist to the extreme: Get money for yourself and your loved ones in this screwed-up world, and screw anyone who gets in your way.

*Hustlers*, it must be said, is hustle incarnate. The film's editor, production designer, the majority of the cast, and three of its executive producers are women (the other two are McKay and Will Ferrell). Scafaria, originally hired as *Hustlers'* screenwriter, had to convince her higher-ups that she, rather than Scorsese or McKay, should direct the picture. As producer Jessica Elbaum told the entertainment site *Vulture* in an oral history of the film's production, "We were prepping by February, we made the movie in March, we wrapped it in May, and the movie's coming out in September, which is insane." Crazier still is how the 29-day shoot and rush to theaters shows not at all in the movie itself. Impeccably acted, plotted, paced, researched, and composed, *Hustlers* is an immersive thrill ride through every lush and period-conscious frame.

On top of that, Scafaria avoids both romanticizing the strip-club scene and exoticizing the profession of her diverse ensemble. She shows the strippers' friendships and fights, base injustices and heightened coups, and how getting by looks different depending on where you stand. Rapper Cardi B—a former stripper herself—who appears in a crowd-pleasing cameo, has said that *Hustlers* matches many facets of her own experience. "I recommend every stripper to see it," she said of the film in an Instagram post. "Especially if you are a New York stripper—like, you definitely will relate." As a woman who hasn't climbed a pole for money but has had to dance in other ways (haven't we all?), I found myself relating too.

@leahkpickett





Give Me Liberty

to a panoramic cast of characters and an exhilarating filmmaking style. Set in working-class Milwaukee, the film spends a day with Vic, a 25-year-old Russian emigre who earns a living by driving a van for individuals with physical and/or intellectual disabilities. (All of the clients are played by nonprofessional actors with actual disabilities, which gives this an air of documentary realism.) He also commandeers the van for personal use; much of the film's conflict derives from Vic trying to do his job while transporting a dozen Russian seniors to a relative's funeral. Mikhanovsky, who cowrote the script with producer Alice Austen, also edited the film, and he maintains an unpredictable, arrhythmic progression that heightens the sense of ever-mounting stress. One minor crisis gives rise to another, making the protagonist seem like a magnet for chaos. Wittily and dynamically, the film makes palpable the struggle to do well by people in need. In English and subtitled Russian. —**BEN SACHS** 110 min. Mikhanovsky and coscreenwriter Alice Austin attend the Friday 7 PM screening. Music Box

### Homework

A major film (1989) by the greatest of all Iranian filmmakers, Abbas Kiarostami, this is an idiosyncratic though mainly straightforward 16-millimeter documentary about the homework done by boys in primary school, with the interviews carried out by Kiarostami himself. For all the simplicity of its approach, this film has a great deal

to impart about Iran during its war with Iraq, and some of the unorthodox formal procedures carried out by Kiarostami are as provocative as in his subsequent documentary masterpiece, *Close-up*; moreover, the director seems every bit as adept as Truffaut at handling children with respect. In Persian with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 78 min. Fri 9/13 and Mon 9/16, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

### Raise Hell: The Life & Times of Molly Ivins

Documentary filmmaker Janice Engel shines a light on political columnist and all-around badass Molly Ivins in *Raise Hell: The Life and Times of Molly Ivins*. The feature-length documentary lays out Ivins's life, starting from her adolescence in Houston as a six-foot 12-year-old who didn't fit in with her peers through her early

### NOW PLAYING

#### The Breakfast Club

John Hughes's 1985 film seems meant to explain 80s youngsters to yesterday's youth, and comes to the comforting conclusion that they're just as alienated, idealistic, and vulnerable as the baby boomers of the 1960s. The chosen format is the Broadway encounter group, in which a circle of cross-sectional characters (one from every major high school social group) get together to swap dreams and anxieties and come out with a better understanding of themselves and the world they live in; needless to say, these kids wouldn't so much as speak to each other in real life. —**DAVE KEHR** R, 97 min. Fri 9/13-Mon 9/16, 11 PM. Logan

#### Calamity Jane

An elaboration of the concept of *Annie Get Your Gun*—not to mention Doris Day's tomboy image in *On Moonlight Bay*—this 1953 western musical is perhaps best remembered for its Oscar-winning tune "Secret Love"; otherwise there's Howard Keel as Wild Bill Hickok, direction by David Butler, and all that kinky cross-dressing. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 101 min. 35 mm. Sun 9/15, 11:30 AM. Music Box

#### For Heaven's Sake

It doesn't have the airtight construction that defines the best of Harold Lloyd's feature comedies, but the individual sequences—including a climactic, car-hopping chase through downtown Los Angeles—are executed with an aerodynamic verve. In this one, Harold is a rich kid (he buys a new car to match his suit, wrecks it, and calmly lights a cigarette from the smoldering ruins) smitten by a lovely evangelist (Jobyna Ralston) who works skid row. The print in circulation, unfortunately, has been "tightened" for television showings, thus perpetuating the false idea that silent comedies consist solely of nonstop freneticism. Sam Taylor directed (1926). —**DAVE KEHR** 57 min. 35 mm. Showing with the 1920 Hal Roach-directed Lloyd short *An Eastern Westerner* (23 min., 35 mm). Dennis Scott provides live accompaniment. Sat 9/14, 11:30 AM. Music Box

### RR Give Me Liberty

Kirill Mikhanovsky's autobiographical black comedy deals with a very specific place and experience, yet it always feels thoroughly expansive, thanks

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## FILM

→ days as a journalist, writing exposés of local racial disparity. By the late 70s, Ivins (as the title suggests) was raising hell at the *New York Times* and, later on, in her column in the *Dallas Times Herald*, and subsequently the *Nation*—often targeting political figures and offering scathing observations on government. Ivins passed away in 2007, and *Raise Hell* features interviews with Rachel Maddow and Dan Rather that illuminate how journalism has changed since Ivins's time in the industry and how she paved the way for modern political commentary. Though the documentary doesn't feature any conservative talking heads to balance out its liberal voice, anyone could leave the film unsettled by how relevant Ivins's commentary remains today. —**MARISSA DE LA CERDA** 93 min. *Landmark's Century Centre*

### Say Amen, Somebody

George T. Nierenberg's entertaining 1982 documentary on gospel music features performances by and interviews with some remarkable primary sources: Thomas A. Dorsey, the inventor of the style; Willie Mae Ford Smith, its leading practitioner in the 30s and 40s; and the Barrett Sisters, a trio hitting their prime. The film escapes the sanctimoniousness endemic to so many movies of this type by its inclusion of funny, messy domestic scenes that touch on the conflicts of evangelism and entertainment, domesticity and show-business success, that possess these highly professional amateurs. When Nierenberg downplays the potentially alienating reli-



*Raise Hell: The Life & Times of Molly Ivins*

gious fanaticism that defines the movement, he is being crafty and a little dishonest; his film sacrifices reportage to likability, but it is very likable indeed. —**DAVE KEHR** 100 min. *Nierenberg attends the screenings, each of which will be preceded by a 30-minute live gospel performance. Sat 9/14-Sun 9/15, 4 PM. Music Box*

### ALSO PLAYING

#### American Dreamer

Jim Gaffigan stars as a desperate ride-share driver who

kidnaps a drug dealer's kid. Derrick Borte directed. *R, 93 min. Gaffigan, Borte, and producer Scott Lochmus attend the screening. Mon 9/16, 7 PM. Music Box*

#### Differently, Molussia

This 2012 experimental French drama by filmmaker Nicolas Rey explores fascism in a fictional totalitarian country; its nine sections are shown in random order at each screening. *In German with subtitles. 81 min. 16 mm. Rey attends the screening. Thu 9/19, 7 PM. Cinema Borealis*

#### Drive-In

Rod Amateau directed this 1976 comedy about teens hanging out at a Texas drive-in theater. *PG, 96 min. 35 mm. Wed 9/18, 7:30 PM. Northeastern Illinois University*


#### Eleven P.M.

A street singer promises to care for the son of a murdered gangster—even if he has to come back from the dead to do it. Richard D. Maurice wrote, produced, directed, and stars in this 1928 “race film.” *60 min. Jay Warren provides live accompaniment. Wed 9/18, 7:30 PM. Beverly Arts Center*

#### The Goldfinch

John Crowley directed this adaptation of Donna Tartt's novel about a boy who loses his mother in a terrorist attack at a museum who later falls into a criminal life, with the titular painting, which he stole during the chaos at the museum, playing a pivotal role in his life. *R, 149 min. AMC Dine-in Block 37, ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, River East 21, 600 N. Michigan*

#### I'm Leaving Now

Lindsey Cordero and Armando Croda directed this U.S.-Mexican documentary chronicling the difficulties faced by an undocumented Mexican immigrant living in New York over the course of two years. In English and subtitled Spanish. *74 min. Facets Cinematheque* 

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Sat 9/14, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$15. 21+

