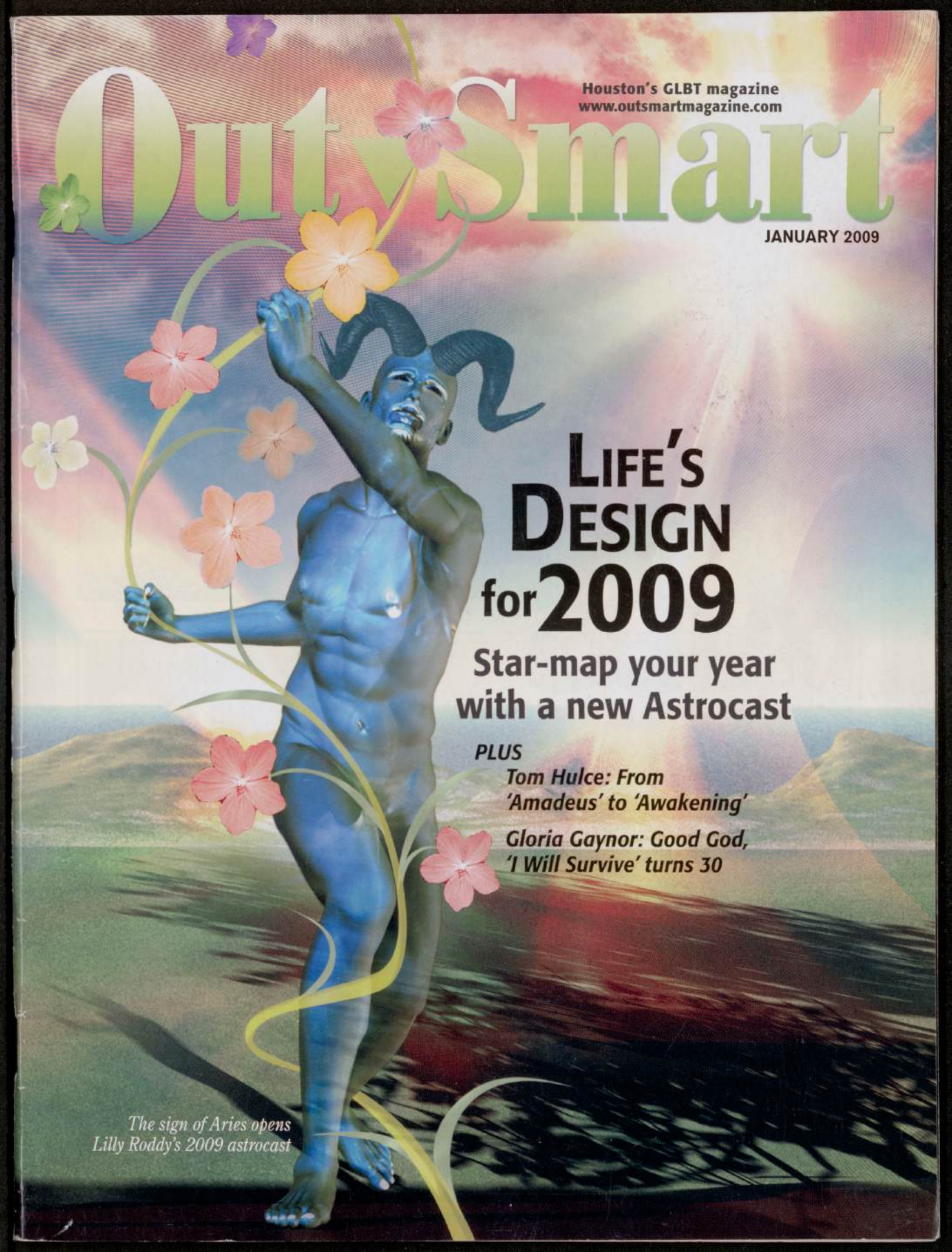




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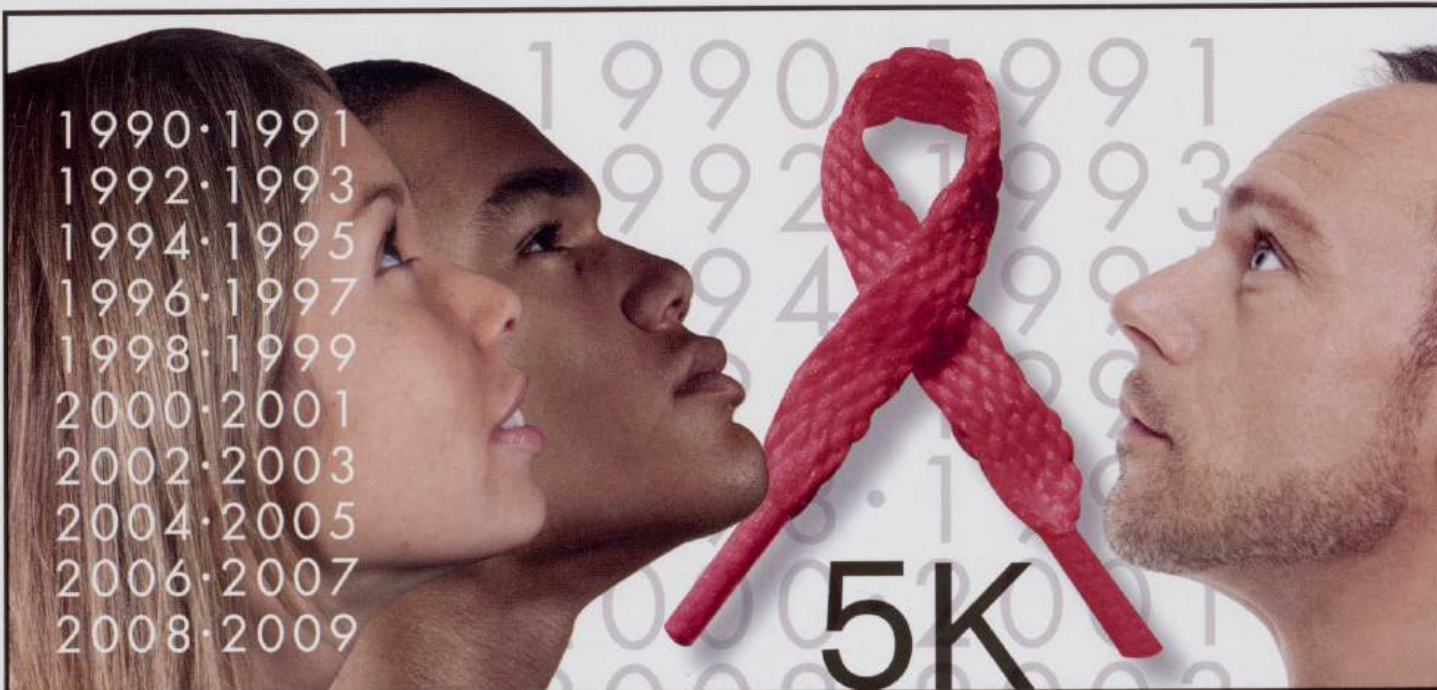
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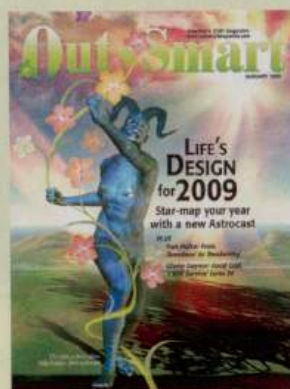
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About the cover:
 Down the road: Lilly Roddy shares her astrological foresight in *OutSmart*'s annual forecast (see page 28).
 ILLUSTRATION David Eduardo Flores Perez
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National Advertising Representative
Rivendell Media - 212/242-6863



Publishers of OutSmart Magazine
3406 Audubon Place • Houston, TX 77006
713/520-7237 • 713/522-3275 Fax

Subscriptions: \$27/12 Issues, \$48/24 Issues

E-mail address: letters@outsmartmagazine.com

Website address: www.outsmartmagazine.com

OutSmart is published monthly. Estimated readership in Houston and surrounding areas is 60,000. Up&Out Communications is not responsible for claims and practices of advertisers. The opinions and views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the staff or management of OutSmart. Inclusion in OutSmart does not imply sexual orientation. ©2009 by Up&Out Communications. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission of the publisher is strictly prohibited. Unsolicited material is accepted. No manuscript returned without SASE.



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Letters

DON'T LET THE FACTS GET IN THE WAY

I think it's unfortunate when a gay media source such as *OutSmart* becomes so wanton for a story about a positive role model that the past of said individual is never discovered. Ask Mark [Timmers, "Houston's Animal Cop" by Brandon Wolf, November 2008] about the bootlegged tickets to the Madonna concert from way back when. It's the reason why he could no longer be a HPD officer and was still fortunate enough to be a constable, which WE ALL KNOW isn't quite the same thing. It's like working in a hospital and being downgraded from a nurse to an orderly. You used to take temperatures, now you empty bedpans... I think you get the picture.

I know it's way too late, but I thought you should know.

James Fedowsky
Houston

EDITOR'S NOTE: Let's set the record straight. *OutSmart* was aware of the "concert ticket" incident before publication of our November cover story, and knew that a District Court jury found Mark Timmers not guilty following a three-day trial, February 13-15, 1989.

Houston attorney Phyllis Frye defended Timmers against allegations that he removed two Whitney Houston (not Madonna) concert tickets from a stolen vehicle. Frye produced testimony revealing that tickets were not offered to Timmers during the stolen vehicle investigation, but at a later date, and that he had no idea the tickets were stolen.

Frye notes that the District Attorney called two Houston Police Department (HPD) officers who testified that Timmers had made damaging remarks about how he came to have the tickets. The same officers testified that they confiscated the tickets from Timmers on the night of the concert and gave them to a Summit security officer. After his sworn testimony, Frye had Timmers stand before the jury and pull the undestroyed tickets from his pocket, which she then entered into evidence. After a five-hour deliberation, the jury cleared Timmers of the charges.

Local activist Ray Hill, a longtime friend of Timmers, characterizes the incident as "a witch hunt orchestrated because Mark was openly gay." Timmers remembers the incident: "After they found out I was gay, it started snowballing. I got notes on lockers, notes on patrol cars."

After winning the court case, Timmers chose not to return to HPD, but instead went to work for Harris County Constable, Precinct 6, Victor Trevino. Timmers has at no time been a constable—he has worked for a constable. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant because of his performance as an animal cruelty investigator. When the Houston Humane Society (who contracted him through Harris County) recently laid him off for reasons they cite as budgetary,

Timmers was re-designated as a deputy because no lieutenant positions were open and Harris County wished to retain him.

On the morning of Friday, November 28, 2008, Timmers was shot and injured while working security for the Meridian Night Club near downtown Houston. Timmers ran to the rescue of a patron who had been shot and was himself shot by the assailant. KHOU produced a video tribute to Timmers' heroism, and it can be viewed online at <http://www.khou.com/video/index.html?nvid=308733>.

OutSmart found no beneficial reason to resurrect the concert-ticket incident in our recent profile of Timmers, and stands behind our belief that he is a hero whom our community can embrace with pride.

KAREN DERR FOR CITY COUNCIL

Karen Derr Realty has enjoyed our 15 years of marketing real estate to the gayest and greatest clients in the world through *OutSmart*. This year, a new opportunity has arisen for me that I have prepared a lifetime for, through my career and service in the community. The Houston District H council seat is being vacated early, so I am running for that position. The special election will be in May of 2009. I'm very excited about this opportunity and will be calling on your support and the support of the GLBT community. I know equality and diversity aren't just morally right; they are essential to our quality of life in Houston.

Karen Derr
Houston

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: *OutSmart* wholeheartedly endorses Karen Derr for the Houston City Council position. We also encourage our readers to review her stellar qualifications and to vote for her in this upcoming special election. Karen Derr has always been a tremendous ally of the GLBT community; she's one of *OutSmart*'s earliest founding advertisers, and her continued support helped shape the magazine that it's become today. Derr will be an outstanding council member for all communities in Houston.

PANHANDLERS, BEWARE

Thanks for exposing the God Bless-HIV/AIDS Awareness scam ["Not-So-Sweet Charity" by Kelly McCann, August 2008]. Now, where is the City of Houston in stopping their activities and prosecuting the head of the scam organization? We shouldn't have to rely on word of mouth to stop giving to them—they should be stopped by the authorities!

Rebecca Novak
Houston, Texas

CORRECTION

In *OutSmart*'s December 2008 cover story, "Equality Denied," we stated that Melissa Etheridge and Tammi Lynn Michaels live in California with Etheridge's two children. The couple has twins, as well as Etheridge's two children from her relationship with Julie Cypher. ■



Phyllis Randolph Frye:
Transgender and
Intersex Legal Issues



Patricia Cantú:
Family Law,
Divorce Issues,
Criminal Defense



Salvador J. Benavidez:
Immigration Issues,
Environmental Regulations
& Compliance,
Landlord/Tenant



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by Nancy Ford



Music makers: prior to January's presidential inauguration, artistic director Jason Stephens conducts members of the Houston Pride Band at their 2008 Children's Concert in Spotts Park.

HOUSTON PRIDE BAND MEMBERS TO PERFORM IN INAUGURAL PARADE

REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE Lesbian and Gay Band Association, a network of American lesbian and gay bands, have announced an amalgam of its membership is scheduled to participate in the January 20 Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C.

According to a December 10 statement issued by the Presidential Inaugural Committee, the group's appearance marks the first time an openly gay group has been invited to participate in the Inaugural Parade.

"I am honored to invite these talented groups and individuals to participate in the Inaugural Parade," said President-elect Barack Obama on his website. "These organizations embody the best of our nation's history, diversity and commitment to service. Vice President-elect

Biden and I are proud to have them join us in the parade."

The marching contingent includes Kevin Taylor, Paige Kovar, and Casey Sherrell, three members of the Houston Pride Band.

Taylor, a board member for HPB, also performed for the two Clinton inaugurations, though positioned along the parade route. "We were towards the end of the parade, and the president, vice presidents, and their families were walking outside their limos. We played 'America the Beautiful'; it was an overwhelming feeling of validation and just being a part of society.

"I know that this year actually marching in the parade will be even greater, and will be well worth the hours spent in the cold."

PRE-CIVIL WAR NEWSPAPER ARTICLE SHEDS HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

THE TRANSGENDER FOUNDATION of America's Transgender Archive, located in Houston, has uncovered an original 1846 American newspaper reporting on the "domestic co-partnership" of two Millerite women.

The *Newark Daily Advertiser* article reads: "... As we understand the story, it is Louisa and Sarah, both maiden ladies of no particular age, [who] became enamored of Mr. Miller's doctrines, and embraced the theory of the speedy consumption of the world's history. They subsequently fell in

love with each other, and fearing that time would not afford them an opportunity of making any other disposition of their love, they entered into a domestic co-partnership, and took each other for better or for worse. Sarah was the richest, and physically the weakest. She had some property; and by mutual agreement she was to furnish the capitol, while Louisa was to do the housework; and the profits—that is, a home and a living as long as time and money should last—were to be divided between the two...."

"The TG Archive was interested in this bit of history because marriage is one of our culture's most powerful institutions for instilling and enforcing cultural gender norms," Cristan Williams, director of TFA, said.

The article further describes how the

end of the world did not occur as Millerism, the forerunner to the Seventh Day Adventists faith, taught. It also reveals that Louisa left Sarah, and Sarah, being distraught, sought to have Louisa arrested by claiming that she had \$40 of Sarah's money.

Not only does this article seem to be one of the first known reports of "gay marriage" in America, it seems also to report on issues that arise from not having clear laws concerning dissolving a "domestic co-partnership," Williams said.

The complete original 1846 newspaper is now available for review in the Transgender Archive located at the TFA Transgender Center, 713 Fargo.

CHARLES ARMSTRONG INVESTMENTS SHARES THE WEALTH WITH '12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS' DONATIONS

CHARLES ARMSTRONG, president and chief executive officer of Charles Armstrong Investments, Inc., the parent company of Meteor, JR's Bar and Grill, South Beach, and the Montrose Mining Company, has announced his annual end-of-the-year charitable donations. Twelve local nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organizations were chosen to share \$12,000, given in the spirit of the Twelve Days of Christmas, for the sixth consecutive year.

"I am pleased to announce that we are once again in a position to give back to our community during this holiday season," Armstrong said. "These organizations work hard 12 months a year to provide services to both men and women in Houston's GLBT community. Even with the challenging local economy and a national recession, we believe it is important to support and recognize these 12 organizations. I would also like to challenge other businesses and bar owners in the community to reach deep into their pockets and donate to some or all of these wonderful organizations. On behalf of our 100-plus employees, management, and thousands of valued patrons that support our family of clubs at 800 Pacific Street, we salute 12 nonprofit organizations with a \$1,000 donation to each."

Organizations receiving the donations include AIDS Foundation Houston, AssistHers, Bering Omega Community Services, Center for AIDS, Montrose Counseling Center's Gay & Lesbian Switchboard of Houston and HATCH youth group, Houston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty →

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News Briefs

continued from page 10

to Animals, the Houston Transgender Unity Committee, Legacy Community Health Services, Lesbian Health Initiative-Houston, Pride Houston, and the Spay-Neuter Assistance Program.

Representatives from the organizations received checks at CAI's annual employee holiday party, held December 16 at South Beach.

ATTORNEY LEAVES LAW FIRM TO RUN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

JERRY SIMONEAUX, co-founder and partner in the law firm of Simoneaux and Frye, has announced his departure from the law firm he co-founded with partner Phyllis Frye in order to pursue opportunities in public service or politics.

"The campaign and election of President-elect Obama inspired me profoundly," said Simoneaux. "Here in Harris County, we elected three openly gay judges to District Court benches and ushered in a new era of real representation in local politics. Now, more than ever, I am convinced that our diverse and talented GLBT community is truly part of the change, and not just cheering for change from the sidelines."

The law firm continues to operate as Frye and Cantú, with new named partner Patricia Cantú and Salvador Benavidez joining its current slate of partners, Frye and Rob Scamardo. Simoneaux remains with the firm in an advisory role with the title "of Counsel."

"Our new arrangement affords me the best of all worlds," Simoneaux said. "Remaining with the firm in an advisory position without the enormous time-consuming administrative duties I once had will allow me to focus on serving my clients while freeing me to pursue avenues in public service or politics."

GLBT FAITH LEADERS DENOUNCE VATICAN OPPOSITION, U.S. INDIFFERENCE TO UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION

FAITH PROGRAM DIRECTORS from national equal rights groups have joined in protest over the Vatican's recent decision to oppose an initiative to decriminalize homosexuality.

The faith leaders reacted to Reuters News Service report that Archbishop Celestino Migliore said the Vatican opposed

the United Nations resolution because it would "add new categories of those protected from discrimination" and could lead to reverse discrimination against traditional heterosexual marriage.

"If adopted, they would create new and implacable discriminations," Migliore said. "For example, states which do not recognize same-sex unions as 'matrimony' will be pilloried and made an object of pressure," Migliore said.

The faith leaders issued the following statement on December 10, United Nations Human Rights Day and the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

"For far too long people around the world have been ostracized, imprisoned, tortured, and denied basic rights to housing, health care, and employment simply because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. In more than 70 countries people can be imprisoned for homosexuality and in several countries same gender love is a crime punishable by death.

"This is why the French government, backed by 27 European Union nations, put forward a proposal, on Human Rights Day, to recognize that LGBT rights are human rights and to decriminalize homosexuality. Such a statement simply affirms the most basic of rights for LGBT people: that they be allowed to live in dignity and safety. . . .

"As faith leaders we were shocked by Vatican opposition to this proposed initiative. By refusing to sign a basic statement opposing inhumane treatment of LGBT people, the Vatican is sending a message that violence and human rights abuses against LGBT people are acceptable. . . . We urge Vatican leaders to speak out against imprisonment or execution of gay people and support this initiative.

"Compounding the Vatican's opposition is the inaction to date of the government of the United States. As faith leaders and citizens of the United States, we call on the U.S. government to join the 50 countries throughout the world that have officially supported this U.N. proposal. . . ."

Signers of the statement were Harry Knox, director of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's religion and faith program; The Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's institute for welcoming resources and faith work; Dr. Sylvia Rhue, director of religious affairs for the National Black Justice Coalition; and Ann Craig, director of The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's religion, faith, and values program. ■

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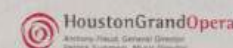
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WHAT A YEAR, WHAT A YEAR

2008. It wasn't so great

Like myself, few of my friends are sorry to see 2008 go. But who could have predicted that we would be celebrating its end—or anything else for that matter—by chanting gleefully, “No more Bush! No more Bush!”

Despite its multiple dangerous hurricanes and its even more threatening political campaigns, 2008 proved to be highly entertaining. And those wacky heterosexuals were in rare form; hardly a day passed without one of them getting into some kind of kooky predicament!

Old dogs, old tricks. Much was said last year about Oklahoma State Representative/raging heterosexual Sally Kern, both publicly in the liberal media and privately in drum circles where lesbians routinely control the weather and fashion trends. In March, we caught a foul, hot wind from our next-door neighbor to the north when Kern called homosexuality a bigger threat to the U.S. than Islam.

“Studies show no society that has totally embraced homosexuality has lasted more than a few decades,” Kern said in a meeting she apparently didn’t know was being recorded. The ever-vigilant Victory Fund posted the speech on YouTube, elevating Screeching Sally to eternal e-famy with her rant about queers’ magical power to destroy governments with our depravity.

Far from her family learning a lesson about tolerance and Christianity, her husband was recently caught advocating the relocation of homosexuals to “education centers.”

“It’s past time that this nation stopped placating sin and start putting [homosexuals] in education programs,” Steve Kern, a Baptist minister, told an undercover reporter last month, adding, “Courts can force drug offenders into treatment centers. . . . There’s no reason our courts can’t do that with homos!”

Perhaps Rev. Kern has a point. Was it not at education centers where Nazis taught their guests valuable skills like how to make lampshades? After all, we all need a marketable skill, especially in these times of high unemployment.

Nope on Hope. In the year’s biggest political news, most gay men and lesbians were thrilled when straight-but-not-narrow Illinois senator, Barack Obama, won the White House in November.

The senator wooed the gay community’s vote not only with the promise to overturn Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, but also by responding mostly favorably to questions measuring his support for same-sex equality at Human Rights Campaign’s televised presidential candidates forum. But now it appears that the president-elect has U-turned on the overturn, with aides indicating it not a priority for the new administration.

Hope™ for the homos was further dashed when Obama cozied up to the heterosexual and highly exclusive Rick Warren, tapping the evangelical minister to deliver the invocation at January’s inaugural.

Chances are The Not Wright Reverend Warren cut a pre-election deal with both senators McCain and Obama to deliver the invocation—regardless of which candidate won the election—in exchange for the acclaimed author agreeing to host the Saddleback Civil Forum on the Presidency in August. Let’s hope this is the worst gaffe our new almost-Prez makes.

But back to that DADT matter....

Speaking of things that make God and gays mad. It was not a good year for hate-sprews. Two of gay America’s most enduring opponents, Jesse Helms and Jerry Falwell, both heterosexuals, passed on to their eternal reward in white, straight, male-dominated heaven.

A fiery opponent of AIDS funding (until late in his life, to Africa), Helms, a five-term senator from North Carolina, was quoted in June 1998, saying, “Gays are sickening and intellectually dishonest.”

Falwell, you’ll remember, charmingly blamed “pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians” for the 9/11 terror attacks on the U.S.

The deaths of both men prompted many to conclude that, indeed, hate kills.

Name-calling. A heterosexual Lesbian man, an inhabitant of the Greek Isle of Lesbos, unsuccessfully filed suit in May to stop

women-loving women from calling themselves lesbians. Despite the suit’s failure, dykes worldwide began compiling alternate monikers to identify themselves, including the pleasingly tropical-sounding “lesbianians,” the more clinical “lesbianisians,” and the gender-bending “lesbones.”

Speaking of bones. In February, the esteemed, straight Texas state legislature decriminalized the possession of multiple dildoes by its citizenry. Previously, Texas law considered it unacceptable to possess more than four. Nonetheless, many individuals report having to cut back on their dildo collection in these difficult economic times; possessing more than four seems a bit ostentatious when so many women—gay or straight—can barely afford even one.

Comets burn out. Since 1997, when television cameras began sweeping arena stands to capture the image of enthusiastic WNBA fans high-fiving, cheering, and clapping, it didn’t take gaydar to recognize that many, many, *many* of those women in the stands were lesbians.

In the Houston Comets’ heyday, the Compaq Center’s smoking section at half time was a near-exact replica of any given dyke bar on any given Saturday night, sans a few Bud Light neon signs and a rainbow flag in the corner.

But after 12 seasons, four of them as league champions, the Houston Comets have financially fizzled; last month its key players were scattered to other teams for the 2009 season. At least partial responsibility for the team’s demise falls to its heterosexual owners for never fully acknowledging a simple equation: lots of lesbians = lots of loyalty = lots of loot. And that’s a fact, Jack.

So goodbye to 2008. This year tested our community to the limit (did someone say California?), but there’s comfort in knowing what doesn’t kill us only makes us stronger. And undeniably, we’re getting stronger (did someone say Connecticut?) everyday.

2009. It’ll all be fine. ■



THE COMPANY HE KEEPS

Barack Obama's choice of advisors means hope is on the horizon

As we look forward to the inauguration of Barack Obama as our 44th President on January 20, the GLBT community has many reasons to celebrate the day with a sense of optimism. After eight years of a Republican administration that has been hostile to our concerns, we now have a president-elect who clearly includes us in his vision for a new America.

In June 2007, then-candidate Obama wrote: "While we have come a long way since the Stonewall riots in 1969, we still have a lot of work to do. Too often, the issue of LGBT rights is exploited by those seeking to divide us. But at its core, this issue is about who we are as Americans. It's about whether this nation is going to live up to its founding promise of equality by treating all its citizens with dignity and respect."

