Age of displacement

As the U.S. government grinds to a halt and restarts over demands for a wall, two exhibitions examine what global citizenship looks like.

By Sarah Conway 16
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

HAPPY VALENTINE’S DAY! To celebrate our love for you, we got you a LOT of stories about aldermanic campaigns. Our election coverage has been so much fun that even our die-hard music staffers want in on it. Alongside Maya Dukmasova’s look at the 46th Ward, we’re excited to present Leor Galil’s look at the rapper-turned-socialist challenger to alderman Pat O’Connor in the 40th—plus a three-page comics journalism feature from Anya Davidson on what’s going down in the 25th Ward that isn’t an uncomfortable text message from Danny Solis.

We’re thrilled you enjoyed our first-ever mayoral campaign questionaire last issue. We were excessively pleased with ourselves for pulling it off—at least until we realized we had entirely overlooked OG mayoral candidate Bob Fioretti. How embarrassing! We have almost no excuse! Except that there are SO MANY DAMN CANDIDATES. Fourteen on the ballot! FOUR. TEEN. LA—all of it—only has 15 seats on its entire city council. Oh and it’s so anticlimactic: in a couple weeks we’ll dutifully head to the polls to choose between them to determine who . . . we’ll vote for in the runoff in April. But more on that next week.

Also in our last issue, there were a few misstatements of fact. Ben Sachs’s review of Image Book misidentified the referent of the title of part three. “Those flowers between the rails, in the confused wind of travelers,” comes from a poem by Rilke, not Rimbaud. And Deanna Isaacs’s review of Electra overstated the show’s length by 40 minutes: the opera runs for only 100 minutes. Additionally, our January 31 review of Irving Park cafe Finom misidentified owner Rafael Esparza.

But let’s not let the mistakes of the past ruin our special day. Happy Valentine’s Day, sweethearts. —Anne Elizabeth Moore

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On the cover. Photo by Daniel Castro Garcia, Catania, Sicily, Italy November 2018. For more of Garcia’s work, go to danielcastorgarcia.com.

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and dens. In our winter months, devoid of the foliage that serves to camouflage these features, all of these marks are much easier to spot. Without saying, there’s winter’s gift of snow, a fantastic substrate that takes impressions quite readily and creates contrast both in color and shadow.

I have been tracking rats, wild birds, and a muskrat in my yard and the city’s alleyways and parks. A coyote or three and a fox at the city’s margins. Tall grasses, shrubby hedges, tree snags, and open waterways are a great starting point to look for such creatures, as someone is usually taking refuge from the humans or other predators in these places, or taking advantage of open water to hydrate or fish. A wet snow is better at taking a clear registration of tracks. A dry snow makes it more challenging to find clear physical tracks, and a deep snow causes hooves, tails, and paws to drag, which can be confusing. But the general shape, distance between, and patterning of punch marks through the snow can give you a clue of identity. I also look for signs of navigation through a landscape: stripped bark, bent or broken branches, a scatter of seed from a tailgrass, the shredding of seeded flowers, a frozen pile of scat. Yellow snow. Red snow.

I carry binoculars, a loupe, a camera, and my ever-present tools of measurement: my hand and my natural walking pace. I prepare to track and trail by dumping my mind in the quiet starting area, and then centering myself quietly. I open my senses, every one of them extending beyond my own body, including the sensing organ of the skin, and allow for fuller awareness of my environs—air, layers, and type of tree and shrub canopy, species and arrangement of plants, change of slope within the ground, large stones, fallen logs, buildings, dumpsters, water features. Once I discover signs, I enter the mind-set of whatever I might be following and learn from it as I proceed.

Once tuned in you will notice animal highways everywhere. Who’s there, how they move through and use the land, who they encounter—favorite forage spots and the speed or urgency in which they look for food are all revealed. The swish of a tail into a den or brushing of feathers around a pounce kill, the pause when a four-legger, once trotting, stands on its hind legs to notice something, and the rerouting of its journey. Burrows reveal themselves in tree snags explaining the pile of bones in front of them. The hustle and switchback weavings of rabbits as they build dens. In our winter months, devoid of the foliage that serves to camouflage these features, all of these marks are much easier to spot. Without saying, there’s winter’s gift of snow, a fantastic substrate that takes impressions quite readily and creates contrast both in color and shadow.

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crack in the wood that the rats have discovered to get into your garage.

A few features to scout for:

**Burrows and dens:** Diameter and orientation of hole, if it is sloped or drops suddenly; where they are found, be they under shrubs or a woodpile, and if under a tree, what species it is and at what height it is found.

**Nests:** Size and shape, materials they are made from, height they are found at.

**Prints:** If a bird, size and distance between tracks. Are they webbed, signaling seagulls, ducks, geese, etc, or anisodactyl (three toes forward and one back), belonging to hawks, falcons, pigeons, morning doves, crows, herons, or with the back toe less pronounced, such as have wild turkeys and pheasants, or zygodactyl (two toes forward and one toe back), such as woodpeckers and owls have. If a mammal—a digger? A leaper? Long toes? A canine? A cat? A rodent? A tail drag, claw marks, foot pads, fingered paws—all are strong markers of specific mammals.

**Patterns and pacing:** Take note of the straddle and stride of the tracks you find.

Is the animal walking, loping, galloping, or running?

**Wing impressions:** Important for predators, as they are rarely just standing on the ground and usually perched coming into ground to swoop and pick up an animal to feed on or process a kill.

**Scat:** Size and shape as well as color and contents. A loupe is perfect for identifying the animal’s favorite foods.

As most of us humans huddle inside, know that midwinter is the courting and mating time for many predators—fox, great horned and barred owls, coyotes, and also beavers and squirrels.

While the cold-weather bird species are here—hawks, kestrels, woodpecker, jay, chickadee, cardinal, and housewren—the first spring birds arrive from their sojourns south—robin, eastern bluebirds, sandhill cranes. Go outside early, after the animals have been moving all night, and keep your senses open to these signals of the thaw to come.

**POLITICS**

Alderman Lucky

In the Ricketts family, Tom Tunney has the best enemies an alderman seeking reelection could have.

By Ben Joravsky

Until his recent fall for swapping zoning changes for Viagra, 25th Ward alderman Danny Solis was, in my opinion, the luckiest alderman in Chicago for his ability to dodge his way out of any predicament. But with Danny out of the picture—probably in witness protection for wearing a wire on Alderman Ed Burke—I’m ready to announce a new Alderman Lucky:

Tom Tunney of the 44th Ward.

Man, Tunney’s been graced with the best enemy any reelection-seeking alderman could ask for—the Rickettses, owner of the Cubs.

The Rickettses say they don’t like Tunney ‘cause he’s been “needlessly disrespectful” in negotiations with the family over Wrigley Field development. But with Danny out of the picture—probably in witness protection for wearing a wire on Alderman Ed Burke—I’m ready to announce a new Alderman Lucky:

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The Rickettses say they don’t like Tunney ‘cause he’s been “needlessly disrespectful” in negotiations with the family over Wrigley Field development. But the more they complain about him, the more attractive he seems to people who don’t like the Rickettses—a long line that stretches from Clark and Addison to their native state of Nebraska. Let’s see . . .

Sox fans don’t like the Rickettses ‘cause—duh, they own the Cubs.

Architectural purists don’t like them because they’ve turned Wrigleyville into the north-side version of Schaumburg.

Democrats don’t like them ‘cause one Ricketts (Pete) is the Trump-loving governor of Nebraska and another (Todd) is the Koch-brothers-loving chair of the Republican National Committee.

OK, Laura Ricketts is a Democrat. But she hardly makes up for Papa Joe, the head of the clan. Nobody to the left of Donald Trump likes him after his abominable string of bigoted comments, including the latest batch directed at Muslims.

If the enemy of your enemy is your friend, then Tom Tunney’s got lots of Ricketts-
hating friends. Maybe Tunney should report opposition from the Ricketts family on his economic-disclosure statements as an in-kind contribution.

It’s a shame too, because there’s a case to be made for ousting Tunney. As service providers go, he’s a dutiful respondent to residents’ complaints. But as a legislator? He’s been an unapologetic rubber-stamper since Mayor Daley appointed him to fill the vacancy caused when his predecessor, Bernie Hansen, stepped down in 2002. Tunney’s supported the parking meter sale and every TIF handout that the recipient didn’t need but got anyway.

One of the few times he broke from the mayor was to vote against Rahm’s proposal to raise the minimum wage. Great, he goes along when it comes to handing out millions to the rich. But when it comes to a measly raise for the working poor he’s Thomas Paine.

Tunney was the only north-side alderman to vote for the Presence TIF deal. In that one, the city gave $5.5 million of your property taxes to Presence, a health care conglomerate that vehemently opposes abortion rights.

Talk about bad twofers. Not only did the city give millions to a wealthy company, but it gave it to an outfit that wants to take women back to the Middle Ages—at least on reproductive rights.

“There’s absolutely no excuse for a public official to deny a woman access to reproductive health care,” says Terry Cosgrove, CEO of Personal PAC, the reproductive rights group. “Tunney’s vote on Presence was shameful.”

Cosgrove was an early supporter of Austin Baidas, a former aide to Governor Pat Quinn and President Obama, who’s running against Tunney as a left-of-center progressive pledging to “end TIFs and corporate giveaways.”

“Tunney’s voted 97 percent of the time with the mayor—from the parking meter deal to Presence,” says Baidas. “Tom has voted Ed Burke values—not Lakeview’s values.”

Elizabeth Shydlowski, the third candidate in the race, vows to be an independent (“I won’t serve a mayor or special interest, but I will serve my constituents”). She also calls for a “one-two year moratorium on TIF spending while the City Council runs a full audit of the program.”

She says she’s running because soaring taxes have made Lakeview unaffordable for middle-class families like her own.

The rise in property taxes will continue should Mayor Rahm win council approval for the $2.4 billion in TIF handouts he’s seeking for the Lincoln Yards and the 78 developments.

Baidas and Shydlowski say they’d vote against those deals. Tunney didn’t respond for comment, but in a recent letter to constituents he said he’d vote against Lincoln Yards. “I feel it is an unnecessary burden on tax-payers to subsidize this multi-billion dollar private project in any way.”

Wow—I couldn’t have said it better myself. Tunney’s newfound vigilance either indicates a radical change of heart or the realization that he’s in a heated reelection campaign.

Shydlowski says she’s an independent—not a Republican—even though she used to work in the Rauner administration. “I’ve voted for Democrats and Republicans,” she says.

On the matter of the Ricketts family, both of them are walking a fine line. Baidas says, yes, he knows Laura Ricketts. But, no, he’s not taking any donations from the family.

Shydlowski says it’s easy for Baidas to be so selective when he comes from a family wealthy enough that he can self-fund his campaign.

She’s accepted $10,000 from Tom Ricketts, $5,000 from Sylvie Legere (Todd Ricketts’s wife), and $2,500 from a couple of Ricketts family employees. But she vows to stand up for the community in any future Wrigley Field developments.

As for the Ricketts family, well, call me cynical, but I think the whole to-do over the Wrigley renovation was like one of those carefully choreographed melodramas (not unlike Rahm’s squabble with Rauner). In this one, Rahm played the good cop, Tunney played the bad cop, and the Rickettses got pretty much everything they wanted.

Not surprisingly, they see it differently, according to Dennis Culloton, the family’s spokesperson.

“Tunney has been unnecessarily disrespectful,” says Culloton. Especially his “up the butt” assertion. In that one he declared: “I’m gonna be up the butt everyday to make sure that the commitments the Ricketts make” get kept.

Culloton also disagrees with my theory that the Rickettses have actually benefited Tunney’s reelection chances. “If they had not raised any concerns about Tunney, he wouldn’t have any competition,” says Culloton.

Well, Mr. Culloton, as if to prove my point, a few days after our conversation, the Sun-Times joined the Tribune in endorsing Tunney for, you guessed it, standing up to the Ricketts family—standing up to Rahm and Daley being something else. Sigh.