## PICK OF THE WEEK

### Australian scuzz-rockers Tropical Fuck Storm sharpen their slow burn on *Braindrops*

FOR THE PAST DECADE OR SO, there's been a heavy influx of gnarly rawk bands from down under who know their dark Aussie-punk history. Contemporary groups such as Deaf Wish, Amyl & the Sniffers, and No Sister seem to have absorbed into their own DNA the damaged sonic splatter of their fucked-up Oz ancestors: the Cosmic Psychos, the Scientists, Feedtime, and the godfathers of them all, the Boys Next Door/the Birthday Party. Such is also the case with the colorfully named Tropical Fuck Storm. TFS have roots in late-90s/early-aughts band the Drones, founded in Perth in 1997 by future TFS front man and guitarist Gareth Liddiard. For nearly two decades, the group straddled the line between enticingly melodic and maniacally dangerous, with epic tunes that escalated into dissonant scrapes of pure noise. Liddiard's partner Fionna Kitschin joined the Drones on bass and vocals in 2002, and after the band went on hiatus in 2016, the couple launched TFS. When the duo were booked for a U.S. tour with King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard, they quickly added members of other di-

verse Australian groups, including Lauren Hammel of metal screamers High Tension and Erica Dunn of postpunk trio Mod Con and minimalist indie torch-song duo Palm Springs. Once the lineup solidified, Tropical Fuck Storm began composing tunes, releasing a few 45s before putting out their savage debut LP, 2018's *A Laughing Death in Meatspace*. Soon after, they signed with Joyful Noise, and just last month they dropped their latest album, *Braindrops* (released by Flightless in Australia). The title track features Tropical Fuck Storm's trademark slow burn of off-kilter, bendy guitars, dystopian lyrics, and a buildup that explodes into a completely modern, experimental, overdriven, blooz-scuzz racket. That urgency also comes out strongly in their live performances; in their surreal appearance on Aussie comedy show *Tonightly With Tom Ballard*, they absolutely destroy while maintaining actual hooks and dynamics. Miss this far-traveling band and risk waiting a while for another chance at their good old-fashioned down-under rock kick to thee gut. —STEVE KRAKOW

## THURSDAY 12

**SAUL WILLIAMS** Akenya opens. 8:30 PM, *Thalia Hall*, 1807 S. Allport, \$28-\$45. 17+

Saul Williams is a one-man multimedia juggernaut: he's had successful careers as a screenwriter and actor, but he's earned his greatest fame as a poet and MC. His new sixth studio album, *Encrypted and Vulnerable* (Pirates Blend), includes a track whose title aptly sums up his musical evolution: "Experiment." Though Williams's first major recording was a collaboration with KRS-One ("Oceans Within," from the soundtrack to the 1998 film *Slam*, which Williams cowrote and starred in), he has largely bypassed the usual musical routes followed by hip-hop artists. His earliest albums are heavily rock influenced, and feature his distinct linguistic flow—he sounds like he's reciting the words to his songs rather than chanting in rhythm. *Encrypted*, the second in a series of three albums that are part of Williams's multiterred

MartyrLoserKing project, has a more pronounced electronica feel, with less emphasis on percussion and more on his voice—which is often altered with electronic effects until it feels like another instrument in the mix. He soars over the keyboards in "Before the War" like a one-man string section, while on "People Above the Moon" he overdubs layers of backing vocals to create sweet harmonies with his leads. Williams can also use his voice as a weapon if he has to—his towering sense of dynamics gives even his whispers the same weight as shouts.

—JAMES PORTER

## FRIDAY 13

**COCK SPARRER** See also Saturday. *This set is part of Riot Fest. 4:40 PM (gates at 11 AM), Radicals Stage, Douglas Park, 1401 S. Sacramento, riotfest.org, \$50-\$550 for single-day passes, \$100-\$170 for two-day passes, \$150-\$1,500*

for three-day passes. ALL

Foundational British street-punk band Cock Sparrer formed in 1972, but their most recent album, 2017's *Forever*, shows the troupe still at the peak of their powers. (Colin McFaull's voice is roughly a half-octave lower than in the band's early days, but that's hardly a quibble.) Aside from Blitz and the Cockney Rejects, the majority of the oi! and street punk that poured out of the UK during the Thatcher era has aged reprehensibly, and from the vantage point of 2019 seems perilously apolitical. That said, Cock Sparrer's 1982 album, *Shock Troops*, remains essentially peerless. The band generally don't write from a political agenda, other than mining the us-versus-them territory that's de rigueur in punk lyricism and celebrating their working-class bona fides. On "Watch Your Back" they make a case that extreme politics of any kind come at the detriment of blue-collar populations: "Everybody's talking about smash the state / Sounds to me like the final solution / Right wing, left wing, full of hate."

Like the Rejects, Cock Sparrer mostly function as dispatchers of good-time party music, with tunes crafted for sing-alongs among a bunch of drunken friends. At their best, they combine timeless themes with musical elements that nod to the UK's folkloric past: on the *Shock Troops* cut "We're Coming Back," for instance, the opening guitar line bleeds into McFaull singing to some distant friend and imploring them to keep their head up. It's instantly nostalgic and winsome but also wiry, tough, and artfully concise. —DAVE CANTOR

**BILL MACKAY & NATHAN BOWLES** See also Sunday. 6 PM, *Hideout*, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$10. 21+

Even if you don't know their names, you may already have heard Bill MacKay and Nathan Bowles. The former is a local guitarist whose versatility has enabled him to conjure late-night streetscapes with poet Dmitry Samarov, make like the Velvet Under- ➔

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Sun, Sept. 22 - Nobody's Girl / Colin Gilmore Band

Wed, Sept. 25 - Greyhounds

Thu, Sept. 26 - Country Night - New Heartaches, Los Gallos

Fri, Sept. 27 - Concerts In The Yard - The Bottle Rockets

Fri, Sept. 27 (In Club @10) - The Red Elvises

Tue, Oct. 1 - WDCB Bluesday Tuesday / Toronzo Cannon

Fri, Oct. 4 - The Bama Lamas, Miss Barbara Clifford and

Shakin' Tail Feathers, Gina Marie & The Golden Bucks

Fri, Oct. 11 - Nora Jane Struthers

Sat, Oct. 12 - The Bros. Landreth

Thu, Oct. 17 - Slaid Cleaves

Fri, Oct. 18 - Smooth Hound Smith

Sat, Oct. 19 - Expo '76

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SEPTEMBER 18	MORSE & WAGNER 5:30PM
	MICHELLE SHAFER 9PM
SEPTEMBER 20	THE RUST DAISY TRIBUTE EXTRAVAGANZA 7PM
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	THE YAPS
SEPTEMBER 21	CITY IN A GARDEN
SEPTEMBER 22	WHOLESMERADIO DJ NIGHT
SEPTEMBER 23	RC BIG BAND 7PM
SEPTEMBER 25	NUCLEAR JAZZ QUARTET
SEPTEMBER 26	AMERICAN TROUBADOUR NIGHT
SEPTEMBER 28	STRAY BOLTS
SEPTEMBER 29	DJ SKID LICIOUS

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## MUSIC

continued from 67

ground with Circuit des Yeux, and roll with the mercurial jams of folk-rocker Ryley Walker. The latter is a North Carolina-based banjo and percussion player who has put driving rock beats behind singer-songwriters Steve Gunn and Jake Xerxes Fussell, evoked the void with improvisational drone outfit Pelt, and kicked up the sawdust with old-time dance band the Black Twig Pickers. Each has also sustained a solo career. MacKay distills folk-rooted songcraft, swooping slide licks, and psychedelic leads into vivid audio travelogues on his recent LPs for Drag City, the latest being March's *Fountain Fire*. Bowles stirs together expansive American Primitive reveries and antic acoustic roots-rock with dashes of minimalist composition and spiritual jazz on his most recent solo LP, last year's *Plainly Mistaken* (Paradise of Bachelors). The two men have played together just once, at the 2018 Cropped Out Festival in Louisville, Kentucky, and that set went so well that they're reviving the duo this weekend. The plan is to work up arrangements of material from their respective solo records using various acoustic stringed instruments and percussive devices, then let their improvisational instincts grow things from there. On Friday, MacKay and Bowles play two outdoor sets as part of the Hideout's Picnics on the Porch series; on Sunday, they appear at the Ravenswood Art Walk. —**BILL MEYER**

**CARL STONE** Joshua Abrams's *Natural Information Society* opens. 8:30 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, \$17. 18+

American composer Carl Stone has been making sample-based music for decades, but his recent albums *Baroo* and *Himalaya* (his first solo releases in 12 years) show that he's still refining his craft. These days he primarily deals with what composer John Oswald christened "plunderphonics"—meticulously cutting up samples of music from around the world and transforming them into evocative new pieces. Stone has experimented with this technique in the past, such as on his 1990 composition "Mom's," but his latest results are far more emotive and technically impressive. Part of what makes Stone's music so fascinating is that his songs extract and magnify the specific rhythms, timbres, and moods of his source material. On "Panchita," he takes Ayumi Hamasaki's "Moments" and turns her vocals into a series of glitches, highlighting the gradual swells in her melodies through rigorous fragmentation. On "Han Yan," Stone shreds joyful Congolese guitar melodies into a million bits, but thanks to his ingenious edits, their ebullient charm still comes through. On the final two songs of *Himalaya*, he sets aside this method of precise deconstruction in favor of long-form drones: on its title track, one of the most mesmerizing pieces in Stone's oeuvre, vocalist Akahirume patiently recites lyrics in a clear, resounding operatic timbre that foregrounds the simple power of the human voice. No matter what his methodology, Stone is an excellent musical excavator, unearthing new beauty from whatever work he touches. —**JOSHUA MINSOO KIM**