What can our community expect from an Obama administration? The Presidential Transition Team has listed the following issues that will be focused on: expanding

hate crimes statutes; fight workplace discrimination; support full civil unions and federal rights for LGBT couples; oppose a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage; repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell; expand adoption rights; promote AIDS prevention; and empower women to prevent HIV/AIDS.

In addition, it's going to be very important who the new President nominates to replace retiring members of the Supreme Court, and Barack Obama has stated that he will choose judges who have "the empathy to understand what it's like to be poor, or African-American, or gay, or disabled, or old."

Glancing back to his campaign, let's remember that Obama participated in the HRC/Logo Presidential Candidate Forum. His campaign had a presence at more than 60 Gay Pride events across the nation, including a meeting with leaders of Houston's GLBT community at Baba Yega Restaurant in Montrose.

The co-chair of the campaign's 50-state

voter registration program was lesbian musician Melissa Etheridge. The co-chairs of the campaign's gay finance operations were Kevin Jennings, founder of Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), and Joan Garry, a former Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) executive director.

Brian Bond, once the gay outreach director for the Democratic National Committee, moved to Chicago to become the Obama campaign's director of constituencies. Gay author Tobias Wolff chaired Obama's national gay policy committee. Dave Noble, a former employee of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), served as the director of LGBT voter mobilization.

Barack Obama's deputy campaign manager, Steve Hildebrand, was always openly gay and visible. Hildebrand recently reflected how "Barack believed long ago that addressing issues important to LGBT

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THE POPE, THE GAYS, AND WORLD PEACE

Inconsistency plagues Benedict's holy messages

The 2008 visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States is cause to reflect on what his papacy has meant so far for gay people. There is some good, but much bad and ugly, to report.

The largest and most pressing public-relations problem confronting the Catholic Church in the United States today is the fallout from the priest sex scandal. Some conservative Catholics have tried to blame "homosexuals" for the sexual abuse of children by priests, since most of it involved male priests and boys under their supervision. Some suggested that the Church purge all gays from the priesthood.

But an antihomosexual purge presents both practical and theological problems for the Vatican. As a practical matter, homosexuals are probably disproportionately drawn to the priesthood. It offers young homosexual Catholics some palliative for the guilt and shame they may feel for being homosexual. It also shields them from embarrassing ques-

tions about why they aren't married.

Theologically, the Church distinguishes between innate homosexual orientation, which is not a sin, and homosexual acts, which are. For Catholicism the orientation itself is blameless, so expelling someone from the priesthood for that alone is hard to justify.

Under Benedict, the Vatican's response has been a mixed bag. On the one hand, current homosexual priests have not been purged, though like all priests they must remain celibate.

On the other hand, in late 2005 the Vatican declared that those who "show profoundly deep-rooted homosexual tendencies" are not suitable candidates for the priesthood. If, however, these "homosexual tendencies" are "simply the expression of a transitory problem," then the person can be ordained if the tendencies are "overcome at least three years before ordination."

That's a bit convoluted, and the details

will be worked out over time, but it suggests that mere homosexual orientation unaccompanied by any homosexual acts now justifies forbidding a man to enter the priesthood. In practice, of course, this will not prevent all homosexuals from becoming priests. But it will bar those who understand and openly acknowledge their homosexual orientation.

If the Vatican under Benedict has blurred the distinction between homosexual acts and orientation, the Pope himself has at least maintained another distinction of importance to gay people.

During his U.S. visit, Benedict spoke of the priest scandal in a way that differentiated between homosexuals and pedophiles. "I would not speak in this moment about homosexuality but pedophilia, which is another thing," he said. "We would absolutely exclude pedophiles from the sacred ministry."

This statement accomplished two important things. First, it reaffirmed that

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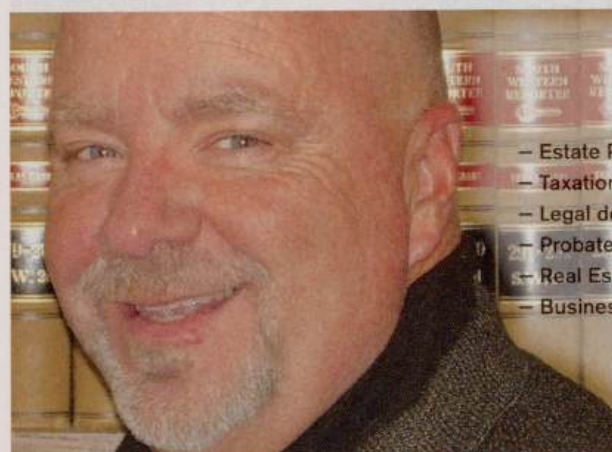
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voters in every major speech he gives could have a more positive impact than speaking to a predominantly gay audience in a hotel ballroom. From his presidential announcement speech in February 2007 to addressing African-American ministers at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on Martin Luther King Day, Barack has shown this commitment over and over again."

During his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, and also during his victory speech in Chicago's Grant Park, Obama mentioned our community. Joe Solmonese, HRC director, believes that Obama made the remarks on gay rights in an attempt to bring the issues to the attention of middle America. "He was speaking probably less to our community and instead trying to find common ground with the people we need to move."

The Obama-Biden transition team assured prospective employees that the administration will not discriminate against LGBT workers. "The inclusion of gender identity is a bold departure from the past—and it sends a clear message," said Christopher Anders, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) legislative counsel.

Last June, Michelle Obama, our nation's next First Lady, spoke to community supporters, saying: "We are all only here because of those who marched and bled and died, from Selma to Stonewall, in the pursuit of a more perfect union. Barack believes that we must fight for the world as it should be."

Now it's time for our community to take a deep breath and just celebrate. Get misty-eyed when the first African-American President takes the oath of office. Feel stirred as he delivers his Inaugural speech. Gush over how beautiful the new First Lady and the First Daughters are as they review the parade. Thrill at the sight of an elegantly gowned Michelle and her tuxedoed husband dancing in the spotlight of the Inaugural Ball.

Each of us, first of all, is an American, and we have the same concerns as the rest of our nation. Can we fix our horrible economic mess that has devastated this country and affected nearly every other country as well? Can we regain our national status as a good and honorable country and people? Can we be The Good Guys again and create true peace, prosperity, and hope?

As long as we're realizing new hope for our own community, let's reach out to the rest of the communities, the states, the countries, and the world, celebrating the audacity of hope together. While we're audaciously hoping for "our own kind" to achieve new heights, let's be audacious enough to

recognize that all of us—the Family of Man—are on the same journey. We can be proudly gay... and once again, we can be proudly American.

Brandon Wolf founded the online group, Houston Activist Network (Han-Net), which is now LoneStarActivists.

OutRight continued from page 17

while pedophiles would be expelled from the priesthood, homosexual priests would not be. Second, it repudiated the association of homosexuality with pedophilia, an old and harmful defamation against gay people that has been used to justify much discrimination.

It is significant that a man of Benedict's standing would separate the two, while so many who admire him do not. Despite his religious objection to homosexual acts, Benedict has not ignored all we have learned from the study of homosexuality. He recognizes that homosexual orientation and pedophilia are distinct phenomena. He deserves credit for his willingness to say so publicly.

Which is what makes his implied, but extravagant, criticism of gay marriage so disappointing. According to the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, a conservative think tank opposed to gay marriage, Benedict has spoken publicly about marriage 111 times. In these speeches, he has connected the traditional definition of marriage to preventing violence, maintaining legal order, and even preserving world peace.

In his January 1, 2008, World Day of Peace message, Benedict said: "Everything that serves to weaken the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman... constitutes an objective obstacle on the path to peace."

Elsewhere he has bemoaned the "growing crisis of the family, which is based on the indissoluble bond of marriage between a man and a woman." When this "truth about man is subverted or the foundation of the family is undermined, peace itself is threatened and the rule of law is compromised, leading inevitably to forms of injustice and violence."

The implication is that gay marriage, along with many other modern developments, will contribute to human catastrophe. Throughout history, gay people have been blamed for everything from the fall of the Roman Empire, to the Black Plague, to every hurricane, tornado, and earthquake that has ever struck civilization. Now we must add global destabilization to the list?

Benedict is correct that weakening families undermines social stability, with many potential harmful consequences. But to →

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accept Benedict's conclusion, we would have to believe that gay marriage will somehow hurt heterosexual families. Like many others, he seems to bundle gay marriage with a miasma of genuinely harmful trends like illegitimacy and rampant divorce.

The problem is that there is no good reason to indulge that fear. There is no evidence yet that gay marriage has undermined traditional families or contributed to violence, lawlessness, and war in countries like Canada, the Netherlands, and Spain. It is no more plausible to think gay marriage will produce cataclysms than to believe (as expressed by the late Jerry Falwell) that accepting "the gays and the lesbians" contributed to 9/11.

Benedict's concerns are not strictly theological ones. They are empirical, testable by evidence and experience, and thus subject to reasonable criticism outside his faith tradition. Day by day, year by year, they become harder to take seriously.

Writing from the conservative side, Dale Carpenter began his column for OutSmart in 1994, when he lived in Houston. Now residing in Minneapolis, Carpenter is a University of Minnesota Law School professor.

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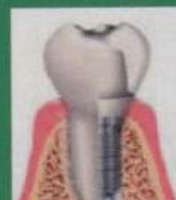


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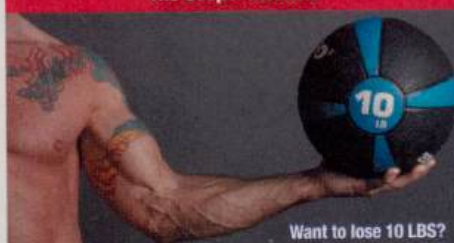
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InsideOut at City Hall

by Annise D. Parker

GOODBYE, COMETS

The demise of Houston's WNBA team is a loss for us all

Champions. Winners. Teams that achieve greatness, inspire their fans, and energize their home cities. The Houston Comets.

The Comets gave us four great seasons that helped establish the WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association). They gave Houston more seasons where they played with heart and grit even when they lost. They introduced us to Cynthia Cooper, Tina Thompson, Sheryl Swoopes, Janeth Arcain, and Kim Perrott, who died so tragically young. All were legends of the sport in their own ways.

Goodbye, Comets. May you not rest in peace. May the tragic news of your demise arouse the generous spirit of a new owner(s), the shame of a fickle public, and the ire of frustrated fans. You'll always be champions to us. You shouldn't end like this.

I've been a Comet season ticketholder from the beginning. The Comets offered great athletic competition at an affordable price. At games I was surrounded by a sea of jubilant and diverse fans, many of them women and girls, an audience mix unlike that of any other sport. That different fan base also meant a different feel to the arena. Games were almost like family reunions in the stands, with a huge "girl power" vibe.

I enjoy most sports, my favorite being baseball, but I believe in putting my money behind women's sports. I even learned to love, and understand, soccer when the U.S. women's Olympic team won gold. We didn't have a Houston team, but I followed the short-lived pro women's soccer league that sprang up in the wake of the Olympic run and attended games in other cities.

Unfortunately, sports are a business, and

no owner can afford to lose money indefinitely. When the WNBA stepped in to take over the team and shop it around for new owners, I made a few calls and had meetings with management representatives. Ten million dollars for a money-losing franchise is a steep hurdle in the best of times, but the current economic conditions made a sale impossible. The Houston Comets and the team's many fans deserved a better fate.

As a college student at Rice, I directly benefited from the new wave of women's sports created by Title IX, which seemed to promise a level playing field for publicly funded men's and women's sports in the 1970s. If you look at photos of Rice teams, you may spot the one and only Rice women's softball team. After one inglorious season, playing with hand-me-down volleyball uniforms and our own equipment, Rice found a way around Title IX rules and disbanded the team.

There were no scholarships. We never had a hope of playing beyond college. (And quickly found that we wouldn't play any more in college unless we transferred away.) We played because we loved the sport.

There are more opportunities today for girls to find their fields of dreams. But there are still too few for women to play at the elite levels they have worked so hard to attain.

It's a good thing I'll have other things to do with my free time this summer.

Annise D. Parker is Houston's third-term city controller and one of the highest-ranking openly GLBT-elected municipal officials in any of the 10 largest U.S. cities. Her website is www.houstoncontroller.org. The City Controller's webpage is www.houstontx.gov/controller/index.html. To receive the controller's newsletter, send an e-mail to cicely.wynne@cityofhouston.net.

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HIV TESTING, TEXAS STYLE

Proposed legislation will make our great state even greater

I recently returned from a trip to San Antonio, one of my favorite cities in the U.S. I appreciate the care with which downtown San Antonio has been laid out for the visitor.

Many attractions are within walking distance of one another, and others are just a short trolley-ride away. I delight in Latino (and especially Mexican) culture—the customs, the art, the food—and SATX has all of those in abundance. And of course, I enjoy the tourist hot spots, the beautiful Riverwalk and the bargain-filled El Mercado. Who wouldn't?!

My favorite attraction in the Alamo City is the Alamo. I have great interest in history, especially the history of our great state, so the Alamo is almost like Mecca for me. So important is this little piece of Texana, I am absolutely thrilled to announce that I am now the owner of a cutting from a Cholla cactus growing on the hallowed grounds of

the Alamo! (Be still, my heart!)

Obviously, I'm a proud Texan.

But I am not blind to the foibles of my beloved state. We're too politically conservative for my liberal lesbian tastes. We still have too many prejudiced Texans who discriminate against racial and sexual minorities. Our infrastructure is crumbling. We don't do enough to educate our children or protect our environment. And we need to make drastic improvements in HIV prevention.

On December 1, 2008, the 20th World AIDS Day, the Houston health department announced that our area's HIV-infection rate is almost twice the national average! And our rates, while lower than New York City or Chicago, are higher than any other Texas city.

In Harris County, there are 44 new infections per 100,000 residents while nationwide the rate is 23 infections per 100,000 persons. According to the city's Bureau of HIV/STD

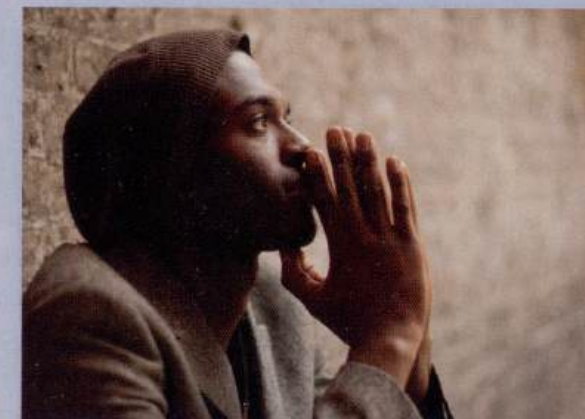
and Viral Hepatitis Prevention, this alarming statistic is accurate and reflects the use of new scientific technology that can actually distinguish recent HIV infections from long-term ones.

Based upon the improved technique for determining new versus existing infections, in August of last year, the CDC increased their estimate of the number of new infections occurring each year in the U.S. from 40,000 to 56,300. The new figures for our region are in line with the CDC's revised numbers.

So, what's being done to combat HIV in Houston?

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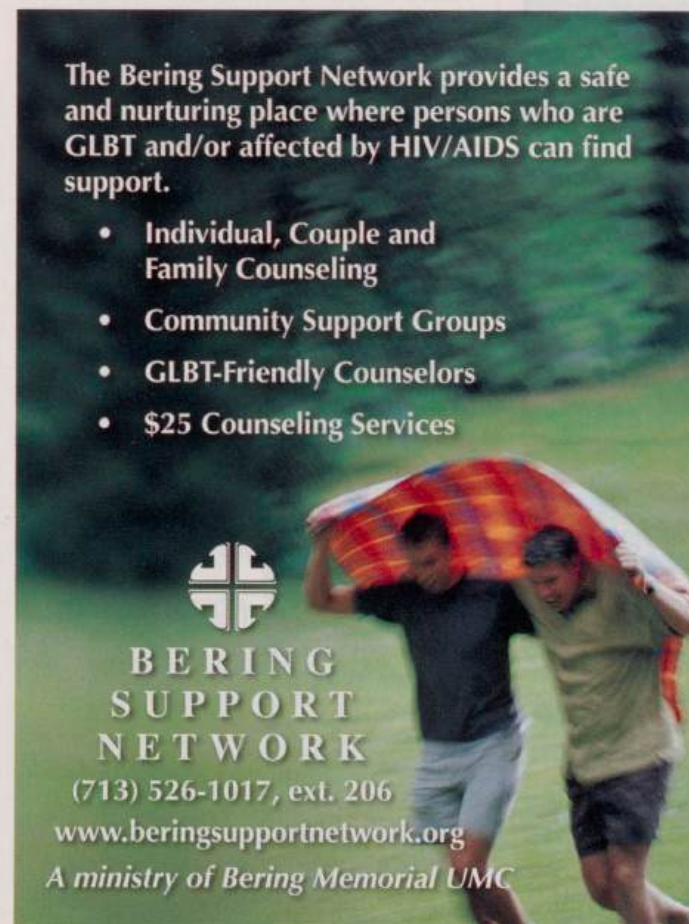


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AIDS Watch continued from page 24

order to help them avoid infecting others. AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH) utilizes social network leaders in a peer-based approach to convey HIV-prevention information to gay and bisexual men. And still other organizations apply various prevention methods to reach youth, women, and persons of color.

In addition to prevention education, Houston ASOs provide opportunities for community members to get tested for HIV. Planned Parenthood, St. Hope Foundation, Bread of Life, City of Houston, and a number of other providers conduct HIV testing at clinic sites and at special events around the city. Such service provision is vital because knowing one's status is the first step to preventing further infections.

But testing by ASOs and the city health department is not sufficient. Our state needs to do more to normalize HIV testing so that each time you visit a doctor's office or hospital for health care, you can receive an HIV test.

Enter Texas State Senator Rodney Ellis.

At a press conference at Houston's city hall on World AIDS Day 2008, Sen. Ellis announced he would propose a new state law in the upcoming legislative session. The bill will require all health-care providers to offer patients HIV testing as a part of routine health screening. Of course, patients will have the right to decline, but it is believed most patients will agree to testing once it becomes a part of a normal doctor's visit.

The bill will also require Medicaid and private insurance to reimburse for HIV testing.

Sen. Ellis' bill will implement recommendations for HIV testing made by the CDC in 2006 as a way of reducing the number of new infections. The idea is that people are more likely to change their risky behaviors and become more cautious about protecting their partners when they know they are infected with HIV. Making it even easier to receive HIV testing, say at your doctor's office, means more people will be tested.

So thank you, Sen. Ellis. We are pulling for you and this important legislation. Your vision for a healthier Texas and your leadership in the fight against AIDS are helping to create a future wherein fewer people will have to face the physical, emotional, and financial devastation of HIV disease. You make our state, and this Texan, proud.

Kelly A. McCann is the chief executive officer of AIDS Foundation Houston. For testing information, call AFH's Prevention Services Department at 713/623-6796 or log on to www.aidshep.org.



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Your Life's Design for 2009

**OUTSMART astrologer
Lilly Roddy shares
hints for a more
manageable
new year**

**Illustrations by
David Eduardo Flores Perez**
Photo of Lilly Roddy by John Conroy

The big change for this year is that Pluto, planet of transformation, regeneration, detoxification, and death and rebirth is entering the sign of Capricorn, where it will abide for the next 14 years. When Pluto changes signs, we always have big shifts in focus, economy, and awareness. Pluto will be most directly affecting the cardinal (action) signs of Aries, Libra, Cancer, and Capricorn. For those born in the earlier days of those signs, your life is in major flux right now.

Generally, Cancer/Capricorn has everything to do with the housing industry, and you are all aware of the shifts that are going on there. You can expect that this decline in the housing industry and difficulty with credit and loans will continue through the middle of 2010. Houston's housing industry may not be so affected until 2010.

The Federal Reserve ("born" December 23, 1913) is very affected by this movement of Pluto into Capricorn, and the financial and credit crunch on the national level will continue through the middle of 2010 as well. There are huge problems for the new administration, and I believe that the corruption uncovered may lead us into a psychological depression deeper than our economic depression.

Jupiter changes signs and enters Aquarius for a yearlong visit. This will help technology markets and will encourage an even greater world market than we already have.

There are four Mercury retrogrades, one more than usual. During Mercury retrograde, it is important to finish old projects, clean out closets and filling cabinets, and contact people from your past. The Mercury retrograde periods are January 6–February 5, May 2–June 5, September 1–October 2, and December 22–January 19.

Also this year, Venus, planet of love and money, goes retrograde February 26–April 26. Look for financial problems and relationship issues to come to the surface and create havoc.

Mars goes retrograde right at the end of this year, December 3–March 22, 2010. This will influence your ability to start new projects and confront problems. It is a better time to look inward and consider your own actions.

And finally, we have two eclipse phases this year. The first one is January 26 in Aquarius and February 9 in Aquarius/Leo. This is a time when people are focused on their own needs and a good time for group associations with like-minded people. The final eclipse phase is July 22 in Capricorn and August 6 in Aquarius. →

Read more on your sign at www.OutSmartMagazine.com

Aries 2009 March 21–April 19

As the year opens, Aries folk begin considering changes to career paths. Many of you are looking at downsizing or mergers. Others are looking at retirement or starting a new career. This is the influence of Pluto and has the most impact for those born March 19–25.

At the core of this energy are your fears about financial independence. As an old part of you dies, you go through your life and throw things away. Many of you are not sure what direction you are heading. This is a time of searching rather than decision-making. Your persona is going through a transformation, and you may not know who or what you will be until the process is over at the end of the year.

Neptune is influencing your friends, groups, and networking sector in your horoscope. You look for people of spiritual like-mindedness and generally eliminate the drama from your life generated by friends and acquaintances. Having a few friends to whom you really connect is more important than having a lot of friends. This is strongest for those born April 12–16. For all Aries, with Jupiter entering this same area of your horoscope, you are drawn to many new people. For those involved in networking for business, this is an excellent year for



improving contacts or getting into an organization that helps promote you. Associations with people from different countries or cultures prove especially beneficial. Watch that you don't overload this area of your life and take on more than you can actually accomplish.

Continuing focus on your spiritual pursuits, you look to step out of the box you were raised in. Many of you have a hard time buying into your old belief system and may reject it altogether. Others examine very different alternatives that you never knew about before. Uranus most strongly influences those born April 11–17.

Improving your health and work routines has a strong impact on all Aries. You take a critical look at just how you structure your routines in all parts of your life. Your primary goal is to make things work more efficiently. You eliminate from your life all those who only add to the crazy-making. Expect your work environment to change to a more effective system. Some of you may even change office locations or look for new places to work. You expect to be treated better by your company. If you don't get the respect you deserve, you will certainly be making some noise about it. The other major part of this is to pay better attention to all areas of your health. If you don't, you may be spending more time at the doctor than you planned.

Taurus 2009 April 20–May 20

Overall, this continues to be an easier time for most Tauruses. Pluto will be opening your mind and your heart to new experiences. This can be an excellent time to go back to school, travel, expand your horizons, and capitalize on your beliefs about money and wealth. Social encounters and marketing yourself or your business skills to new markets are easier than ever. You may be reluctant at first to act on these opportunities, but the solid assurances that you continue to receive will ultimately convince you. Your mind is really looking to expand beyond your old boundaries and look into new areas that you have only been considering for the last couple of years.

Jupiter making its way into your career sector enhances your opportunities for career advancement. Many of you are considering starting your own businesses this year. This may also mean that many of you travel more for your company. Don't be surprised if they are considering relocating your company and you with it. Overall, you will be more successful in your company and can expect some sort of promotion or raise in pay.

Those born May 13–18 are on a spiritual pilgrim-



age. You are going through a time of disillusionment about what you thought life was about and was supposed to mean. You are not going to know what you want, but only what you don't want, and this will make many of the stable cows and bulls feel very unstable. If you can relax with this, you will do fine. If you fight it, you will only increase your anxiety.

There continue to be new people coming into your life who open your mind to new ideas that help many of you innovate in your career and do what you really want to do. Uranus is helping with this and influencing those born May 12–18. You may feel a bit uncomfortable asking others to help, but that is part of what this planetary energy is trying to get you to open up and do.

Then there is Saturn helping to give form to your creativity. Saturn is trying to make sure that your imaginative ideas make it to the physical world. You should be able to take any good idea, and with some planning, really make it work. If you have children, this will be a time when they are growing up and maturing right in front of your eyes. This is a shift from focusing so much of your personal energy on their development and safety to paying more attention to your own inner creative spirit or inner child. This very same energy can also give form to any new business idea that you may be considering.

Gemini 2009 May 21–June 21

Pluto prepares you for a massive overhaul in the relationship and intimacy sector of your life. This is especially strong for those born May 20–25. You are digging up secrets that you keep from others and many that you keep from yourself. This directly influences your relationships. You want more from your partner, and they want more from you. This includes business and personal relationships. At the core of this could be problems associated with money or very different value systems. This may bring some relationships to an end because the differences can't be resolved. You need to pay more attention to your investments. This part of your life is very unstable, and you could lose some of your savings if you don't take heed.

Part of you wants to get away from it all and not deal with the strong sense of responsibility that dogs you. Take up a hobby or start a class to give those desires for freedom and inner searching practical application. If you work from an inner perspective, rather than being driven by expectations or things outside you, you will succeed with these energies. If you try to do the same old thing, you will not be able to follow through or feel passionate about what you are doing. Taking



adult education classes is a good way to stimulate your brain and get energy into this part of your life.

Travel can be especially significant. You are more open to new surroundings and ideas. Spas or retreats may be best because there is an underlying purpose for being there.

Career choices are still being revitalized, especially for those born June 12–18. You won't be able to do the same routine. If you can't find something where you are currently employed, you may look elsewhere to find satisfaction. The more active you are in this process, the more freedom you will feel. If you wait for others to make decisions, you feel more restricted.