Hey, Alderman Tunney—on Valentine’s Day, you might want to send some chocolates to the Rickettses. Lord knows, they’ve earned it.
Depending on who you talk to, 46th Ward alderman James Cappleman is either a cold, deceitful hater of the poor who’s destroyed much of Uptown’s affordable housing stock or a friendly, responsive neighborhood booster who’s made Uptown a better place to live.

Since Cappleman, 66, was elected in 2011, the 46th Ward has seen massive transformations. High-rise luxury towers have been erected, the Wilson Red Line stop has been revamped; homeless encampments have been cleared. single room occupancy (SRO) buildings—which provided cheap studio living—have been closed. The benches have disappeared from many CTA bus stops, as have the hoops from many public basketball courts. It hasn’t all been the alderman’s doing. Developers and gentrifiers have for decades eyed Uptown, a prime swath of lakefront real estate that has long been one of the north side’s low- to mixed-income neighborhoods with a level of racial integration unheard of in most parts of the city.

For almost a quarter century before Cappleman’s election, the ward was led by Helen Shiller, whose persona was as polarizing as his. She was slammed for being antidevelopment and not tough enough on crime, and lionized for her track record of preserving the neighborhood as a home for the poor. In 2007, after Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the neighborhood as a home for the poor. In 2007, after Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Cappleman without a runoff, the high-rise voters who are alarmed by Shiller’s last election, in which she beat Capp
James Cappleman; Erika Wozniak Francis; Marianne Lalonde; Angela Clay © MARK DURKASOVA

more. The ONE People’s Campaign however, a political 501(c)(4) offshoot of the nonprofit ONE Northside community organization, couldn’t corroborate. Staff, whose sympathies lie with the ward’s have-nots, eagerly showed me spreadsheets tracking the number of SRO units lost (803, with 200 more on the chopping block) and upscale rental units created (1,265, including 64 at the shuttered Stewart Elementary) on Cappleman’s watch. They’d also found that “interested parties” connected to these developments had donated more than $56,000 to Cappleman in his second term alone.

No one of this has been lost on Cappleman’s challengers, who’ve all been accusing the alderman of hypocrisy and running on a promise to make Uptown something other than a developer’s playground. If you think that an anti-gentrification platform will alienate the ward’s “wealthier lakefront high-rise voters,” perhaps not in 2019: a majority of every precinct in the ward voted in favor of lifting the state ban on rent control last November.

Just a couple of doors down from Cappleman’s campaign office, Erika Wozniak Francis, 36, is organizing a run lubricated by union support and her minor celebrity as a cohost of The Girl Talk live show at the Hideout. A fifth-grade teacher at a northwestside elementary school and a frequent critic of the city’s TIF deals, Wozniak Francis has out-funded the other challengers and is supported by Congressman Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, David Orr, and other progressives. She’s even earned the endorsement of the National Association of Social Workers’ Illinois chapter—which Cappleman once cut Weiss Memorial Hospital off from easy access to the thoroughfare. She wants to see the City Council. “It was through my involvement that I started to understand that our alderman’s office wasn’t hearing everyone’s voice equally,” she said.

Lalonde slammed Cappleman for taking money from developers seeking zoning changes (his self-imposed rule—that he won’t take donations within a year of a developer receiving requested changes—doesn’t impress her) and from Ed Burke; for voting to divert $15.8 million in TIF funds toward a luxury high-rise when an aging community center needed renovations; for his support of a Lake Shore Drive project that would cut Weiss Memorial Hospital off from easy access to the thoroughfare. She wants to see a community benefits agreement created for the rehab of the Uptown Theatre. She also thinks the City Council needs a scientist. “Scientists are naturally objective,” she said coolly. “They’re detail oriented in their decision-making, they look at data critically, and they’re BS filters.”

The two men in the race display less local expertise and have far less money in their campaign funds than Wozniak Francis and Lalonde. But they’re equally frustrated with Cappleman and want to make the 46th Ward a kinder and gentler place. Justine Kreindler, 38, lives in the East Lakeview part of the ward. He’s the only candidate with kids, and his campaign platform comes down to “housing, education, and a peaceful community,” he said. He wants to push developers to build more three-bedroom apartments to accommodate families, to launch a PR campaign to make local schools more attractive, and to stop throwing armed cops at every problem rooted in poverty.

Kreindler says he was inspired to run by watching Cappleman “bash” the community during his 2015 campaign. “It baffled me why someone who disliked their community so much would want to run to be alderman.”

Kreindler, who works with the youth leadership nonprofit Public Allies, is measured—and honest if he doesn’t know the answer to a question. He has the soothing manner of a guy who probably doesn’t mind changing di-
neighborhood schools. She remembers the neighborhood as “buzzing” during her childhood. “All of us are interconnected because we were a part of the same struggles.”

Clay has served as the president of Voice of the People in Uptown, the nonprofit affordable housing developer behind the building she grew up in, but currently works in HR at a bank. Watching the neighborhood get less affordable and youth resources dry up, and not seeing Cappleman fight like Shiller used to, motivated Clay to run. She says the alderman too often claims problems are out of his hands. She doesn’t blame Cappleman for gentrification, however, but for not doing enough to ease its blow on lower-income residents. She says that just because drug dealing isn’t as prevalent on the streets doesn’t mean it’s not happening—or that its root causes aren’t still there.

Her campaign has almost no money, and she organizes her volunteers out of Everybody’s Coffee on Wilson, a café that touts itself as the place that filters “coffee, not people.” But, she says, she’s built a coalition she’s confident will turn out to vote when they see a candidate they can relate to.

If Clay or any one of the other challengers manages to get to a runoff, it seems likely the bases of the others will fall in line to help that candidate oust the incumbent. And between the five of them, they collected 2,000 more signatures on their nominating petitions than Cappleman.

The alderman, meanwhile, is still leaning on his tough-on-crime message and insisting he’s been the champion that both the ward’s business leaders and its poor need. When I asked if he’d thought about what he’ll do if he loses, Cappleman seemed baffled. He enumerated all the new improvements in the ward, and listed more to come, what with the Baton and Double Door moving in, and the long-awaited renovation of the Uptown Theatre looming at last.

“What do you think the odds are of me losing right now?” he asked. “I’ve been in tough elections. In 2011 there were 11 of us in this race. 2015 was a tough race. And 2019—I would not want to run against me.”

Andre Vasquez had never run for public office before launching his campaign for 40th Ward alderman in April, but he’s been in plenty of battles. As a Lane Tech student in the mid-90s, he’d spend his weekends crossing Navy Pier, entering impromptu cyphers where he’d freestyle against other ambitious young rappers from all over Chicago. Vasquez says he competed in more than 1,000 battles and lost only seven times—though admittedly that’s by his own count. He says that someone who saw him in action called him Optimus Prime, in homage to the Transformers franchise’s head Autobot—he thinks because of his skill at mimicking popular rappers. The name stuck, and as Vasquez grew into a career in hip-hop, he called himself Prime.

In the late 90s, he went on to become a member of venerable underground hip-hop collective the Molemen. Now he’s a socialist candidate for 40th Ward alderman, hoping to unseat entrenched incumbent Patrick O’Connor.

By Leor Galil

Hip-hop taught Andre Vasquez about community—and he wants to take those lessons to City Hall

In the 90s he rapped as Prime and joined underground collective the Molemen. Now he’s a socialist candidate for 40th Ward alderman, trying to unseat incumbent Patrick O’Connor.

By Leor Galil

Aldermanic candidate Andre Vasquez talks politics with a potential constituent at Isabella Bakery (1659 W. Foster) in January. © Deana Rutherford
Our votes don’t matter.” That’s an attitude Vasquez knows well. “Hip-hop music taught some of us to be absolutely cynical, to believe that our votes don’t mean anything, that we don’t understand and aren’t welcome to that world,” he says.

Vasquez has learned to reach past such cynicism, and he believes he’s got the best chance against O’Connor. He’s about as far from the Chicago machine as aldermanic candidates get: he’s a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, and he supports a Civilian Police Accountability Commission (an idea pushed by fellow DSA member and 35th Ward alderman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa). He’s in favor of an elected school board, and he wants to strengthen the Affordable Requirements Ordinance, requiring developers to build 30 percent of new units as affordable housing and closing loopholes that allow them to build those units elsewhere or not at all.

“It’s different when it’s music or hip-hop—people go, ‘I like the music, that’s why we’re coming out in a crowd,’” Vasquez says. “But when you’re talking about these issues, and you get people that are invested that are throwing down and dedicating so much time, it just speaks volumes.”

In the late 70s, Vasquez’s parents emigrated from Guatemala to Illinois, where they married. His father repaired shoes downtown and eventually found a job making orthotics for Lurie Children’s Hospital; his mother worked the night shift at an envelope factory, then became a housekeeper. Vasquez was born in 1979, and he and his younger brother grew up in southern Bucktown. “There were Latin Kings on the street, so my parents kept me inside and sheltered,” he says. “But also because they were undocumented, they were concerned that anything I would get into might perhaps put them in a situation where they could get deported.” He spent a lot of time reading alone at home. “Because my parents kept me in that space, books and everything were my way out of it,” he says. He devoured science fiction and comics—and as an adult, he’d name his son Parker because of his love for Spider-Man.

During Vasquez’s childhood, his family got priced out of four different neighborhoods. They left Bucktown for Humboldt Park, then moved to Roscoe Village, Avondale, and finally Irving Park East—all areas to the south and west of the 40th Ward, which extends north-south roughly from Devon to Lawrence and east-west from Clark to Kedzie. Vasquez believes his relative rootlessness as a kid taught him the value of being connected to a place and its people. “It allowed me the opportunity to see what it’s like feeling separated and not part of a larger community,” he says. “So I’m really invested in trying to build community at every possible instance.”

As a freshman at Lane Tech in 1993, Vasquez found his first real community through hip-hop. Rap fans at the school would form cyphers between classes. “I went from writing my first little raps and trying them out in front of people to really working on my freestyle skills, and that got me notoriety,” he says. “And as somebody who had never been the center of attention, it just blew my sense of self up—which is sometimes a little bit too much when you’re a battle rapper. But considering what I had come from and feeling like nobody, I think it provided a good counterbalance.”

In high school, Vasquez aspired to be an English teacher, and rapping engaged his writing skills. “I’ve always been really . . . excited is a weird word to say, but really interested and intrigued in how people put words together,” he says. “Hip-hop allows you to create these Rubik’s Cubes of wordplay.” Soon Vasquez got a taste for battle rap, and every day after school, he’d post up near the edge of campus on the corner of Addison and Western, dressing down challengers in front of dozens of spectators. On weekends, he took his hunt for opponents to Navy Pier. “That got me a lot of notoriety citywide, also because I was one of the very few brown kids that were doing it,” he says. “What they would say is, ‘Who’s that white boy?’”

One of the few battles Vasquez lost took place in a Mexican restaurant across the street from the Congress Theater. DJ and producer Juvenal “PNS” Robles judged the competition and gave Vasquez the L. “He could read an opponent, and it’s funny ‘cause I think it still fits him today,” Robles says. “As opposed to regular battle guys, who’d just go in for insults and the cheap joke, he’d go for nuance.”

Robles became an important figure in Vasquez’s development as a rapper—thanks to his position in the Molemen, one of the city’s longest-running DJ and production collectives, he provided the younger man with an entry point into the local hip-hop scene. Founded in 1989 by producers Ed “Panik” Zamudio and Alberto “Mixx Mas- sacre” Espinosa and rapper Donald “Vakill” Mason, the Molemen had become a dominant force in Chicago’s underground rap community by the mid-90s, when Robles joined. He frequently DJed at local hip-hop events, and Vasquez offered his services. “I used to carry records for him when I was like 16, 17, to get into Double Door to get on the mike,” Vasquez says. He bonded with several core members of the Molemen especially easily because of their shared heritage. “I met Panik through his brother, Visual. I think because we’re all Latino too, it was easy to kind of identify, and they were just like, ‘Yeah, we’re gonna bro you, so come on board.’”