Saul Williams @ GEORDIE WOOD

## SATURDAY 14

**COCK SPARRER** See Friday. Clowns open. 10 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 2105 S. State, sold out. 17+

**DUSTER** *Living Hour* opens. 9 PM, *Sleeping Village*, 3734 W. Belmont, sold out. 21+

You can't talk about San Jose slowcore trio Duster in 2019 without talking about their fan base—whose numbers surged after the band broke up in 2001. During the five years the group existed, they released two albums and a few seven-inches (mostly through Seattle indie Up Records) filled with grainy, sedate rock, recorded onto stolen cassettes using half-broken gear. But their efforts went largely overlooked, and the band split up without achieving much recognition beyond a favorable Pitchfork review of their second album, 2000's *Contemporary Movement* (though the site had yet to develop the clout it has now). That same year, Up Records cofounder Chris Takino died of leukemia and Duster's catalog went out of print, which nearly cast them into oblivion. But over the next couple decades, young listeners began to find their way to the band, discovering older siblings' copies of their albums, or learning about them on 4chan's music board, or from emerging indie darlings who've claimed Duster as an influence (hello, Girlpool). The band's inviting, enigmatic sound coupled with the mystique around them drove new demand for their recordings, and extant copies of Duster's vinyl releases began selling for hundreds of dollars—their 1998 debut, *Stratosphere*, reached \$391.18 on Discogs. Last year, Duster kicked off what's become an →

Find more music listings at  
[chicagoreader.com/soundboard](http://chicagoreader.com/soundboard).

## FESTIVALS

Hip-hop in a park, folk music in a bar, art on the sidewalk, and more

### CAMP SMOKEY BEAR

See Gossip Wolf, page 74. Sat 9/14, noon-9 PM, Camp Shabonna Woods, 15810 Torrence, South Holland, general admission free, VIP packages \$25-\$400. 🎫

### MIDWEST SING & STOMP

This daylong fest puts the spotlight on the myriad folk musics and traditional dances that have become part of Chicago culture. Sat 9/14, 2 PM-midnight, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, \$15-20. 21+

### RAVENSWOOD ART WALK

This pedestrian-friendly fest showcases local artists and businesses, and its two stages of live music feature performances from Of Wondrous Legend (O.W.L.), Glyders, Junegrass, Seres de Luz, and others. Sat 9/14 and Sun 9/15, 11 AM-6 PM, Ravenswood and Belle Plaine, \$5 suggested donation. 🎫

### RIOT FEST

This hometown punk festival celebrates its 15th year with three days of bands in Douglas Park, with sets from Blink-182, Bikini Kill, Cock Sparrer (see page 67), and dozens of others. Fri 9/13 through Sun 9/15, 11 AM-10 PM, Ogden and Sacramento, \$49.98-149.98. 🎫

### WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL CHICAGO

See page 35. Fri 9/13 through Sun 9/29, multiple venues, many shows all ages. FREE

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10/17 NAPALM DEATH  
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10/19 GHOSTLY 20  
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Boris @MIKI MATSUSHIMA

### continued from 68

extensive reunion by opening a New York show for one of their acolytes, (Sandy) Alex G, and they've also been working on new material. Earlier this year Numero Group reissued their catalog as a box set called *Capsule Losing Contact*, which includes a previously unreleased single, the anxious "What You're Doing to Me." Both the vinyl and CD versions of *Capsule Losing Contact* are sold out, but the set is streamable via the usual channels, allowing anyone to experience a long, uninterrupted trip through the cosmos with Duster steering the ship. —LEOR GALIL

**ELIZABETH MOEN** *Holly* opens. 9 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, \$12. 18+

Iowa singer-songwriter Elizabeth Moen started performing only about four years ago, but she hardly sounds like a beginner. The 25-year-old has a soul-deep voice with a ragged, sensual edge that's poised between bluesy world-weariness and folk innocence. The first tune Moen wrote, "Songbird," is an achingly wistful love song to song, and it's fully realized perfection. "I wish I could swoop you into my wings / But I'm just a songbird outside your window," she sings as she strums on an acoustic guitar, capturing the hope of an aspiring performer with a rare, sweet clarity. Nothing on her self-released second album, 2018's *A Million Miles Away*, quite

reaches the level of that initial burst of passion and yearning, but its mix of alt-rock, country, and soul has its own pleasures. Her band's stoned clatter nicely sets off the smoky, Amy Winehouse-tinged exploration of lust and regret on "Red," and even better is "Time Is a Shitty Friend," where Moen's vocals come in exhausted bursts while the indie-rock instrumental alternately chimes and roars behind her. "Time, she isn't always right," she sings wryly, "and doesn't always have your back." For a young performer on the cusp of success, the ticking of the clock has to be an audible threat. Being talented and ready isn't always enough, and it's hard to know if Moen will get through that window, but it's worth listening to her try. —NOAH BERLATSKY

**TROPICAL FUCK STORM** See *Pick of the Week*, page 67. **Conan Neutron & the Secret Friends and Basement Family** open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$15. 21+

## SUNDAY 15

**BILL MACKAY & NATHAN BOWLES** See *Friday*. *Part of the Ravenswood Art Walk* (see *festivals at left*). 2:45 PM (music begins at 11 AM), Greater Ravenswood Chamber Stage, Ravenswood and Belle Plaine, \$5 suggested donation. 18

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# THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST PUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE

## IN MEMORIAM PEDRO BELL

ON AUGUST 27 WE LOST PEDRO BELL, WHO ENVISIONED THE GROOVING MADNESS OF P-FUNK/FUNKADELIC WITH CARTOONY FUTURISTIC DRAWINGS THAT ARE STILL SYNONYMOUS WITH "THE FUNK." KNOWN AS "CAPTAIN DRAW," "SIR LLEG," AND "PEDRO DELIC," BELL WAS BORN IN CHICAGO IN 1950, AND HE SOUGHT ESCAPE FROM A STRICT RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING IN COMIC BOOKS & SCIENCE FICTION. HE STUDIED ART AT ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY WITH THE PROGRESSIVE DON BAUM & DID RECORD REVIEWS AND COMICS FOR THE SCHOOL PAPER (LATER REPRODUCED IN ROCTOBER MAGAZINE). HE SENT DECORATED ENVELOPES INSPIRED BY UNDERGROUND ARTIST ROBERT WILLIAMS AND HOT-ROD CARTOONIST BIG DADDY ROTH TO THE LIKES OF SUN RA, ZAPPA, & FUNKADELIC, AND IN 1970 HE HEARD BACK FROM GEORGE CLINTON. BELL SOON BEGAN MAKING ART FOR FUNKADELIC, STARTING WITH FLYERS AND DOING HIS 1ST LP COVER FOR 1973'S "COSMIC SLOP." AS CLINTON'S WEBSITE SAYS: "WHAT PEDRO BELL HAD DONE WAS INVERT PSYCHEDELIA THROUGH THE GHETTO. LIKE AN URBAN HIERONYMOUS BOSCH, HE CROSS-SECTED THE SUBLIME AND THE HIDEOUS TO JARRING EFFECT." IN HIS METICULOUS LINER NOTES, BELL SHAPED THE GROUP'S SUBVERSIVE NARRATIVE, CASTING ITS MEMBERS AS SUPERHEROES ("MAGIC

MIKE "HAMPTON," "STINGRAY" DAVIS) AND INVENTING CONZO JARGON ("THUMPASAURUS," "BOP GUNS). AFTER FUNKADELIC'S "THE ELECTRIC SPANKING OF WAR BABIES" IN 1981, HE DID ART FOR VARIOUS CLINTON PROJECTS, ENDING WITH 2007'S "BY THE WAY OF THE DRUM." SADLY BELL RARELY GOT PAID FOR HIS WORK, SO HE HELD JOBS AT A POST OFFICE, FOR AN AUTO-PARTS MANUFACTURER, AND AS A SECURITY GUARD; HE ALSO REVIEWED RECORDS IN COMIC FORM FOR THE VILLAGE VOICE. HE BECAME LEGALLY BLIND IN 1996, AND AS HIS VISION DETERIORATED, HIS ASSISTANTS TOOK OVER DRAWING DETAILS. BELL'S WORK EVENTUALLY BEGAN APPEARING IN GALLERY EXHIBITS, INCLUDING THE MCA'S "SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL" IN 2007 AND THE CULTURAL CENTER'S "AFRICAN AMERICAN DESIGNERS IN CHICAGO" IN 2018. BY 2009 HE WAS LIVING IN THE HYDE PARK ARMS SRO, AND HE SPENT HIS FINAL YEARS AT THE CHICAGO RIDGE NURSING AND REHAB CENTER. LET'S HOPE BELL'S DEATH WILL SPUR A REASSESSMENT OF HIS GROUND-BREAKING WORK.