This is a year to get family life and home in order. This is both an internal and external process. Work on what makes you feel safe and secure. The home analogy is about the inner self; that is where you want to feel more secure. Gemini by nature doesn't always feel good about commitment, since you feel choosing one thing limits you from doing another. Any work or plan must have several outlets so that you don't get bored or feel trapped. If you don't take this process into your own hands, Saturn will be using the big guilt stick on you, bashing you about the head and shoulders. Create your own inner home and security so you can make that happen on the outside as well.

Cancer 2009 June 22–July 22

You moon kids are a busy bunch with Pluto, planet of death and rebirth, moving into your relationship sector for the next 14 years. This has the most impact on those born June 22–25. You can expect your relationships will go through a massive cleanup. Some may not last and you may be sad about that, and others may leave and you will be happy. You are more open about what your needs are than you have been in many years. Internally, you get rid of old patterns that unconsciously sabotaged your relationships in the past. At the very bottom of this is getting to know yourself better.

Becoming more intimate is also high on your agenda. You are definitely interested in opening up and letting out your secrets and getting to know your partner and closest friends better. Many of you are moving beyond the physical and getting to know the world in a more spiritual or metaphysical sense. This is strongest for those born July 15–20. Association, either through friendship or other relationships, can be very financially beneficial. Investments can prove very good for you, even in this time of financial uncertainty. Taking classes in this area are especially helpful. Just be sure that you are open to new opportunities that may take you outside your comfort zone.



Generally, you can greatly benefit from taking classes this year; you are especially receptive to new information. If you are the one doing the teaching, step outside what you are accustomed to and consider new ways to get your message across. Get more connected to the Internet, another great source of income. Your message and ideas reach a larger audience, and you need a better way for that to happen. Speaking of vacations, you are really ready to get away from your routines. This is strongest for those born July 14–20.

Organization is another key area of activity this year. You are ready to get your life, your office, and your home more ordered. You were very busy last year and just didn't seem to get all your projects finished. First comes the assessment period, then start tossing out what you don't need. You don't have time for people and projects that don't give your life some meaning and purpose. Communications with family members could be short and terse. Watch your attitude! You are not as open and as receptive as you usually are, and that crabby nature could come to the surface.

Watch for career bumps from the end of February through the end of April. Don't waste your resources or your skills during this time. Keep your expenditures to a minimum and don't take any unnecessary risk with your finances. →

Leo 2009 July 23–August 22

There could be a lot of cleaning going on at your house and a lot of tossing out to go with it. There is an internal cleaning going on as well. You look to improve your diet and exercise programs. Health issues come up if you are not ready to address this and make necessary improvements. Don't let that happen. Move on this idea before you have to. Hang on as your work environment gets the cosmic makeover. Some of you may be moving work locations, while others are doing a major remodel of work locale or office equipment. There could be some downsizing going on in your workplace. This will have the most impact on those born July 23–26.

Relationships are a big deal for you this year. First, Jupiter, planet of opportunity and good luck, enters the area in your horoscope that rules alliances. Those of you with existing relationships feel a breath of fresh air in your partnership. You feel more positive about your partner than you have in the past. Those of you without a partnership will be interested in making contacts with potential partners. At the very least, you have a more active social life. For those born August 15–20, you are more confused about your relationship direction. In fact, you may want to spend more time alone rather than be in any social situation. You could be conflicted near the end of the year, feeling a pull in both directions of needing time alone and wanting to be around more people.



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At the core of this, you are questioning all aspects of your reality and your purpose on the planet.

This year you are supposed to become more innovative with your talents and come up with better ways to create a more diverse economic base. There could be new people coming into your life with opportunities that you have never considered before. You are also supposed to be spicing up the activity in the bedroom. You and your partner are stuck in a routine, and it may cause your relationship some problems, maybe even one of you to wander. Another aspect of this is that you work on freeing yourself from fears that have limited your taking risks on yourself in the past. You are more outspoken and direct. This is strongest for those born August 14–20.

Finally, Saturn is bearing down on the financial sector of your horoscope. This means that you need to be getting your money, credit cards, and all debts in order. You may feel very oppressed by your financial situation, even to the point of depression and losing sleep. You are caught up in the idea that your credit score has some reflection on your self-worth. Nothing could be further from the truth. You are just afraid to admit that you need help. Leos always want to appear strong and self-reliant, and when you have to ask for help, you are ashamed. Just think that your loyal subjects are offering their gifts to you as a sign of love and appreciation for you being you. Although this may sound comical, it is not. Open up and make your life easier.

Libra 2009 September 23–October 23

Cleaning out the home, family, and emotional foundations is one of your major projects. Some of you are moving, some are remodeling, and some are in a state of flux. This is your time to cut your umbilical cord. You are questioning who you are and where you are supposed to be. The first stage is the big clean-out. Expect to go through your closets, store rooms, files, etc. You may not have much left when you are done. This includes family, friends, romantic partners, and clients. You are clear about how your unconscious controls your actions and decisions, and you are reconsidering decisions made over your lifetime. This is how deep the cleansing will be. Expect changes with your parents as you take over the parenting role. This is strongest for those born September 23–26.

Creative pursuits are part of your agenda. With the seriousness of what is going on, you need diversions to help maintain a sense of perspective. Your people skills are excellent, and you will be able to manage even the worst curmudgeon. If you can do more of this in your work or business, you can be very successful—especially if your work is entertaining others. Some of you are more selective about whom you choose to be around. This is strongest for those born October 16–20.



Your creativity is based on fulfilling a deeper sense of your connection to nature or your spiritual self. You may be drawn to activities that make the world more ecologically safe and that help others clean up their inner selves. Part of what you are doing is reparative work on your own child-raising experiences.

Discarding old health and work habits are also on the menu. Try new ways to get yourself involved in exercise. This will tie into the cleansing you are doing. Your tolerance of drama at work will be low. If you can, look for the person who is in charge to clear up the mess so you don't take it on as your job. You are not very patient, and you may end up telling the truth... and we can't have that. Look also for improvement in your high-tech equipment. If they consult you, that will be best. You have many good ideas of how to make the workplace more efficient.

You test your spiritual beliefs, looking for a belief that is practical, useful, and has an earthly reward. You also question beliefs and ideas from childhood. Your vision about these things is better than it has been, so don't be self-critical about past decisions. Take it in stride and be grateful that you have better vision and can make better choices. You may also be visiting friends in the hospital this year. Your visit will do them wonders. Don't miss this chance.

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Virgo 2009 August 23–September 22

Creative juices flow, and you search out useful outlets for that energy. You may start a new business marketing some specific talent or creation that has been waiting in the wings, or you may take up a leadership position or expect advancement. This is not a year to waste. If you have children, they could show a lot of leadership or maturity this year. Try not to get into a power struggle with them. Rather, be a guide or mentor. A latent talent may make its way to the surface. You want to express more of your imaginative capacity to access your inner child and allow your own child to be his/her own person.

New work routines are on the horizon. Some of you get new working conditions or work equipment; others change work locations. You are busier than usual. There are new people to work with, and the work environment is more pleasant than usual. You should get along with most everyone this year. Health routines are successful when you focus on improving them. The more social the health routine, the more successful you will be. For some of you, a more spiritual path of health and work is more to your liking. You need a more peaceful work environment. Yoga or tai chi is the perfect exercise for you. You may even choose to work at home this year, avoiding the crowds and drama altogether.



This will be strongest for those born September 15–20.

There is strong need for absolute renewal in your relationship patterns. This work is about you. You may be feeling trapped or that your relationship lacks passion. This cycle can be a time when some relationships come to an end. If you avoid facing this issue, you will find that your partner will bring it up in a less understanding way. It is especially tense in early February and mid September, particularly for those born September 14–20.

With Saturn, the get-a-life-get-a-job planet, moving through your sign, you are more pragmatic than ever. You are in a major life review, and everything that is you or represents you is on the list. This has a major impact on your relationships, where you also need renewal. Saturn wants to know where you are headed for the future, and she works only with a clear plan that both people are participating in. If there isn't more equitability, she will encourage you to move on. The same thing is happening in your career sector. You should be getting recognition, a promotion, and more responsibility. If you don't, you take your talents elsewhere. You are rather testy during February and September. Keep the doors and windows open so you can escape if you need to. Be responsible to yourself and let others make their own choices and do their own work.

Scorpio 2009 October 24–November 21

Your communication skills improve, and you are able to say more in fewer words. Even though the ideas that you communicate are simple to you, they have profound effect on those who listen. Your words can be more piercing than usual, even for a Scorpio. Sibling relationships are changing this year. You will certainly have to let go of the relationship you had as children. You expect them to grow up, or you will be having a heart to heart with them.

For those wondering if you need a new car, the answer is yes. This is strongest for those born October 24–26. Keep an open mind. Take classes, renew skills, and keep your brain active.

You need more space, more windows, and definitely more light in your life. You could be moving or just remodeling, but your house will look different. This is a healing time with your family. They are more open to you as an adult and an individual than they have been in a very long time. You feel much less trapped. If your parents are elderly, make an effort to visit as they may not be with you much longer. Travel will do wonders for you.

For those born November 14–19, you look for someplace you can call home. You are not sure what you



want or where you want to be or what others expect of you. Renting is much better for you right now than buying. Don't worry about your need for isolation; this is a time to connect with your inner spiritual self. Only allow people into your life that you really trust.

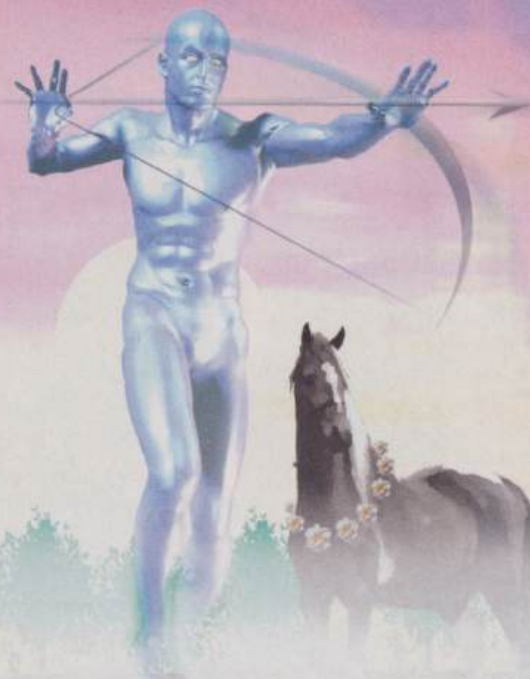
You are drawing like-minded people into your life, people who have a passion for life and are doing things that really interest you. You may sweep away friends who need too much caretaking. This will be very strong during February and September. You want them to be mature and take responsibility for their actions. Look for play outlets that you have not previously allowed yourself. This is strongest for those born November 13–19.

Groups and associations are going through a major overhaul this year. First, they must have a purpose in your life. You are not interested in spending your time and money with an organization that isn't responsibly motivated. You will be an effective leader if you take on a leadership role in an organization that will benefit from your organizational skills and your direct, to-the-point way of interacting. Don't be afraid to step up. Don't worry, not everyone is going to like you anyway. Look for support and information from trusted friends. They will be able to tell you the truth and help in this endeavor. →

Sagittarius 2009 November 22–December 21

Some of you really feel the financial crunch. You get rid of debts and tidy up old fiduciary records as a precursor to overhauling your skills and talents. This is an excellent time for taking classes to improve skills or consider another career, one that offers real satisfaction in your work. You may see old clients going by the way. You have to get out there and market yourself. Ask for help from a professional to improve your efficiency and exploit talents you have kept buried. Look to the future. Don't hold on to the past just because you did that well.

Your day-to-day routine gets very busy. Keep a handle on your commitments, else you will need a clone to keep up. There are so many things that you want to do, and the list keeps expanding. If you are a writer or public speaker, this is a fabulous year for you. Your words and thoughts get out there, and people are very accepting of your ideas. If you are interested in publishing, make it happen. Don't hesitate to get an agent. They are more receptive to you than ever for this entire year. Those of you born December 14–19 are especially creative and imaginative. You could be the people doing art with a very high-tech method. Open up and share your dreams with others. They might touch people in a way that resonates with their divine selves.



Revamping your innermost motivation is at the core of this. In the past, your impetus came from expectations that others had for you. You felt an obligation to do what they asked. This was not a sacrifice, as you felt good doing this. But now, you are ready to address a stronger internal desire and release some of your internal fuel that has kept you stimulated. Some of you, especially in the first third of the year, will feel bored with personal routines and work. You need to find something new to do, even if it is a hobby. Otherwise, there is too much pressure on your career to be more fulfilling than it was intended to be. This has greatest impact for those born December 13–19. In your work, you are ready for a new challenge—a promotion or a whole new career. If you do not find it where you now work, you will be updating your résumé. Minimally, you expect people at work to behave more maturely. You are very, very, very tired of trying to do most of the work and keep everyone's spirits up as well. Your dog-and-pony show is in retirement, and you are ready for everyone else to do what is expected and not whine about it. Don't be afraid to look at totally different career paths. This is a very good year to change.

Capricorn 2009 December 22–January 19

Pluto, planet of the cosmic enema, entered your sign in 2008 for a 14-year stay. Her initial impact is greatest on those born December 22–25. If you were born later in the sign, don't worry; she will eventually get to you. The last time Pluto was here 248 years ago, King George taxed the colonies for his expenses in the French and Indian War, setting off the American Revolution. Those of you affected are experiencing a personal revolution. You are open to new ideas, thought forms, and personal expression. Out with the old and in with the new. There are no limits, so feel free to chuck it all. You are going through a death and rebirth, and you control your life choices like never before. Choose well.

This could be a good investment year for you. You have to be conservative with your choices, but you have an intuitive knack for picking out things that will recover and look good for the future. Your desire is elevated. It is easy for you to justify spending, but other than investments, curtail your spending. You need more attention and recognition from your partner, boss, friends, and clients. Let them know what you need. You don't give out many signals, and they probably can't read that kind of subtlety. Those of you born January 13–17, try to figure out what you need to



do and can't seem to get a handle on it. Enjoy the search and don't worry about logic-based decisions. If you can rely on your intuition, you will do fine. Otherwise, enjoy the search and don't worry about coming up with a clear plan until next year.

You are bored with day-to-day routines. This creates impatience, which is not normal for you and surprises a lot of people. You normally couch your words in a pleasant and acceptable manner, but now you say what's on your mind, and you aren't apologetic. Be careful of your physical movement and driving habits. You could be accident-prone this year, especially in February and September. People from other cultures bug you, and you don't want to adjust to them or change. It's okay, you don't have to. This is especially strong for those born January 12–17.

Your ruling planet, Saturn, supports you in career shifts. You can retrain or retool or even start a new career. What she demands from you is a clear plan, a concrete goal, and a method for getting from A to B. Without this clarity, Saturn is not going to be helpful, and she will only point out the areas where you didn't do well. Let her be your guide. She has a penchant for detail, and she is always your best friend.

Aquarius 2009 January 20–February 18

Do you remember when Martin Luther challenged the church and caused a religious revolution? This is your time to do that for your life. Whether you are a religious conservative or a New Ager, you are decontaminating that part of your life. You see lies, half truths, or just plain ole BS that was offered as truth, and you experience anger and become somewhat jaded. Some of you give up all beliefs, others step past this and invent new belief systems. Ultimately, that is what you have to do anyway, but the clean-out is the first step in the process. This is strongest for those born January 20–23.

Also, Jupiter, planet of growth, travel, education, and expanding brain, enters your sign for a year, making you more optimistic about life. You bring more people into your life, increase your social activity, and are more willing to try new things. This can make you extra busy in your career, and you may have more work and responsibility than you want, resulting in over-commitment. You may have a time trying to reign in your ideas. You need friends to look over your plans so that you can finish them this year and not in 2020. Expect more opportunity and make the best choices.

For those of you born February 12–16, you are on your spiritual pilgrimage. You are looking for aspects in your life



that feed you from the inside out and not the outside in. This isn't your year to make choices but to explore options. Choices you make must be very open-ended so that you can come and go at will, or it must fill your passion gauge, so that you aren't deterred by the work involved. Follow your intuition.

You are supposed to be stepping way outside your comfort zone this year. Look at talents that you have not previously used. You have plenty of practicality backing you up, so you don't have to worry about your plans not coming to fruition. Some of you may find your company is looking to shift away from outdated products toward another market share. Your mind is very inventive. Share those ideas.

You are reviewing intimacy and looking to make relationships more real and connected. If you are not able to, or if the other people involved aren't willing or are just too lazy, you look for greener pastures. Financial problems could be just the tip of the iceberg between you and your partner, as hidden problems come to the surface. You may have to look deep and be glad that you are getting this information so that your trust with your partner can deepen. Couples therapy helps you see your shadow part in this.

Pisces 2009 February 19–March 20

You are evolving at a rapid rate, and many of your friends won't be able to keep up. Make way for new people in your life. You eliminate organizations that have outlived their usefulness. Some can be salvaged, provided they are reinvented with new goals and led by someone fresh and new. That person could be you; you are ready to step up and take on a leadership role. You lead by example, and others just follow you. And I'm not kidding. This is strongest for those born February 19–22. For those supremely motivated, politics could be your new venue. This is a powerful time for you.

You are open to new ideas and people from different cultures. You incorporate new ideas and find practical uses for them. You integrate your spiritual views into a neat package that draws from all you have explored. The result is more peace in your life. Some of you lead others on a path of enlightenment via a teaching path or a process of spiritual enlightenment. This is an excellent time to put your ideas to paper. Don't worry; there is a part of you that is double-checking and making sure there is a practical application for all that you explore.

For a small group of you, those born March



13–17, you are heavily engaged in reviewing your spiritual path. Some are headed out to workshops, meditation groups, or spiritual retreats. You are not satisfied with others' words or ideas. You are looking for the experience and the epiphany that only comes with a personal connection with your spiritual center.

With Uranus, planet of revolution and passion, moving through your sign, you do not tolerate deferred gratification. You want fulfillment now. Not the usual patient Pisces, allowing others to go ahead of you, you want to be first, though you don't mind lending a hand to someone behind you. You break old boundaries that once provided safety and support but now limit your newfound abilities. Uranus is the planet of rebellion, and you are rebelling against the old you. This is strongest for those born March 12–16.

You review how well you have constructed your partnerships. Were you open about what you wanted in the beginning? If not, you go back and straighten that out. Your partner has to be more responsive and responsible. It doesn't have to be 50/50, but there must be more conscious interaction. If this isn't happening, you will bring your relationship to an end. This is true of personal, friendship, and business relationships. There must be new goals and new intimacies that pull your relationships together. The good news is that there is great potential for that to happen. You just can't do it alone. ■



From Musical Genius to Musical Theater

Tom Hulce gets his first look at Houston as Houston gets its first look at his Tony Award-winning production of 'Spring Awakening'

Interview and recent photo of Hulce by Blase DiStefano

I've been here for a day. . . . It seems interestingly eclectic here in a way that's surprising in terms of the cliché of a big city in Texas." Tom Hulce, Academy Award-nominated actor (for *Amadeus* 1984), Tony Award-nominated actor (for *A Few Good Men* 1990), Emmy Award-winning actor (for *The Heidi Chronicles* 1996), and now Tony Award-winning producer (for *Spring Awakening* 2007), relaxes at Houston's Hotel Icon as he animatedly talks about his career, his coming out, and the touring production of *Spring Awakening* that opens in Houston January 6.

Blase DiStefano: Can we get started with Proposition 8? I think it's interesting because as I'm interviewing you, some Houstonians are protesting at City Hall, which is not far from here.

Tom Hulce: I live in New York and I grew up in the Midwest and I have lived in California. So election night was a thrilling event in terms of possibility of the open end of the bracket, if you will, and potential for a different set of givens was quite bitter-sweet in terms of composition. . . . Perhaps we are just on a trajectory and we will prevail as soon as enough people are younger, because it seems to be not an issue in any way for people under 30.

Young people don't seem to think anything of it, and a lot of them are experimenting. Did you ever experiment?

I grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which was a very progressive community, and there was a period where it was cool to be experimenting, because it was something your parents definitely wouldn't want you to be doing. [Both laugh] And that was a lovely coincidence for those of us who identified in the culture of the revolutionary position.

How did you feel or did you have support... I'm not trying to make assumptions here, but I read on the web that you're out.

It's interesting when people want to talk or not talk about that. I have no issues about that, so I'm fine to talk about it.

I guess because in a much bigger sense

than any one piece of who I was, I was very dedicated to not doing things the way you're supposed to. I was very dedicated to not following the rules, to creating my own set of rules and found that when I tried to play by the conventional rules, I was not good at it, and when I made up my own rules, I was very happy with how things went. That manifested in all kinds of ways, including in my acting career. I never made the choices that everyone thought I should make. For me, in a way, being in the film *Animal House*, that was my aberration [both laugh], the thing that was the most mainstream. It was like what the hell was I doing over here when six months earlier I was playing the stable boy in Peter Shaffer's play *Equus*? You couldn't find a more complex, psychotic, spiritually confused, sexually confused story, and then I go over here and become a kind of white-bread innocent icon.

Animal House was how people got to know you.

Exactly. I did a couple of other films right →

The music man: Tom Hulce was about 30 years old when he played Mozart in the 1984 film, *Amadeus*, which earned him an Academy Award nomination. Now 55, Hulce is a producer of *Spring Awakening*, the Tony Award-winner for Best Musical in 2007. Broadway Across America brings the play to Houston's Hobby Center, January 6-18. Details: broadwayacrossamerica.com.

Musical Genius to Musical Theater

continued from previous page

in that time period, but I felt it was wrong to keep pretending to be younger than I was and to keep losing my virginity, and it wasn't interesting to me. [I was interested in] character work, because in some way the more comfortable thing for me was to do something off-center in some way.

So I took myself out of the film arena and stayed in the theater, which was completely satisfying to me. It was where I felt like I lived. I just thought that I would wait until a piece of work came along that wouldn't seem a contradictory piece of work. And literally the next thing that came along, four or five years later, to my good fortune, was *Amadeus*.

We knew you, but now it was like "Oh my goodness!" From *Animal House* to...

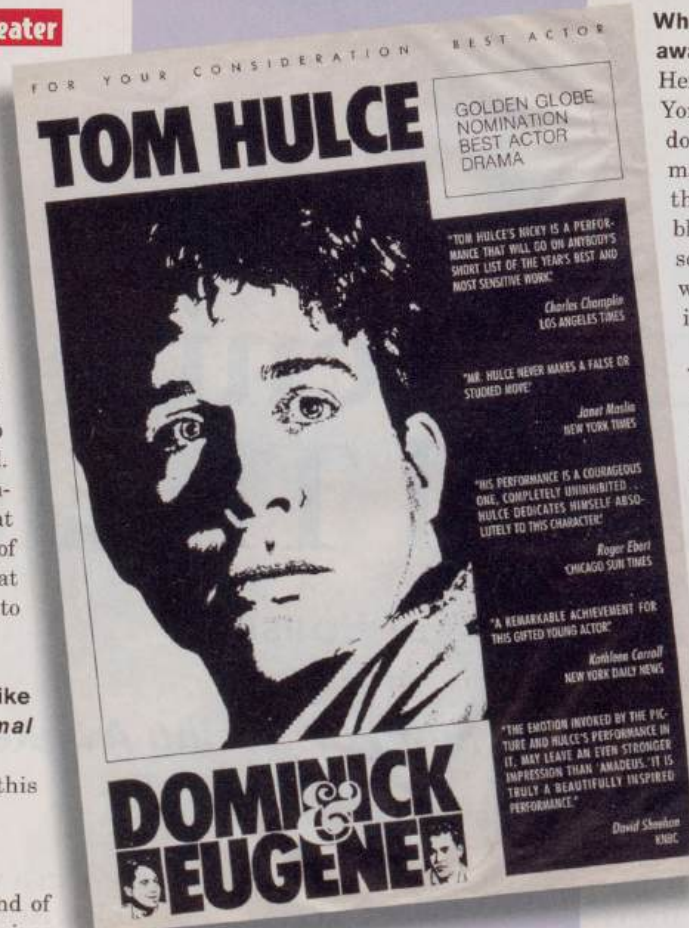
Right, like, "What's wrong with this picture?" [Both laugh]

How did that affect you?

It was gigantic in terms of the kind of response that we got. To this day, it gives me a kind of validity and access in a way that that legacy continues. Thank God for DVDs and Netflix and everything, because it just means that everything has a very long shelf life. We were nominated for Oscars, and [F. Murray Abraham] got the Oscar 'cause we were in the same category. The Italians—interestingly, given the part he played was Italian—the Italians gave the award to me. It was so ironic and funny and fun.

The other thing I'll tell you that I don't think I've talked about was that by then I felt it was important to talk about my private life, but I had waited long enough into my public career that I wanted to wait until a moment that it would have as much bang for the buck. So I had targeted the Oscars as just the place to simply acknowledge the relationship I was in, and damn it if that didn't work out. [Both laugh] Then as my desire to act waned, I stopped taking on the major assignments that I had had. I didn't want this to be the consolation thing of "When you stop acting, you start talking." [Both laugh] Then I just found a way to just not have it be an issue, but I really wanted to see if I could help.

In the meantime, I had a major chunk of time for myself both here and in London where I was doing Larry Kramer's play *Normal Heart*, and that was *wildly* meaningful to me. . . . Larry Kramer and I went to the



Behind the scenes: One of Tom Hulce's most acclaimed roles came in 1988 with the film *Dominick and Eugene*. He was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture—Drama for his portrayal of the mentally challenged young man. Seated at Hulce's table at the ceremony, with co-nominee Gene Hackman (*Mississippi Burning*), was Dustin Hoffman, who won for a similar role in *Rain Man*, with Hulce losing possibly due to lack of promotion by *Dominick's* producers, Orion Pictures. Because his personal agency was "so pissed off," Hulce says, it, not Orion, was responsible for this advertisement in the January 13, 1989, issue of *The Hollywood Reporter*.

world AIDS conference in Toronto at that time and we had a press conference, and at the press conference he was talking about what it meant to him to have a gay actor to play the part. And I was like, "Oh, okay." [Both laugh] But interestingly, the press became unable to deal with it as a piece of information, and there wasn't a reason to make an event out of it, so they didn't write about it. So there was a chunk of time where I was speaking openly about my own life wherever I was if it was appropriate, and there's a kind of reverse thing that could also happen, because I wasn't in the limelight enough for it to be some kind of titillation.