In the late 90s, while studying education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Vasquez became a member of Molemen himself. Through a rapper he knew in New York, he landed a spot on MTV’s hip-hop countdown Direct Effect. “Then I ended up being part of the HBO Blaze Battle, which was the first televised MC battle—most of the city then was like, ‘Oh, you’re the guy,’” Vasquez says. “It went from not having a community to, like, ‘Here’s your community, here’s what we do all the time, here’s everyone to connect with,’ and really feeling valued for myself. I’d never pictured I’d have anything like that, so when I did I was full in.”

Chicago rapper Pugs Atomz, then head of the Nacroats crew, befriended Vasquez through battling. Atomz saw Vasquez’s leadership qualities and drive back then, and describes him as “tenacious and not accepting ‘no,’ and willing to create the things we wanted to see. Like, ‘All right, let’s go to New York tomorrow.’ ‘Let’s go battle at Scribble Jam.’ That’s what we’re doing. We were just always both ready to do it, and willing to take the lead if necessary—and support each other.”

Vasquez provided the Molemen with infrastructure and promotional support. He’d sell Molemen tapes at Navy Pier and the Taste of Chicago and wear Molemen T-shirts while working at Gramaphone Records. When the Molemen were working on their expansive 2001 double album, Ritual of the . . ., Vasquez helped bring in rappers from outside the crew. “I was going back and forth to New York, so I actually hooked up a lot of those songs as an executive producer,” he says. “Some of the songs that were there, it was definitely me putting that together—I was just super geeked to be a part of it all.” Ritual features Chicago greats such as E.C. Illa, Rubberroom, Juice, and Rhymefest, plus out-of-town heavies such as Aesop Rock, MF Doom, and Atmosphere rapper Slug. Vasquez got the track “Unbreakable” to himself, though it’s his only appearance.

In 2002, the Molemen released the Prime 12-inch Madman and a CD-R called The Op- timus, the debut by Prime’s crew the Scam Artists, which also included Atomz, rappers Verbal and Robust, and producer Qwel (who eventually became a Moleman). Within a year or so, however, Vasquez started getting frustrated by his position in the Molemen. “I kept seeing my value as being, like, ‘Oh, I’m the intern, I’m gonna go do this,’” he says. “It took a while for me, as a person, to be able to separate myself from what I was accomplishing, and understanding that I have value regardless of that. I think I was going through internal stuff, and at that point we kind of parted ways.”

Vasquez had already formed another crew, Middle Ground, in 2001, and there he was more a mentor than a peer to the other rappers. “I just wanted to see what it’d be like to actually start my own group of folks, and little-bro with some other folks who were rappers,” he says. Robles remembers the advice he gave Vasquez as he left the Molemen: “I told him, ‘If you start your crew, you’re still going to have to clean toilets,’” he says. “But the person that cleans the toilets cares about the crew.”

Middle Ground released a couple albums in the late 2000s, but like most of Vasquez’s recorded output, they’re hard to find these days. Aside from the stray YouTube upload—the title track to Madman, for one—Vasquez’s music isn’t streamable. And he’d prefer to keep it that way. He’s unhappy with the sound quality of many of the recordings, and with some of the things he was saying in those songs.
music was never enough to support Vasquez by itself—as he got established in hip-hop, he also moved up in the world of retail. “I had gone from first being a janitor at Kids ‘R’ Us at the Addison Mall to working at record stores to selling cell phones to running my own AT&T store on Chicago and Rush,” he says. His day jobs helped him pay for studio time and beats, but they also provided a janitor at Kids ‘R’ Us at the Addison Mall to the world of retail. “I had gone from first being a janitor at Kids ‘R’ Us at the Addison Mall to working at record stores to selling cell phones to running my own AT&T store on Chicago and Rush,” he says. His day jobs helped him pay for studio time and beats, but they also provided a

11,000 apartments and condos throughout Illinois; he continues to juggle the job with his campaigning.

When Vasquez took an interest in Bernie’s presidential campaign, he shared his enthusiasm through some of the same channels he’d used to share music. “Facebook, Twitter, Instagram: the same way I would promote songs, videos, albums back in the day. It remained the way I stayed connected to people,” he says. “Folks would be like, ‘Oh, I didn’t even know this guy was running—I had no idea.’ It felt really cool to be able to plug people in who weren’t a part of the political process at all, and just connected with me from a different history that we share.”

When he organized Bern Fest in March 2016, he called on old friends from his life in hip-hop. Veteran battle rapper Shadow Master and a duo of Pugs Atomz and rapper-producer Awdazcate took the stage among speakers such as Black Lives Matter activist Ja’mal Green, My Block My Hood My City founder Jahmal Cole, Cook County State’s Attorney candidate Kim Foxx, and 2015 40th Ward aldermanic challenger Dianne Daleiden.

Bern Fest impressed at least one of the community organizers in attendance. “One of them stayed around at the end and was like, ‘What are you doing next?’ And I was like, ‘I just know how to throw shows,’ ” Vasquez says. “They were like, ‘You should come to one of our trainings, because you’ve been community organizing.’ That’s what led me to do the canvass.”

That organizer was Amanda Weaver, executive director of Reclaim Chicago, and Vasquez joined her organization to run chapter meetings in his ward and launch a monthly series encouraging informal conversations about politics at neighborhood bars—he called it “Drinks and Discourse.” (“I like aliteration, ‘cause I’m a rapper,” he says.) And just as people used to come out to his shows, they came out to his events. “That’s where I started seeing it and going, ‘Oh, we’re getting a turnout of 80 to 100 people—how can we turn that into power?’” Vasquez says. “I became the chair of the Reclaim Chicago North Chapter—it was so focused on the 40th Ward. I was already having the idea, like, ‘Maybe this is a thing.’”

Reclaim Chicago spokesperson Kristi Sanford remembers Vasquez from Bern Fest and considers him an embodiment of the organization’s goals. “This is what we’re all about—regular people running,” she says. She sees Vasquez’s unconventional trajectory and his hip-hop past as assets. “What Andre’s doing is showing by taking this risk that all of us can do politics, and it’s going to take all of us doing it to change the city,” she says. “It’s inspiration to the rest of us who were always told, ‘This is not your place.’”

Sanford says Vasquez is already doing some of the work he’d need to do in order to accomplish things in City Hall. “I know Andre’s building relationships with all the other candidates we’ve endorsed,” she says. “We could see a new class of freshman aldermen with relationships with each other and fresh vision for the city.” Ramirez-Rosa is the lone incumbent of the five candidates with Reclaim endorsements—the others are Colin Bird-Martinez (31st Ward), Rossana Rodriguez (33rd Ward), and Maria Hadden (49th Ward).

Running a competitive race against Chicago’s second-longest-serving alderman requires plenty of cash. And challengers who rely largely on small individual donations are at a huge disadvantage against incumbents such as O’Connor, who have establishment money from industry groups, PACs, and unions. According to data provided by the Illinois State Board of Elections, Vasquez has a little more than $20,000 cash on hand. Daleiden and O’Keefe trail him closely, with around $16,000 apiece, and Okere is in a distant last place with about $6,000. But O’Connor’s budget dwarfs those of all four challengers combined: the Citizens for Patrick O’Connor committee has nearly a quarter million dollars.

Vasquez is nonetheless confident he can force O’Connor into a runoff. “We’ve raised the most money out of all the challengers; we’ve gotten the most petition signatures,” he says. He estimates he has more than 200 volunteers helping him knock on doors and make calls. “I love actually knocking and hearing the stories from everybody,” Vasquez says. “You learn so much and you see so much of your experience in someone else’s.”

The capstone of Vasquez’s hip-hop career, as he tells it, was a studio session with New York rapper KRS-One in 2008 (they released a song with Que Bilah called “Todays Lesson”). In some ways that collaboration prefigured his interest in community organizing and public service—KRS-One has been one of the most prominent political voices in rap for more than 30 years. “I had learned so much about society and about politics without even knowing about it, listening to KRS,” he says. “It was really full circle for me, and I was able to go, ‘I’ve accomplished more than I expected, we’re good.”

Though Vasquez has left rap behind, the friends he made during that chapter in his life first helped him understand what it meant to be part of a community—and he wants to hang on to that feeling. When Vasquez started fund-raising for his campaign last year, he called up some of his old comrades to help. Che “Rhymefest” Smith headlined a show in August called “Chicago Hip Hop for Prime.” Sean Daley, aka Slug from Atmosphere, donated $1,500, and Atomz and Robles gave money too. Vasquez understands that as an activist and aldermanic candidate, he has the opportunity to do for others what the rap scene did for him—to connect them to something bigger and more powerful than themselves. “He wrote me this card from his campaign, ‘cause I donated,” Robles says. “He personally wrote on the back, saying I was the closest thing he ever had to a big brother.”
Another Mayor Daley?

In a race marked by strong women of color, Chicago may be poised to elect the machine-backed legacy white candidate.

By Nate Marshall

The year 2018 was considered by many pundits the year of the woman. From congressional bids to local and state races across the country, women challenged and in many places won power at rates previously unseen in American life. But just when momentum seems to be building in national politics, Chicago seems poised for an abrupt turn back toward the masculine in our mayoral election. While headlines early in the mayoral race focused on the celebrity and youth support behind Amara Mendoza, and Gery Chico have been weakened by their personal and professional ties to Burke.

Meanwhile, 70-year-old Daley has quietly emerged as a potential front-runner with little of the stink of Burke and Chicago machine politics on him. Despite Burke’s famous fealty to the two previous Daley mayors, Bill has escaped much of the scrutiny of other candidates because much of his political career has happened in D.C. under Clinton and Obama rather than in his ancestral Bridgeport haunts. It seems possible, although perhaps shocking, that in a race where much of the conversation has been focused on women-of-color candidates like Enyia, Preckwinkle, Mendoza, and Lori Lightfoot, a white guy from the most famous Democratic political family this side of Camelot might be poised to step into the big seat on the fifth floor.

Daley, to be sure, seems to be the smoothest operator of his family, less prone to verbal gaffes than his father or brother. If anything, he seems to aggressively avoid making much of an impression at all. While other candidates have busied themselves with ballot challenges or scandal management, Daley has been content to amass a war chest that is by far the largest in the field ($5.94 million compared to the next closest, Toni Preckwinkle’s, at $3.75 million). Daley’s list of donors at $25,000 and up reads as a who’s who of Chicago business and private equity types, including Pritzker matriarch Marian (married to Jay) and Cubs CEO Tom Ricketts. Ironically, Daley has turned his lack of local political bona fides into an advantage of sorts. He avoids the more extensive political connections to Burke of other front-runners while being able to count on the endorsements of famous national politicos like Al Gore.

Gore’s endorsement of Daley would seem a surprise to some. Gore championed Daley’s ability and willingness to be an advocate for environmentalism, while Daley simultaneously received endorsements from the plumbers’ union that was essential in keeping lead service lines in use for years in Chicago after the potential health risks were well-known. Daley may also stand to benefit from his association with Obama. Though the former president is unlikely to endorse him personally, it wouldn’t be shocking if Obama was quietly rooting for Daley given the candidate’s stated opposition to a community benefits agreement for the forthcoming Obama Presidential Center.

Now Daley is positioning himself toward a strong base that includes a good bit of Chicago’s business community, some elements of organized labor, and fans of past presidents he’s served under. Daley’s overtures toward Obama’s base have been met with a mix of confusion and hostility, but may prove persuasive to fans of the former president who don’t remember the unseemlier dimensions of past Daleys. Bill has suggested the Dan Ryan Expressway name be changed to honor Obama and garnered the endorsement of his brother’s former mayor challenger, Bobby Rush. These machinations seem designed to portray him as the kindler, gentler Daley, eager to sell out a former close family ally (Dan Ryan was the Cook County Board president considered the second-most powerful Democrat next to Richard M. Daley) and to show that Bill will be more attentive to the needs of black voters than his predecessors.