- THANKS TO: MARC FISCHER, P. MONTORO, & SALEM COLLO-JUIN

TUNE INTO THE RADIO VERSION OF "THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC" ON "OUTSIDE THE LOOP" ON WGN RADIO 720AM, SATURDAY AT 6AM WITH HOST MIKE STEPHEN. COMMENTS, IDEAS TO ARCHIVED @ OUTSIDETHELOOPRADIO.COM [plasticcw@hotmail.com](mailto:plasticcw@hotmail.com)

## TUESDAY 17

**BORIS, UNIFORM** 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$20. 18+

Japanese metal trio **Boris** have been at it for nearly 30 years, and over the course of nearly 40 full-length releases and collaborative albums they've covered nearly the entire spectrum of loud, harsh, and heavy music. On the band's latest single, "Love" (the first taste of the upcoming album *LΦVE & EVΦL*), they blur the lines separating all the genres they've mastered in the past: massive waves of doomy sludge give way to smeared,

hazy, psychedelic shoegaze vocals, which makes the track sound crushingly miserable, pensive, and uplifting all at once. Boris aren't just one of the most prolific bands of this generation, they're also one of the best—everything they cook up is great, and "Love" is no exception. Opening up for them on tour are New York industrial duo **Uniform**, aka former Drunkdriver singer Michael Berdan and recording engineer Ben Greenberg (formerly of the Men). Uniform have cultivated a massive output over their five-year career, and their latest release, *Everything That Dies Someday Comes Back*, is their second LP collaboration with fellow experimental noise-metal duo the Body. The record is another dose of blistering, creepy electronic hard- ➔

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## MUSIC

### continued from 71

core from two of the best bands in the game right now. Boris and Uniform are both known for massive-sounding, mind-bending performances, so miss this show—or forget your earplugs—at your peril.

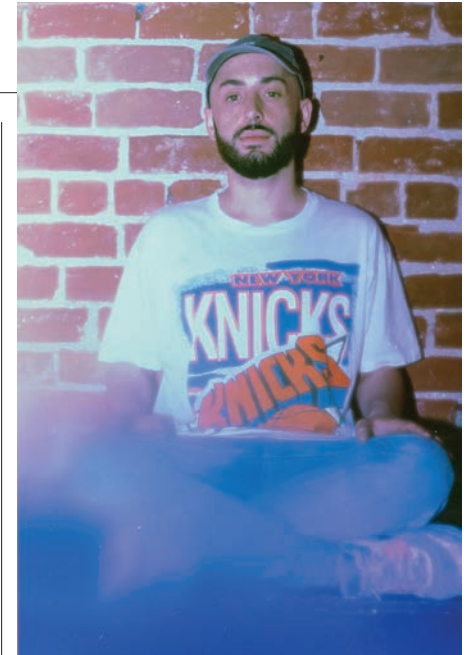
—LUCA CIMARUSTI

**CROSS RECORD** *Fauvely and You Folk* open.  
8 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, \$12. 18+

Emily Cross started Cross Record in Chicago as a solo experimental-pop project and morphed it into a full band shortly before moving to Austin. But soon after Cross Record put out their debut full-length, 2016's *Wabi Sabi* (Ba Da Bing), front woman Cross decided to give the group a rest. She became a death doula, providing holistic support for people in the last moments of life, and formed the folk-leaning band Loma with Shearwater's Jonathan Meiburg and her husband, Dan Duszynski (also her chief collaborator in Cross Record). While Loma recorded their 2018 self-titled debut for Sub Pop, Cross and Duszynski got divorced and Cross relaunched Cross Record as her own creative outlet. On Cross Record's new self-titled album (also on Ba Da Bing), Cross and a handful of collaborators create beguiling intimacy through simple piano melodies, somber clarinet lines, and trembling electronics. The songs feel sacred and private, even when Cross steers her ambient style toward the symphonic on "Y/O Dragon," with its boiling bass synth, chatty percussion, and busy, bell-like synth melody. Cross recently told Bandcamp that making this album reminded her of what it felt like when she first began making music: "Really pure, and exploratory in a really nice, comfortable way." By tapping into that energy, Cross has delivered something enchanting. —LEOR GALIL



Emily Cross of Cross Record  
© JACKSON MONTGOMERY SCHWARTZ




Jade Lilitri of Oso Oso © JAVI PEREZ

## WEDNESDAY 18

**OSO OSO** *Sidekicks, Future Teens, and Dogleg* open. 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, \$15. 17+

Oso Oso front man Jade Lilitri makes sweetly catchy, straightforward rock songs like he was born to do it. Though he's a veteran of the east-coast independent emo scene, he couldn't find a label for Oso Oso's second album, 2017's *Yunahon Mixtape*, so he put it out himself as a pay-what-you-want release on Bandcamp. The album gained a cult following, and pop-punk-focused indie label Triple Crown reissued it the following year. Despite that late success, he seems to understand that the odds are stacked against him because he's working within a critically maligned subgenre. That reality gives Oso Oso's new third album, *Basking in the Glow* (Triple Crown), an internal tension, and Lilitri's motivation comes through clearly. These euphoric songs get extra punch from a quixotic sense that they're hoping against hope, which is especially welcome when simply glancing at the day's news can send you spiraling into despair. *Basking in the Glow* acts as a balm and an energy drink, and its irrepressible melodies tell us that chasing an impossible dream can be a joy unto itself. —LEOR GALIL

### SAMSON YOUNG: WORLD FAIR MUSIC

A conversation between artist Young & curator Orianna Cacchione is interspersed with musical works led by Samson Young. 5:30 PM, Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan. Free with tickets, which can be reserved at [cso.org](http://cso.org). 


The 1933 Chicago World's Fair, titled A Century of Progress International Exposition, was touted as a celebration of modern innovation, and its grand aspirations were not without merit. Even though it took place during the depths of the Great Depression, it was so successful that its run was extended into 1934. With these events serving as inspira-



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[chicagoreader.com/soundboard](http://chicagoreader.com/soundboard).

## MUSIC

tion, Chicago Symphony Center will host "Samson Young: World Fair Music," which will feature a conversation between Hong Kong-based artist and composer Samson Young and Orianna Cacchione, curator of global contemporary art for the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art, punctuated by performances of music composed for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Describing Young as a "multi-disciplinary artist" hardly does justice to the variety of mediums he incorporates into his projects. Trained in music composition at the University of Sydney, the University of Hong Kong, and Princeton University, Young is unbound by formal conventions, and he often blends visual and audio elements in inventive combinations. As a visual artist, he's made a series of "sound drawings" that visually represent musical bars, noises ("boom"), and effects ("tremo-

lo") without any accompanying audio. Likewise, visuals are often essential to his compositions and performances; in his 2014 presentation of Muted Situation: #1 Muted String Quartet, the ensemble "plays" two violins, a viola, and a cello without touching their bows to their strings, creating only the muffled notes produced by the action of their fingers on the instruments' necks. Though Young hasn't revealed the full details of tonight's program, the CSO ticket site teases "a few surprises," so the audience should come prepared to engage their ears and eyes in an experience beyond the norms of symphony performance. This concert coincides with the opening of Young's first U.S. museum exhibition, "Samson Young: Silver Moon or Golden Star, Which Will You Buy of Me?," which runs through December 29 at the Smart Museum. —AUDREY HENDERSON 

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# EARLY WARNINGS

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

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Kim Petras BYRON SPENCER

## NEW

**Andrew W.K.** 12/31, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+  
**Audien** 11/15, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM, 18+  
**Berner** 10/22, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Big Head Todd & the Monsters** 2/22, 8 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM, 18+  
**Bonerama** 12/14, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston  
**Bossa IV, King Tuts Tomb** 10/16, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**David Boykin: Abeeku** 9/28, 3:30 PM, Little Black Pearl  
**Joey Brink** 9/29, 1 PM, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel  
**Danny Brown, Ashnikko, Zelooperz** 11/7, 9 PM, Metro, 18+  
**Maggie Brown Group** 9/29, 2 PM, Midway Plaisance at Woodlawn  
**Ari Brown Quintet** 9/28, 1:30 PM, Midway Plaisance at Woodlawn  
**Cash Cash, R3hab** 1/18, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+  
**Cashmere Cat** 12/13, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM, 18+  
**Chicago Fringe Opera Season Kick-Off** 9/24, 5:30 PM, Lagunitas Chicago Tap Room  
**Claudettes, Joslyn & the Sweet Compression, Daisy-chain** 11/16, 9 PM, Hideout  
**Cold War Kids** 1/25/20, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+  
**Isaiah Collier & the Chosen Few: The Story of 400 Years** 9/28, 9:30 PM, Logan Center for the Arts  
**Shemekia Copeland, Kevin Burt** 12/26-12/27, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 9/13, noon  
**Cosmic Country Showcase**

featuring **Scott Hirsch, Alex Grelle, Camilo Medina, Caroline Campbell, Irregular Girl, Andrew Sa** 10/25, 9 PM, Hideout  
**Sylvie Courvoisier & Mary Halvorson** 9/28, 7 PM, Logan Center for the Arts  
**Orbert Davis Sextet: In the Spirit** 9/28, 2:30 PM, Hyde Park Union Church  
**Angel Bat Dawid's Requiem for Jazz** 9/28, 1 PM, Logan Center for the Arts  
**Dead Horses** 12/5, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM  
**Deeper, Slow Pulp, Girl K** 10/5, 9 PM, Hideout  
**Dirt Monkey** 1/18/20, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+  
**Disco Biscuits** 1/2/20-1/4/20, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+  
**Jerry Douglas (solo)** 11/14, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM  
**Dried Spider, Tommy Carroll's Calculated Discomfort, Half Stop** 9/19, 9 PM, Schubas  
**El Famous, Makena, Growing, Heartsick, Havens** 10/5, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Emo Nite LA** 11/1, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Englewood Jazz Festival day one with 2019 Spirit of Jazz Awards presentation, Maurice Brown Quintet, Englewood/Soweto Exchange, and more** 9/21, noon, Hamilton Park  
**Englewood Jazz Festival day two with Nicole Mitchell Ensemble, Corey Wilkes Quartet, David Boykin Quartet, and more** 9/22, noon, Hamilton Park  
**Eoto, Pnuma Trio** 11/9, 10 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+  
**Fission, Chaos in Creation, Honeydew Squeeze** 9/22, 5:30 PM, Bottom Lounge