When you did *A Normal Heart*, were you aware of the AIDS epidemic?

Here's what shocked me: I lived in New York at the time Larry's play opened down at the Public Theater, I think maybe in 1985, and it was that far into the epidemic, and I lived within 20 blocks of the Public Theater, and I was so shocked. *That play* taught me what was going on, because I wasn't around in the center of that life.

That must have been enlightening.

It was horrifying and enlightening, and it made me want to make my contribution at that time. I felt the best contribution I could make was through my work, and so literally I sought out the opportunity to do that piece of work.

The one in London.

Yeah, they had done that play at the Royal Court with Martin Sheen playing Larry. But in what world do I replace Martin Sheen in anything? [Both laugh]

At that time in London the epidemic was at a much earlier stage, so it felt like the play could have an effect that was much more immediate. It was bizarre—that was at the height of my popularity, because it was 18 months after *Amadeus*. So the front rows had teenage girls who had come to see *The Normal Heart* because of that, and then there were the normal theater-going audience, and there was the gay audience. It felt so cool that there was a reason for the various groups to go, and they were all having the same intense experience together.

Tell me about the making of *Dominick and Eugene*.

The producers set up a phenomenal circumstance where Ray Liotta and I moved to Pittsburgh and lived there for about six weeks before the filming started. There was a great care of the process in making something that gave us the best chance to do work that was as particular and intimate as it was.

I couldn't have given my performance if Ray weren't the other actor, because it required somebody who would be comfortable with a ridiculously intimate relationship, not sexual but intimate. To be honest with you, I don't remember what the circumstances were, but there's that little scene where the two brothers are in the shower, and some of the producers were getting a little nervous and suggesting we don't shoot that. We did shoot it, even though when we were shooting it—we're not naked—the water's freezing cold inside! [Both laugh] →



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Musical Genius to Musical Theater

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When they were casting it, I was at that point where they weren't allowed to ask me to audition because I was too fancy at that point, so then my job became to make them understand they should choose me, without doing the thing I do best, which is act, right? So I'm showing up for my meeting with them and I just happen to have dog hair on my sweater, and they can wonder if I'm doing it on purpose or maybe it's just me and maybe my socks didn't match. They wanted to meet with another actor and I didn't know who it was. I walk in and it's Ray Liotta, and I thought, "Okay, it's these two working-class Italian brothers, and I'm the one who's not coming back into this room. There's no way he and I could be twins." [Both laugh] But bless them again for their imagination, and they understood that that could happen.

Now back to stage with *A Few Good Men*. It's kinda weird...

That's crazy, right? [Both laugh] That's so not my territory. Before *A Few Good Men* was going to be done as a play, I had sent Aaron Sorkin's screenplay of *A Few Good Men* to my agents saying this guy is amazingly talented, that this would be a perfect film for your clients Tom Cruise or Val Kilmer, who had just done *Top Gun*. So in order to help Aaron, I had already cast the film. [Both laugh] Many years later, I get a phone call asking if I would like to be in it, and I'm like, "That's crazy. What are they thinking?" I was thinking this is the only time in my life I've been asked to do this kind of a part. And so I agreed to join them.

What was the filming like on *Murder in Mississippi*?

We were shooting right outside of Atlanta, and Blair Underwood and I were rehearsing a scene on the street and people didn't know we were acting, and someone pulled over to me and said, "You better get out of here, there's going to be [trouble]." I'm like, "Dude, we're rehearsing."

That would be scary. How did that shoot go?

That was an amazing story to climb into. When you shoot a film for television, the shooting is fast. But it was something where everybody was committed to it. But if you're looking to cast someone who is identifiably Jewish and from New York City, the fact they got the WASP from Detroit to do it... [Both laugh] It just meant that I got a lot of opportunities to

climb into some really interesting stories along the way.

Were there other incidents during the filming?

There was a scene with a lot of extras, and some people brought their own KKK outfits—that was a little tense.

How scary. Makes me sit up. You've really done a lot of different roles and...

Lucky me, right? This applies to *Spring Awakening*—the fact that in some way I had the luxury of pursuing the work that intrigued me or challenged me and never really had to have a consideration about my career or commercial concerns. Part of what I think has allowed *Spring Awakening* to become what it's become is the fact that we never talked about where it was going to end up.

It got started about nine years ago, right?

Yes, the authors and Michael Mayer, the director, worked for about two years through a number of workshop processes just writing it. And then it got put aside both because 9/11 happened and the theater in New York that was going to do it for a while became much more conservative in what they were doing. And then the director and I went and made the film *The Home at the End of the World*. So basically I made their director unavailable to them for a couple of years. [Both laugh]

We invited Duncan [Sheik] to do the score, and Duncan and Steven [Sater] did two songs for the film. But basically they chose to wait and not get a different director, so then the month the film opened, I sat down with the three of them and said that I would love to re-invigorate the adventure of *Spring Awakening* and help take it to



Stargazing. *Spring Awakening* producer Tom Hulce (l) was an honored guest at a reception hosted by George Lancaster (r) at Houston's recently opened House of Blues. Fashion designer Zang Toi, who was simultaneously in Houston premiering his spring '09 collection at Nordstrom, was also honored at the reception co-hosted by Phoebe Tudor.

wherever it wanted to go and to finish the process. Probably about six months later we did a concert reading at Lincoln Center, and then about 10 months after that we started the process at the Atlantic Theater. I started it about five years ago, and for me it was full time because it was the hardest thing to get people to understand what we saw that you couldn't see when you read it on the page.

So you had to verbally convince them...

And get them into a room with it and let them understand the thrill of being in a room with a dozen young people in their late teens and early 20s and this material and the kind of authenticity that both the material and these performers can bring to it. The play is based on the 1891 Frank Wedekind play, which is kind of a classic.

Wasn't it banned for 100 years or so?

Yeah. The first uncensored English language version was done in the '70s. But to understand, there is this story that is honest, a cautionary tale about what happens if we are unable to answer the needs of our young people. But hand in hand with that, to have an exhilarating, quite beautiful musical, this piece is so contradictory in every way. This story takes place in the 1890s, but the songs are in a contemporary idiom; the story takes place in a kind of repressive, conservative provincial community, and the songs take place in an abstract place that is full of great exhilaration and possibility and color. The songs are considered some kind of rock, but in their description in the press, they use words like 'ravishing' and 'gorgeous.' Those two words don't go together, so there's something about it—there's a new set of rules that have made it incredibly challenging but also incredibly satisfying when it turns out the work that we did can be accessible to so many different groups of people.

And at the Tonys, you won...

When we did the concert at Lincoln Center, after that concert my partner Ira [Pittelman] joined us, and he and I are now producing partners in terms of new projects.

You were the two producers?

To begin with, I was the only person in the room moving it forward, and then Ira joined, and then the Atlantic Theater Company offered us a home, so we were able to do the production at the Atlantic. At that point just Ira and I were involved and then we decided we would be crazy and move the show to Broadway, something we

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The Boys in the Opera

Gay, talented, and dedicated to bringing opera to kids, these guys are an artistic dynamic duo

by Marene Gustin
Photo by Mark Hiebert



Defying Disney: To kick off 2009, Houston Grand Opera to Go's Kade Smith (l) and Chuck Winkler rework Antonin Dvorák's *Little Mermaid* for local students in grades three through eight. The original operatic version of the story, with which many of the young audience members are likely less familiar than its animated retelling, plays Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at Heinen Theatre, January 26–February 13. Details: houstongrandopera.org/operatogo.

Chuck Winkler and Kade Smith live and breathe opera, but they do have their differences. Winkler is a native Houstonian who loves to cook, Smith, an Okie, prefers baking cookies. Winkler was a boy soprano, Smith wanted to be a scientist but didn't have the grades.

"I'm a morning person," Winkler adds. "He's not." When collaborating on the children's operas they help create for Houston Grand Opera's *Opera to Go!*, they fuel up with vanilla vodka and Dr. Pepper. And, somehow, it all turns out all right.

"We have a great working relationship and we socialize together," says Smith. But they aren't partners in real life—both have boyfriends—even though they spend a lot of time together. They not only sing in HGO's chorus, but Winkler is the director of HGOco, while Smith is the program director. And in their spare time they create 45-minute, high-energy kid operas from three-hour classics that tour the country introducing young people to the magic that is opera.

"Sure, it's hard," says the boyish Winkler, who at 46 resembles a cuter, younger Scott Baio, dressed sans tie in a corduroy jacket and jeans. "But we know what these kids want, you have to keep them laughing. A lot of what we do is based on cartoon humor."

Smith, 30, who dresses more like a cool college professor but admits to being young at heart, adds that he "loves Square Bob Sponge Pants!"

But more than just an affinity for kiddie entertainment, it takes a great deal of talent and music aplomb to condense classics like *Daughter of the Regiment* into English-language performances that not only grab the attention of some 300 K-to-8th-grade students but, hopefully, impart an appreciation of the art as well.

"It's just a great way of telling a story," Winkler says of opera. "Every performance I introduce I try to compare it to sports. Opera is like the Olympics. It's not just some person with a Viking hat on."

Smith agrees. "The arts enrich our lives in ways other entertainment can't. Sitting in front of the TV two hours a day doesn't make me want to be a better person."

But TV watching, and just about everything else, does fuel their creations. Besides condensing classics and writing English librettos for them, the duo are also working on original works—with Winkler writing the music and Smith doing the lyrics—that will reach their young audiences.

"We have a lot going on in our heads," Winkler says, as Smith finishes his sentence by adding "but nothing we want to tell you about right now!"

Whatever they come up with—an opera version of *Hannah Montana*?—you can bet it will be a big hit with the kids. And maybe, just maybe, a life-changing experience.

"Even if it's just one kid in 350, if we can light that spark, we've done our job," sums up Winkler.

Opera, and in particular HGO, are their lives.

"I think it's just a great place of opportunity," says Winkler of the opera company.

"It's opera-terrific!" adds Smith.

"I did not say that!" Winkler points out with a laugh.

Marene Gustin wrote about pets and their owners in the November issue of OutSmart.

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The Incredible Shrinking Woman

Losing weight wasn't a matter of vanity for Sally Huffer. It was a matter of life and death

by Nancy Ford
Photo by Yvonne Feece



"I have met some other people in the GLBT community who have had either lapband or gastric bypass surgery, and I am so grateful to be able to get to know them better," says Sally Huffer, who underwent gastric bypass surgery in September. "It's nice to feel a sense of community within the community."

Losing weight. It's New Year's resolution Numero Uno.

But for Sally Huffer, getting her weight under control was much more than a vow made at midnight on the last day of December.

"Looking in the mirror, I would have been a fool not to see my own mortality staring back at me," Huffer says. "I lost my mother last year and one of my best friends in May of this year. Both could have made decisions to prolong their lives but opted for the majority of their lives to engage in behavior that was deadly—smoking."

After suffering these losses, Huffer realized she was doing the same thing with her own vice—food. And she had promised both her parents prior to their deaths that she'd keep an eye out for "The Best Brother in the Whole Wide World 'Trade-mark,'" as she refers to her brother, Bradley. "That meant that I had to stick around."

On September 17 of this year, her 43rd birthday, Huffer entered Park Plaza Hospital to undergo a "laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass and cholecystectomy." →

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The Incredible Shrinking Woman

continued from page 44

"The latter is a fancy way of saying I had my gall bladder removed," she says. "I did not know it at the time, but my gall bladder was infected with a very large stone."

Some might think undergoing surgery is a strange way to celebrate one's birthday, but it made perfect sense to Huffer. "I figured if people can renew their wedding vows, I can renew my birthday," she reasons.

Hadar Spivak, MD, FACS, "a brilliant man," Huffer extols, performed the surgery, which cost \$18,000, which her insurance didn't cover. "There apparently is a loophole in the state of Texas that gives insurance companies the right to deny coverage to companies with less than 250 employees, even if my employer wanted to purchase a rider to cover the surgery," Huffer says. "I understand that it's hard for them to spread the cost out, but Medicaid covers the surgery."

"But I was afraid that at my weight, I couldn't wait—heeheehee—until I qualified for Medicaid," she quips. Huffer's financial planner, Gary Brownfield, recommended she purchase the surgery with a credit card that awarded points for purchases.

"I was able to get gift cards for people during the holidays with the points I had accumulated. I didn't have to pay any interest, and then paid off the credit card with the money I had saved."

Huffer's hospital stay lasted four days, which she followed with a few days' pampering at a local hotel to recuperate. Her surgery resulted in "four very tiny incisions," and a larger one, about two inches long that allowed a route for infection to exit the body, took about a month and a half to heal. For about a week after surgery, she also had a tube coming out of her abdomen to allow fluid to drain—all with minimal pain.

"I had some shooting pains where the doctor said scar tissue was forming on my abdominal muscles," she says. "But that has subsided now."

Every day, Huffer says, she feels stronger and stronger; she had lost more than 70 pounds as of December 1. "I used up a lot of gravity," she jokes,

adding more solemnly, "I still have a long, long way to go." Regarding other numbers, Huffer has no specific target weight. Her goal is simply to live longer.

"I plan to keep losing after I'm under 200—don't get me wrong. It's just one of those things I cannot wrap my brain around."

Huffer, Montrose Counseling Center's community projects specialist since August 1, 2000, realizes her weight loss carries with it emotional implications as well as physical. "When I first met with Dr. Spivak, he asked me what I thought about getting into a size 10. I started weeping. I remember wearing a size 14 in sixth grade; I have no memory of being smaller than that. He said I may even end up in a smaller size. This is not something I can comprehend. Still."

Less than four months after surgery, Huffer says she is already experiencing vast improvement in her health. "This last summer I had been diagnosed with diabetes, and that is in remission. I feel better—I can fit into armchairs! I am much more disciplined in terms of drinking a lot of water and eating three times a day. I used to not eat all day long until I came home from work. That does a serious number on your metabolism."

Apart from "harassing my kid brother for years to come," Huffer says, there are "silly things" she looks forward to doing that she couldn't do at the height of her obesity. "I couldn't go to movies at River Oaks Theater because the seats are uncomfortably narrow. I was ashamed to fly because I knew they'd slap me with purchasing two seats, not to mention all the fearful stares of everyone in the boarding area who prays they don't have to sit next to me. I won't have to ask for a seat belt extension and will be able to sit in the exit row. Hopefully the summer heat won't be so debilitating. I will have more stamina. I already have more than I did before surgery, and I imagine that will continue to improve. And I'm looking forward to being able to buy something other than shoes in a regular department store!"

Nancy Ford reported on the Proposition 8 protest in December's OutSmart.

Food for Thought

Unlike lapband surgery, which is mostly performed as outpatient surgery, gastric bypass requires being admitted to the hospital. Huffer opted for the more invasive gastric bypass surgery, despite increased threat of complications, based on success rate and body mass index (BMI). "People with higher BMIs do better with gastric bypass," Huffer says.

Lapband patients must be extremely compliant with getting adjustments and following the diet regimen in order to be successful. Even then, they may only lose up to half the weight they're going to lose in an 18-month period. With gastric bypass surgery, compliance is not negotiable. "You can get physically sick if you don't follow the rules, which include taking small bites, chewing food thoroughly, avoiding sugars and fatty foods, not drinking with meals. It's also critical to take vitamins, since the gastric bypass works through a method of malabsorption."

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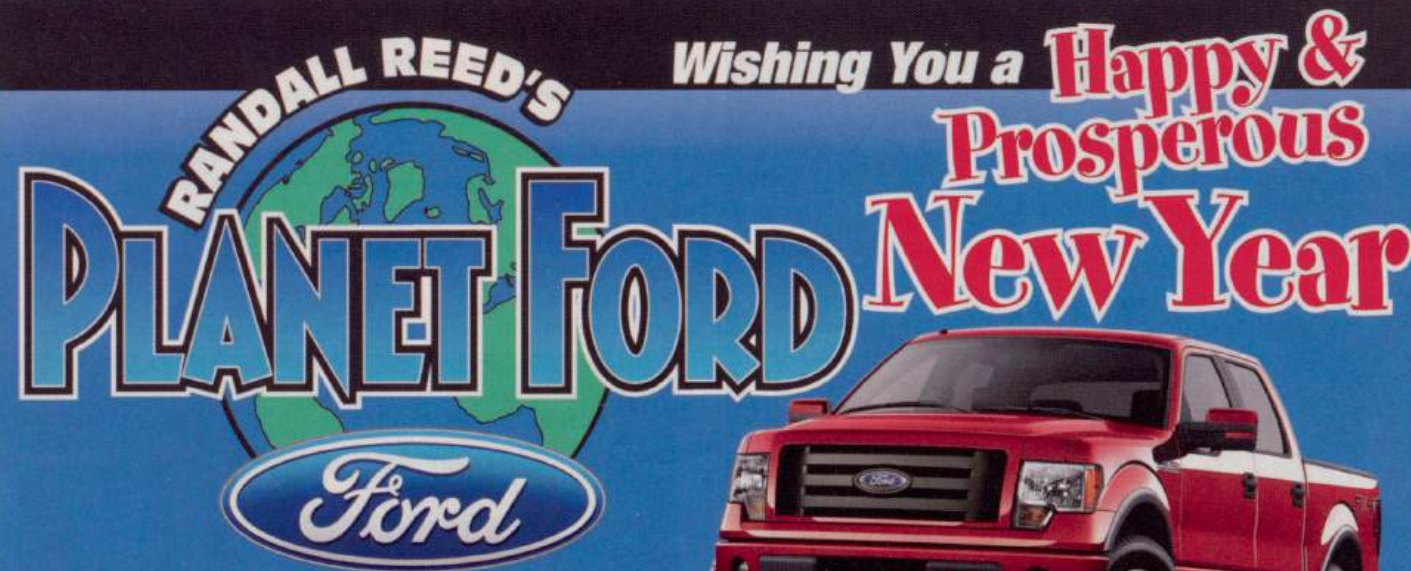
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Survival Instinct

**Gloria Gaynor talks to 'OutSmart' about her return to the stage...
when God isn't interrupting**

by Donalevan Maines

On January 23, disco legend Gloria Gaynor makes her first appearance ever with a symphony orchestra when she celebrates the 30th anniversary of her biggest hit, "I Will Survive," by singing with the Houston Symphony Orchestra at Jones Hall in downtown Houston.

When I spoke with her by phone last Halloween morning, Gaynor was at her home near Newark, N.J., still in the dark as to details of the planned *Disco Evening with Gloria Gaynor*. "I really don't know how it's going to work, but if they want me to sit still, they would have to tie me into my chair!" she says.

"I've always wanted to do it [sing with a symphony]. I don't like performing with [pre-recorded] tracks because it's not fresh. I miss the spontaneous, human element that you get singing with musicians," she explains.

In her long career, Gaynor has only played once with an orchestra. That was in Italy, and it remains the most memorable experience she's had singing her signature song. Although she'd heard countless anecdotes about how fans have related to the lyrics, she says, "One story always stands out in my mind. In Italy, I changed the line 'It took all the strength I had not to fall apart' to 'Only the Lord could give me strength not to fall apart.' Afterwards, an Asian girl, about 23 years old, told me that God had caused her to miss her flight back to the Orient, so that she could attend my concert. I said that was sweet, and she said, 'No. I was going home to commit suicide. Now I don't have to die.'"

Gaynor says that more than 50 other artists have recorded "I Will Survive," but hers remains the most famous. "God gave me this. He said this one is for you."

Today, Gaynor says that "faith is everything" to her, but she had "no real concept of Christ" until 1982. She explains that as a child she had been "inundated with church" and got so sick of it that she made a →



And so you're back: It's been 30 years since Gloria Gaynor became Queen of the Gay Disco with her mega-hit "I Will Survive." She also struck gold with her rendition of "I Am What I Am," another gay anthem of the highest order. So as Gaynor, an avowed Christian, returns to the stage to resurrect those gay salad days, is it unreasonable to ask her to clarify her beliefs regarding homosexuality and the Bible?

solemn vow not to indoctrinate her children with religion. "We learned the principles of Christ without knowing who Christ was," she says.

"Then, one Sunday morning, I blew the dust off the family Bible and said, 'It's show time.' Being the practical person I am, it was the harmony of the Gospels that struck me, and how they foretold of the coming of the Messiah, Emmanuel. I said, 'Oo-kay.'"

Gaynor adds that she knows there are gay Christians but she's never been to a gay church. "I would tell gay people the same thing I would tell anyone," she says, "to read with the Holy Spirit's guidance, seek the truth, and surrender to it."

But hark! She stops and says, "I hear the Lord speaking to me now." After a brief moment, she says, "Some years ago I went to a seminar at a place called Living Waters. [The website says, 'While there are degrees of sin, both homosexuals and fornicators will not be heirs to heaven.'] It was founded by an ex-homosexual. It made me want to reach out to the sexually and relationally broken, in a way that doesn't alienate them or beat them over the head with religion."

Gaynor also has "a vision of a ministry for teenage parents." She explains, "It would include a school for behavioral science and a learning and recreational center."

No doubt students also would learn to appreciate positive messages that resonate in Gaynor's music, including her disco version of the gay anthem from *La Cage aux Folles*, "I Am What I Am." "To me," she says, "that song says that God made us all, and He doesn't interfere with us. He tries to influence us, and He only wants what's best for us. I believe that my purpose is to help guide people in His ways so they will be abundant in life."

Again, our conversation is interrupted. Not by the Lord this time, but by a public relations person for the Houston Symphony. She wants us to get back to the subject at hand, Gaynor's upcoming performance at 7:30 p.m., January 23, with the Houston Symphony.

Gaynor says she will hit Houston the night before, then rehearse once with the symphony on the afternoon of the performance. That evening, the audience will groove to disco favorites such as "Never Can Say Goodbye" (first recorded by the Jackson Five) and Gaynor's renditions of nostalgic favorites such as "Killing Me Softly," "Every Breath You Take," and

"You Are All I Need to Get By." In addition, there will be a separately ticketed VIP after-party with Gaynor on the stage at Jones Hall immediately after the concert. Later that night, the South Beach nightclub will host an "I Will Survive" theme party with free admission for anyone holding a ticket stub from the concert.

- Single-party/concert tickets: 713/224-7575 or houston-symphony.org.
- VIP after-party tickets: Clare Greene at 713/337-8582 or clare.greene@houston-symphony.org.

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OutSmart magazine.

An "I Will Survive" Moment

"My own favorite 'I Will Survive' moment," states Donalevan Maines, "came when my friend Marshawn Evans twirled to the tune at the 2001 Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, winning a talent scholarship and helping her place as third-runner-up. On that night, just days after 9/11, the audience cheered wildly as they obviously related 'I Will Survive' to America's stalwart reaction to the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. And after I interviewed Gaynor, a friend whom I correspond with in prison told me that 'I Will Survive' is going to be his anthem while behind bars." ■

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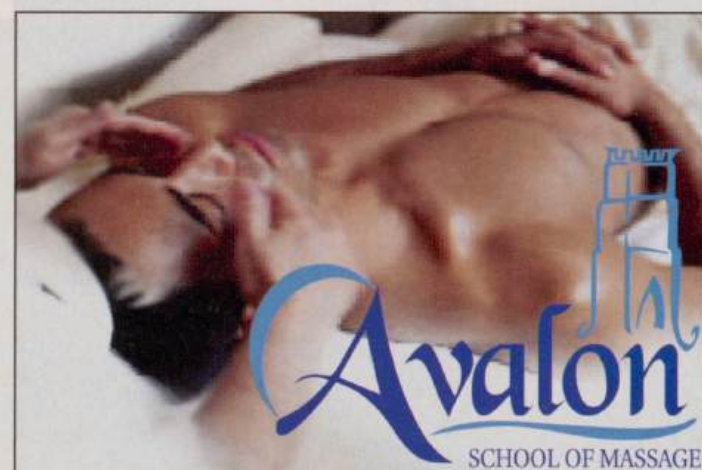
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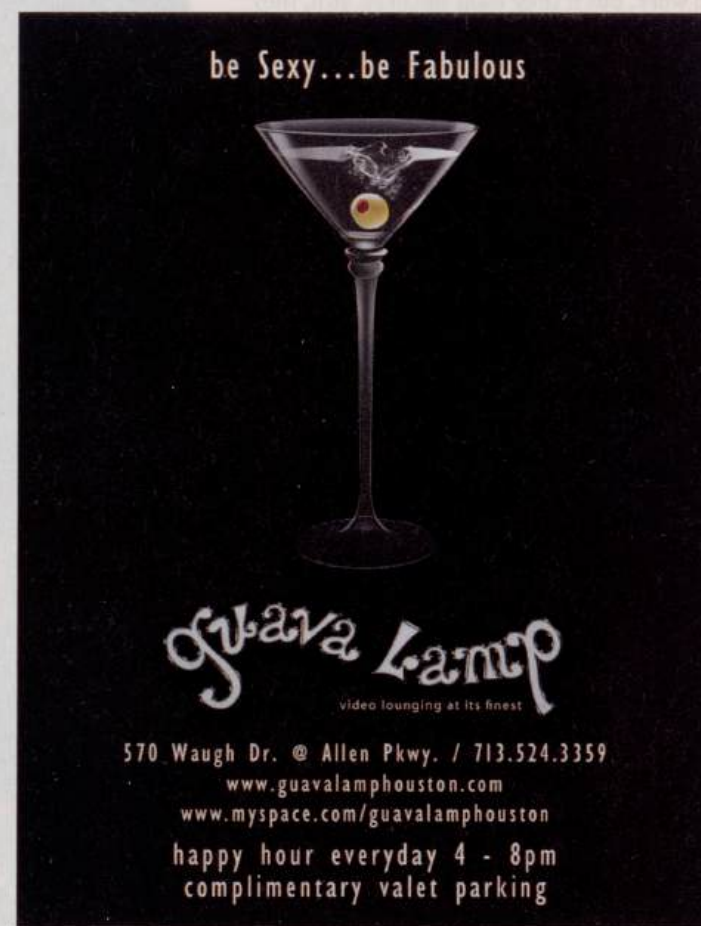
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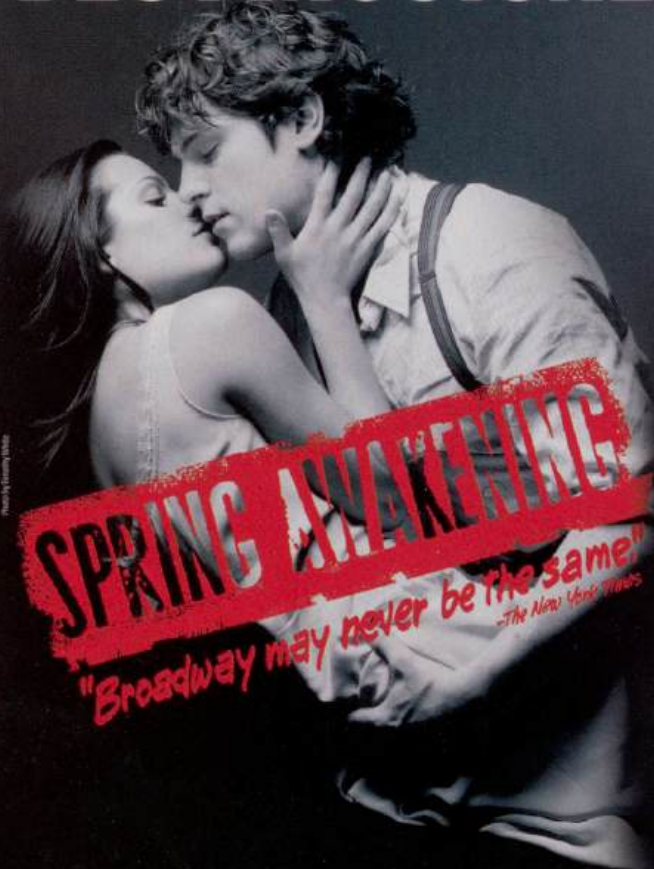
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Barney Frank

(Democratic congressman of Massachusetts)

(The Advocate, 1/13/08, Benoit Denizet-Lewis)

But as we're about to leave [a polling place on Election Day], a slender, pale man with a thick Russian accent [says to Barney Frank:] "We got into this economic mess because of people like you. . . . You gave a mortgage to everyone who didn't deserve one."