Bill, for his part, seems to be in lockstep with his family’s traditions of solidifying and expanding executive control in Chicago, as evidenced by his opposition to an elected school board and his proposal to merge Chicago Public Schools and the City Colleges. Richard M. famously unilaterally closed Meigs Field and reconstituted the leadership of CPS into its current structure. The elder Daley exercised wide-ranging political control across the city’s Democratic machine and strengthened the notorious patronage system that would produce politicians like Burke. In a muddled field it seems likely that the city of Chicago could experience another generation of Daley power consolidation.

This Daley, at the very least, seems unlikely to match his father or brother’s two-decade rules of the city. He could, though, find himself in the most difficult fiscal and political situation of the bunch. He would assume control of a city that is losing population (and in particular hemorrhaging black residents), with an embarrassingly low homicide clearance rate, historically strained community-police tensions, and a continually darkening financial picture. The next mayor will be tasked with addressing all of these issues with a City Council still reeling from the made-for-TV defection of Danny Solis in aid of federal investigators.

Will the next mayor be a Daley? The political planets are aligning to make Bill Daley a major player in Chicago. Black and Latinx communities figure to have their support fractured across a number of candidates, perhaps opening the door for a “trusted” candidate like him to peel off support. Daley may have as good a shot as any at making the likely runoff and perhaps winning the whole thing. If he does make the runoff, it seems likely that a rush of cash would flow into his already bloated war chest.

His family’s old power base of working-class white voters would likely fall in line. Those voters, coupled with even modest support from communities of color, would place him in a strong position to win it all, particularly with the diminished voting power of black Chicago due to out-migration. Many younger voters, either new to the city or new to civic life, may not remember the Daley family’s former misdeeds and penchant for power grabbing, and may be seduced by the chance to have a former Obama staffer in City Hall. Only time will tell if he’ll continue his habit of following Rahm Emanuel—whom he replaced as White House chief of staff after Emanuel resigned to run for mayor—into a new job.

@illuminatemics
DOOR TO DOOR

THE 25th WARD IS AN AREA RICH IN CULTURAL HISTORY, COMPRISING PARTS OF PUSEN, CHINATOWN, MCKINLEY PARK, AND THE WEST LOOP. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1996, DANNY SOLIS IS NOT SEEKING ELECTION TO CITY COUNCIL, AND FIVE YOUNG CANDIDATES, INCLUDING BYRON SIGCHO LOPEZ, A OSA-ENDORSED VIC PROFESSOR AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZER, HAVE EMERGED IN THE RACE FOR ALDERMAN ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND. I SPENT THE DAY SHADOWING LOPEZ AND SPEAKING WITH HIS PROSPECTIVE CONSTITUENTS, MANY OF WHOM ARE MY NEIGHBORS.

10:30 A.M. I ARRIVE AT LOPEZ CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS, LOCATED AT 1622 SOUTH BLUE ISLAND.

POLITICAL VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE CANVASSING ASSIGNMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS.

WHO HERE KNOWS WHAT CPAC STANDS FOR? WHO HERE KNOWS WHAT THAT ACRONYM MEANS?

YOU WORKED WITH HAROLD WASHINGTON’S CAMPAIGN, AND YOU WERE HELPING TO GET OUT THE HISPANIC VOTE BECAUSE YOU SPEAK SPANISH?


SO YOU'RE REALLY ABOUT SEEKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CULTURES, BASED ON COMMONALITIES, AND COLONIALISM WON'T ALLOW IT.

I HAD A THEORY... IN 1979 I WAS TALKING WITH A FRIEND... AND I SAID THAT IF AFRO-AMERICANS AND HISPANICS COULD WORK TOGETHER, WE COULD DO WHAT THE ETHNIC GROUPS DID UNDER THE MACHINE, UNDER ANTON CERMAR.

I’M NOT SILENT.

ENACT CPAC NOW!

* CIVILIAN POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL

BYRON SIGCHO LOPEZ

WILLIAM FRANK WILLIAMS

ANYA L.L. DAVIDSON
12-3:45 PM LUNCH AND MEETING WITH RESIDENTS AT CONGRESSMAN GEORGE W. COLLINS APARTMENTS

WE DON'T EVEN HAVE SOCIAL SERVICES. WE DON'T EVEN HAVE A SOCIAL SERVICES COORDINATOR HERE. WHAT IS YOUR PLAN FOR REPRESENTING THE COMMUNITY?

WE USED TO HAVE A VAN THAT WOULD PICK RESIDENTS UP AND TAKE US GROCERY SHOPPING. WE DON'T EVEN HAVE THAT ANYMORE.

MY PLAN IS TO HAVE A LIAISON IN THE BUILDING. I WANT TO HEAR DIRECTLY FROM YOU.

I'M PASTOR EARTHA SUTTON. I LIVE IN APARTMENT 127. I MINISTER TO ALL THOSE WHO NEED IT AND WE ALL NEED IT. I'M INTERESTED IN FEEDING THE SICK, CLOTHING THE HOMELESS... I WANT FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE PAID THEIR TAXES AND PAID THEIR DUES, I WANT PEOPLE LIKE US TO COME IN AND HELP THEM.

SMYTH SCHOOL HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1938. THEY HAVE NO COMPUTER INSTRUCTOR, THEY HAVE VACANCIES THEY WON'T FILL. THERE'S NO STAFF FOR STUDENT SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL ED. AND WE'RE CONCERNED THAT SAINT IGNATIUS, AN ELITE COLLEGE PREP SCHOOL, IS BUILDING A STADIUM ON WHAT SHOULD BE PUBLIC LAND.

I HAD A VERY HAPPY CHILDHOOD BECAUSE I ALWAYS HAD SOMETHING TO DO. I WANT TO GIVE THESE KIDS THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES.

SAM DOUGLAS, LEFT VICE PRESIDENT OF THE TENANTS' ASSOCIATION AT BARBARA JEAN WRIGHT COURTS, AND ADOURTHUS MACK, RIGHT FORMER CHAIRMAN OF SMYTH SCHOOL

DEBRA KELLY AND THE VOICES OF YOUTH ENSEMBLE CHOIR
**3:45 PM LEAVING THE COLLINS APARTMENTS TO VISIT PILSEN FAMILIES AFFECTED BY GENTRIFICATION**

*It was a real victory to get in there today. I got slaughtered in that building in the last election.*

*The senior vote is what incumbents count on. Solis has a liaison here, and he clearly instructed the building manager not to let the Lopez campaign in. Solis has a plan for succession and I'm not a part of it.*

*The residents were afraid to host an event for fear of retaliation. Finally Pastor Sutton offered to host. But it's the same problem at other senior buildings.*

**TODAY'S ACTUALLY MY BIRTHDAY BUT I DIDN'T TELL ANYONE. PEOPLE WOULD HAVE JUST SAID A HOLLOW "OH HAPPY BIRTHDAY" AND I WOULD HAVE SAID "COME CANVASS WITH ME."**

*People still talk about homeownership as the answer to gentrification but it's not the solution.*

*Inspectors came into the Chavez home when no one was present who spoke English. The family received a list of violations, estimated to cost about $40,000 to fix. Now they're being harassed by developers who want them to sell.*

**4:15-5:00 VISIT WITH THE CHAVEZ FAMILY**

*Delfina Chavez, her daughter Naveli. Says the prospective loss of their home has adversely affected her mood and her health.*

**5:15-6:30 CANVASSING IN MCKINLEY PARK**

*I'm definitely going to vote for you but I can't put your sign in the window 'cause my dad's a Republican.*
FOOD & DRINK

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Boston Fish Market is a midwestern leviathan
From a small wholesale market to a sprawling suburban seafood emporium

By MIKE SULA

Five years ago, if you were shopping for, say, a pound of shrimp or some smoked chubs at Boston Fish Market in Des Plaines, you might have been treated to something from the huge spread of fresh, fried, or grilled sea creatures Louis Psihogios laid out every day to impress his large wholesale restaurant accounts.

“We didn’t want it to go to waste,” says Psihogios, the founder, kapetanios, and executive chef of what is now, with the recent opening of a massive restaurant and fish market in a former Pete Miller’s Steak & Seafood in Wheeling, a seafood wholesale, retail, and restaurant armada.

Psihogios didn’t plan for this to happen when he moved his processing operation from Park Ridge to Des Plaines in 2013, but soon his retail customers—the ones who knew about the fresh fish to be had tucked inconspicuously off Mannheim Road—began to come in around lunchtime and clamor for fried clams and walleye sandwiches. Before long there was a menu with Georges Bank scallops, and gulf snapper fried to order by the pound, and charbroiled Great Lakes platters, and whole branzino, though he’d prepare anything customers wanted from the display cases. The towering Greek salads with crabmeat and shrimp were impressive values at $13.99, and before long, lines went out the door. Those heaping platters of seafood became a signature too, notably the zuppe di pesce, a six-pound mountain of mahi mahi, Manila clams, mussels, calamari, and shrimp, the soup itself a relative puddle of sauce.

Psihogios was born 50 years ago in Greece—in the Peloponnese, he says vaguely. He’s impatient with questions about his past: “It’s all on the website,” which outlines a youth spent fishing the Mediterranean and harvesting the family’s olive orchard. He arrived in the States in the 70s, first living in New York for a few years, and then Chicago, where he worked in a handful of Greek restaurants and diners, notably cooking at the late Melrose Diner in Boystown. That was followed by a few years as a Boston longshoreman unloading fish from the docks, the experience from which he took the name of his first wholesale market, which he opened in Park Ridge in 1995.

The business has grown exponentially. He says he has ten ships fishing the Great Lakes for whitefish, and 40 more under contract, which goes a long way toward establishing Boston Fish Market as the top processor of midwestern whitefish, now more than 100 tons per week, he says. There are ten ships sailing out of New Bedford, Massachusetts, too.

The company first made moves on the 227,685-square-foot property in Wheeling three years ago, throwing a gauntlet in front of nearby Bob Chinn’s Crab House, one of the country’s perennial top-grossing independent restaurants. Last summer Louie’s Boston Fish Market opened with a new flagstone facade and four separate dining areas, two of them facing glass displays featuring a sprawl of piscine abundance on ice. Psihogios, trading his chef’s whites for a sport coat, can be spotted prowling his domain, while white-shirted Greek servers scurry tableside the instant one’s eyes are raised.

That shrimp and crabmeat salad has jumped in price—it’s $23.99 now—along with many other things on the sprawling menu, but they’re rarely not astonishingly abundant, even daunting. A massive plate of halibut Vesuvio, flaky fillets slathered with tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, olives, and asparagus, seems unrestrained compared to presentations done with Mediterranean simplicity. That’s the way Psihogios still prefers things: whole broiled fish, barely treated with olive oil, lemon, and oregano.

“I eat it every day,” he says. #
Age of displacement

There are more refugees now than at any other point since World War II. Two exhibitions examine what global citizenship looks like.

By Sarah Conway

In a time when the question of whether to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border dominates the national discourse and the question of who belongs on each side is omnipresent, two Chicago exhibitions wrestle with what citizenship means today, especially for those who are deliberately and structurally denied these rights.

“Dimensions of Citizenship: Architecture and Belonging From the Body to the Cosmos” will be on view for the first time in the United States at Wrightwood 659 after its debut in the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale last year. Curated by Niall Atkinson, Ann Lui, and Mimi Ziegler, “Dimensions of Citizenship” plays on the architectural implications of citizenship through seven spatial dimensions, ranging from citizen to nation to, finally, the cosmos, produced by seven transdisciplinary teams.

“Stateless: Views of Global Migration” at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, by contrast, looks to patterns of exclusion and belonging in an unprecedented movement of people across borders fueled by conflict, economic inequality, and climate change.