**For the Fallen Dreams** 10/1, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Fort Frances** 12/5, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Alasdair Fraser & Natalie Haas** 11/10, 3 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 9/13, 9 AM  
**George Freeman/Mike Allemana Organ Quartet** 9/20, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Winter's Jazz Club  
**Tia Fuller's Diamond Cut** 9/28, 8:15 PM, Midway Plaisance at Woodlawn  
**Futuristic, Scribe Cash, Yonas** 10/25, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+  
**Gioli & Assia** 11/15, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Gorgon City** 12/28, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+  
**Green Day, Fall Out Boy, Weezer** 8/13/20, 5:30 PM, Wrigley Field, on sale Fri 9/20, 10 AM  
**HaitiDansCo with drummer Rodrigue Jean-Baptiste** 9/29, 1 PM, Experimental Station  
**Dana Hall's Spring** 9/28, 6:15 PM, Midway Plaisance at Woodlawn  
**Angelo Hart Trio** 9/28, 4 PM, Hyde Park Bank  
**Harvey Fox, Daydream Review, Space Gators** 10/20, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Hunter Diamond New Works Residency: Grit** 9/24, 9 PM, Whistler  
**Iré Else Abure, Afro-Cuban dance with Edson Cabrera** 11/1, 8:30 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music  
**Irish Christmas in America with Niamh Farrell, Séamus Begley** 11/30, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 9/13, 9 AM  
**Syleena Johnson** 1/10/20, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery, on sale

Fri 9/13, noon  
**Richard Johnson (solo)** 9/28, 3:30 PM, Logan Center for the Arts  
**Willie Jones III Sextet featuring Renee Neufville** 9/28, 5 PM, Logan Center for the Arts  
**Aaron Kamm & the One Drops, Zoofunkyou** 11/2, 9 PM, Schubas  
**Karuna (Hamid Drake & Adam Rudolph)** 9/28, 3 PM, Augustana Lutheran Church  
**Samuel Kerridge, Stave, Prostitutes, Todd Mattei** 10/17, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Last Waltz tour with Warren Haynes, Jamey Johnson, and more** 11/21, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre  
**Albert Lee** 1/4/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston  
**Lockbox, Faithful, Equip (DJ set), Reckless DJs** 9/22, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Bill MacKay & Katinka Kleijn** 9/28, 5 PM, Augustana Lutheran Church  
**Matroda** 10/17, 10 PM, Spy Bar  
**Menzingers, Tigers Jaw, Culture Abuse** 10/26, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+  
**Moonlight Disco featuring Sweater Beats** 11/1, 9 PM, Cerise Rooftop at Virgin Hotels Chicago, on sale Fri 9/13  
**Mungion** 12/28-12/31, 9 PM, Martyrs'  
**Neighbor Lady** 9/22, 8:30 PM, Hideout  
**Night Moves, Pleasures** 11/17, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village  
**No Men, Bleach Party, Click-bait** 10/31, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Shanta Nurullah Trio** 9/28, 3:30 PM, Oriental Institute Museum  
**Peaer** 10/19, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Kim Petras** 11/27, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre  
**Radical Face** 2/28/20, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM  
**R.A.P. Ferreira fka Milo** 9/21, 10:30 PM, Hideout  
**Ike Reilly Assassination, T.J. Jagodowski & Dave Pasquesi** 11/9, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 9/13, 9 AM  
**Revolution Oktoberfest After Show with Yob** 9/28, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Revolution Oktoberfest day one with Yob, Bongripper, Pallbearer, Rezn** 9/27, 4 PM, Revolution Brewpub  
**Revolution Oktoberfest day two with Parquet Courts, Dehd, Mdou Moctar, Boogarrins, Touched by Ghoul, Pool Holograph** 9/28, 1:30 PM, Revolution Brewpub  
**J. Robbins (band), Life & Times** 12/13, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

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**Say Sue Me** 12/8, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM  
**Score, Unlikely Candidates** 11/9, 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club  
**Shiba San, Walker & Royce** 10/25, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM, 18+  
**Slaves** 11/2, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+  
**Snow Burial, These Beasts** 9/21, 8:30 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+  
**Greg Spero's Spirit Fingers, DJ Makaya McCraven** 9/24, 7 PM, Martyrs'  
**Spirit Was, Sean Henry** 11/7, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Patrick Sweany** 12/31, 8 PM, Reggie's Music Joint  
**TC Superstar, Joey Nebulous** 10/9, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Richard Thompson (solo)** 12/29-12/31, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston  
**Too Many Zoos, Birocratic** 2/5/20, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM, 17+  
**Ultramagnetic MC's, Samiam the MC** 11/9, 10:30 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, on sale Fri 9/13, noon, 18+  
**Armin Van Buuren** 10/12, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+  
**Kai Wachi, Sam Lamar** 11/22, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 9/13, 1 PM, 18+  
**Greg Ward's Rogue Parade** 9/29, 4 PM, Midway Plaisance at Woodlawn, part of the Hyde Park Jazz Festival  
**Patrick Watson** 4/22/20, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**We Intend to Cause Havoc documentary about W.I.T.C.H.** 10/15, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, Chicago, 18+  
**Wingtips, Pixel Grip, Star Tropics, Feeltrip DJs** 11/22, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

**UPDATED**

**Andrew Bird** 12/9-12/13, 8 PM, Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, 12/13 show added; 12/11 show sold out  
**Lido** 10/31-11/1, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village, 11/1 show added  
**Madonna** 10/15-10/17, 8:30 PM; 10/21, 8:30 PM; 10/23-10/24, 8:30 PM; 10/27, 8:30 PM, Chicago Theatre, 10/27 show added; on sale Fri 9/13, 10 AM



## GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

**THIS SUMMER**, local jazz saxophonist and clarinetist **Hunter Diamond** spent three weeks studying composition with flutist **Nicole Mitchell** at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida—and now that he's back in town, he has a bounty of new jams to share! Diamond is playing a free weekly Tuesday residency at the **Whistler** in September to debut that material: on September 17, he'll set poems by his father to music with a septet that includes reedist **Cameron Pfiffner** and bassist **Katie Ernst**, and on September 24, he'll play with a quintet that includes saxophonist **Nick Mazzarella** and drummer **Dana Hall**.

Outsider musician **Wesley Willis** died in 2003, but *Gossip Wolf* still can't walk through Wicker Park without remembering him posted up in front of the long-gone Burger King at Milwaukee and Honore, drawing one of his lovely, idiosyncratic cityscapes. These days, Willis's artworks are harder to see—they fetch thousands of dollars apiece—so it'll be a special treat when **Matthew Rachman Gallery** opens the exhibit "**City of Many Dreams**" on Friday, September 13, at 6 PM. It features dozens of Willis's drawings from the collection of architect Paul Young, plus sculptures by Willis's brother **Ricky** that use found objects to re-create buses, trains, water towers, and other buildings. Proceeds from sales of the sculptures will benefit **Project Onward**, a local nonprofit that offers professional guidance to artists with mental or developmental disabilities.

There's no festival in town like **Chimeka's Camp Smokey Bear**. Last year, the Chicago rapper launched this daylong all-ages celebration of hip-hop culture, and it returns to South Holland's **Camp Shabbona Woods** on Saturday, September 14. Chimeka recruited a stellar lineup of local rappers for the second camp, including **ZMoney**, **Queen Key**, **Solo the Dweeb**, **Happy Birthday Calvin**, and **Kidd Kenn**—who just signed a deal with Island. General admission is free, and VIP passes start at \$25. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip\_Wolf or e-mail [gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com](mailto:gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com).