"No, you actually have that backward," Frank blurts back. "I'll show you articles where I was critical of that. If you want the facts, I can give them to you."

"You've been in Congress too long. Look at what's happening in Massachusetts [with gay marriage]. People are leaving."

"Then why don't you leave too?" Frank says matter-of-factly. "You should move somewhere else."

Chuck Lorre

(writer/producer, The Big Bang Theory, Two and a Half Men)

(The Big Bang Theory, 12/8/08, <http://chucklorre.com/index.php?p=231>)

I believe that inherent within the God-given right to the pursuit of happiness is the equally God-given right to the pursuit of unhappiness. That is why I support gay marriage.

Joel & Victoria Osteen

(Lakewood Church)

(Larry King Live, 12/8/08, CNN)

Larry King: [In] the new issue of Newsweek, it discusses the Proposition 8 study in California and the defeat of the proposal to allow marriage among gays. And it claims that the Bible has many, many, many marriages among gays and that it does not come down on it. How do you feel about it?

Joel Osteen: . . . I'm not for gay marriage. . . . In the Bible, I see that a marriage is between a male and a female. . . .

Do people have the right to marry whom they wish to marry? You know, for a time in this country, blacks couldn't marry whites in the South.

Oh, yes. Yes, oh, I think... absolutely. I think anybody should be able to...

But not gays?

Well, I just don't think that... you know, I don't think that's God's best. . . .

Do you think that gay is a choice?

. . . I can't say that I understand it all, but I believe it's a choice.

Larry King to Victoria Osteen: How do you feel, Victoria, about the gay question?

Victoria Osteen: Well, you know, I believe marriage should be between a man and a woman. And we do have gay people in our church. And they're wonderful people. They're nice people. It's just that we don't believe in that.

Jon Stewart

(host, The Daily Show)

(The Daily Show, 12/9/08, Comedy Central)

Re: discussing gay marriage with Gov. Mike Huckabee.

As far as I can see, choosing a religion is a choice, whereas being a homosexual is not.

Carrie Fisher

(author, Wishful Drinking)

(TODAYShow.com, 12/10/08, Mike Celizic)

[She] had a relationship with agent Brian Lourd [who] left her—not for another woman, but for another man. For solace Fisher turned to her mother [Debbie Reynolds], who cheered her up by saying, "We have all sorts of men in our family. We have horse thieves. We have one-man bands. This is our first homosexual!"



Ellen DeGeneres

(TV Guide, 12/1/08, Damian Holbrook)

Damian Holbrook: So, how is married life?

Ellen DeGeneres: Married life is blissful. Somehow, and I don't know how, it's very different. It feels lovely and I'm very grateful that I'm able to be married. I love that I get to say "my wife."

And did you campaign to fight California's same-sex marriage ban, Prop. 8?

Yeah, I bought some airtime on my own. There are churches that raise millions of dollars to take this away from us, and it's like, "Can't you find something better to do with your money? Can't you help some hungry people?" This is crazy that they're raising millions of dollars to instill fear in people. It's sad. I don't know why it's such a big deal to allow equal rights.

Ellen DeGeneres (r) and her wife Portia de Rossi (seen here at the 19th Annual GLAAD Media Awards in L.A. this past April, when they were not yet married): is married life different than single life?

Heath Ledger



3 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

(The Advocate, 1/17/06, Alonso Duralde)

Alonso Duralde: Having played Ennis [in Brokeback Mountain], on the off chance that your child comes to you with the "Dad, I'm gay" speech, do you think you're ready to hear it now?

Heath Ledger: Oh, it wouldn't have bothered me beforehand. I don't have a further appreciation for people who are gay; I always have. It's never been an issue for me. Of course, if my child came to me and said that, I'd love them even more for being honest with me.

Suzanne Westenhoefer

(comedian and star of the documentary A Bottom on Top)

(The Advocate, 12/16/08)

Re: part of her letter to President Obama.

. . . If it looks like you can't pull all the troops out of Iraq right away, then just get out the homos. Once people see how often and amazingly we serve, they may realize we've been in the military forever and are necessary. If not, no worries. I've always felt homos are too precious to lose anyway.

Elton John

(Spectacles: Elvis Costello With..., 12/3/08)

Re: Being greeted at the door by a completely nude Leon Russell. I didn't know where to look. Well, I did, but I didn't.



ELLEN/PORTIA: JORDAN STRAUSS/WIRE IMAGE; COURTESY GLAAD; HEATH: MARK LIDDELL/THE ADVOCATE; ELTON: COURTESY SUNDANCE CHANNEL

TIME HAS COME AGAIN

Revisiting 'Brideshead Revisited'

When the so very odd Evelyn Waugh's masterwork *Brideshead Revisited* last appeared on screen, the world was in the grip of a serious recession. The six-hour PBS version was a smashing success in 1981 in no small part because we were desperate for a little relief from a tattered reality. Nothing like a few long shots of a fabulous English country manor to take our minds off our paltry past-due mortgage. The 2008 big-screen version of Waugh's conflicted story of class warfare, stifling religion, suffocating mothers, and lost love spends most of its flashback in and out of the magnificent Brideshead, ancestral home of the shattered family of Flyte.

Patriarch Lord Marchmain (Michael Gambon) has long ago fled the judgmental Lady Marchmain (Emma Thompson) for the canals of Venice; pathetic brother Bridley spends his days collecting matchbooks; sister Julia (Hayley Atwell) floats about the edges of the manor, a self-proclaimed "family shadow"; and brother Sebastian is in open revolt. Patterned after the androgynous Saint Sebastian (he's the pretty one penetrated



Walk this way: Ben Whishaw (l), who plays Sebastian Flyte, and Matthew Goode, who plays Charles Ryder, are coached by director Julian Jarrold in a scene from *Brideshead Revisited*. Expanding on the PBS miniseries which aired in 1981, the 2008 feature film is based on Evelyn Waugh's 1945 classic British novel about loss of innocence set in England prior to World War II.

repeatedly by arrows depicted in nearly as many Renaissance oils as Madonna—the real Madonna, not the one that made everyone wait hours for her show last month), Sebastian Flyte of Brideshead is a Christian martyr of a different sort.

Into this mess of a family wanders the hopeful Charles Ryder (Matthew Goode) enamored of Sebastian, Brideshead, and Julia, in that order. Part artist, part social climber, part love-struck young man, Charles guides us through the canals of Venice, the magnificent halls of Brideshead, and the lives of a decadent English aristocracy in a vain search for... security? spirituality? status? sex? love? The only hint of an answer comes when Charles dips his atheist fingers into the holy water of the Brideshead chapel so he won't burn them when he reaches to snuff out the presence lamp (the candle that burns when consecrated bread or wine is present). Does he extinguish the light? Does he leave it burning? You'll have to watch all two-plus hours of the new DVD release to know. Don't skip to the last scene, it's worth waiting (and watching) for.

Available Jan. 13 from Miramax Films Home Entertainment (miramax.com).

John W. Stiles (johnwstiles.com) writes regularly for OutSmart magazine.

DVD/VHS Shorts

Kiss the Bride



This sophisticated yet-not-too-cerebral comedy centers on an engaged couple (Tori Spelling, James O'Shea) who may be singing the wedding bell blues when the groom's former male interest shows up. Liberation Entertainment. Kissthebridemovie.com. —Preview: Nancy Ford

Kiss Me Deadly



What is it with former 90210 stars and gay DVD releases this month? Shannen Doherty suffers from amnesia in this thriller also starring Robert Gant (*Queer as Folk*). Bottom line, someone wants them both dead. Liberation Entertainment. Kissmedeadly-themovie.com. —Preview: N.F.

She Likes Girls 3



Julie Goldman (*Big Gay Sketch Show*), Guinevere Turner (*Go Fish*, *The L Word*), and other heavy hitters contribute to this collection of made-by-women-for-women short films. Sex toys and other dykely delights provide subject matter. Wolfe Video (wolfevideo.com). —Preview: N.F.

He Likes Guys



The flip side of the of the aforementioned shorts coin, this collection includes *Waiting for Yvette*, starring Wendie Malick (*Just Shoot Me*), a special message from actor Alan Cumming (*Reefer Madness*, *The L Word*), and more. Wolfe Video (wolfevideo.com). —Preview: N.F.

The Best of Dr. Katz



The list of contributors to this animated series reads like a Who's Who of contemporary comedy: Margaret Cho, David Cross, Janeane Garofalo, and others take to the couch proving that laughter is the best medicine. Comedy Central (shop.comedycentral.com). —Preview: N.F.

Passion & Power



This documentary explores the history of the vibrator from the Victorian era through the sexual revolution of the 1960s to the postfeminist present. It also uncovers the mysteries of the female orgasm. First Run Features (firstrunfeatures.com). —Preview: Suzie Lynde ■

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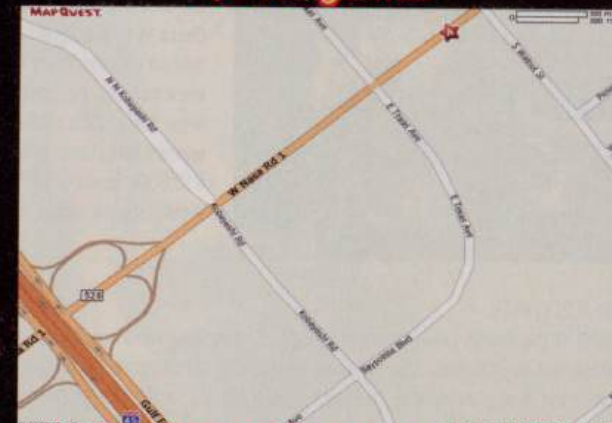


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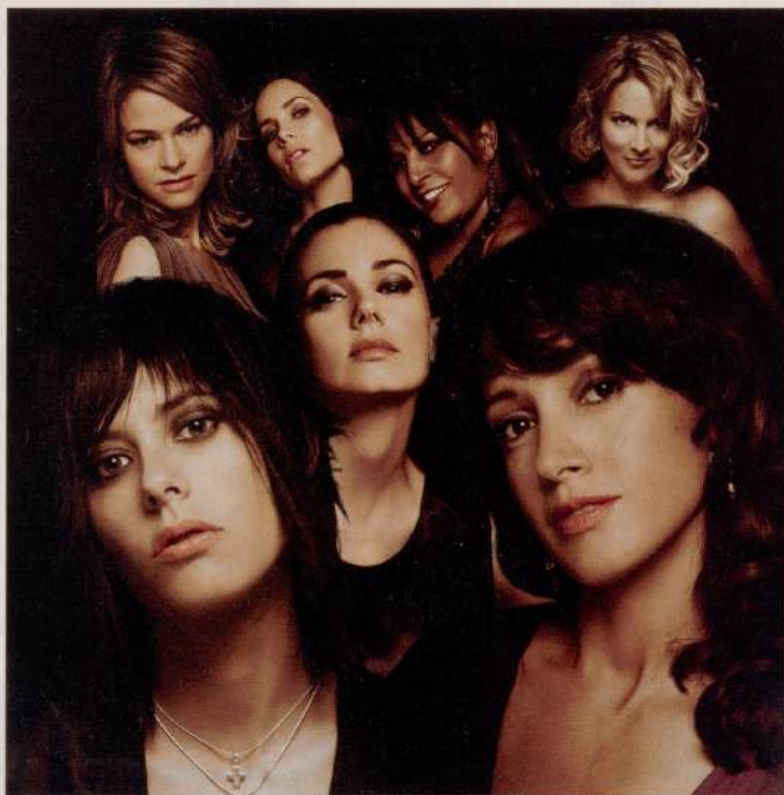
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GOODBYE, OLD FRIENDS

'The L Word' returns to Showtime for a final season



It was lovely while it lasted: returning one more time for a mini-season of *The L Word* are (back row, l-r) Leisha Hailey as Alice, Rachel Shelley as Helena, Pam Grier as Kit, Laurel Holloman as Tina; (front row, l-r) Katherine Moennig as Shane, Mia Kirshner as Jenny, and Jennifer Beals as Bette.

Women can change in six years. A lot. They can fall in love, fall apart, have a baby, fall back in love, fall apart again, and come back together again. Or they can go to prison, yet find love. Or they can identify as bisexual one year, but can decide the very next year to shun the penis and stick to loving women, even in the face of losing those loving women to death and Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

The final season of the Showtime's hit cable series that opened humanity-at-large's eyes to lesbian culture has been reduced to a scant eight episodes. A December teaser revealed the death of Jenny, and why each cast member had motive to kill the loony lesbian we all love to hate. Expect the season to unfold in "Who Shot J.R.?" fashion, with the killer revealed at the shortened series' end. We wouldn't mind if it all ends up being a dream, with a soapy Dana in the shower after her Wimbledon win.

All we know for sure is that Alice (Leisha Hailey) may—or may not—return to us in the form of a spin-off. If there's a god in heaven....

Showtime mines Sundays for girl gold, following *The L Word* with the series premiere of *United States of Tara* starring Toni Collette, and the return of *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*. Sunday, January 18, 8 p.m. Showtime (sho.com).



THINK MUSICAL CHAIRS (KIND OF) BUT WITH FOOD

Ted Allen (*Queer Eye*, *Food Detectives*) hosts the culinary series challenging four fledgling chefs to turn a selection of everyday ingredients into an extraordinary three-course meal. After each course, one contestant gets *Chopped*—ergo, the show's title—until the last man or woman left standing claims the grand prize of \$10,000. January 13, 9 p.m. The Food Network (foodnetwork.com).



CREAM OF THE CROP

Coming as little surprise to anyone who witnessed his brilliant performance in Gus Van Sant's feature film, *Milk*, Sean Penn is among a field of five nominated to receive a Golden Globe Award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture—Drama. He recently won both the New York and Los Angeles film critics' awards. The 66th Annual Golden Globe Awards airs Sunday, January 11, 7 p.m. on NBC. ■

Not NASCAR

Supermodel of the World, the irrepressible RuPaul, is looking for a successor, it seems. We don't believe that for a minute, but nonetheless nine top drag queens are set to compete for the title of Drag Queen Superstar in RuPaul's new television vehicle, *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Ru, author Merle Ginsberg, and *Project Runway* winner Santino Rice judge the diva'd-up syncers, and welcome different celebrity judges, like Bob Mackie, Lucy Lawless, and Jenny Shimizu, to their panel each week. February 2. Logo (logoonline.com).

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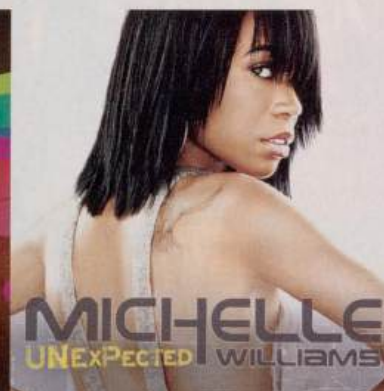
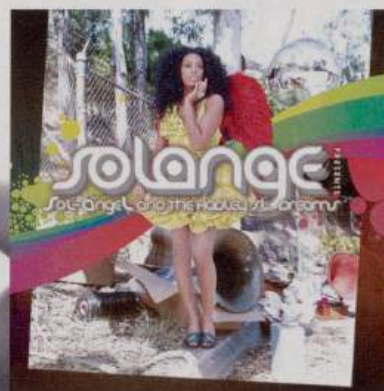
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DESTINY'S CHILDREN

What's up with Beyoncé, Solange, and Michelle Williams?



Beyoncé Knowles is an incredibly busy woman. With a burgeoning acting career in full swing, including a lead in the film version of *Dreamgirls* and a much-discussed portrayal of Etta James in *Cadillac Records* under her belt, it's amazing that the ubiquitous Knowles can find the time to record an album. Let alone a double disc set. But nevertheless, here we have *I Am... Sasha Fierce* (Music World Music/Columbia).

The *I Am* disc of the set finds Mrs. Jay-Z at the height of her dramatic diva powers. The album opener, the unexpected "If I Were a Boy," sounds like it could be a lost Jill Sobule tune, beginning with the texture of her vocals at the start of the song. On "Halo," Beyoncé makes room for herself under Rihanna's "Umbrella," while "Bro-

ken-Hearted Girl," a collaboration between Beyoncé, Babyface (remember him?), and others, is a tearjerker of the highest order. Higher-powered pop number "Ave Maria" does its part to justify the cross dangling from Beyoncé's wrist on the album cover.

Having learned nothing from Garth Brooks' failed Chris Gaines debacle, Beyoncé assumes the persona of Sasha Fierce on the second disc. However, where Beyoncé ends and Sasha begins is not entirely clear. While it may be impossible to listen to the pelvic snappy "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)," without thinking about the *SNL* parody featuring Justin Timberlake, it is nevertheless as catchy as a spike heel in a shag rug. "Radio" flirts with a new-wave sensibility and "Diva" snatches a page from the Missy Elliott playbook.

Like another set of Southwestern sisters, fellow Texas tarts Ashlee and Jessica Simpson, Beyoncé and kid sister Solange are in a rivalry for the spotlight. Beyoncé obviously got a head start, but Solange is poised to give her some fierce competition. *Sol-Angel and the Hadley St. Dreams* (Music World Music/Geffen) opens

with Solange promising that she's not high on opening track "God Given Name." More along the lines of the retro soul revival being perpetrated by Amy Winehouse, Duffy, Estelle, and Raphael Saadiq, Solange flirts with musical time travel on the light disco funk of "Tony" and swoops down on the '60s, courtesy of the infectious vintage Heinz Kiessling horn sample.

Solange continues in a vintage vein throughout on songs including "Would've Been the One," the Motown-motivated "I Decided, Pt. 1," the Hi Records homage of "6 O'Clock Blues," and even ventures into more exotic territory as on the aptly named "Cosmic Journey" (featuring Bilal) and "This Board" (which samples Boards of Canada).

What's the verdict? Solange steps out →

GrooveOut Shorts

Julie Clark
Change Your Mind



A winner of a Kerrville New Folk Songwriting Competition, this out lesbian has become a festival favorite with her deep lyrics and pleasing melodies. "I'd Do 'em All If I Could" is lots of fun, especially if you listen between the lines. Great Big Records (julieclark.net). —Review: Nancy Ford

Dan Manjovi
Woke Up This Morning



This is the second album from the openly gay recording artist who specializes in bluesy piano-based arrangements. He's a regular at New York's major music rooms, like The Bitter End, likely mak-

ing him a formidable live performer. DanMan Music (danmanjovi.com). —Preview: N.F.

Barbara Cook
Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder



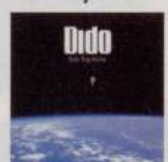
The multi-award-winning cabaret queen relies once again on classic standards like "Old Devil Moon" and "Where or When" in this snappy collection helmed by music director, Lee Musiker. DRG Records (drgrecords.com). —Preview: N.F.

Tony DeSare
Radio Show

This dynamic singer/pianist/songwriter takes a nostalgic trip back to the days when radio was our only electronic entertainment. Authentic-sounding standards dominate here, like the opener, "Get Happy." But De-



Dido
Safe Trip Home



Sare truly soars with his pensive, penetrating version of Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'." Available now online; available in stores Januray 20. Telarc Records (telarc.com). —Review: N.F.

The gentle songstress asserts a strong streak of independence in her third album, and not only via its lyrics, like on the strong "Don't Believe in Love" and the painfully realistic "Let's Do the Things We Normally Do." She also takes charge of music and lyrics, vocals, guitar, piano, bells, and recorder, culminating in a smooth and thought-provoking listening experience. Arista (arista.com). —Review: N.F. →

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GrooveOut continued from page 58

of her big sister's shadow and radiates, glowing with a distinctively different kind of light. Whether or not she can maintain such a challenge remains to be seen.

Poor Michelle Williams. Talk about the difficult task of forging an identity separate from Beyoncé's. Formerly one-third of Destiny's Child, Williams, like Knowles, has also tried her hand at acting, playing the role of Celie's lesbian love interest Shug Avery in the stage musical *The Color Purple*. It's been a few years since the last Destiny's Child disc, but Williams remains in the Knowles camp. Her latest album, *Unexpected* (Music World Music/Columbia) is on the label owned and operated by the Knowles' papa. She even covers a Solange co-composition, the marvelous "We Break the Dawn." On the whole, the disc is a modern beat-driven affair, with songs such as "Hello Heartbreak," "Lucky Girl," "Till the End of the World," "Private Party," possessing the potential to become dance-floor sensations in the hands of the right remixers and DJs. It's an inoffensive disc with only a few minor flaws. First things first: can we please call a moratorium on intros and interludes? And while we're at it, how about retiring the vocoders? Especially if the artist can actually sing, as Williams clearly can.

Gregg Shapiro is a past recipient of the annual OutMusic award that recognizes contributions by non-musicians in furthering the work of GLBT performers.

GrooveOut Shorts

continued from page 58

Liza Minnelli

The Complete A&M Recordings



Between 1968 and 1972, Judy's firstborn recorded enough music to fill four albums, one single, and a slew of what would later become bonus material as she was emerging as a legend in her own right. This 51-cut collection compiles them all into the consummate Liza-lover's dream. Happy New Year! Collector's Choice Music (ccmusic.com). —Review: N.F.

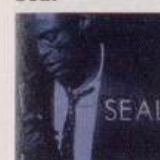
Il Divo

The Promise



The gorgeous, surgically accurate operatic quartet offers a diverse array of songs, including some made famous by ABBA ("The Winner Takes It All"), Leonard Cohen ("Hallelujah"), and even Frankie Goes to Hollywood ("The Power of Love"), all fancied-up by being sung mostly in Spanish and Italian. Columbia Records (columbia.com). —Review: N.F.

Seal
Soul



Producer David Foster was right when he said Seal "was born to sing these songs"—the 12-cut collection of soul standards is perfectly attuned to the baritone's husky range and emotional delivery. Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come" stands out. Warner Bros. Records (warnerbrosrecords.com). —Review: N.F.

Enrique Iglesias
Greatest Hits



The gayest of the straight Latin crooners greets the holidays with this collection of his globe-encircling hits. Includes chart-toppers, "Bailamos" and "Hero," plus two new tunes with Ciara and Sean Garrett. Interscope (enriqueiglesias.com). —Preview: N.F.

Original Off-Broadway Cast Recording
The Marvelous Wonderettes



The '50s and '60s live again via this popular review sung in four-part do-wop harmony. Features solid hits of those eras like "It's My Party," "Secret Love," "Lipstick on Your Collar," "Rescue Me," and "Sincerely." PS Classics (psclassics.com). —Preview: N.F.

David Foster
Hit Man



Some of the greatest singers of all time (like Andrea Bocelli, Celine Dion, Barbra Streisand, Josh Groban, and others) participate in this CD/DVD tribute to one of the greatest songwriters/producers of all time. The prolific Foster already has 15 Grammys, and should probably clear mantle space for more. Reprise Records (reprise.com). —Preview: N.F.

Future Clouds and Radar
Peoria



First, they're from Austin, not Illinois. Second, this "electric, art-pop ensemble" is vocally reminiscent of a Plastic Ono Band-influenced John Lennon, making them well worth a listen.

Though not promoted as a breakout, their "Eighteen Months" is especially fun. Star Apple Kingdom (fanaticpromotions.com). —Review: N.F.