Today migration is at its highest level since World War II. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2018, 68.5 million people were displaced worldwide; of that number, 25.4 million have been designated as refugees; ten million have been left stateless (that is, not recognized as a citizen of any state and often lacking access to basic rights such as freedom of movement and education); and fewer than 105,000 have been resettled. Only 22,491 refugees were resettled in 2016 when the toll was 400,000. The number today is unknown.

In his series “Live, Love, Refugee,” Imam, a photographer and filmmaker, uses droll irony and deft absurdism as a visual response to the usual depictions of refugees in humanitarian photography. After surviving kidnapping and torture (he told the New York Times in 2016 that he wasn’t sure who his captors were), Imam left Damascus in 2012. He settled first in Lebanon, where he began to collaborate with displaced Syrians living in a refugee camp in Beqaa Valley. The experience taught him to believe other’s stories no matter how strange they seem. Imam spent the better part of a year working with Syrian refugees to create theatrical reenactments of their dreams, nightmares, and memories, which he subsequently captured in black-and-white still photographs with handwritten quotes from the subjects.

Imam, the recipient of the 2017 Tim Hetherington Trust Visionary Award and a 2014 Magnum Foundation Arab Documentary Photography Program grantee, now lives in Amsterdam. He was denied a visa to attend the “Stateless” exhibition in Chicago because he does not hold a valid Syrian passport. He says barriers to travel have been the story of his life, another banal annoyance of statelessness.

“Wonder if they will accept me when I have a Dutch passport?” he asks in a WhatsApp interview. “I will be the same artist, only the papers will be different.”

Al Charif, a photographer, documents the memories of ten women who fled Syria for Beirut, London, and Paris in a series of videos called “Women Memories.” Among them are Ghada, a mother of Palestinian descent who has lived through two exiles—the first the collective exile after the Nakbah in 1948 when 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were expelled from their homes, the second her own more recent exile from Syria—who arrives in Europe by sea. Another is Maissa, a religious studies student from a rural area outside Homs whose family has been decimated by the war.

In one of these videos, In Ten Years, the women speak about where they see their lives a decade on, often dreaming of the day they will return to Syria.

Al-Charif isn’t sure when a return to Syria will be possible. Ten years seems too soon. “Unfortunately, when I watch this video today, after almost seven years, I understand that we are still very far from what we hoped for at the beginning of the Syrian revolution,” she says. Both videos are near a display of 36 photographs of mundane objects from Syria—hand cream, ID cards, keys, a teacup—that have become relics, a reminder of both the journey and an unreachable home.

The loss of home is an intimate and particularly important subject for Al Charif. “I have made an artistic choice as soon as the [Syrian] uprising began,” she writes in an e-mail. “My questions resulted from my own experience, inciting me to decode the unceasing successive migrations and the footprint they leave on the way we see ourselves and the space in which we live.”

“Stateless: Views of Global Migration”
Through 3/31, Mon-Sat 10 AM-5 PM, Sun noon-5 PM, Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600 S. Michigan, 312-663-5554, mocp.org

“Dimensions of Citizenship: Architecture and Belonging From the Body to the Cosmos”

By Sarah Conway
I
ronically, “Dimensions of Citizenship: Architecture and Belonging From the Body to the Cosmos” couldn’t escape the fallout from the budget battle over the $5.7 billion border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Its opening date has been pushed back from February 15 to February 28 due to a slowdown in cargo handling from an east-coast shipyard. “It is worth noting, given the fact that this exhibition tackles topics of migration and boundaries, that the recent government shutdown complicated and no doubt contributed to the delay in the receipt of our shipment,” Wrightwood 659 director Lisa Cavanaugh writes in a press release.

The installation examines genuine belonging in both worldly and heavenly bodies. “Dimensions of Citizenship” invited representatives from the worlds of architecture and design to build what the exhibition catalog describes as spaces of healing and citizenship for all immigrants, legal or otherwise, today and in the future.

“Architecture, urbanism, and the built environment—these form a crucial lens through which we come to understand better what, perhaps, we all already know: that citizenship is more than a legal status, ultimately evoking the many different ways that people come together—or are kept apart—over similarities in geography, economy, or identity,” the curators write in an essay in the exhibition catalog.

In 2017 the city of Memphis removed three statues that commemorated the Confederate States of America. In Stone Stories: Civic Memory and Public Space in Memphis, Tennessee, Studio Gang envisions a public monument for tomorrow. A video shows how a vacant six-city-block stretch of cobblestones that once served as Memphis’s historic port for the cotton industry and slave trade can be reimagined in a way that blends personal histories of longtime residents into a civic space truly for all. The display in “Dimensions of Citizenship” includes 50-pound stones from Memphis Landing, also known as Cobblestone Landing, and a hand-drawn map of the city.

In Thrival Geographies (In My Mind I See a Line), Chicago artists Amanda Williams and Andres L. Hernandez, in collaboration with Shani Crowe, a multidisciplinary artist best known for her work with hair braiding, question whether all people are able to access the rights and benefits of citizenship in the United States.

The collaboratively built 22-foot-high steel frame structure shooting into the air was set in the courtyard of the U.S. Pavilion in Venice; in Chicago, it will occupy a corner space of the Wrightwood 659 atrium. The “intervention in the courtyard,” as Williams calls it, honors African-Americans who “took up space” in a country that has historically dismantled, stolen, and illegally acquired black land, property, and lives.

Both exhibits, “Dimension of Citizenship” and “Stateless,” call us to create a new measurement for belonging, perhaps in courtyards, dreams, and memories instead of on paper.
The “purchased lives” that built America

An exhibit at the Illinois Holocaust Museum connects the slave trade to the reality of the present.

By AIMEE LEVITT

The Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves went into effect on January 1, 1808, effectively ending the transatlantic slave trade from Africa. It did not, however, end the demand for slaves in the United States.

The Louisiana Purchase had recently doubled the size of the country, and the expulsion of Native Americans opened up even more land for white settlers. The cotton and sugar plantations in the new states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas would make the American south the fourth-largest economy in the world. None of this expansion would have been possible, of course, without slave labor. Between 1808 and 1865, one million people were transported from the “upper south”—Maryland and Virginia and the Carolinas—to the deep south, by boats and trains and on foot, chained together in coffles, marching through cities.

This history is now on display in “Purchased Lives: The American Slave Trade from 1808 to 1865,” a new exhibition at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center on loan from the Historic New Orleans Collection. Its connection to IHMEC is obvious, says chief curator Arielle Weininger: “When one group decides another group is ‘other,’ when that group is brutalized and families are torn apart and people are murdered, the parallels connect our histories.”

“How do you humanize this story and connect it to the reality of 2019?” asks Erin Greenwald, who curated the original exhibit. In the 50 years before Greenwald began work on “Purchased Lives,” the Historic New Orleans Collection had never done an exhibition on slavery, even though New Orleans was the nexus of the domestic slave trade for the first half of the 19th century. (At one point, there were 50 markets in the city, not counting informal sales on the ships and levees.) Nor had the Smithsonian, said Nancy Bercaw, the chair of the division of political history at the National Museum of American History, who joined Greenwald and Christopher Reed, a professor emeritus at Roosevelt University, for a panel discussion on Sunday moderated by the Tribe’s Morgan Elise Johnson (who occasionally contributes to the Reader). The reason, said Bercaw, was that historians—a largely white and male population—had claimed there were no objects to display. “Oddly,” she said, “there were objects everywhere.”

New Orleans was particularly rich in documentation: customs manifests, warrants to seize property subject to forfeiture, newspaper ads, and bills of sale, which, unique to Louisiana, were kept as public records. Greenwald also had access to testimonies of former slaves collected by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s.

All of these things are on display in “Purchased Lives.” It is unsettling to see a three-foot-long shipping manifest that, in exquisite 19th-century copperplate script, lists human beings by name along with their ages, weights, trades, and degrees of blackness (“black,” “yellow”), as if they were cattle or furniture. These manifests and bills of sale contain a disproportionate number of ten-year-olds; ten was the youngest age a child, under Louisiana law, could be separated from his or her mother.

“The only birth records were on plantations,” says Greenwald. There was profit to be made from inaccuracies. “Owners would lie to place a small child into the trade.”

Many auxiliary industries grew up in New Orleans to support the slave trade. There were suppliers of cheap clothing, markets that fattened up new arrivals before they were sold, and hospitals that provided medical care because, since Louisiana was the first state with lemon laws (meaning merchandise deemed defective could be returned), it was in the dealers’ best interests to sell healthy slaves. The Touro Infirmary charged $1 a day for slaves; a record book, on display, shows who was paying.

There were, of course, attempts at resistance. Slaves would slow their work, break their tools, or go into hiding. Newspapers frequently carried ads from owners looking to recover runaway slaves. Punishments were severe: whippings; time in the “hotbox,” a hole in the ground; wearing an iron collar with bells attached. There is one such collar on display in “Purchased Lives.” It weighs six pounds, roughly the same as a brick.

Slavery was officially abolished in 1865, but in a lot of ways, it still goes on. Immediately after the war, many freed slaves, without homes or tools or even clothing of their own, continued to work the plantations as sharecroppers; one of those plantations, Angola, which belonged to Isaac Franklin, who ran the largest slave-trading operation in the nation, is now the Louisiana State Penitentiary, a high-security prison farm. At the end of Reconstruction in 1877, many of the antebellum government officials returned to power and established the restrictive Jim Crow laws that effectively made blacks second-class citizens. “Any hope for change fell apart,” says Greenwald.

And families who had been separated during slavery remained divided. As late as 1912, former slaves placed ads in the Southwestern Christian Advocate, a newspaper circulated in five states throughout the deep south and often read aloud by pastors to their congregations on Sundays. There is a searchable database of 2,400 of these “Lost Friends” ads in “Purchased Lives.” For the IHMEC version of the exhibition, Weininger prepared an installation of enlarged copies of 22 ads that have some connection to Illinois. Some of the ads were placed by people who had moved to Illinois during the Great Migration or were searching for people who had last been seen heading to Illinois many years ago.

“There’s a lack of understanding among Americans about the history of slavery,” says Greenwald. (In the panel discussion, Reed put it more succinctly: “Denial.”) In the south, textbooks were written to support the Lost Cause narrative: the war was about states’ rights, not slavery. In the north, people tend to think of slavery as something that happened elsewhere. But the north, especially before industrialization, profited from slavery too; the southern economy boosted the entire nation. “People think this is a southern story,” Greenwald concludes. “It’s not a southern story. It’s an American story.”
Magic has long been known as a boys’ club. It’s estimated that only between 5 and 10 percent of professional magicians are women. But now a new generation of female magicians is poised to seize the spotlight and stand shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts.

Throughout the month of February, the Chicago Magic Lounge will feature two female standouts. The Incredible Jan Rose graces the stage from Thursday, February 14, through Saturday, February 16, for the “Valentine’s Weekend Signature Show” with her husband and fellow magician, Danny Orleans. Alba will be the featured act for the “Anniversary Show,” which runs the following week from Thursday, February 21, through Saturday, February 23.

Magic has been around forever” says Lesley Stone, COO of the Chicago Magic Lounge, “and women have always been here. It’s time that they start being recognized.” Historically women operated in the roles of assistants, prepping props or being sawed in half though they were often just as skilled as the men.

Rose met Orleans at an audition in 1983. After touring together for more than six years, they got married. Their mentor, vaudevillian Eddie Fields, retired and passed his secrets on to the young couple. Over their 32 years of marriage, they have personalized the act, traveling and performing across the globe together, even lecturing at a magicians’ conference in Italy. Their act features mentalism—one of the most rare and difficult types of magic because it creates the illusion of another person reading your mind. “I am excited about the enthusiasm and education and reimagining of magic,” Rose says, “people understanding and respecting magic as an art form. It feels good to the soul and spirit.”

When Alba began studying at a magic school in Buenos Aires, her father initially discouraged her hobby. One day, he came to see her perform at a restaurant. At the end of the performance, he told her he now saw that she could change lives through magic, that he was proud of her, and gave her his blessing. Steadily her career evolved until she received her big break at the Magic Castle in Hollywood, an opportunity she compares to an opera singer performing at La Scala in Milan.