## → UPCOMING

**Abhi the Nomad, Dave B** 10/30, 7:30 PM, Schubas **18+**  
**Above & Beyond** 10/25, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+  
**Acid King, Wizard Rifle** 9/25, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**Aesthetic Perfection** 10/5, 8 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**Afrotrox, Kokoko!** 9/21, 9 PM, Chop Shop **FREE**  
**Agnostic Front, Prong** 9/19, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**AJR, Flora Cash** 11/23, 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom **18+**  
**Marc Almond (Sex Cells), Hercules & Love Affair** 10/29, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 18+  
**Amber Run** 11/7, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Amigo the Devil, King Dude, Twin Temple** 11/22, 8 PM, Metro, 18+  
**Amon Amarth, Arch Enemy, At the Gates** 10/7, 7 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+  
**Anamanaguchi** 11/10, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**And Hell Followed With, Vctms, Widomaker** 10/28, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**Matt Andersen** 10/17, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**

**Angels & Airwaves** 9/21, 7 PM, House of Blues **18+**  
**Arkona, Metsatoll, Wind Rose, Astillian** 9/23, 6 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**Augustana** 11/19, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Mac Ayres** 11/24, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**B Boys** 10/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Babymetal, Avatar** 9/20, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom **18+**  
**Bad Gyal** 10/5, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Badflower, Weathers, Dead Poet Society** 9/29, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Marcia Ball Band** 11/8, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Ronnie Baker Brooks** 9/20, 8 PM, City Winery **18+**  
**Bros. Landreth** 10/12, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn  
**Marc Broussard** 10/26-10/27, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Building, Heather Woods Broderick** 11/3, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Buku, Esseks, Frq Ncy** 10/12, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+  
**Cedric Burnside** 9/19, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Celebrate** 10/18, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 18+

**Rock Club, 18+**  
**Califone** 9/28, 9 PM, Schubas  
**Alex Cameron** 11/8, 10:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**Toranzo Cannon & the Chicago Way** 9/30, 8 PM, City Winery **18+**  
**Capstan, Rarity, Neverkept** 10/12, 5:30 PM, Beat Kitchen **18+**  
**Alessia Cara, Ryland James** 10/30, 7:30 PM, Rosemont Theatre, Rosemont **18+**  
**Eddie Carey, Anna Ash** 10/6, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Mary Chapin Carpenter & Shawn Colvin** 10/18, 8 PM, Athenaeum Theatre **18+**  
**Frank Carter & the Rattlesnakes, Beaches** 9/29, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+  
**Vinnie Caruana** 10/17, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+  
**Peter Case** 10/26, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn  
**Cat Clyde** 12/4, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Cenzontles Indigenous Celebration** 11/27, 8:30 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **FREE** **18+**  
**Chelou** 9/19, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Cher, Nile Rodgers & Chic** 11/27, 7:30 PM, United Center **18+**  
**Tyler Childers** 10/31, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+

**!!! (Chk Chk Chk)** 10/6, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Ciara** 10/4, 7:30 PM, Park West **18+**  
**Corrosion of Conformity, The Skull, Mothership, Witch Mountain** 9/27, 7:30 PM, the Forge, Joliet **18+**  
**Elvis Costello & the Imposters** 11/22, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre **18+**  
**Counterparts, Stray From the Path, Varials, Chamber, Greyhaven** 11/13, 5:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Crash Test Dummies, Port Cities** 9/22, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **18+**  
**Marshall Crenshaw** 12/12, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Mikal Cronin, Shannon Lay** 11/15, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Crumb, Divino Nino, Shormey** 11/6, 7 PM, Thalia Hall **18+**  
**Cuco, Kaina** 9/22, 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom **18+**  
**Charlie Cunningham** 9/24, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Cupcake** 9/30, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Cherie Currie & Brie Darling** 11/25, 8 PM, City Winery **18+**  
**Gus Dapperton, Spencer** 10/4, 7:30 PM, Metro **18+**  
**Davina & the Vagabonds** 10/7,

7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Deep Purple, Joyous Wolf** 10/18, 8 PM, Rosemont Theatre, Rosemont **18+**  
**William DuVall** 11/3, 8 PM, City Winery **18+**  
**Dwele** 11/29, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery **18+**  
**Justin Townes Earle, Cerny Brothers** 10/21, 8 PM, City Winery **18+**  
**Early November, Have Mercy, Owl** 10/9, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Earthless, Maggot Heart, Sacri Monti** 10/3, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Mary Gauthier** 12/14, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Generationalists** 9/20, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Geowulf** 11/7, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Gesaffelstein** 11/16, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+  
**Goblin, Gigan, Lion's Daughter** 11/7, 8 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 18+  
**God Is an Astronaut** 9/25, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**Hiroimi** 10/14-10/15, 8 PM, City Winery **18+**  
**Hiss Golden Messenger** 11/9, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Kelly Hogan, Scott Ligon, Nora O'Connor** 9/20, 6 PM, Hideout

**Drew Holcomb & the Neighbors** 9/19, 8 PM, Thalia Hall **18+**  
**Honey Dijon, Harry Cross** 10/12, 10 PM, Smart Bar  
**The Hood Internet** 10/31, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Hot Tuna, Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams** 12/13, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+  
**Injury Reserve, Slauson Malone, Body Meat** 10/3, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge **18+**  
**Iya Terra, For Peace Band, Ries Brothers** 11/1, 9 PM, Schubas  
**Nikki Lane** 10/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **18+**  
**Lankum** 9/20, 7 PM, Irish American Heritage Center **FREE** **18+**  
**Lankum, Yandong Grand Singers of China** 9/19, 7 PM, Beverly Arts Center **FREE** **18+**  
**Lettuce, Ghost-Note** 11/9, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+  
**Lex the Lexicon Artist, Super Smack, Microphone Mitsfitz** 10/1, 6:30 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Gordon Lightfoot** 9/27, 8 PM, Copernicus Center **18+**  
**Lil Keed with Lil Gotit ft. Slimlife Shawty & Paper Lovee** 9/20, 6:30 PM, Avondale Music Hall **18+**  
**Little Brother, Phonte, Rapper Big Pooh** 9/27, 9 PM, Metro, 18+ →

2019

# UPCOMING SHOWS



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 9/22 The Band Camino w/ Valley  
 9/24 IOI.9 The Mix Presents Andy Grammer  
 9/26 Steve Lacy  
 9/27 & 9/28 Blackberry Smoke + The Record Company  
 10/1 Bombay Bicycle Club w/ The Greeting Committee  
 10/4 Wage War w/ Like Moths To Flames, Polaris, Dayseeker  
 10/5 Lagwagon & Face to Face w/ MakeWar  
 10/9 Boulet Brothers - Dragula Tour  
 10/11 Caravan Palace  
 10/12 Charli XCX  
 10/13 Hoodie Allen w/Jake Miller  
 10/14 Rich Brian  
 10/16 All That Remains & Lacuna Coil w/ Bad Omens, Eximious, Uncured  
 10/18 Jidenna 10/19 Noah Kahan w/ JP Saxe  
 10/20 Scotty Sire w/ Toddy Smith, Bruce Wiegner, Chris Bloom

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# EARLY WARNINGS

➔ **Los Lobos** 12/8-12/10, 8 PM, City Winery **📍**  
**Lost Frequencies** 10/12, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+  
**Lost Kings, Martin Jensen** 12/7, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge **📍**  
**Loud Luxury** 11/8, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall **📍**  
**Loving** 10/24, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Lsdream, Shlump** 11/8, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+  
**Lula Wiles** 9/25, 8 PM, Hideout  
**Luna** 10/12-10/13, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall  
**Melvins, Redd Kross, Toshi Kasai** 9/26, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+  
**Mersiv, Supertask, Mlotik** 10/11, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Mesck, Juss B, Myxed Up, Qilin, Ceol** 10/4, 8 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 18+  
**Metal Allegiance, Crobot, Weapons of Anew, Metalfier** 10/31, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Mike Doughty, Ghost of Mr. Oberon** 10/23, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Anais Mitchell** 10/18, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Roscoe Mitchell, Moor Mother** 12/12, 7:30 PM, Fullerton Hall, Art Institute of Chicago **📍**  
**Mo Lowda & the Humble, Ona** 10/12, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Monatik** 11/23, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+  
**Möngöl Hörde, War on Women, Rebuilder** 12/8, 7:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+  
**Dave Monks** 11/8, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**New Mastersounds** 10/17, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**New Pornographers, Lady Lamb** 10/2, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+  
**Oh Land, Arthur Moon** 9/27, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Oh Sees, Prettiest Eyes** 10/11-10/12, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**Oktave's tenth anniversary with Carl Craig, Jeff Derringer** 10/5, 10 PM, Smart Bar  
**Tunde Olaniran** 10/4, 8:30 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Isabelle Olivier Trio** 10/23, 8:30 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town

School of Folk Music **FREE** **📍**  
**Angel Olsen, Vagabon** 11/4, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+  
**Onuka** 10/18, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall **📍**  
**Oransi Pazuzu, Insect Ark** 10/10, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**P-Lo, Guapdad 4000, Aux Chord & Kawasaki** 10/17, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy** 11/1, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**CeCe Peniston** 9/22, 8 PM, City Winery **📍**  
**Lee "Scratch" Perry & Subatomic Sound System** 9/20, 8 PM, Subterranean  
**John Pizzarelli** 10/13, 5 and 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Plague Vendor, No Parents** 10/5, 7 PM, Beat Kitchen **📍**  
**Pop Will Eat Itself, Chemlab, Acumen Vs. 16Volt, Curse Mackey, Bootblacks** 9/19, 7 PM, Metro, 18+  
**Preservation Hall Jazz Band with Yusa and more** 11/4, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**Progtoberfest V with Tauk, Claudio Simonetti's Goblin, Felix Pastorius, and more** 10/11, 5 PM; 10/12-10/13, noon, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+  
**Queen! with Cerrone (DJ set), Michael Serafini, Garrett David** 10/2, 10 PM, Smart Bar  
**Quinn Christopherson, Morgan Powers, Max Subar** 9/22, 8 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Rachael & Vilray** 11/1, 7 and 9:30 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Rat Boy** 11/3, 7 PM, Schubas **📍**  
**Red Elvises** 9/27, 10 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn  
**Redlight** 10/12, 4 PM, Electric Hotel  
**Regrettes, Greer, Hala** 10/11, 7 PM, Metro **📍**  
**Tim Reynolds TR3** 12/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Rezn & Lume collaboration, Not for You, Borer** 10/12, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Rezz, Peeekaboo, Blackgummy** 11/1, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+  
**Antonio Sanchez & Migration** 10/3, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