Joel Evan

Embracing the Light... and then some



You might recognize this beautiful, out gay man from his nude modeling days when he was known as "Jet Kanashi." As to his music, do you remember what happened when *Boogie Nights*' Dirk Diggler (Mark Wahlberg) decided to record an album? January 27. Self-produced (joelevanmusic.com). —Review: N.F.

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LIGHT & DARK

Author Michelle Cliff writes her thoughts in 'If I Could Write This in Fire'

It happens when you're not paying attention. It happens, in fact, better when you're not paying attention.

Small thoughts flit through your brain like fireflies in summer. Things you need to remember at the store. Something that has to do with what's in your hand or in front of your face. Barely noticed scenery spotted through a window. Half-completed ideas. Things you murmur to yourself, then quickly forget.

Imagine what the world would be like if we all wrote those thoughts, short memories and ideas down. Fortunately, author Michelle Cliff did just that, and in her new book *If I Could Write This in Fire* (University of Minnesota Press), you'll read a few of them.

Born light-skinned (or "red," as a cousin claimed) in a country where your ancestors could have been slaves or slave owners, Cliff remembers her best friend, Zoe. They were close when they were young children in Jamaica, but as dark-toned Zoe and fairer Cliff grew up, their paths separated. Poverty and domestic violence became Zoe's life. Cliff went on to private school in England. She suspects that the difference in skin tone may have meant a difference in opportunity.

On a cross-country tour of America and back, Cliff makes note of the places through



Racial inequality is not dead: light-skinned Michelle Cliff says she probably had more opportunities than her dark-toned friend Zoe.

which she passes: small New Mexico and Texas towns where souvenirs reflect the location and the history; Oklahoma, where HITCHHIKERS MAY BE ESCAPING INMATES signs dot the highway; a Missouri diner in which the cook's wife appears to be speaking to herself; Civil War battlefields; Nebraska museums dedicated to African Americans; the coast of California where a Dust Bowl survivor tells Cliff about leaving her mark.

Back in Europe: Cliff is speaking about Jamaican literature at a college in Frankfurt. The students seem indifferent, but they're listening. In between sessions, Cliff visits the local cemetery where *opfer* Aus-

chwitz and *opfer* Riga are carved on Jewish headstones. She talks with an elderly rabbi. She believes herself alone with ghosts.

Finally, on a plane to Houston, Cliff overhears an exchange between two men in which racism is expressed almost blithely. This gives her reason—as if a light-skinned, lesbian woman with "tall hair," a descendant of Africans needs reason—to examine race and discrimination. In her last chapter of this book, Cliff offers 10 simple "tests" for anyone who believes that racial inequality is dead.

I have to admit, I almost didn't finish this book. The preface made me want to toss it aside with great force. In the end, I was glad I didn't.

Author Michelle Cliff has a knife-sharp eye for detail and has an uncanny ability to burrow into your brain with observations that almost hurt. The sadness in *If I Could Write This in Fire* is so real that you can carry it; the wit, so keen it can cut; the anger, hot as a poker.

Pick up a copy of *If I Could Write This in Fire* for a gift, then grab one for yourself. This satisfying, thought-provoking book is the kind that, when finished, begs for renewed attention.

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was three years old, and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

ReadOut Shorts

Milk: The Shooting Script
Screenplay by Dustin Lance Black
Introduction by Gus Van Sant
Newmarket Press (newmarketpress.com)



In 1977, Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, becoming the first openly gay man to be voted into major public office in America. His victory was not just a victory for gay rights; he forged coalitions across the political spectrum. Milk changed the very nature of what it means to be a fighter for human rights and became, before his untimely death in 1978, a hero for all Americans. In *Milk*,

Oscar-winner Sean Penn stars as Harvey Milk under the direction of Oscar-nominee Gus Van Sant, filmed on location in San Francisco, from an original screenplay by Dustin Lance Black. *Milk: The Shooting Script* includes an exclusive introduction by director Van Sant; the film's complete shooting script; scene notes by screenwriter Black; an exclusive conversation with Black, Van Sant, and activist Cleve Jones, who was mentored by Harvey Milk; a color photo section; and complete cast and crew credits. —Preview: Troy Carrington

Light Fell
Evan Fallenberg
Soho Press (sohopress.com)

In 1977, an Israeli scholar leaves his wife and five sons for a charismatic rabbi. Years later, on the scholar's



50th birthday, he tries to make amends with his family. The crossroads of family, religion, sexuality, and responsibility are unflinchingly explored, and Fallenberg makes all the foreign references feel familiar. The journey to that birthday dinner is long, and no one gets off easy in this narrative, but there are aching, beautiful passages along the way. —Review: Neil Ellis Orts

How Not to Make a Short Film:
Secrets from a Sundance Programmer
Roberta Marie Munroe
Hyperion (hyperionbooks.com)

Roberta Marie Munroe shares the critical secrets, tips, and guidelines for filmmakers looking to make their own →

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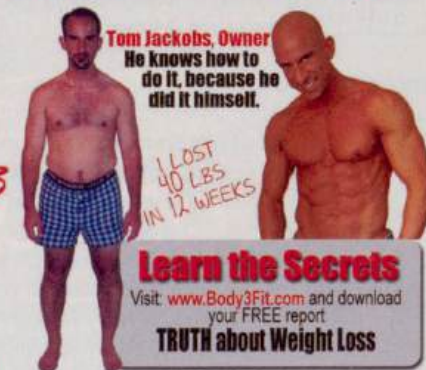
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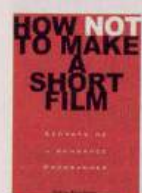
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successful directorial debuts. Lest you think she isn't qualified to dish out advice, Munroe (who is openly gay) was the Short Film Programmer at the Sundance Film Festival for five years. Her first film, *Dani and Alice*, has played at more than 120 festivals around the world, and received the PlanetOut Best Drama Award in 2006. In *How Not to Make a Short Film*, you will learn, among many other points, the top 100 clichés that plague the short filmmaker, how to set a budget and find money to finance your project, when it's okay to shoot on your cell phone, and film festival dos and don'ts. —Preview: Suzie Lynde

Utopia's Debris
Gary Indiana



Basic Books (basicbooks.com)

Indiana is clearly very smart and broadly educated, which is a sharp combination when you have a culture in need of dissection. This collection of essays covers a broad range of cultural and political subjects and no topic is given a free ride. Artists he admires fall victim to his pen as much as politicians he loathes, making this a good book when you're in the mood for an argument. —Review: N.O.

Got 'til It's Gone
Larry Duplechan



Arsenal Pulp Press (arsenalpulp.com)

This queer romantic comedy is the first novel by Duplechan in 15 years and the fourth to feature his alter-ego Johnnie Ray Rousseau, a gay black man of Louisiana Creole stock. When we first met Johnnie Ray in the 1987 novel *Blackbird*, he was a gay teenager in love with the star of a high school play; now he's 48, admittedly vain and looking down the short road to 50 with some chagrin. In the midst of midlife crisis, he falls for a much younger man with some serious Daddy issues; throughout it all, Johnnie Ray tries to look at love (and his life) from both sides now (to borrow a phrase from his idol, Joni Mitchell). —Preview: T.C. ■

TURKISH DELIGHT

Author Mehmet Murat Somer visits Houston



Mehmet Murat Somer

Murder! Blackmail! Drag! Kickboxing! Though these concepts may initially seem incompatible, author Mehmet Murat Somer believes otherwise. The Turkish scribe's murder mystery series is a mainstay on the best-seller lists, his unlikely

hero/heroine being a drag queen nightclub owner who unwittingly gets mixed up in Istanbul's underworld. Nonetheless, she consistently emerges victorious, solving crime and making all things right in her world, once again.

In Somer's latest, *The Kiss Murder*, one of the club girls, clandestinely involved with a powerful and conservative businessman, turns up dead. It falls to Somer's queen to solve not only that murder, but also a series of interrelated crimes as well. That's a lot of work for a drag queen.

Mehmet Murat Somer signs copies of his books, *The Kiss Murder* and *The Prophet Murders*, January 28, 6:30 p.m. at Murder by the Book, 2342 Bissonnet. Details: 713/524-8597. —Nancy Ford



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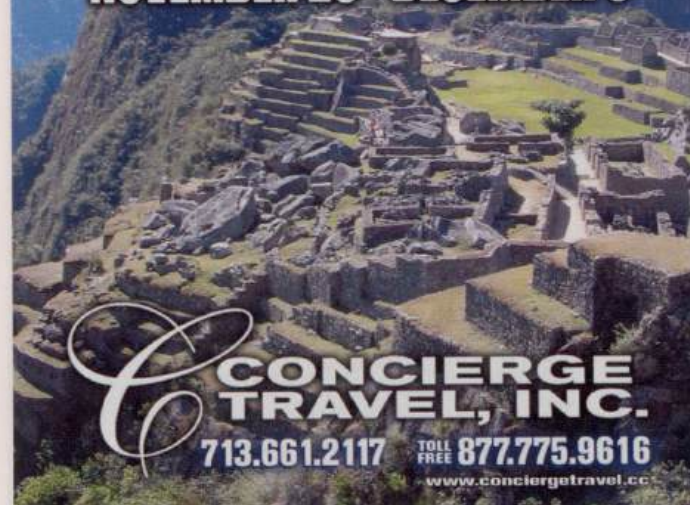
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Audacious hopes for the New Year

I want a new president. I know we've just elected one, but I'm impatient. Besides, wishing for what's already happening might somehow grease the karmic skids and make everything else I'm hoping for more likely to come true. Whatever it takes, I hope the change we believed in on election night pans out.

What would happen if we all took time to envision the kind of world we want? Let's go for it. Let's believe that the promise of liberty and justice for all really does include all of us. Let's dream big. Harmony and understanding, sympathy and trust abounding? Call me old school, but I hope it's not too late for the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

I hope our national priorities move toward ending militarism, racism, and poverty. I hope the promise of equal opportunity and human dignity becomes reality for everyone—youth, elders, people with

disabilities, people who are incarcerated, immigrants, people who are poor, homeless, hungry, people of every religion and no religion.

I hope we stay committed to withdrawing from wars, saving our planet, and building a sustainable economy. I hope CEO salaries go down and workers' wages go up. I'm not afraid to say it, I hope we DO redistribute the wealth.

I hope more people become community organizers and work for universal healthcare, affordable housing, and clean energy. I hope green jobs flourish, unemployment plummets, and unions grow stronger. I hope we re-regulate the auto industry, the corporate tax structure, insurance and pharmaceutical companies, and the media.

I hope birth control is made as accessible as Viagra. I hope the diet and fashion industries' obsession with thinness gives

way to healthier, more realistic images of what's beautiful, and that everyone stops hating their bodies. I hope AIDS becomes rarer than polio and that everyone who has HIV gets everything they need to stay well.

I hope government dedicates itself to protecting the most vulnerable among us, and that it publicly acknowledges that those include lesbian, gay, bi, trans, intersex, and queer people. Especially LGBTIQ youth. I hope we get serious about preventing hate crimes.

I hope the new commitment to education means good schools, with well-paid teachers, accessible to everyone. I hope we close the achievement gap. I hope that new federal standards will require women's history, black history, immigrant history, indigenous history, and LGBTIQ history integrated into every school's curriculum. I hope women's sports receive the same

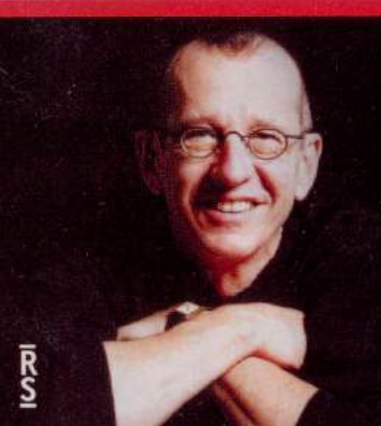
funding and promotion as men's. I hope no boy is ever again teased for being too swishy and no girl has to hold back out of fear of seeming too tough, too smart, or too strong. I hope trans kids get whatever support and medical services they need to become their true selves early in life, and I hope they can use whatever the hell bathroom they choose. I hope we'll all feel free to express our gender and our love however we want without having our spirits—or worse—beaten out of us.

I hope the new president appoints progressive Supremes to the high court and that they strike all unconstitutional laws from the books. I hope marriage equality becomes the law of the land. I hope, at long last, that LGBTIQ discrimination bites the dust.

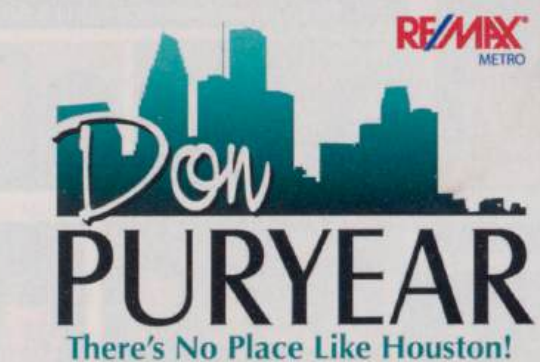
I hope my hopes are not a pipe dream. I hope you'll express your hopes, too.

And about that new president? I hope he's kept safe. I hope our country will no longer be governed from an undisclosed location and that we'll keep seeing him on TV and YouTube and all those cool T-shirts reminding us that change is not only possible, but inevitable, imminent, and already under way.

Sally Sheklow hopes with her domestic partner in Eugene, Oregon.



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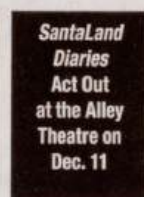
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Women's Choir Concert on Dec. 9



Bering Omega Caring Cabaret on Nov. 23



A Judy Garland Christmas at Club In-N-Out on Dec. 7



It's Madame with an E! at Meteor on Nov. 27

SantaLand
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Act Out
at the Alley
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The Transgender Day of Remembrance on Nov. 22



World AIDS Day Luncheon on Dec. 1



World AIDS Day Candle-Lighting Ceremony on Dec. 1



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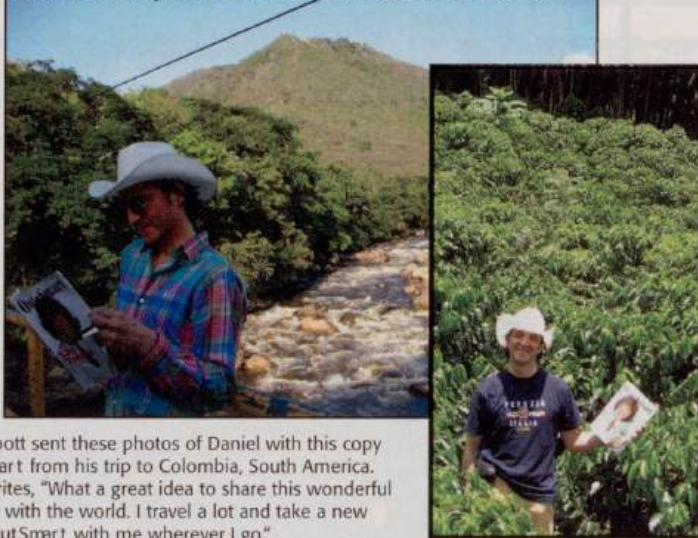


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Daniel at Parque de Cafe in Colombia, South America.



Frank Abbott sent these photos of Daniel with this copy of OutSmart from his trip to Colombia, South America. Abbott writes, "What a great idea to share this wonderful magazine with the world. I travel a lot and take a new copy of OutSmart with me wherever I go."

GOING OUT OF TOWN?

Take OutSmart along. Snap a picture of yourself at your destination and send it to us. Send high-resolution images to Editor@OutSmartMagazine.com or mail photos to 3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

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



January 7: Pride Houston and Broadway Across America presents **GLBT Nite at Spring Awakening**. See the show and party after at Guava Lamp. Info: www.broadwayacrossamerica.com/groupsales. Password: PRIDE09

January 23: Houston Symphony performs with **Gloria Gaynor** with an official VIP Disco Evening After-Party with Gaynor present. After party at South Beach. Info: www.Houstonsymphony.org

January 24: Celebrate **Art 4 Life** with AIDS Foundation Houston. Featuring an art auction, live music, and dancing. Info: www.Mukuru.org

January 31: Society for Performing Arts presents **Les Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo**, an OUTrageous evening featuring the world's foremost all-male comic ballet company, 8 pm at Jones Hall, followed by a private party. See the show and then party with the cast! Info: www.spahouston.org/groupplounge. Password: swanvip

March 15: The 20th Annual AIDS Walk Houston, benefiting AIDS Foundation Houston and 14 outstanding AIDS organizations. Info: www.AIDSWalkHouston.org

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Calendar of Events

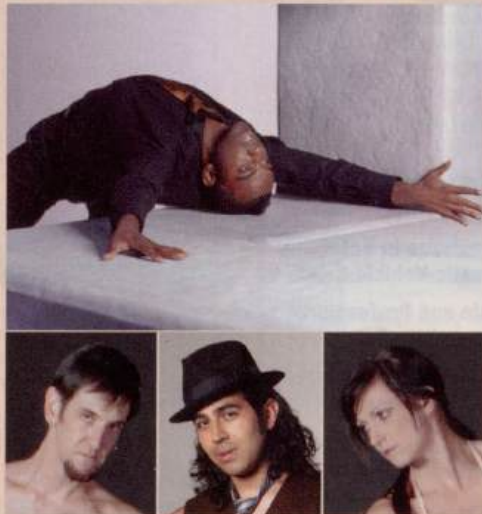
Compiled by Sheri Taylor Bockelman

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Toni Leago Valle's 'tetrís'

Being a gay dancer has its pros and cons," says Corian Ellisor. "The field of people I come in contact with are more willing to come out and support dance. With that being said, many people ask what I do, and I am always faced with the stigma of dancing on a poll."

In *tetrís*, the new dance theater piece created by Toni Leago Valle, UH dance faculty member and Dance Source Houston project manager, people are dancing on blocks—huge, moveable puzzle pieces created by Houston Ballet designer, Tom Boyd. Throughout the evening-length work, a cast of 12 tries to put together all the pieces of a woman's life, using many experiences from Valle's coming of age in the 1980s. "We entered the dating scene after the 'free love' mind-set, so bisexuality and experimentation was popular during my teens," Valle



Not dancing on a poll: Corian Ellisor (supine) is one of four out dancers (from a total of 12) who are part of a new theater dance piece, *tetrís*. The other three are (l-r) Joe Modlin, Alex Abarca, and Brittany Wallis.

says. "I had many gay friends and even tried a few bisexual relationships. Then—wham!—we were hit with AIDS... all of a sudden, intimacy was banned and everyone withdrew from one another." With a soundtrack from the '80s and '90s, *tetrís* explores the loneliness and fragmentation these mixed messages had on a generation.

Ellisor is only one of four gay dancers in the cast of 12, the others being Brittany Wallis, Joe Modlin, and Alex Abarca, none of whom dance on poles in this production.

"Definitely nothing wrong with that," Ellisor adds. "I just don't do that."

Tetrís runs January 29, 30, February 5-7, 8pm, Barnevelder Movement/Arts Complex, 2201 Preston. Learn more at tonileagovalle.com.

—Neil Ellis Orts

JANUARY

PERFORMING ARTS

Grandpa Hasn't Moved in Days. Ned has passed away, but that doesn't stop the hilarity. The colorful assortment of characters who make up the Fertle family and the townspeople of Dumpster are drawn together by the funeral, but the occasion proves to be anything but solemn. \$22. Jan. 15-May 9. Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. Info: 713/522-7722 or www.radiomusictheatre.com.

Houston Grand Opera presents *Chorus!* An unforgettable evening of music and spectacle, this fully costumed and staged production, on the scale of the grandest of grand operas, stars the world-renowned HGO Chorus, and the highly acclaimed HGO Orchestra under the baton of music director Patrick Summers. Includes some of opera's most heart-stopping choruses, such as Verdi's *Nabucco* and *Il trovatore*, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and Bizet's *Carmen*, performed with selections from operetta, oratorio, and musical theater. Tickets start at \$20. Jan. 30-Feb.

13. Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas at Smith. Info: www.houstongrandopera.org or 713/228-6737.

The Light In The Piazza. As Margaret Johnson and her daughter Clara tour Italy in the summer of 1953, Clara falls in love with handsome young Fabrizio Naccarelli. Why Clara's mother opposes the affair is revealed in delicate bits and pieces, but ultimately she must put her trust in the miracle of young love even as she faces the truth about her own marriage. Mature audiences; sexual content; no children under age five allowed. \$20-\$36. Jan. 8-25. Main Street Theater Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose Blvd. Info: www.mainstreettheater.com or 713/524-6706.

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Beguiling and enchanting, Benjamin Britten's version of Shakespeare's play creates a spell-binding atmosphere that inhabits a truly unique dreamlike world. Bright, percussive sounds of harps, keyboards, and percussion for the fairy world, warm strings and wind for the pairs of lovers, and lower woodwind and brass for the mechanicals draws the audience in like magic. Tickets start at \$20. Jan. 23-Feb. 6. Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas at Smith. Info: 713/228-6737 or www.houstongrandopera.org.

Mrs. Warren's Profession. Bernard Shaw's classic battle between mother and daughter over sex, love, money, and morality—this is one of his most enduring and best-loved plays. Kitty Warren has worked hard to provide the comfortable upbringing she never had for her daughter Vivie. Now that her independent, feminist daughter is about to embark on a career of her own, Kitty decides to talk about the profession she has really been engaged in. Tickets start at \$21. Jan. 14-Feb. 1 (previews Jan. 9-13). Hubbard Stage, The Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. Info: www.alleytheatre.org or 713/220-5700.

Spring Awakening swept the 2007 Tony Awards winning eight out of its 11 nominations, including Best Musical. Set against the backdrop of a repressive and provincial late-19th-century Germany, *Spring Awakening* tells the timeless story of teenage

self-discovery and budding sexuality as seen through the eyes of three teenagers. January 6-18 at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby. Starting at \$26, tickets are available at Hobby Center Box Office, all Ticketmaster outlets, by calling 713/629-3700, or online at www.BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com. See interview with Tom Hulce (star of *Amadeus*), a producer of *Spring Awakening*, on page 36.

PERFORMING ARTS

For Young People

Houston Grand Opera to Go! presents Dvorák's *Little Mermaid*, perfect for first-time opera goers and created especially for students. It is sung in English, 45 minutes long, and complete with full sets and lavish costumes. An opera about a little mermaid who would do anything to be with the man she loves. \$5. Performances held daily at 9:30 am and 11:15 am. Jan. 20-24. The Heinen Theatre, Houston Community College Campus, 3517 Austin. Info: www.houstongrandopera.org (click "HGOco" link to "Heinen Matinee") or 713/546-0231.

RADIO

After Hours. Sunday mornings, 1-4 am. Featuring the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-5738.

Queer Voices. Mondays, 8-10 pm. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-4000.

Reach Out in the Darkness. Houston's only transgender radio host and her partner present selected music from the '60s, played like it was in the '60s, exclusively from vinyl pressings. Every Wednesday morning, 3-6 am, KPFT Pacifica radio (90.1 FM). →

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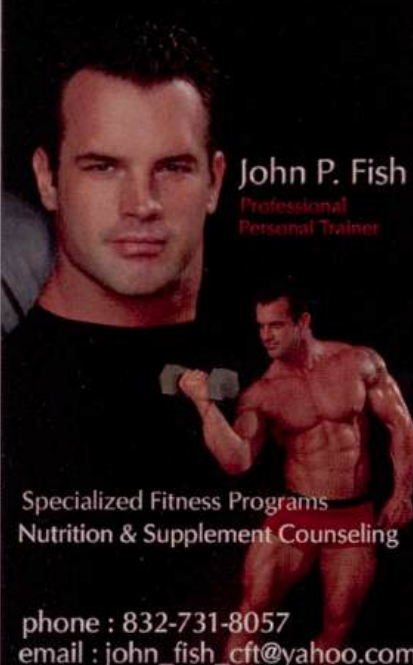
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LookOut

by Nancy Ford

TRANSFORMATIONAL NEW YEAR Houston Transgender Unity Committee hosts the second annual Brenda Thomas Memorial New Year's Day Social, named for the local transgender community leader who passed away in 2006. Guests are encouraged to bring food or beverage items for the potluck meal, which also features door prizes, a silent auction, and a raffle. Benefits HTUC programs. Jan. 1, 2 p.m., at Vanity: A Trans-formation Studio, 1442 Yale St. Details: htuc.org.

SCHUUR 'NOUGH This year's Cabaret for a Cure fundraiser fighting HIV and AIDS features Grammy-winning jazz musician Diane Schuur, with Ken Gayle, Deidre Henry, Deborah Duncan, The Richard Brown Orchestra, The Mary Griffin Band, Todd Honeycutt, Bubba McNeeley, Moodafaraka, Hanq Neil, Sky Shepherd, Shaun Smith, and Adam Tendler also providing entertainment. The evening also posthumously honors I. W. Marks with its Humanitarian Award. Benefits Legacy Community Health Services. Friday, Jan. 9, 6:30 p.m. Hilton Americas-Houston. Details: cabaretforacure.org.

SILVER CELEBRATION Time to dust off those shoulder crowns: members of the Empire of the Royal Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star celebrate the 25th anniversary of the charitable group with High School Reunion—A Night Amongst the Pyramids at Sheraton Houston North (15700 JFK Blvd.). The fun begins Jan. 15, 8 p.m., with the In-Town Show at Brazos River Bottom, hosted by Christopher Garrett, Daryl Quijano, DD Demarco, and Selena St. John. On Friday, Jan. 16, participants embark on the Houston Bar Tour, but not before they're treated to the Out-of-Town Show, held at the hotel at 7 p.m. The main event, Coronation 25, takes place Saturday night, Jan. 17, 5 p.m., followed by a Victory Brunch hosted by Bob Skinner and Kimberly O'Neil on Sunday, Jan. 18, at 10:30 a.m.; both these events are also at the hotel. The weekend of royal camaraderie ends Sunday with the Victory Party and Show beginning at 4 p.m. at Brazos River Bottom. Details: 888/627-8196 • ersicss.org.