Alba’s specialty is sleight of hand. “I like to do intelligent magic. With intelligent premises. I always think that my audience is full of better-educated people than myself who came to share their time with me. I feel honored that they decided to give me a chance to entertain them and show them something new. “At every show, she takes the time to connect with the audience. “I use magic techniques as a tool to communicate what is inside me. Hopefully it will resonate with the audience,” she says, “and we can make magic together.”

By Sheri Flanders

The Incredible Jan Rose and Alba transform magic into a women’s game.

MAGIC

Presto change-o

Alba performing in 654 Club at Chicago Magic Lounge

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@SheriFlanders
Privilege in America means not just getting opportunities to succeed but being forgiven for screwing up. Rich white kids with a penchant for partying and brawling (or worse) still end up becoming CEOs and Supreme Court justices, while many studies indicate that black kids who break school rules face far harsher punishment from early on.

That’s one of the dimensions of the school-to-prison pipeline illustrated in Dominique Morisseau’s richly faceted, if occasionally opaque, 2017 drama, aptly titled Pipeline, now in its local premiere at Victory Gardens Theater under the direction of Cheryl Lynn Bruce.

Nya (Tyla Abercrumbie) is a black teacher in an embattled inner-city public high school where even the morning announcements sound like a prison warden’s exhortations. Her son, Omari (Matthew Elam), is facing expulsion on a “third strike” from the private school where her successful ex-husband, Xavier (Mark Spates Smith), has wangled a spot for him.

Over 90 tense minutes, we’re immersed in the fear and self-recriminations Nya experiences around her son’s future and her own role in shaping him as a single mother. Morisseau also adroitly references famous black writers. Gwendolyn Brooks’s poem “We Real Cool,” which Nya teaches, underscores her fears for her son. In the play’s best scene, we learn Omari assulted a white teacher who singled him out to discuss Bigger Thomas’s violence in Richard Wright’s Native Son.

Morisseau’s dialogue ripples with warmth and wit as well as despair about the state of public education in impoverished districts. Janet Ulrich Brooks as Laurie, Nya’s white fellow teacher who has just returned to the classroom after having her face slashed by the family of a kid she flunked, spouts “tough love” rhetoric, saying, “A good old ass whipping can teach a lot.” But she has expectations for her kids beyond good behavior, as demonstrated by her mockery of a substitute for showing her class season four of The Wire instead of giving them actual work.

Where Morisseau’s play feels thinnest, ironically, is when it focuses on Omari and his Latinx classmate and girlfriend, Jasmine (Aurora Real De Asua). Their performances spark with kinetic energy, but they sound as if they’re talking past each other, even when they’re alone and away from the suffocating expectations of parents and teachers.

But when Abercrumbie and Elam face off, it’s breathtaking and heartbreaking. Nya’s attempts to bridge the divide between what she knows as a teacher and what she fears as a mother leave her son hanging in the void. We don’t know what Omari’s first two “strikes” at the school were, but his description of the fateful classroom assault (later mirrored by Laurie’s harrowing account of a fight between two boys in her classroom) shows us how quickly the pipeline can suck someone like Omari in, when it’s just one bad day too many, one microaggression too far.
Dead Man’s Cell Phone

**THEATER**

Like a very small casserole Dead Man’s Cell Phone resurrects the lost art of taking other people’s messages.

Gordon’s cell phone has a cheerful ring, light and lilting, not the ringtone of a man you take seriously. Still, it cuts through the air with the disarming insistence of an ice cream truck, or maybe only an ice cream pushcart, and Jean, the woman next to him in the cafe, at last picks up. Jean is a polite woman. Gordon is dead.

Sarah Ruhl’s Dead Man’s Cell Phone explores what happens to love and loss when the previously discrete variables of presence and absence are muddled by our common technology. “You’ll never walk alone,” says Gordon’s mother, “Because you’ll always have a machine in your pants that might ring.”

Ruhl writes like a lucid dream. Attentive to the way dialogues become monologues as the distance between speakers tends toward infinity, nostalgic for the lost art of taking other people’s messages, handy with peculiarly apt comparisons (“You’re like a very small casserole”). Jean continues to pick up for Gordon, discovering his mother’s momentary manifestation as Gordon. And the cell-phone ballet of Ruhl’s script is indicated throughout, our common technology. “You’ll never walk alone,” says Gordon’s cell phone has a cheerful ring, light and lilting.

They paved paradise A folksinger, an ambitious young couple, and an enigma battle existential dread in an Amazon-like Fulfillment Center.

Four quietly desperate souls struggle to abate their modern economic dread and suffocating loneliness in Abe Koogler’s 2017 tragicomic one-act. To the chagrin of his city-loving long-term partner (Toyia Turner), a young middle manager (Jose Nateras) accepts a six-month trial position in an Amazon-like megawarehouse in suburban New Mexico, a stepping stone in their journey to a new home.

What differentiates Koogler’s play from other suburbia-as-existential-limbo stories is a wary, perhaps misanthropic suggestion that a bohemian fidelity to youth and youth’s lack of experience is a barrier to a sense of normalcy in a land of shuttered blinds, disillusionment, and unused sidewalks.

A Doll’s House, Part 2 checks in on Ibsen’s Nora Helmer’s back—and this time it’s personal.

A Doll’s House, Part 2 features some truly excellent beat-by-beat scene work by a cast adept at humanizing some incredibly flawed human beings. And for all of Fulfillment Center’s Joni Mitchell-scored angst, the glimmers of compassion and intimacy shared between characters read as authentic and earned.

Nora Helmer’s back—and this time it’s personal

A Doll’s House, Part 2 checks in on Ibsen’s characters 15 years later.

Director Robin Witt places 34 audience seats—two groups of 12, two groups of five—on the stage surrounding the playing area for her keenly observed production of Lucas Hnath’s heady 2017 play. In essence, two juries and two galleries observe the proceedings: Nora, the proto-feminist heroine of Ibsen’s 1879 scandalous classic, returns to the household she left 15 years ago when she abandoned her husband, children, and all material comfort in the name of self-actualization, and Hnath spends 90 intellectually hypercharged minutes asking us to weigh everyone’s culpability.

“Everyone” here is Torvald, Nora’s banker husband, who for years treated her like a brainless bumble; Anne Marie, the nanny who raised Nora’s three children after Nora vanished; and Emmy, Nora’s headstrong grown daughter, who remembers nothing of her mother. There’s a skeletal potboiler plot involving suspect legal maneuverings and emotional blackmail (all very Ibsen), but it’s there mostly to prop up a series of two-person encounters—all of which involve Nora—through which Hnath considers myriad layers of accountability among a quartet of people, each of whose every decision seems to put the other three in great jeopardy. Along the way the playwright shows just how difficult it can be to make any definitive pronouncement about marriage, gender roles, or family responsibility.

Nora’s back—and this time it’s personal

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It often feels like a rigorous theatrical exercise, despite the astonishing efforts of Witt’s cast to fill the brany dialogue with human dimension. That effort eventually pays off, and by the time Nora’s done, she—and we—have been through the wringer. —JUSTIN MAYFORD

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ARTS & CULTURE

Girlfight
The Girl in the Red Corner tries to punch her way out of life’s problems.

Broken Nose Theatre presents the midwest premiere of Stephen Spotswood’s drama about a young woman who confronts her demons by climbing into the steel cage of an MMA ring. The metaphor of the hero literally punching out her problems couldn’t be more, er, on the nose, but in the hands of this capable cast and with just enough real-life detail, this production manages to transcend cliche and end up with an affecting, often-powerful story of perseverance.

Halo (Elise Marie Davis) turns up at a local MMA gym not knowing exactly why she’s there, but needing an outlet to defuse the rage she feels after losing her job and ending her marriage. Although initially hesitant, Gina (August N. Forman) agrees to become her trainer. The pair form an unlikely bond that helps both confront the familial and societal forces keeping them from reaching their goals. Putting on boxing gloves gives Halo the power to deal with an alcoholic mother and overbearing sister; taking on a protege helps Gina ease her sense of isolation from family and friends (duh, apparently, to their gender presentation) and battle with opioid addiction.

Can a woman really punch her way out of life’s problems? As Halo herself admits to her sister in their most heartfelt conversation, the ring is the one place where she feels she can actually win. That feeling, however fleeting, may be enough fuel to keep one going. Elizabeth LaHidlaw directed.—DIOTRY SAMAROV

The Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes—The Valentine Edition
Through 3/10: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Sat 2/23, 3/3, and 3/9, 10:30 PM, Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont, 773-372-5252, handbagproductions.org, $27, $31 seniors and students.

Thank you for being a friend
The Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes takes on Valentine’s Day.

Fans of The Golden Girls, the popular 1980s sitcom about four senior citizens—three widows and a divorcée—sharing a home in Miami, will likely enjoy this campy spoof from Hell in a Handbag Productions. Written by Handbag’s artistic director, David Cerda, and directed by Jon Martinez, the show takes the original series’ main strength—the perfectly balanced personalities of its four affectionately quarrelsome leads—and ups the source material’s already plentiful queer appeal. Housemates Blanche, Rose, Dorothy, and Sophia—the roles played on TV by Rue McClanahan, Betty White, Bea Arthur, and Estelle Getty, respectively—are performed here by men in drag. Michael Rashid as strong, sarcastic Dorothy, Adrian Hadlock as Dorothy’s often inappropriate 83-year-old mother, Sophia; Grant Drager as sultry, oversexed southern belle Blanche; and especially Ed Jones as sugary, naïve Rose from Saint Olaf, Minnesota, deftly re-create the sharply timed rhythms of the insult-packed banter among the “girls.” Script writer Cerda—who also plays Dorothy in late-night performances—hammers home the sexual subtext of the jokes in this rambld, salty entertainment.

In the first segment, the women place risque personas in their local supermarket’s in-house shopper newspaper, resulting in Rose apparently hooking up with a lesbian girlfriend; meanwhile, masculine Dorothy inadvertently introduces the concept of non-binary pronouns to the patrons of a feminist cafe. In the second half, set at the Miami Senior Center’s Sadie Hawkins dance, Dorothy nearly gets engaged to an ex-con suspected of murdering his wife, while inebriated Sophia faces off with her archival Sylvia, played deliciously by Danne W. Taylor.

“Commercial breaks” in the form of an audience-participation quiz game led by cabaret comic Maureen San Diego add to the fun, as does the inevitable sing-along rendition of The Golden Girls’ theme song, “Thank You for Being a Friend.”—ALBERT WILLIAMS

Sucker punch
Spoiler alert: Nothing in On Clover Road is what it seems.

The best comics are deadpan. They don’t telegraph that they are going to be funny, they just are. In the same way, the best thrillers don’t let us in too early on the fact that we’re watching a thriller. Steven Dietz’s 2015 play about a mother trying to steal her daughter away from a cult begins with a rather flat, naturalistic conversation between a woman and a man who we slowly realize must be a cult deprogrammer. The audience is lured into thinking we’re going to be watching a dramatic exploration of family dysfunction ending in some variation of a mother-and-child reunion. Instead, Dietz sucker punches us, then sucker punches us again and again until by the end of the evening we’re positively punch drunk—and utterly thrilled. To be more specific would spoil the ride.

Dietz does not deserve all the credit. Thanks to director Halena Kays and her team of theater professionals at American Blues Theater, both on- and backstage, the pace of this production is pretty close to perfect. Every turn in the plot comes at just the moment we think we—finally—know who is who and what is happening. And each performance is riveting without being overwrought. Gwendolyn Whiteside is compelling as the grieving mother, yearning to set her daughter free. And Philip Earl Johnson is terrific and terrifying as a strong-willed, utterly unscrupulous, perhaps-savior turned villain we will, by the end of the evening, love and hate with equal fury.—JACK HELBIG

On Clover Road
Through 3/16, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM; also Mon 2/18, 7:30 PM and Wed 3/15, 2:30 and 7:30 PM; no performance Sat 2/23, 3 PM, Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont, 773-372-5252, handbagproductions.org, $27, $31 seniors and students.