**Satsang** 11/9, 9 PM, Martyrs'  
**Scissors, One Life, Blood People, Reaganomics** 9/28, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+  
**Screaming Females, Dusk, Stuck** 10/23, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band** 10/19, 8 PM, United Center **📍**  
**Richard Shindell** 10/12, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Shonen Knife, Bev Rage & the Drinks** 10/1, 8 PM, Subterranean  
**Sarah Shook & the Disarmers, Senora May** 10/11, 10 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Shovels & Rope** 10/18, 8 PM, the Vic, 18+  
**Shura** 10/16, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Sir Babygirl, Nyssa** 10/4, 9 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Skegss** 11/2, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge **📍**  
**Smooth Hound Smith** 10/18, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn  
**Snails, Rusko, Kompany, Hi I'm Ghost** 12/28, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+  
**Jay Som, Gia Margaret, Boy Scouts** 10/18, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall **📍**  
**Son Little** 11/20, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Songhoi Blues** 10/19, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Sons of the Never Wrong** 11/24, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Space Laces, Must Die** 10/11, 8:30 PM, Park West, 18+  
**Spafford** 10/18, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**Amy Space** 9/21, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Tom Speight** 10/21, 7:30 PM, Schubas **📍**  
**Stiff Little Fingers, Avengers** 10/16, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Billy Strings** 11/22, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+  
**Strung Out, Casualties** 10/10, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+  
**Nora Jane Struthers** 10/11, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn  
**Subdudes** 10/19-10/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**

**Sum 41, Amity Affliction, Plot in You** 10/6, 6:30 PM, Riviera Theatre **📍**  
**Sunset Rollercoaster, Paul Cherry** 10/18, 9 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Svdden Death** 1/10/20, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+  
**Swervedriver, Criminal Hygiene, Milly** 10/28, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**SYML** 11/17, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall **📍**  
**Tank & the Bangas, Pell** 10/16, 8 PM, Metro, 18+  
**Tannahill Weavers** 10/6, 7 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Tegan and Sara** 10/15, 8 PM, Cahn Auditorium, Northwestern University, Evanston **📍**  
**Temples, Mattiel** 10/31, 8 PM, Metro, 18+  
**Terrapin Flyer** 11/27, 9 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn  
**Teskey Brothers** 3/18/20, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**Thigh Master, Dag** 10/2, 9:30 PM, Hideout  
**This Will Destroy You** 11/19, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Tiger Army, Sadgirl, Kate Clover** 10/13, 7 PM, Metro **📍**  
**Tinarwen** 10/1, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**Tiny Moving Parts, Fredo Disco, Standards** 10/26, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge **📍**  
**Tobi Lou, Liltrxptendo, Femdot** 10/20, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall **📍**  
**Todrick** 11/3, 8 PM, Metro **📍**  
**Tool, Killing Joke** 11/3, 7:30 PM, United Center **📍**  
**Toro y Moi, Channel Tres** 11/1, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+  
**Tossers, Old Grand Dad, School of Rock All Stars** 9/28, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+ **FREE**  
**Toto** 10/4, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre **📍**  
**Town Mountain** 9/26, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Jimmy Traskelin and Tallari** 9/28, 8:30 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Gloria Trevi, Karol G** 9/21, 8 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont

**Trifinity (Yheti/Toadface/Mt. Analogue)** 12/13, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+  
**Tuck & Patti, Sam Fazio** 12/10-12/11, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Frank Turner & the Sleeping Souls** 10/17, 7 PM, Athenaeum Theatre **📍**  
**Twin Peaks, Nude Party, Ohmme** 11/29, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre **📍**  
**Matt Ulery's Delicate Charms record release** 11/1, 9 PM; 11/2, 8 PM, Green Mill  
**Carrie Underwood** 10/29, 7 PM, United Center  
**Venom Prison, Homewrecker, Call of the Void, Knaaves** 9/22, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+  
**Vetusta Morla** 10/6, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge **📍**  
**Victor Internet** 10/10, 7 PM, Subterranean **📍**  
**Video Age, J Fernandez, Sports Boyfriend** 9/20, 9:30 PM, Hideout  
**Phum Viphurit** 9/24, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+  
**Vivian Girls** 11/1, 9 PM; 11/2, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**ViVii** 10/4, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Volac, Phlegmatic Dogs** 9/19, 10 PM, Sound-Bar  
**The Wailers** 10/11, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Loudon Wainwright III** 10/27, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Wale** 10/17, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall **📍**  
**Summer Walker, Melii** 11/26, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+  
**Warhawks, Cabana Wear, Wrong Numbers** 9/20, 8 PM, GMan Tavern  
**Waterboys** 9/29, 5 and 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Waterparks** 11/29, 7:30 PM, the Vic **📍**  
**Mike Watt & the Missingmen** 10/2, 8 PM, Schubas  
**Way Down Wanderers** 12/7, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Jimmy Webb, Robin Spielberg** 11/17, 8 PM, City Winery **📍**  
**Weeks, Spenttime Palace, Vernes**

10/3, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**Weyes Blood** 9/30, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+  
**White Denim, Spaceface** 11/9, 8 PM, Metro, 18+  
**White Fence** 10/8, 9 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Wild Ponies** 11/13, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn  
**Kelly Willis, Bruce Robison** 11/2, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston **📍**  
**Jonathan Wilson** 9/26, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **📍**  
**Winchesters, Friends of the Bog, Ultra Violet Fever** 9/30, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+  
**Windy City Soul Club** 12/31, 9 PM, Logan Square Auditorium  
**W.I.T.C.H.** 10/16, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+  
**With Confidence, Seaway, Between You & Me, Doll Skin** 11/30, 6 PM, Bottom Lounge **📍**  
**Witt Lowry, Xuitcasecity, Whatever We Are** 9/21, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Wolf Eyes** 9/19, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle  
**Chelsea Wolfe, Ioanna Gika** 10/24, 9 PM, Metro, 18+  
**Lee Ann Womack, Sarah Siskind** 10/4-10/5, 8 PM, City Winery **📍**  
**Wonder Years, Homesafe** 10/20, 6 PM, Metro **📍**  
**Yoke Lore, Exes** 10/19, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+  
**Tiffany Young** 11/2, 7:30 PM, the Vic **📍**  
**Young Thug, Machine Gun Kelly** 10/25, 8 PM, Credit Union 1 Arena at UIC **📍**  
**Yungblud, Missio** 10/4, 7:30 PM, the Vic **📍**  
**Zaz** 10/10, 7:30 PM, Athenaeum Theatre **📍**  
**Zeds Dead, Blunts & Blondes, Sodown, Lick** 12/20-12/21, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+  
**Zimmer** 12/11, 8 PM, Sleeping Village  
**Zimmermen tribute to The Last Waltz** 11/16, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn **📍**



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# OPINION

## SAVAGE LOVE

### To fist or not to fist?

Depends upon your sphincter.  
Plus: grappling with strapping on

By DAN SAVAGE

**Q:** My roommate is a gay man who is into getting fisted. A lot. We were FWBs until he moved into my place, at which point we agreed it would be better for us to not have sex anymore. It's worked out fine, and he's been here for a year. Here's the problem: About two years ago, he got into fisting and he has someone over every night to fist him. As soon as he comes home from work, he spends a good hour in the bathroom cleaning out, and then some guy comes over to fist him. Every single day. My roommate is a very attractive guy who doesn't think he's attractive at all. I've talked to him a few times about whether he's being sexually compulsive, but he just laughs and says, "Well, you suck a lot of dick." (I have a healthy but moderate sex life.) I am concerned that all this ass play is not healthy. As a friend, I want him to seek help for his sexual compulsion, his low self-esteem, and his social isolation. As a roommate, I am tired of all these strange men coming into my home and the high water bill.

—FREQUENT INSERTIONS SINCERELY TROUBLE SOMEONE

**A:** "Fisting is a healthy and safe sexual activity so long as the participants are sober," said Dr. Peter Shalit, a physician and author who works with many gay men. "There is a misconception that fisting damages the anal sphincter, loosens it, and causes a loss of bowel control over time. This is absolutely false."

Devin Franco, a gay porn star who's been getting fisted on a weekly basis for many years, backs up Dr. Shalit. "People who are only used to vanilla intercourse are sometimes shocked," said Franco. "People will leave comments on my videos asking if I was in pain, even though I'm clearly always enjoying it. Fisting is actually the most pleasurable sexual act I've ever experienced—and seven years in, no negative health consequences and everything down there works just fine, thanks."

But exactly how does *that* work? How does someone like Franco get a fist and/or a ridiculously large sex toy in his butt?

"A skilled fisting bottom can voluntarily relax the anal sphincter in order to

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# OPINION

continued from 69

accommodate a hand up to the wrist or further," explained Dr. Shalit. "A skilled fisting top knows how to insert their hand—it's actually fingertips first, not a clenched fist—and how to do it gently, taking their time, and using lots of lube. And, again, after the session is over, the sphincter returns to its normal state."