PAEANS TO THE NEW PREZ Prepare for Inauguration Day with Change That You Can Dance To: Obama Music Videos, a presentation of music videos about President-Elect Barack Obama. This special screening will include international videos, including "Viva Obama" by Mariachi Aguila de Mexico, "Barack Obama" by Cocoa Tea, and more. Saturday, Jan. 17, 6:30–8:30 p.m. Presented by Aurora Picture Show at The Station Museum, 1502 Alabama. Tickets: \$6. Details: aurorapictureshow.org.

L+HRC It's *TLW*'s final season, so let's party while we can. The Houston chapter of Human Rights Campaign presents its annual *The L Word* kickoff party at two local nightclubs, featuring a raffle of popular Showtime DVD sets. Sunday, Jan. 18, 8 p.m., at Guava Lamp, 570 Waugh Dr., and Chances, 1102 Westheimer. Tickets: \$5. Details: hrc.org.

ART AND DANCE AIDS Foundation Houston presents Mukuru's fourth annual *Art for Life*, an exhibition and auction of 50 pieces of artwork from established and emerging artists, but with a new twist: this year's art exhibit is followed by a dance. England-born, now-Texas-artist Lucinda Copley's *Elemental Desire*, a piece produced on etched glass (pictured here), is among the works of art available for purchase at the event. Curator Wade Wilson of Wade Wilson ART serves as auctioneer, with entertainment by the '80s cover band, Molly and the Ringwalds. Saturday, Jan. 24, 7–9 p.m. Artwork is on display Jan. 21–24. Vine Street Studios, 1113 Vine St. Tickets: \$20–\$50. Details: 713/623-6796, ext. 278 • mukuru.org.



Elemental Desire

THE ART OF CAMP Southern Country Houston's charity art auction benefiting Camp Hope, postponed due to a visit from Hurricane Ike, has been rescheduled for Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m., at the home of John Danielson III, 3618 Burlington. The auction, featuring work donated by local artists, raises funds for AIDS Foundation Houston's summer camp for children affected and/or infected by HIV and AIDS. Details: 713/492-2204.

PIANO, MAN Veteran pianist Jerry Atwood has found a new base at Bistro Calais where he performs Fridays, Saturdays, and every other Wednesday with a revolving cache of cabaret vocalists including Sharon Montgomery and Deborah Boily. 2811 Bammel Ln. Details: 713/529-1314 • bistrocalais.com.

Dragging for the Dogs The furry-friends-loving folks at Spay-Neuter Assistance Program have announced the group's second annual drag competition to crown Ms. Purrfect. Benefits SNAP's animal aid program, which provides free spaying and neutering and reduced-cost wellness services for the animals of persons affected by HIV and AIDS. Saturday, Feb. 7, 7 p.m. Tony's Corner Pocket (817 W. Dallas). Details: Paul Hidalgo, 713/516-8950 • www.snapus.org. ■

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

The Birth of Christianity: A Jewish Story is a new exhibition that explores the relationship between these two religions. Includes rare manuscripts and artifacts organized to tell the story so the visitor understands the relativity of the objects to its role in history. It concludes with an examination of the time before the Common Era as it turns into the Christian era. \$12.50–\$18. Through April 12. The Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Info: www.hmns.org or 713/639-4629.

Body Worlds 2 & The Brain: Our Three-Pound Gem. A vivid display of the latest neuroscience findings on brain development and function, brain disease and disorders, and brain performance and improvement, this is the original exhibition. It is a holistic meditation on the brain that merges anatomy, neuroscience, and philosophy that resonates with everyone. Also see 200 other real human body specimens, including more than 20 full-body specimens in life-like, dramatic poses; healthy and unhealthy organs; body parts and slices. \$17–\$25. Through Feb. 22. The Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Info: hmns.org or 713/639-4629.

Creating Space City USA. When Apollo 11 landed on the moon, Neil Armstrong's first words were "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." As the world watched and listened to those words, Houstonians felt a special pride. See the evolution of NASA, from the construction of the Johnson Space Center in 1962, and the city of Houston's critical role in the achievements of the space program. Free. Jan. 13–Apr. 26. The Heritage Society Museum, 1100 Bagby, Sam Houston Park. Info: www.heritagesociety.org or 713/655-1912.

Dr. Seuss Wants You! now at Holocaust Museum Houston. Theodor Seuss Geisel, well-known author of children's books written under the "Dr. Seuss" pen name, was also a lifelong cartoonist who used his talent to express his concern and opinions during the early years of World War II, drafting more than 400 newspaper and magazine editorial cartoons. See a variety of his illustrations from 1940s newspapers. Free. Through Feb. 1. Central Gallery, Holocaust Museum Houston's Morgan Family Center, 5401 Caroline St. Info: hmh.org or 713/942-8000.

First Saturday Arts Market (formerly Yale Street Arts Market). Local artists display and sell original works of art, and local musicians entertain. It is held the 1st Saturday of every month at 548 West 19th at Wind Water Gallery's parking lot. Free. 11 am–6 pm. Info: www.yalestreetmarket.com. Stop by The Artful Corner at 3423 White Oak Blvd., 713/426-4ART.

Greenery Gala: A New Leaf. Celebrating Houston's long growing seasons with a profusion of greenery and signature artwork, the Green House Gallery promotes eco-friendly themes with an eclectic and appealing body of paintings, prints, giclée, ceramics, metal sculpture, wearable art, and jewelry. In a stately house that opens onto a bough-canopied veranda, artists greet visitors and offer demonstrations, encouraging questions about their materials and creative processes. Through Jan. 31. The Green House Gallery, 716 W. Alabama. Info: www.greenhouseartgallery.com or 713/535-6462.

Hot Glass and Environments. Hot Glass, Cool Collections offers a glimpse inside 12 of Houston's best private glass collections. The works on view represent the many styles and techniques of the Studio Glass Movement, including hand-blown, kiln-worked, torch-worked, and cold-worked glass. Large Gallery. *Environments = Form + Space* features imaginative installations by three emerging glass artists who present new and expansive ways to define the discipline of glass. Small Gallery. Through March 15. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. Info: craftthouston.org.

Max Ernst in the Garden of Nymph Ancolie is conceived around the mural, *Pétales et jardin de la nymphe Ancolie*. The surrealist work, with a bird-like figure emerging from monumental curling red flower petals, was painted by German-born artist Max Ernst (1891–1976) in 1934 for the wall of a Zürich nightclub. John and Dominique de Menil were close friends with the artist, meeting him the same year he completed the mural, recently fully restored. The Menil Collection is the first venue to showcase the work, which also includes 75 other important paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Ernst. Through February 15. The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross, www.menil.org or 713/525-9400.

Museum of Unnatural History, presented by Art League Houston, is an installation of new works by Elaine Bradford. It consists of dioramic displays similar to those found in natural history museums, and which serve as "natural habitats" for the artist's fantastical crocheted-covered taxidermy creatures. Opening reception is Fri., Jan. 9, 6–8 pm, with an artist talk at 6:15 pm. Two free docent-led tours of the installation, which is on view from Jan. 9–Feb. 20, will be conducted for the public on Jan. 10 and Feb. 7 at 2 pm. Art League Houston, 1953 Montrose Blvd. Info: 713/523-9530, artleaguehouston.org, or alh@artleaguehouston.org.

One-Man Army. Eleanor Roosevelt once described cartoonist

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Arthur Szyk as a "one-man army," because he used his art as a weapon to garner support for the social and political issues in which he believed, crafting illustrations to draw the public's attention to the murder of European Jews in Nazi Germany during World War II. He portrayed Jewish people as strong, patriotic, and heroic, while creating many powerful anti-Nazi and anti-axis cartoons. Free. Through Feb. 8. Mincberg Gallery, Holocaust Museum Houston's Morgan Family Center, 5401 Caroline St. Info: hmh.org or 713/942-8000.

The Puppet Show: marionette art. A variety of media that explores the imagery of puppets, from actual puppets to works that evoke topics associated with puppetry and others that introduce new variations to this historical and global form of theater. Jan. 17-Apr. 12. Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. Info: www.camh.org or 713/284-8250.

The Sounds I See: Photographs of Musicians. An exhibition of formal-style studio portraits and an array of concert shots taken in auditoriums, nightclubs, and symphony halls, capturing moments in the life of a musician. Images of classical performers such as Pablo Casals and Igor Stravinsky to popular legends like Willie Nelson, Mick Jagger, and ZZ Top. Through Jan. 19. Audrey Jones Beck Bldg. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet St. Info: www.mfah.org or 713/639-7300.

Texas Green: 4th Annual Open Call Show. Artworks in various forms and interpretations that resonate with this year's theme, from newly emerging as well as established local, regional, and national artists. The Texas Green exhibit will be on view through Feb. 15. Free. Art Car Museum, 140 Heights Blvd. Info: artcarmuseum.com or 713/861-5526.

DAILY

Daily (Mon.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. HCHD Thomas Street Clinic is offering HIV testing free to the public, 9 am-1 pm. There is no need to establish eligibility ("gold-card"), no donation will be asked of the person seeking testing, and the test is free. Thomas Street Clinic, 2015 Thomas, 713/873-4157 or 713/873-4026.

Daily (Sun.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. Legacy Community Health Services offers free confidential rapid HIV testing using the OraQuick-Advance collection method with results available within 20 minutes at the following community-based locations. • **MONDAYS:** ALL STAR NEWS AND VIDEO EMPORIUM, 3415 Katy Freeway & Studewood, 4-8pm; GEORGE SPORTS BAR, 617 Fairview, 6-10pm. • **TUESDAYS:** 611 HYDE PARK PUB, 611 Hyde Park, 4-8pm; MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 4-8pm. • **WEDNESDAYS:** CLUB HOUSTON, 2205 Fannin, 8pm-12am; EJ'S, 2517 Ralph, 10pm-1am. • **FRIDAYS:** MIDTOWN SPA, 3100 Fannin, 5-9pm; EJ'S, 2517 Ralph, Fri. 10pm-1am. • A complete listing of locations is also available by calling 713/830-3070. Free confidential syphilis testing is also offered. HIV & syphilis testing is offered at the main clinic located at 215 Westheimer, Mon.-Thurs. 11am-7pm and Fri. 11am-5pm.

Daily (Sun.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. Planned Parenthood offers free anonymous or confidential testing at clinic locations throughout the area. To speak with an HIV counselor: 1-800-230-PLAN, Dickinson: 281/337-7725, Fannin: 713/831-6543, FM1960: 281/587-8081, Greenspoint: 281/445-4553, Huntsville: 936/295-6396, Lufkin: 936/634-8446 x223, Rosenberg: 281/342-3950, Stafford: 281/494-9848.

Weekly (Mondays)

TG Support Group. One of the oldest groups in Houston (started in 1990). Helping TransGenders Anonymous is a facilitated support group for all transgenders, supporters, family, and significant others. 7-9 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Meditation Mondays. Alan Davidson, author of *Body Brilliance: Mastering Your Five Vital Intelligences*, leads Big Mind, a simple, yet powerful and rapid way to help you shift into wisdom, self-realization, and actualization. Begins Jan. 5 in the Montrose area. Info: ThroughYourBody.com/events.html or 713/942-0923.

Weekly (Tuesdays)

Houston Roller Derby Rec League. Girls interested in skating but need to learn more skating skills or just want to learn the game and skate recreationally do not have to join the derby to skate with the rec league. Training is 7:30-9:30 pm at Dairy Ashford Roller Rink. Info: http://houstonrollerderby.com/public/page236.aspx.

Weekly (Thursdays)

Depression & Bipolar Support Group. Don't let depression or bipolar disorder dig its claws into what little hope you've managed to hide from the shadows. Bering Support Network can help. You can benefit from the experience of others. GLBT friendly. Free. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold, Room 232, 7:15-8:30 pm. Info: 713/526-1018.

Weekly (Sun., Wed., Sat.)

Love and Rackets. Tennis players and enthusiasts of all levels are invited to join the Houston Tennis Club at Memorial Park tennis center. The club gathers Sundays from 9 am-noon, Wednesdays from 7:30-9 pm, and offers clinics every Saturday from 9-10:30 am. There are also social activities throughout the year. Annual membership \$30, court fees \$3 per session. More info: houstontennisclub.org.

Biweekly (2nd & 4th Wednesday)

City of Houston TransGender Task Force is charged by the city of Houston to ensure that transgender Houstonians are able to access the medical and social services in order to reduce the incidence of HIV within the transgender community. 7-9 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Biweekly (2nd & 4th Friday)

Transgender Buddhist Meditation Group offers a traditional Theravada Buddhist vipassana 30-minute meditation for transgenders. 7-9 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Semimonthly (2nd Tuesday & 4th Saturday)

FTM TG Support Group. Some Transgenders Are Guys is one of the most dynamic FTM groups in the country. STAG is a facilitated group for female-to-male identified individuals, supporters, family, and significant others. 2nd Tuesday 7-9 pm and 4th Saturday 5-6 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Monthly (1st Tuesday)

The Houston SPCA Pet Loss Support Group provides a professionally facilitated, supportive, and safe environment for people to grieve the loss of a beloved companion. Free. 7 pm at the Houston SPCA, 900 Portway Dr. Info: 713/869-7722, ext. 127, or houstonspca.org.

Transgender Christian Bible Study and worship group is for Christian transgenders who want to share their faith with other Christian transgenders. 7-9 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. Info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Monthly (2nd Tuesday)

Free Legal Consultations for Anyone with HIV/AIDS. AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. (AFH, www.aidsfhelp.org) and Katine & Nechman L.L.P. have partnered to provide 30 minutes of free legal consultation on any legal issue to anyone with HIV. If any action is recommended, an attorney will take steps when applicable or make referrals to appropriate legal aid offices. Consultations are held at the offices of Katine & Nechman, located at 1111 North Loop West, Suite 180. To schedule an appointment, clients should call the law office at 713/808-1000 or use the contact box on the firm's website (which has more info on the consultations): lawkn.com.

Monthly (3rd Tuesday)

The Chapter One Book Group at St. Paul's United Methodist Church discusses the 1984 Booker Award-winning *Hotel du Lac* by Anita Brookner at their January 20 meeting. The group, which is open to anyone who enjoys reading and discussing a wide variety of books, meets at 7:30 pm in the church's Youth Library, J-202. To be added to the group's e-mail list, contact Linda@hbit.com. St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. More info: www.stpaulshouston.org.

Monthly (1st Friday)

TG Social. The Friday Night Transgender Social is a special, once-a-month event hosted by the TG Center for the Houston-area transgender community, supporters, family members, friends, community providers, and significant others. Each themed social consists of a dinner, movie, games, and/or presentation. 7-10 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. \$5. More info: 713/520-8586 or www.transhouston.com.

Monthly (2nd Saturday)

Second Saturdays at Winter St. Studios. It's open-door policy at Winter St. Studios every second Saturday of the month. This is a great way to meet and hang with the varied artists working in many different media and styles in their studios. Participating artists have a large red dot on or near the door of their studio. All are welcome between 1 and 6 pm. Winter St. Studios, 2101 Winter St. More info: 713/862-0082 or winterstreetstudios.net.

Monthly (4th Saturday)

TG Support Group. Texas Association for Transsexual Support is another one of the original support groups in Houston. TATS is a professionally facilitated support group for those identifying as being a transsexual. 4-5 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. More info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Significant Others TG Support Group. The Significant Others Support is a group that provides support to the wives, husbands, girlfriends, and boyfriends of individuals whose partners are considering transition. 3-4 pm at the TG Center, 713 Fargo. Info: 713/520-8586 or transhouston.com.

Monthly (1st Sunday)

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January 6, 7, & 11 (Tues., Wed., Sun.)
Houston Roller Derby new girl tryouts. All new girls must attend all three days of tryouts. Dairy Ashford Roller Rink. For more info: http://houstonrollerderby.com/public/pag242.aspx.

Jan. 6, 13, 20, 27 (Tuesdays)
Major Messages in Minor Prophets. The 12 "minor prophets" of the Hebrew Scriptures are "minor" only in terms of the length of the books, not their messages. This multimedia series enlightens serious Bible students and interested lay persons on these books of the Bible. The four-part free class is taught by John Rodriguez. 6:30-8 pm in Room 5-301 of the Sanctuary Building of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. More info: stpaulshouston.org.

January 9-11 (Friday-Sunday)
The Kooky Comedy Cabaret. A post-holiday spectacular! Enjoy entertainment by some of the finest singers, comedians, and variety performers in the city. Three performances only. \$35. The Texas Repertory Theatre, Northwood Plaza, 14243 Stuebner Airline. Info/tickets: www.texreptheatre.org or 281/583-7573.

January 10 (Saturday)
Main Street Theater Kids On Stage Open House. Everyone is invited—and it's free! Kids On Stage teaching staff leads kids of all ages in mask-making, arts and crafts, theater games, and dance. 11 am-1 pm. Main Street Theater, Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose Blvd. Info: www.mainstreettheater.com or 713/524-6706.

January 11 (Sunday)
Blood Drive. A Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center mobile unit will be at St. Paul's United Methodist Church to accept blood donations from 8 am-1 pm. They will be parked on Calumet Street between Fannin and San Jacinto and the church's two parking lots. To reserve a time to donate: Phyllis at 713/528-0527 or pbrock@stpaulshouston.org. More info about donating blood: www.giveblood.org. St. Paul's United Methodist Church (stpaulshouston.org) is located at 5501 Main St.

Jan. 11, 18, 25, Feb. 1 (Sundays)
Sacred Spaces. What makes a space sacred? What makes something we do sacred? What makes our lives sacred? A four-week study explores these questions as it focuses on the act of worship, particularly the act of sacred worship. Jan. 11: Dr. Bill Kerley discusses "Sacred Spaces"; Jan. 18: Rev. Shelli Williams discusses the "Sacraments"; Jan. 25: Michael Pirics discusses "Sacred Symbols"; Feb. 1: a panel discussion addresses "Sacred Liturgy." 5:30-7 pm at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. More info: stpaulshouston.org.

January 13 (Tuesday)
East Meets West: The Shanghai Quartet. For one performance only, featuring world-renowned guest artist, Wang Guowei, the Shanghai Quartet is known for its passionate musicality, impressive technique, and multicultural innovations. Tickets \$17-\$42. 8 pm. Stude Concert Hall, The Alice Pratt building, Rice University, entrance 18 off Rice Blvd. or entrance 8 off University Blvd. Info: www.HoustonFriendsOfMusic.org or 713/348-5400.

January 15 (Thursday)
Bulldozers and Butterflies. St. Paul's School presents Dr. Bill Kerley and Dr. Sherry Beeman in their 16th annual relationship seminar, Bulldozers and Butterflies. Constructing a relationship that leads to transformation and beauty requires tools and hope. This seminar for couples focuses on specific behaviors that can help remove the barriers to growth and provide bridges to new relationship territory. Free and open to the public at 7 pm in Fondren Hall at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. More info: stpaulshouston.org.

January 17 (Saturday)
Fresh Fruit. Urban Harvest 9th Annual Fruit Tree Sale. Bring a wagon (if you can), the site is under cover, so you can pick your tree rain or shine. Choices include apples, pears, persimmons, peaches, plums, apricots, pecans, blueberries, blackberries, figs, olives, oranges, mandarins, grapefruit, pummelo, kumquats, lemons, avocados, mangos, and more. 9 am-2 pm. Rice University Football Stadium Concourse, entrance on Greenbriar between Rice Blvd. and University Blvd. Info: www.urbanharvest.org.

Free Arbor Day fun at the Houston Arboretum & Nature Center. Tree seedlings will be given away, while supplies last, and native trees will be available for sale. Learn proper tree planting and ask tree-care questions. Family friendly activities include constructing paper pots, recycling newspapers into hats, and a puzzle hike on a forest trail. Free. 10 am-4 pm. Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Drive. Info: 713/681-8433 or www.houstonarboretum.org.

January 20 (Tuesday)
Rescheduled: Messiaen Centennial Performance. Da Camera of Houston celebrates the 100th anniversary of the

birth of French composer Olivier Messiaen with a performance of *Visions of l'Amen* (original date Dec. 9, 2008.) The composer first performed his great religious piano cycle with his student and future wife Yvonne Loriod, in a semi-secret art gallery concert in Nazi-occupied Paris. \$35. 7:30 pm. The Rothko Chapel, 1409 Sul Ross. Info/tickets: Da Camera Music Center, 1427 Branard or www.dacamera.com or 713/524-5050.

January 22 (Thursday)
ActOUT @ The Alley. Mrs. Warren's Profession. Join the Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce for pre-performance mixers, complimentary appetizers, and music in the Alley Theatre's 4th floor Terrace Room, 6:15-7 pm. To participate in the Red Ribbon Toy Drive, take an unwrapped children's toy with you for donation. Free, with show admission. See "Performing Arts" for synopsis. 7:30 pm. Mention ACTOUT. Tickets start at \$21. Hubbard Stage, The Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. Info: 713/220-5700 or www.alleytheatre.org.

January 24 (Saturday)
Houston Press Presents Artopia 2009 features the first annual MasterMind Awards. Artopia is dedicated to highlighting the Houston area's rich and diverse artists, musicians, fashion designers, culinary masters, and cocktail creators. This inaugural event will feature live musical performances and three fashion shows. Over 30 local artists will show visual art ranging in style from graffiti to abstract to pop. Dance performances will be given by Houston Metropolitan Dance Company, Dominic Walsh Dance Theater, and Travesty Dance Group. Then there's the first annual MasterMind Awards, which are an acknowledgment of the area's artists, innovators, and entrepreneurs who change our creative and cultural landscape. 8-11 pm at Winter Street Studios, 2101 Winter Street. Tickets: \$35 donation. A \$75 VIP donation is available and includes complimentary valet and access to an exclusive VIP lounge. Tickets available at houstonpress.com or 713/280-2400.

January 25 (Sunday)
St. Paul's Choir sings a Choral Evensong. The service of Evensong, also known as evening prayer, traces its origins to the daily rites of the medieval church and has been said or sung regularly in its current form since the 16th century. 4 pm, in the Sanctuary. St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. Info: www.stpaulshouston.org or 713/528-0527.

January 31 (Saturday)
Dr. Maya Angelou, presented by The Brilliant Lecture Series. Tickets from \$18 to the VIP level of \$150. Limited VIP tickets include a pre-event reception with Angelou, an autographed copy of her new book, and front orchestra seating. \$75 level tickets receive a copy of the book and orchestra seating. 7:30 pm. Tickets/info: 713/974-1335 or brilliantlectures.org.

Songs of the Earth Concert. Da Camera celebrates over a century of cross-fertilization between the Asian and Western classical traditions, as composer Zhou Long makes his Houston debut. The orchestra program is Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (chamber version); Zhou Long's *The Farewell* for pipa, erhu, and chamber orchestra; and Mahler's *Abschied from Das Lied von der Erde* in its chamber version. \$25-\$45. 8 pm. Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas at Smith. Info: Da Camera Music Center, 1427 Branard, 713/524-5050, or www.dacamera.com.

PLANNING AHEAD

FEBRUARY

February 4 (Wednesday)
Cultural Encounters Through Music. Da Camera's free lunchtime series for February includes a shadow puppet play by fourth-grade students from Lovett Elementary School and the music of Claude Debussy. Bring lunch and enjoy the performance, plus enter for a chance to win tickets for an upcoming Da Camera concert. Noon. Grand Foyer, Wortham Theater Center. Info: www.dacamera.com or 713/524-5050.

February 6 (Friday)
"Out Night" at the Masquerade Theatre for the production of Man of La Mancha. This classic allegory of the struggle of good versus evil is highlighted at times by the sometimes comedic, sometimes dramatic attempts of Don Quixote to right all the wrongs in the world. While his exploits are occasionally chided by onlookers, the hero never wavers in his quest, and the purity of his crusade becomes more and more evident. Containing one of the most powerful moments in musical theater ("The Impossible Dream"), Mitch Leigh's score highlights an entertaining and moving story of personal triumph. *Man of La Mancha* gives audiences an uplifting look at the power of ideas and the strength to follow one's dreams. Tickets: Masquerade Theatre at 713/861-7045 and use this special code—MTGLBT—to receive a \$10 discount off all adult tickets. A meet & greet will be held afterward in the lobby with the entire cast of the production. You can also call the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts for tickets at 713/315-2525 or visit www.masqueradetheatre.com. ■

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Theatre Under The Stars

Business News

by Nancy Ford



A DIAMOND AMONG JEWELERS OutSmart's Thomas Chelena (l) presents IW Marks Jewelers owners Daniel Marks and Brad Marks with the magazine's Gayest and Greatest Readers' Choice Award 2008. The store, perennial winners of the Best Jeweler award, celebrated its 30th anniversary on November 20.

HOUSTON LEGAL Following the announcement that founding partner Jerry Simoneaux is pursuing a career in public service (see News Briefs, page 10), Simoneaux and Frye law firm is now called Frye and Cantú. New partners Patricia Cantú and Salvador Benavidez join the firm's current slate of partners, Phyllis Frye and Rob Scamardo. Simoneaux remains with the firm in an advisory role with the title of "Counsel." Details: liberatinglaw.com.

FITNESS AWARD Houston Gym was recognized in November by Bodybuilding.com as its first official "Bodybuilding.com Gym of the Month." The monthly winners are determined by the nutrition website based on the gym staff's level of knowledge and friendliness, availability of free weights and appropriate machines, "and a motivating environment where serious training is taking place, all at an affordable price," said Ryan DeLuca, Bodybuilding.com chief executive officer. Houston Gym, owned by Johnnie West and John Langerman, is located at 1501 Durham in the Heights.