FILM

MOVIES

Democracy and disobedience
Astra Taylor on wealth, power, and the American dream

By Sujay Kumar

In What Is Democracy? Astra Taylor, a Canadian filmmaker, writer, and organizer, poses that question to Greek scholars, Guatemalan immigrants in North Carolina, Syrian refugees, a Miami barber who’s a convicted felon, and many others. In one scene, black middle-schoolers discuss how their voices are often ignored by teachers. “What you say to us all the time is, ‘Go to college so you can do what you love,’ but you don’t even love what you do,” says one student, to the applause of her classmates. What Is Democracy? is a fluid visual essay, an investigation stitched together with quotes from Plato’s Republic. The film, in violation of one of the most common tropes of filmmaking, is actually interested in listening to what its subjects have to say.

Taylor, who also tours occasionally with husband Jeff Mangum’s band Neutral Milk Hotel and wrote 2017’s must-read The People’s Platform (from Metropolitan Books), is a co-founder of the Debt Collective, an organization that provides a digital platform to dispute debt and turns individual indebtedness into collective power (and action, like a successful debt strike against Corinthian Colleges, a now-defunct group of for-profit schools). She’s hosting an “assembly of the indebted” at Hull House on February 15.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

Instead of showing textbook examples of democracy like voting and the White House, you choose to film black and brown faces who define democracy as the pursuit of justice and the American dream. Why?

When people think about democracy, they think typically of government and of elections. They think of the rule of law. They think it’s the protection of minority rights as a sort of principle, individual liberties. But there has to be an economic component, right? You can’t separate politics from economics.

The American dream, which was stronger in an earlier cut, is this pathological way that Americans have talked around the issue of class. It’s such an ideological phrase because it’s this idea of freedom, pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, meritocracy, striving, the pursuit of happiness from the declaration of independence—but it was always founded on exclusion, founded on the dispossession of indigenous people and slavery, and a very selective relationship to immigration. Implicit in the film is the fact that there’s a critique of the American dream, but then there’s also something related to it, which is that everybody has the right to not just exist but to thrive.

Americans are disillusioned, for very good reason. Why did you bother making this film?

You can’t just wag your finger at people, because that doesn’t acknowledge the fact that people are cynical because the structure is actually really rotten. It is really corrupt. You have to hear people, you have to speak to people’s discontent. You can’t just smugly tell them that they should engage in the most baseline aspect of democracy, which is voting. And our voting system is so fucking unfair. The film is one thing, but as an activist, what we have to do is tap into that discontent and orient it in a constructive democratic direction and be strategic about how we then...
engage in what’s going to be a pretty brutal power struggle. Because the billionaires are going to write their little books like Howard Schultz. But when push comes to shove, they will try to kill us!

Schultz referred to billionaires as “people of means.” Somebody tweeted that at me. He really wanted a euphemism? Wait till he hears the word “capitalist.”

In the film you go to a Trump rally in Raleigh. How do we view the MAGA movement through the prism of democracy? I did need to show this idea of popular sovereignty, but if it’s disconnected from other types of guardrails then it can be the tyranny of the majority even if they’re not really a majority. It’s more like the tyranny of a nostalgic retrograde minority. What struck me the most at those events (aside from genuine misogyny and racism) was some of the messaging on the big screens on the jumbotron. And it was all this anti-hedge fund, antibanker messaging. We cannot cede discontent to this pseudopopulist plutocrat-serving divide-and-conquer bullshit. The solution can’t be the sort of platonic idea that the masses are so moronic that we have to disempower them. It has to be “let’s engage in political education and actually try to improve people’s lives so we can pull some people to our side and marginalize those where there’s no hope.” But it is democracy. Democracy is always going to be unstable, it’s always going to undermine its own legitimacy.

Part of the message of the film is that, all the way back, Plato said the problem is the divide between the rich and the poor. Then when Madison and Hamilton were writing their Federalist Papers, they were like, “oh, democracies are unstable, but what we should do instead is just, you know, make a republic so that the natural aristocracy can shine.” The thing that we have never tried is actually just sharing the wealth. Let’s finally create conditions of relative economic egalitarianism and see how unstable things are.

How do we break the stranglehold tech companies—monopolies that still brand themselves as democracies—have on our lives? There’s just a problem with the business model. The current pathologies of democracy, whether it’s electoral or technological, derive from the incentives that are driving it. There has to be an economic fix. There has to be a breaking up of tech monopolies. There has to be a de-commodifying of things. It’s not about privacy. It’s about the status of this private data as the sort of raw material for an extractive form of capitalism. A lot of our leverage over these tech companies is actually more as citizens than consumers. But because we are not the main consumers, because we’re not really paying for the services—the advertisers are—we have almost no power of the purse. No ability to boycott. We have to think about them politically. So that’s why it’s ultimately more of a democracy problem than a technological problem.

I want to ask about your camera and how it lingers on faces and watches as they shift from arguing to smiling, and then crying. I didn’t want the camerawork to reinforce the idea that this is an elite inquiry. I specifically make films that are philosophical and people do not feel invited into intellectual conversations. I wanted the camerawork to say, “Hey, you’re here with me. I might be an intellectual, but actually what an intellectual is is someone who wants to know more, who is curious, who’s always learning.” I want to put asking questions and the desire to learn back at the heart of what it means to be an intellectual. I wanted to have respect for the people on screen and also a love for them. Because I do think we have to have a kind of affection for other human beings if we’re going to work this out.

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Lost in translation
In *Everybody Knows*, Iranian director Asghar Farhadi attempts to make a Spanish movie.

By Ben Sachs

The great Indian director Satyajit Ray once remarked that, in making movies for the entire world, his responsibility was to look at the particulars of his society and find the universal. This sounds like a good formula for storytellers who aspire to international viewership, but it would seem to break down whenever they work outside their native countries. Can a director truly understand the particulars of a society he or she doesn’t know intimately? If not, can his or her finely honed sense of the universal make up for this lack of understanding? Some filmmakers working abroad have used their outsider status to their advantage, producing work that speaks to feelings of alienation that people experience everywhere. The films Michelangelo Antonioni made outside of Italy (*Blow-Up, Zabriskie Point, The Passenger*) exemplify this; so too do the ones that Hou Hsiao-hsien has directed outside of Taiwan (*Café Lumière, Flight of the Red Balloon*).

Perhaps the most internationally recognized Iranian filmmaker presently working, Asghar Farhadi has now made two movies in countries other than Iran, *The Past* (2013) and *Everybody Knows* (2018). The first of these was shot in France but focused on an Iranian character; the protagonist, somewhat alienated from French customs despite being married to a Frenchwoman, poignantly reflected Farhadi’s own emotional distance from the setting. The more recent film, shot in Spain, contains no Iranian characters—or, for that matter, any character who might be perceived as an outsider. Farhadi has decided to look at people who could conceivably exist anywhere, and unfortunately this ends up working to the movie’s detriment. The film’s observations don’t feel universal, but simply generic.

*Everybody Knows* hinges on a few big plot twists, and while they keep the narrative compelling, they detract from the film as a whole: the turns feel plausible, yet they also exude a certain show-offy quality that take one out of the story. Moreover, the film is so dependent on its surprises that it seems to be treading water whenever it isn’t building up to a twist or watching the characters reel from one. The first half hour is practically a slog, as Farhadi lingers on scene after scene that does little besides relay exposition.

Laura (Penélope Cruz) is a middle-aged woman from a small town outside Madrid who’s lived in Buenos Aires for some time with her husband (Ricardo Darín), young son, and teenage daughter. At the start of the film, Laura returns with her family to her birthplace to attend a wedding. Farhadi leisurely introduces the nuclear family along with Laura’s sisters and parents, inviting viewers to bask in the lovely small-town setting and the interactions of the happy family. The writer-director also introduces another character, Paco (Javier Bardem), a vineyard owner who once worked for Laura’s parents, though he waits for a while to reveal Paco’s connection to the other characters.

Before the wedding, Laura’s daughter, Irene, gets to know a local boy who’s about her age. They ride around on a motorcycle (nearly colliding with Paco and his wife at one point) and have the sort of vaguely reckless good time one might find in movies about young people from all over the world. While the wedding takes place in a local church, the boy takes Irene to the church’s bell tower; on the wall she notices an inscription made by her mother and Paco when they were teenagers. Apparently the two were lovers when they were young. “Everybody knows about it,” the boy asserts, but it comes as news to Irene. The revelation of Laura’s past, as seen through her daughter’s eyes, is one of the movie’s stronger moments, tapping into a universal coming-of-age experience wherein one realizes his or her parents were once reckless youths like oneself. Yet Farhadi refuses to let the moment stand in on its own—rather, he makes it portend a bigger revelation to follow. (The remainder of this review will address some of the plot twists of *Everybody Knows*, so readers who want to be surprised by the film may want to check out here.)

During the wedding party that night, Irene gets kidnapped when she’s left alone in her bedroom. Farhadi leaves the abduction offscreen, keeping the identity of the kidnappers a secret. In fact, Irene’s abduction becomes known only when the family receives a text message from the kidnappers demanding a ransom and threatening to kill Irene if her parents contact the police. The film’s shift from benign family drama to thriller is the most successful of its turns, signaling a marked change in tone. Still, given how little the exposition weighs on the rest of the film, one wonders whether Farhadi couldn’t have gotten to the kidnapping sooner—it’s as though he wanted to lull his viewers into comfort for no other reason than to pull the rug out from under them. Regardless, *Everybody Knows* picks up speed as Laura and her family fret over how to handle the situation and the story settles into a familiar abduction narrative.

Farhadi ameliorates the sense of familiarity by bringing in more surprises. The first of these is that Laura’s husband isn’t the successful businessman that others presume him to be; the truth is that he’s been out of work for two years and lacks the money to pay the ransom. The second is that Paco is really Irene’s father, having sired her before Laura moved away. This would explain why Paco (who hasn’t had any children with the woman he married) jumps in to help Laura and her family manage the crisis of the girl’s abduction. He feels a sense of responsibility for Irene and cares personally for the girl’s safety. Farhadi also raises the possibility that Paco still longs for Laura and that he acts as he does out of devotion to her. Yet since the filmmaker reveals relatively little about Paco and Laura’s past relationship, their present-day moral dilemma feels theoretical at best.

Even worse, Farhadi fails to elicit interesting performances out of anyone in his cast—the biggest inadvertent surprise of *Everybody Knows* may be how little chemistry he generates from real-life spouses Bardem and Cruz. You can’t really fault the actors for this failing, as they’re playing dramatic conceits rather than fully fledged characters; they just don’t have enough to work with. The cast achieves some interesting moments when Farhadi explores the dynamics of Laura’s family as they prepare for the wedding and respond to the kidnappers’ threats, perhaps because the family dynamics are more tangible than the moral drama that surrounds them. In any case, these scenes keep *Everybody Knows* grounded and attention-grabbing; without them, the film would feel so indistinct as to be immaterial. 