Which is not to say that people haven't injured themselves or others engaging in anal play with large sex toys, fists, or even perfectly average cocks. That's why it's crucial to take things slow, use lots of lube, and go at it sober.

"Fisting isn't for everyone," said Dr. Shalit. "In fact, most people are unable to relax their sphincter in this fashion."

But to figure out whether fisting is for you, first you gotta wanna, and then you gotta try.

"It actually took about two years for me," said Franco. "That's from the first time I did anal play thinking, 'Maybe I can get his whole fist in there' to the first time I actually got a fist in my ass. Two years."

And while fisting isn't for everyone, like Dr. Shalit said, it's very clearly for your roommate. But enjoying the hell out of a particular sexual activity isn't by itself evidence of low self-esteem or sexual compulsion.

"If FISTS thinks his roommate has low self-esteem," said Dr. Shalit, "he's done the right thing by telling him he should seek help. But that's the end of his responsibility. Whether or not his roommate seeks help is up to his roommate. And it's hard for me to agree that his roommate is being sexually compulsive based on what's in the letter. Many men have sex every day, and the roommate's sex life doesn't seem to have any negative consequences except that FISTS doesn't like it."

While Franco also doesn't think getting fisted daily is proof that your roommate is out of control, fisting isn't something he does every day. "Doing it daily sounds *exhausting*," he said. "The act requires a lot of physical exertion. I personally need a little recovery time between sessions. But I do know guys who do it every day—maybe not a *fist* every day, but they play with large toys every day. But I couldn't and I don't."


All that said, FISTS, two of your cited reasons for not liking what your roommate is up to—strange men in and out of your apartment (and your roommate) and all that douching driving up your water bill—are legitimate complaints that you shouldn't be shy about addressing.


"To not have a lot of strangers in and out of the apartment is a reasonable ask of a roommate," said Dr. Shalit. "But if the roommate sees a steady stream of FISTS's hookups

coming over, it could seem like a double standard. And I suppose he could ask for extra help with the water bill, but I'm skeptical that 'cleaning out' for fisting would actually cause a significant increase in the bill."

Dr. Shalit recommends *Anal Pleasure & Health* by Jack Morin to anyone who wants to learn more about anal intercourse, fisting, and other forms of anal play. "It's the bible of anal sexuality," said Dr. Shalit.

**Q: My husband of nearly 20 years came out to me as bisexual about two months ago. He assured me he has no intention of looking outside our marriage for other sex partners. We've always had a kind of barrier sexually, and it seemed to fall away after he came out. We've since done all manner of things, including my using a dildo on him. It has been a fun and empowering experience overall. But he mentioned that he'd like me to peg him using a strap-on. I mean, of course he would, right? He'd like to actually feel my body against his. That would doubtless make the whole experience better for him. But I'm having a hard time wrapping my head around it. Does this require me, even if temporarily, to change my body? I'm feeling really vulnerable and insecure about it, like it means there's something wrong with my body. Using the dildo is no big thing, and I don't understand why this feels so different and difficult. —PEGGING FEELS DIFFERENT**

**A:** You don't have to do anything about this right now, PFD. Your husband only came out to you as bisexual two months ago! Your husband's honesty pulled down that barrier you'd always sensed but could never name, and that's wonderful and exciting. And you're already exploring anal penetration with him on the receiving end, which is something many straight men also enjoy. If covering your genitals temporarily with a strap-on makes you feel awkward or unwanted, you don't have to do it—not now, not ever. But I can't imagine you think there's something wrong with the bodies of lesbians who use strap-ons with their female partners, just as you don't seem to think holding a dildo means there's something wrong with your hands. If covering your vulva with a strap-on makes you feel negated or undesirable, there are dildo harnesses that strap on to your thigh, not your crotch, and could provide your husband with body-to-body closeness during penetration while still leaving your vulva and clitoris accessible for digital stimulation. 

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## LEGAL NOTICES



The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) is releasing proposed updates to the HCV Program Admin Plan and ACOP for public comment.

The 30-day public comment period begins Sept 11 (8 a.m.) and ends October 10, 2019 (5 p.m.). While CHA encourages and welcomes all program participants, residents, and the community-at-large to review the proposed updates to the HCV Admin Plan and ACOP, you are not required to attend the public comment hearings in order to submit comments. Your presence or absence at the hearing does not affect your housing.

The dates, times, and locations of the public comment hearings are as follows:

- September 26, 2019, 6:00 pm: Family Investment Center (FIC), 4859 S Wabash
- October 1, 2019, 11:00 am: Hattie Callner Apts, 855 W Aldine

Public housing residents, HCV participants, and the public may submit comments on the Proposed Admin Plan and ACOP during the public comment period. The 30-day comment period begins September 11 and ends October 10, 2019. All comments must be received by October 10, 2019.

Copies of the Proposed HCV Admin Plan and ACOP will be available beginning September 11 through October 10, 2019 at the following locations:

- CHA and HCV Administrative Offices: 60 E Van Buren St
- Family Investment Center (FIC): 4859 S Wabash St
- Central Advisory Council Office: 243 E 32<sup>nd</sup> St
- HCV Regional Office- South: 10 W 35<sup>th</sup> St
- HCV Regional Office-West: 1852 S Albany Ave
- Erie Neighborhood House: Little Village 4225 W 25<sup>th</sup> St  
West Town 1347 W Erie St
- Spanish Coalition for Housing: North Office 1922 N Pulaski Rd  
South Office 1915 S Blue Island  
SE Office 9010 S Commercial

Mail, E-mail or Fax comments to:

Chicago Housing Authority  
Attention: Proposed HCV Admin Plan & ACOP  
60 E. Van Buren Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
[commentontheplan@thecha.org](mailto:commentontheplan@thecha.org)  
Fax 312.913.7837

[www.thecha.org](http://www.thecha.org)

If you have question about this notice, please call the CHA at 312.913.7300  
To request a reasonable accommodation, please call 312.913.7690

STATE OF ILLINOIS,  
PUBLICATION NOTICE  
OF COURT DATE FOR  
REQUEST FOR NAME  
CHANGE. Location Cook  
County - County Division -  
Case Type: Name Change  
from Katherine Collins  
Heringhaus to Katherine  
Denise Collins Case Initiation  
Date 08/22/2019 Court  
Date 10/28/2019, 50 W.  
Washington St, Chicago, IL  
in Courtroom #1704 Case #  
2019CONC001088 (09/12)

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by the undersigned with  
the County Clerk of Cook  
County, Registration Number:  
Y19002030 on August 23,  
2019. Under the Assumed  
Name of SCIBERRAS  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
with the business located  
at 6220 S KIMBARK 3,  
CHICAGO, IL 60637. The  
true and real full name(s)  
and residence address of  
the owners(s)/partner(s) is:  
Owner/Partner Full Name:  
JOHN SCIBERRAS Complete  
Address: 6220 S KIMBARK 3,  
CHICAGO, IL 60637 (09/19)

STATE OF ILLINOIS,  
PUBLICATION NOTICE  
OF COURT DATE FOR  
REQUEST FOR NAME  
CHANGE. Location Cook  
County District 2- County  
Division - Case Type: Name  
Change from Matthew  
Radzik to Maciej Radzik Case  
Initiation Date 09/03/2019  
Court Date 11/06/2019, 9:00  
AM in Courtroom #0204 Case  
# 20192003712 (09/26)

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Name of Mo'Hawk The  
Mixer Mobile Bartending  
Services with the business  
located at 3145 W Flournoy,  
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true and real full name(s)  
and residence address of  
the owners(s)/partner(s) is:  
Owner/Partner Full Name:  
Monique Rolling Complete  
Address: 3145 W Flournoy,  
Chicago, IL 60612 (09/26)

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COURT OF THE STATE OF  
WASHINGTON IN AND FOR  
THE COUNTY OF KING,  
JUVENILE DEPARTMENT  
IN RE THE DEPENDENCY  
OF:  
TIE'LAJAH PITTMAN  
DOB: 03/15/13  
NO: 19-7-01908-3 KNT  
NOTICE OF HEARING  
TO:  
\*Nicholas  
Pittman, Alleged Father;  
Unknown Father, and/or  
anyone claiming parental/  
paternal rights or interest in  
the child and to All Whom It  
May Concern:

On June 21, 2019, a petition  
for Dependency was filed  
in the above entitled Court,  
pursuant to RCW 13.34.080  
and/or RCW 26.33.310  
regarding the above named  
child, whose parents are  
Tiesha Turner and \*.  
[FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION, CALL 253-  
372-5738, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30  
p.m.]  
Said Petition will be heard  
on October 29, 2019, at the

hour of 8:15 a.m., at King  
County Superior Court,  
Juvenile Department, 401 4th  
Ave North, Kent, WA 98032,  
before a judge of the above  
entitled court, at which time  
you are directed to appear  
and answer the said petition  
or the petition will be granted  
and action will be taken  
by the court such as shall  
appear to be for the welfare  
of the said child.  
Dated September 3, 2019  
BARBARA MINER  
KING COUNTY  
SUPERIOR COURT CLERK  
BY: AMD, Deputy Clerk.

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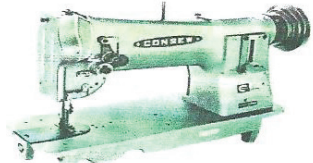
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