OUTDOOR PROMOTION The Miller Theatre advisory board has named Cissy Segal Davis as its new managing director. Owner and operator of Publicity Specialties marketing firm, Segal Davis takes responsibility for the overall management of the organization, programming, the grants process, special attractions, fundraising, and more. Details: milleroutdoortheatre.com.

BEST OF BELLAIRE Joyce Gayles, PhD, has been selected for the 2008 Best of Bellaire award in the psychologists category by the U.S. Local Business Association. Dr. Gayles received the award based on her success in enhancing the positive image of small business through service to her customers and community. A clinical psychologist and success coach, Dr. Gayles is the founder of TransformationWorks, which offers psychotherapy, career counseling, and coaching for business and professional development. Details: transformationworks.com. ■

Musical Genius to Musical Theater

continued from page 40

thought was a crazy idea even though it was greatly acclaimed in the 168-seat theater. [Both laugh] The fancy people started to show up, and on one night two people from the cast of *Grey's Anatomy*, Steven Sondheim, and Keanu Reeves were in the audience, and the next night it was James Franco and Calvin Klein and David Bowie. That was happening before we moved, so clearly there was a buzz about it that was spreading fast. Then we moved uptown and took on two other partners, and then each set of partners were responsible for raising half of the money, so Ira and I raised about half and the others were brought in under the leadership of our partners.

My head is spinning.

Right. Have you ever seen so many people?

At the Tonys, who goes up to accept the award?

Ira and I spoke in acceptance but everyone—however many there are listed—everyone came up on stage, the cast came up on stage, it was a very full stage even at Radio City.

Ira is your business partner?

Yes.

Do you have a...

Right now? I'll be changing this right fast, but the experience, the work experience of this has been so overwhelming that I'm not in a relationship. But my life in general, I work a 12-hour day, and the success of *Spring Awakening* and its proliferation worldwide is turning out to be quite amazing.

It's coming here to Houston and then it's going where?

It's touring North America, is now booking in 2010, and has an invitation to go to China, this company in English.

China!?

China. Go figure. We open in London for the British production in February, we open in Vienna for the production for all the German territories at the beginning of April, the Korean production opens July 4, and the Japanese production has been in the works, but they haven't figured out when they're going to launch, so it's a phenomenal thing. And interestingly, I think because it's not literally American in terms of the subject matter, that it has a kind of attraction worldwide.



"Morality, sexuality, and rock 'n' roll." With book and lyrics by Steven Sater and music by Duncan Sheik, *Spring Awakening* has enjoyed a successful two-year run on Broadway. The acclaimed coming-of-age musical closes on Broadway this month, but not before winning eight Tony awards for its uncompromising treatment of Frank Wedekind's 1891 banned play, *The Awakening of Spring*.

Is it that accessible in these places?

In a way, it has the form of a classic story.

The other countries aren't as puritanical?

I think America is the most puritanical of all countries. I think we don't think of ourselves that way, but we're *so* young. They have centuries and centuries of history they've lived through, and scandals they've been through. What they're responding to is the center of it, which is the quest of these young people to find their way into a better world or to create one. And the challenge to us as adults: How the hell do you bring a young person into the world and do it responsibly and empower them or choose not to so they can have the best life? So all that transcends culture, and the story goes into a great array of things we might have experienced in our adolescence. There are so many different points of identification that in the aggregate become quite universally accessible.

How has the response been?

When we were in San Diego, I saw it with the oldest audience I've ever seen it with, and at the end they gave it such an ovation. The circumstances of the story being as restrictive as they are in that little town in the 1890s, it actually felt for that audience a relationship as they were growing up, so they climb in in a way that's almost more literal than our young audience, which climbs in

more because of the issues of it and what it's exploring.

And there's a subplot in it of one boy who may find that he likes boys, and there's a scary capitalist character who basically has a theory about life that there's a way to play it, and you can play it so you get what you want. And basically what he wants is whatever he wants. So there's a mirror relationship to the central love story that's between two boys, but it's not conventional in any way because the aggressor in the relationship, who knows what he is except that he's definitely somebody who's going to beat the system.

What are the characters' names?

Hanschen and Ernst. In a conventional story, that story would be lovely and unexpectedly sweet, but in ours it turns askew in a way that is unique. Our theory is that the character who is seducing the other one—his children and grandchildren will end up being Nazis. The German legacy of it all.

Spring Awakening plays January 6–18 at the Hobby Center. Tickets start at \$26 and are available at the Hobby Center box office (800 Bagby), all Ticketmaster outlets (713/629-3700), or online at www.BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com.

Blase DiStefano interviewed Chad Allen for the September 2008 of OutSmart magazine.

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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

Houston

LA ACADEMIA

Hot salsa and Latin flavor rule at this dance bar on the southwest side of Houston. Weekends often offer high-production drag shows, drink specials. 5829 S. Gessner • 713/334-5422 • www.myspace.com/laacademiaclub

ANITA'S BAR & GRILLE

Well-known drag queen Anita Bump serves up tasty casual food at this new Montrose location with "Anita-ritas" leading the full-bar menu. You never know when the headliner might take the stage for an impromptu performance. 2409 Grant St. • 713/522-BUMP (2867) • www.anitabump.com

BARTINI

This club near the Westheimer curve now features a second ladies' nights, Passionate Sundays on the second and fourth Sunday, in addition to the Exquisite Wednesdays ladies' night. 1318 Westheimer • 713/526-2271

BELLA AIDA GARDENS

Lady Barbara and MC Zip (of Bartini fame) host True Unity parties in this southwest Houston club every Saturday night for "everyone in the community," the women say. "We welcome lesbians, gays, transgenders, and bisexuals of all ethnic backgrounds." 9371 Richmond • 832/230-3739

BLUR

This multi-level dance club features an expansive patio upstairs lounge, and balconies that overlook the busy Pacific St. traffic. The ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wednesdays, 18-year-olds are welcome on Thurs., resident DJ Lorenzo spins Wed.-Sat. nights, DJ Pollo spins Karumba Latin night on Sun. Happy hour, 8-10 p.m.; free cover before 11 p.m. 710 Pacific St. • www.blurbar.com

BOCADOS

Each Wednesday, women pack this Mexican restaurant for dancing and socializing preceded by open mic sessions on last Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. Sunday brunch starts at 11 a.m. and lasts 'til 3 p.m. 1312 W. Alabama • 713/523-5230

BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM

The BRB, Houston's leading gay country-western bar, is located in Midtown, just outside Montrose. Expect to see some fast and fancy two-stepping. Southern Country dance club offers lessons on Thurs. night. 2400 Brazos • 713/528-9192

CHANCES/THE NEW BARN/G-SPOT

Houston lesbians and those who love them enjoy three separate clubs under one roof, satisfying their C&W, urban dance, and live chick-music needs. Expanded and renovated bars include multiple video screens, banquet seating, and more. 1100 Westheimer • 713/523-7217 • www.chancesbar.com

CLUB 2020

Located downtown near the Toyota Center, this urban club features ClubbersFriday with male and female dancers. Its 6,400 square feet also offers theater-sized viewing screens and VIP rooms. 2020 Leeland • 713/227-9667 • www.club2020houston.com

CLUB ADAM AND EDEN

Serving the collective party needs of the Clear Lake area's gay men and lesbians, the adjacent clubs are open seven days a week, offering a large video lounge, a martini bar, pool tables, a private VIP area, and a 1,200 sq. foot dance floor. 522 W. NASA Parkway. Details: 281/557-0434 • www.clubadam.net

CLUB CRYSTAL

If you miss the now-closed Inergy, you'll find many of its former staff, management, and décor at this two-room Latin/hip-hop club. Sunday evening drag shows rule the roost. 6680 Southwest Frwy. next to Colorado. www.crystaltheclub.com • 713-278-2582

CROCKER

New ownership has taken over this durable Montrose nightspot that boasts "the longest happy hour in Montrose." Miss Jenny hosts Wii tournaments, with gay boxing on Wed. and gay bowling on Sun. 2312 Crocker • 713/529-3355

COUSINS

Drag fans frequent this club in the heart of Montrose for its camp shows Thurs.-Sun. 817 Fairview • 713/528-9204

DECADES

This casual neighborhood bar attracts a devoted crowd of regulars. It hosts a Monday pool tournament and Wednesday dart tournament and offers free pool on Sundays. 1205 Richmond • 713/521-2224

EJ'S

Located on the western front of Montrose, EJ's retains the charm of a colorful, local hangout. Frequent shows, including community benefits, pack the stage. The upstairs martini bar offers a quiet retreat. 2517 Ralph • 713/527-9071 • www.ejsbar.com

GEORGE

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar, just like most other neighborhood sports bars in town. But George's occasional benefit drag show makes it a wonderful, campy alternative. Sports Saturdays start at 3 p.m. with dart and pool tournaments; Steak Night is Sun., 3-7 p.m. 617 Fairview • 713/528-8102

BEHIND THE BAR



WHO: Leon Tindel

WHERE: George's Country Sports Bar, 617 Fairview, 713/528-8102

WHAT'S UP: Multiple television screens are scattered throughout George, making this comfortable sports bar an especially popular gathering spot for NFL playoffs on Sundays.

GUAVA LAMP

The club left Shepherd Plaza and reopened with a larger space near Allen Parkway. Guava Lamp presents karaoke nights on Sun. and Wed. and offers a free happy hour buffet on Fri. 570 Waugh • 713/524-3359

IN-N-OUT

Heights residents appreciate this nearby alternative to Montrose haunts with state-of-the-art large digital displays, Internet jukebox, comfy seating, and daily drink specials. 1537 N. Shepherd Dr. • 713/589-9780

JR'S BAR & GRILL

With house emcee Kofi, OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest reigning drag champion, this Montrose standard offers shows Sun.-Wed., as well as pool tables, go-go boys, and karaoke. 808 Pacific St. • 713/521-2519

MARY'S, NATURALLY

The oldest gay club in Houston, this is a legendary nightspot, though not as notorious as in days past. Mary's hosts many community fundraisers, including the Imperial Court of Houston's Jukebox Wednesdays event. 1022 Westheimer • 713/527-9669

METEOR

Check out the classy baby-grand piano at this posh but comfy lounge on the downtown edge of Montrose. The spacious double-room bar offers multiple giant plasma video screens; the updated patio accommodates smokers in style. 2306 Genesee • 713/521-0123 • www.meteorlounge.com

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

This comfortable neighborhood club doubles as a piano bar with a regular roster of evening pianists including Wayne Gray and Roger Woest. 1419 Richmond Ave. • 713/520-8446

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Study male dancers bump and grind every night at this leather/denim spot. The two-tier back patio bar provides a perch for viewing the Pacific Street scenery. 805 Pacific • 713/529-7488

RAINBOW ROOM

Every Thursday, Heather Moon hosts karaoke at this north Houston club. DJ Kenny supplies music on Fri. and Sat. 527 Barren Springs • 281/872-0215 • www.therainbowroombar.com

RIPCORD

Named best place to show off your leather in the Gayest & Greatest poll, The Black Hawk Leather shop is located inside the club. Another big draw is the Houston Big Men's Club's bi-weekly hamburger BBQ fundraiser. 715 Fairview • 713/521-2792 • www.theripcord.com

THE 611

This neighborhood club is a popular spot with pool sharks. On Fri. and Sat., the 611 dishes up buffet dinners. Features include a garden-style patio. 611 Hyde Park • 713/526-7070

SOUTH BEACH

This expansive, ultra chic dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest awards with DJ Jimmy Skinner, local spin legendess, DJ Rocky B, spins for Goddess Wednesdays. The club offers frequent high-production-value drag shows. 810 Pacific • 713/529-5086 • www.southbeachthenightclub.com

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club located close to downtown has one of the friendliest bar staffs in town, both inside and outside at its patio bar. The raised stage where local charities perform also features an amateur dance contest each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 11 p.m. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas. 713/571-7670 • www.tonyscornerpocketbar.com

VIVIANA'S

This club, in a new location, appeals to fans of Latino music and drag alike. 4624 Dacoma • 713/681-4104

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, the gayest spot on the north side also accommodates private parties, holy unions, and receptions. Enjoy Wii tournaments Fridays, 7-9 p.m., and Sundays, 5-8 p.m. 247041-145N, Suite 105. 281/298-9035 • www.ranchhill.com • www.myspace.com/theranchhillsaloon

Humble

WHISPERS

Northerly GLBTs meet at this comfy neighborhood bar that offers pool, darts, video games, karaoke Thurs., dancing to the Internet jukebox and live DJ on Fri. and Sat., and Steak night on Sun. 226 First St. • 281/359-2900 • www.whispersbar.com

Galveston

3RD COAST BEACH BAR

OutSmart readers voted this Seawall spot the island bar with the best happy hour in the 2005 Gayest & Greatest poll. Thurs. is karaoke night, with cabaret/variety shows on Fri. and Sat. nights. 31st and Seawall Blvd. • 409/765-6911 • www.3rdcoastbeachbar.com

THE PINK DOLPHIN

Opened by Eldridge Langlais, formerly the Paradise Guest House proprietor, this club in the former 3rd Coast Beach Bar location offers an expansive Gulf view. 9th and Seawall Boulevard • 409/621-1808

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A neighborhood bar, the island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The private patio includes a swimming pool. On Sat. and Sun. nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409/765-9092

Beaumont

THE COPA

The hangout for Lamar University students, this two-story dance club has pool tables, a spacious stage, and a staircase that would make Norma Desmond green with envy. 304 Orleans • 409/832-4206

ORLEANS STREET PUB AND PATIO

The place to hang for food, fun, and booze in a newly renovated pub, in good weather or bad. Open every night from 7 pm-2 am. 650 Orleans • 409/835-4243

Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only GLBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thurs.-Sat. Smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979/823-6174 • www.haloobs.com

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This begins a really big time of change and, certainly, a time of hope for us all with the beginning of our new administration. One of the things to pay attention to this month is your old friend Mercury going retrograde on January 11 in Aquarius and moving back into Capricorn. Those of you born in those signs should be prepared for some reexamination and to take some time to look into finishing old projects that you have not finished. Mercury will be retrograde from Jan 8 through February 3. • There is a Solar Eclipse or New Moon in Aquarius on the 25th—a great time for new beginnings with a lot of extra energy and a strong dose of spirituality to go with it. This is also the indicator for the beginning of the Year of the Ox, a cycle that repeats every 12 years. • The Sun finishes her journey through Capricorn and enters Aquarius on the 19th. Mercury starts in Aquarius and moves back into Capricorn on the 20th. Venus has a very short stay in Aquarius and shortly enters Pisces on the 3rd. Mars is visiting Capricorn for the entire month. Jupiter enters Aquarius on the 5th for his one-year visit. The rest of the planets are happy where they are.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). Career and long-term security take over your concerns as the new year opens. You will be rather impatient during this month, so be careful how you express your views at work. Your patience will reach an all-time low near the end of the month. Don't act in haste, even though you want to. Get a plan and make it work. Friends may not be as available as you like. And some may not have your best interest at heart. Keep your exercise program on track and follow those New Year's resolutions.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). You are in a more relaxed mood as the holidays begin. Your career definitely doesn't have your interest through the holidays. It may be best if you could take some time away and get some perspective. If you are not happy at your work, you will really want to leave. With Mercury retrograde, you will be more introspective than usual. I know the Cows and Bulls don't move quickly even when they know they are going to. They like to make a choice that they can stay with a while. Don't make any sudden career choices toward a new position until after February 4. Time with friends over the holidays can be the best for you.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). You are more serious this month and not as lighthearted as you usually portray. Concerns about connecting with others and your financial situation has you really wanting to focus on your future. You are feeling a bit trapped about money. If you are in a relationship, what you both spend money on this year is really weighing heavily on you. Some of these concerns could make for potential splits in your existing relationships unless you can talk about them. You could be looking for some new place to work by the end of the month, because of your dissatisfaction.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). Relationships are the big topic for this month. And if you have problems



CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). Happy Solar Return to the Seagoats, kids, ewes, and rams. For many of you, this will be a time of internal searching. You are reconsidering all the things that make up your identity. And many of you will be very willing to throw out a lot of those very things. Despite the fact that it will make you nervous and uncertain, you are doing it anyway. With Mercury retrograding into your sign, that only makes the diving even deeper. Use this time to plan and hold off on making any permanent decisions or plans until after Mercury goes direct on February 4. Otherwise, you may end up regretting some of those decisions. Keep a close eye on your money.

and have been avoiding them, this month will be the time that you confront them. Your relationship may need some care and nurturing or some major work, but without you paying more attention, it may come to an end. And if you are in a partnership and lonely or single, this is just the energy you need to get you out of your stuck situation. Some of you will be drawing someone from your past back into your life. Take a chance on this. Keep a watch on your finances. You need to get rid of some of the debt.

LEO (July 23–August 22). There are two big topics for this month. The first one is about your work conditions and your health regimes. Time to get back into good health, and you are ready to start that. Work relationships can be testy and you certainly won't be taking any BS off your co-workers. Be careful that you don't have a big chip on your shoulder and make yourself a target. The second thing is that Mercury is retrograde in your relationship area. That means that old relationship problems will surface. Be proactive and bring these up before they become a problem. Therapy would be very helpful.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). With your ruling planet, Mercury, going retrograde, you are going to be in a big time of cleanup. Old projects that you put on the back burner or just avoided altogether will need to be taken care of. And the workplace will need lots of extra attention. There are plenty of things for you to do, and you might as well get them done. Exercise and health are also big on the cleanup schedule. You are rather creative and can find all kinds of solutions for problems that you have this month. Your patience will be very low at the end of the month. Avoid putting yourself in situations that may limit your options.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). Home and family are your themes for January, and you thought that was what you did last month. It's a time where you

are ready to feather your nest and get rid of those things that don't really belong there. Some of you will be moving, remodeling, or relocating. And you will not be your balanced patient self. Be ready to focus on your inner child. Your own children will have to move over and make room for the new baby. Home projects should be planned but not begun until next month. Toward the end of the month, take some time off and get away from your routines.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). Getting your message across is the most important thing for you this month. You may have a lot to say and really want people to hear you. Your ideas about organization and efficient methodology are going to be right on target, and you are very interested in getting to the truth. Family relationships are not as smooth; they may not want to hear what you have to say. Since that is where Mercury retrograde is for you, problems around the family or your home are bound to come to the surface. And just because you say it, doesn't mean they will respect you or even listen. Keep your schedule open and flexible.

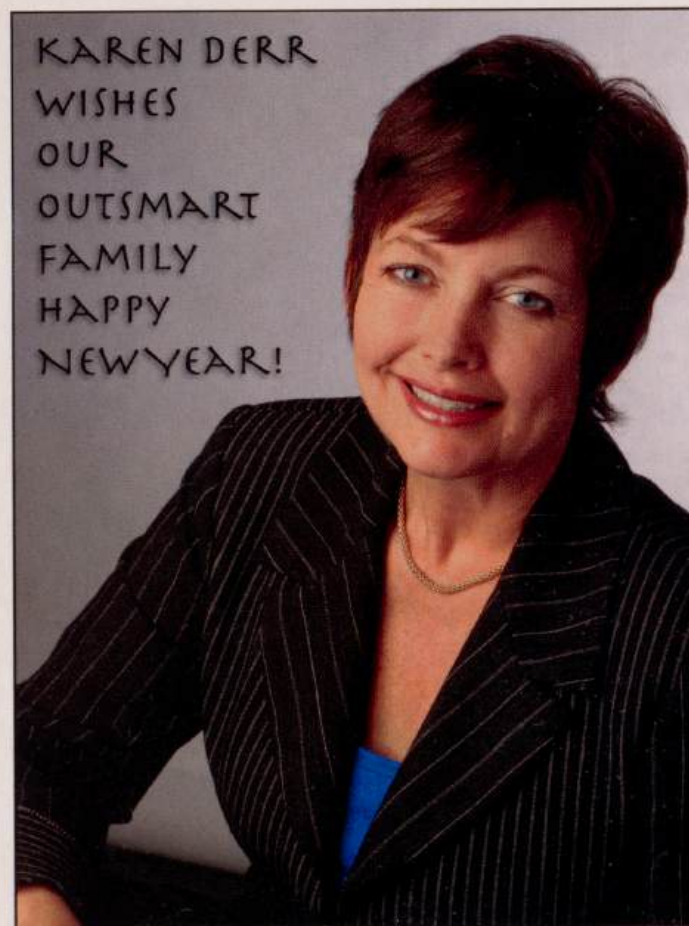
SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). Your financial picture, the best use of your personal skills, and the appreciation of what you do by others is certainly significant on your agenda this month. You are in a very practical, get-things-done, don't-waste-my-time mood. Others may be seeking your advice on these very topics. You seem to have your finger on the pulse. You are also putting into play conservative use of your resources. Keep an eye on your money, and be careful of everything you sign this month. Read and reread before you do. And if you can, put off signing until after February 4.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). Looking back is your theme with Mercury going retrograde in your sign. You are a bit more reclusive than usual as your sensitivity levels are extra intense. You need to take this month as a time when you are finishing up your game plan for the upcoming year, because as February gets here, it will be as though you were shot out of a cannon. You could be so busy that you may not be able to keep up with all the things you want to accomplish this year. This month is about rest and retreat. Stick to that plan so you will have plenty of energy in reserve for next month.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). This is the year when Pisces behave more like Virgos—practical, purposeful, and using sequential logic. Relationships are a big item this month and this year. Friends this month can be very helpful and can fill in some of those relationship gaps if you are single. Be sure and look up old friends; they will be happy to see you. Your social dance card is still full, and you are ready to take the holidays all the way through the end of the month. I know there is that nagging Virgo in the background, wondering why you are being more serious. You can listen with one ear and make plans to get back to routine life in February.

Read Lilly Roddy's forecast for all of 2009 in this issue. For more astro-insight, log on to www.lillyroddy.com.

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Photos by Dalton DeHart

OUT IN HOUSTON



Tori Williams, John Heinsarling, Carey Pope, Gayle Alsot, Courtney Harris, and Fernando Armbruro at the Diana Foundation Awards Kick-off Party on Dec. 14.



Donny Roy, Phyllis Mandola, Tommy Mandola, Tony Mandola, and Jeff Plummer at Tommy Mandola's birthday and Thanksgiving celebration.



Harris County Judge Ed Emmitt, Sean Carter, and Houston Mayor Bill White at the Leadership Houston Presents Distinguished Leaders Gala Hurricane After-Party on Dec. 2.



Officers of Bayou City Boys Club: Brian Tucker, Josh Cones, Billy Underwood, Chris Sokol, Richard Garcia, and Parker Langley at the Annual Red Ribbon Toy Drive At Meteor on Dec. 7.



Theatre Under the Stars' David Greiss, Johnny Hooks, and the cast of *White Christmas* at the Out at TUTS night on Dec. 12.



Cristan Williams, Georges Zemamek, Cassie Berwanger, and Carolyn Bosma at the HTGA's Transgender Thanksgiving Dinner 2008 on Nov. 24.



John Danielson, III, and Bob Rinn at their annual Christmas Party on Dec. 13.



John Odom, Josh Farmer, Carmen Chavez, Kim Pottlitzer, Fred Walters, and Gene Labrada at the Houston Buyers Club Open House on Dec. 13.



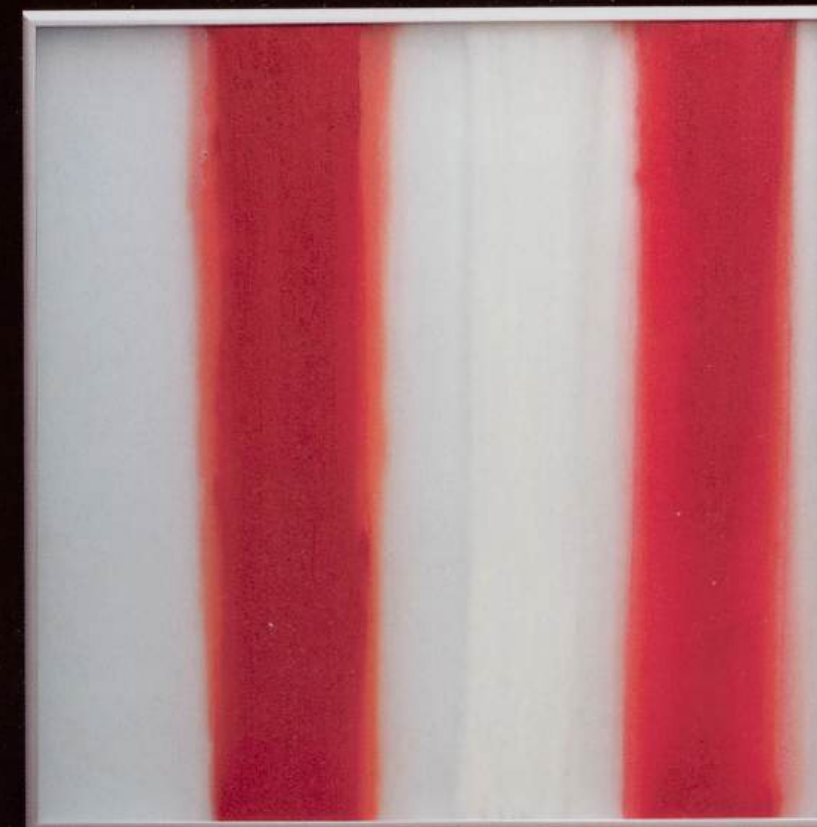
Tammy Tadlock, Franki Navarro, David Bowlers, and Eva Lee at the EPAH Holiday Party on Dec. 14.



Tim Wilde and designer Timoteo with the models of his show at the Male UWear Fashion Show at Meteor on Dec. 13.



Wayne Gilbert, Diane Barber, Alton LaDay, and Jonathon Glus at the opening of DiverseWorks' performance of *Thrive*, part of the UH Women's Studies conference "Gender, Creativity and the New Longevity" on Nov. 14.



Lucinda Cobley, *Elemental Desire*: Cultivar, 2008, oil and pigments on etched glass, 18.5 x 18.5 inches

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