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Audition
A spoiler warning is necessary; a drastic change in tone occurs partway through this methodically deceptive drama. And though I hate to ruin the complex experience of following a rather calm story about a lonely widower as it becomes something else, I feel obliged to point out that the hard-core gore and soft-core surrealism of this baroque morality play may not support any theme, least of all the one spelled out in a vengeful character’s dialogue. Takashi Miike directed a screenplay by Daisuke Tengan, with Ryo Ishibashi and Ehi Shina. In Japanese with subtitles.—LISA A. SPECTOR 1985 115 min. Fri 2/15-Sat 2/16, 11 PM. Music Box

Cold Pursuit
Director Hans Petter Moland remakes his Norwegian film In Order of Disappearance (2014), transferring the action to Colorado but retaining a sense of nihilistic ugliness familiar from numerous Scandinavian thrillers. A bored-looking Liam Neeson stars as a snowplow driver whose grown son gets murdered by members of a powerful drug ring. The driver predictably takes revenge, tracking down and killing several of the culprits, but the surviving criminals suspect that members of another drug ring committed the crimes, and a bloody turf war ensues. Moland attempts to play this for black comedy, indulging in lots of Tarantin-esque mannerisms along the way (all the criminals have silly nicknames and pontificate a lot), but the director seems to take greater delight in laboriously killing off his characters than he does in delivering jokes. The film contains a good deal of racist inventive, and Moland unwisely tries to play this for laughs too. With Laura Dern and Tom Bateman.—BEN SACHS R, 118 min. AMC Dine-in Block 37, Ford City

The Color of Pomegranates
The late Sergei Paradjanov’s greatest film, a mystical and historical mosaic about the life, work, and inner world of the 18th-century Armenian poet Sayat Nova, was previously available only in the ethnically superior 1969 version of the film, found in an Armenian studio in the early 90s, shouldn’t be regarded as definitive (some of the material from the Yutkevich cut is missing), but it’s certainly the finest we have and may ever have: some shots and sequences are new, some are positioned differently and, of particular advantage to Western viewers, much more of the poetry is subtitled. (Oddly enough, it’s hard to tell why the “new” shots were censored.) In both versions the striking use of tableaux-like frames recalls the shallow space of movies were censored.) In both versions the striking use of tableau-like frames recalls the shallow space of movies

CineArts 6, Chatham 14, City North 14, Ford City

The Favourite
Anyone—woman or man—who weds for money, position, or power is highly mercenary. And that’s what makes the absurd-black comedy The Favourite so brave: two alluring, clever, resourceful, and ruthless “ladies” of the early 18th-century British royal household, Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, Keeper of the Privy Purse (Rachel Weisz), and her declasse cousin, Abigail Hill (Emma Stone), are so locked in competition for the favors of Queen Anne (Olivia Colman) that her bedchamber becomes a key battlefront. “Intriguing” doesn’t begin to describe them, and “likable” rarely does.—ANDREA GROVYALL 2018 R. 120 min. Sat 2/16, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 2/17, 4 PM. Century 12 and CineArts 6, City North 14, Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Female Perversions
An adventurous and sometimes sexy (if only fitfully successful) 1996 adaptation of Louise Kaplan’s celebrated nonfiction book, directed by Susan Streitfeld from a script she wrote with Julie Hebert. Streitfeld focuses on a successful single prosecutor (British actress Tilda Swinton, displaying an impeccable American accent) as she waits to discover whether she’s been appointed as a judge, her kleptomaneic-scholar sister (Amy Madigan), the prosecutor’s boyfriend, a lesbian psychotherapist she has a fling with, and other people in her orbit. Oscillating between everyday events in her life and her dreams and fantasies, the film is much more successful with the former than with the latter, which often get heady-handed and obscure. But the freshness of Streitfeld’s approach toward gender anxiety and social conditioning fascinates even when the overall clarity diminishes. Not for everyone, but those who like it will probably like it a lot. With Karen Sillas, Clancy Brown, Frances Fisher, Laila Robins, Paulina Porizkova, and Dale Shuger.—JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 1985 R. 114 min. 35mm. Tue 2/19, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

The G Force
Strong women propel Pamela Sherrod Anderson’s documentary, about seniors who step up as primary caregivers for their grandchildren after their children fall prey to mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, incarceration, or sudden death. Ellen Robinson of Chatham rears her teenage grandson, Patrick, with the help of Chicago police officer Denny Perdue, who has steered the boy into swimming and boxing. Georgianne Fischetti of Lincoln Park took charge of her granddaughter Martha during the girl’s infancy, became her guardian a year later, and eventually adopted her at the child’s request. This warm, uplifting documentary also introduces the Second Chance Grandparents Writing Group, which offers a creative outlet to stressed caregivers. —ANDREA GROVYALL 2018 58 min. Anderson attends the screening Sun 2/17, 3 PM. Chicago Filmmakers

Happy Death Day 2U
One of the only horror films I’d describe as cute, the 2017 Blumhouse hit Happy Death Day was a slight but engaging riff on Groundhog Day, following a college student doomed to relive the day of her murder until she figures out the identity of her masked killer. This superior sequel gives up on being a horror film early on and transforms into a wild sci-fi fantasy with imaginative twists involving parallel universes and characters with multiple identities. Director Christopher Landon (who also scripted this one) maintains the same charming tone he established in the first film—we’re not meant to take the story too seriously, even though we’re meant to view most of the characters with affection—and he accomplishes some nifty tracking shots as well. Like its predecessor, the movie has a broad sentimental streak, but the sentiment feels more thoughtful and heartfelt this time around.—BEN SACHS PG-13. 100 min. AMC Dine-in Block 37, Arclight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, City North 14, Ford City, 600 N. Michigan

I Want to Dance
An adventurous and sometimes sexy (if only fitfully successful) 1996 adaptation of Louise Kaplan’s celebrated nonfiction book, directed by Susan Streitfeld from a script she wrote with Julie Hebert. Streitfeld focuses on a successful single prosecutor (British actress Tilda Swinton, displaying an impeccable American accent) as she waits to discover whether she’s been appointed as a judge, her kleptomaneic-scholar sister (Amy Madigan), the prosecutor’s boyfriend, a lesbian psychotherapist she has a fling with, and other people in her orbit. Oscillating between everyday events in her life and her dreams and fantasies, the film is much more successful with the former than with the latter, which often get heady-handed and obscure. But the freshness of Streitfeld’s approach toward gender anxiety and social conditioning fascinates even when the overall clarity diminishes. Not for everyone, but those who like it will probably like it a lot. With Karen Sillas, Clancy Brown, Frances Fisher, Laila Robins, Paulina Porizkova, and Dale Shuger.—JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 1985 R. 114 min. 35mm. Tue 2/19, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

I Want to Dance
A 60-year-old Tehran author suffering from writer’s block receives a CD of songs from a mysterious writer’s bloc. The film moves between Cendide-like farce and a deeply disturbing apprehension of a world in grotesque, irreversible decay—it’s the only true film noir comedy. The script, adapted from a novel by Sherwood King, is credited solely to Welles, but it’s the work of many hands, including Welles, William Castle, Charles Lederer, and Fletcher Markle.—DAVE KEHR 1985 87 min. Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures at the Tuesday screening. Fri 2/15, 115 and 6 PM; and Tue 2/19, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Rabbi à la Berlin: Wir Bleiben Hier
Polish documentarian Bartek Konopka’s wryly funny Rabbi à la Berlin (2009) unfolds from the perspective of the rabbits that lived in the no-man’s-land between

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East and West, for them the wall is no symbol of bitter division but a paradise of quiet and “green, succulent grass.” Dirk Otto’s 1990 German documentary Wir Bleiben Hier is about Vietnamese immigrants in East Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In German with subtitles. —BEN SACHS 82 min. Fri 2/15, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art

**RR** Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors

Adapted from a novel by Ukrainian writer M. Kotsyubynskyi, Sergei Paradjanov’s extraordinary merging of myth, history, poetry, ethnography, dance, and ritual (1964) remains one of the supreme works of the Soviet sound cinema, and even subsequent Paradjanov features have failed to dim its intoxicating splendors. Set in the harsh and beautiful Carpathian Mountains, the movie tells the story of a doomed love between a couple belonging to feuding families, Ivan and Marichka, and of Ivan’s life and marriage after Marichka’s death. The plot is affecting, but it serves Paradjanov mainly as an armature to support the exhilarating rush of his lyrical camera movements (executed by master cinematographer Yuri Ilyennyk), his innovative use of nature and interiors, his deft juggling of folklore and fancy in relation to pagan and Christian rituals, and his astonishing handling of color and music. A film worthy of Dovzhenko, whose poetic vision of Ukrainian life is frequently alluded to. In Ukrainian with subtitles. —JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 2007 97 min. 35mm. Mon 2/18, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

**Sudden Fear**

Gargoyles thriller from 1952, with Joan Crawford (in her high garish period) as an heiress who discovers her husband (Jack Palance, the perfect iconic match) is planning to kill her. The film was a product of RKO desperation and didn’t do especially well on first release; its anomalous success as a revival (in 1987, in 35-millimeter restoration) seemed largely a matter of fidelity to archetype (as a clear-lined suspense) and kitschy iconographic tastes, though probably Charles Lang’s glossily noirish cinematography had something to do with it too. With Gloria Grahame, Bruce Bennett, and Mike Connors; David Miller directed. —PAT GRAHAM 1952 110 min. Fri 2/15, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 2/17, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

**Swimming Pool**

As a big fan of Under the Sun (2001), the previous collaboration between Charlotte Rampling and writer-director François Ozon, I was prepared to follow them pretty far into the ambiguities and nuances of this tale (2003), about a celebrated British mystery novel-ist (Rampling) who arrives at her publisher’s country house in the south of France to work on a book but finds her space invaded by her promiscuous daughter (Ludovine Sagnier of Ozon’s 8 Women and Women and Water Drops on Burning Rocks). Unfortunately, after the well-honed psychological melodrama of its first half, this wanderers off into the metaphysical territory of Ingrid Bergman’s persona (a much better film). In English and subtitled French. —JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 2003 102 min. 35mm. Thu 2/21, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

**To Dust**

His searing lead performance in Son of Saul (2015) established Géza Róthig overnight as a prodigiously gifted dramatic actor, who but knew he could also be funny? In this screwball comedy about death and mourning, he’s by turns hapless, endearing, and more than a little nuts as an upstate New York Hasidic cantor plagued by nightmares about his recently deceased wife’s corpse decaying in her grave. Determined to learn how quickly her dust will return to dust, he badgers a pot-smoking, burned-out community college science teacher (Matthew Broderick, master of the double take) for some hard data as to when her rachus (soul) is likely to return to God. Some cockamamie, quasi-scientific, and definitely not kosher experiments ensue; meanwhile, enthralled by a pillfered tape of the 1957 Yiddish classic The Dybbuk, the cantor’s two impressionable young sons (Leo Heller, Sammy Visit) decide dad needs an exorcism. Writer-director Shawn Snyder makes a strikingly original and winsome feature debut. —ANDREA GRONVALL 2015 105 min. Landmark Renaissance Place, Westfeldt Old Orchard

**What Is Democracy?**

For those itching to take a political philosophy class or wishing they’d paid more attention in college, this documentary is a potent introductory course. Canadian-American filmmaker Astra Taylor (Examined Life) traces the idea of democracy back to its roots in ancient Greece and Plato’s Republic, visiting the philosopher’s strongholds in Athens and deftly weaving Greece’s ongoing debt crisis into her scrutiny of a corruptible system. Taylor speaks with public figures, scholars, and a wide range of citizens in several countries about their views of democracy and its fault lines, eliciting passionate commentary from all parties. Though her subject would be difficult to unknot even as a documentarian, what Taylor achieves with her feature is commendable. She presents an inclusive and necessary debate, asking whether democracy today really is of, by, and for the people, and if it ever was. —LEAH PICKETT 107 min. Taylor attends the Friday and Saturday screenings. Fri 2/15, 7:45 PM; Sat 2/16, 5 PM; Sun 2/17, 5:30 PM; Mon 2/18, 7:45 PM; Tue 2/19, 7:45 PM; Wed 2/20, 7:45 PM; and Thu 2/21, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

**Wings of Desire**

Wim Wenders’s ambitious and audacious feature (1987) focuses mainly on what’s seen and heard by two angels (Bruno Ganz and Otto Sander) as they fly over and walk through contemporary Berlin. These are the angels of the poet Rilke rather than the usual blessed or fallen angels of Christianity, and Wenders and co-screenwriter Peter Handke use them partially to present an astonishing poetic documentary about the life of this city, concentrating on an American movie star on location (Peter Falk playing himself), a French trapeze artist (Solveig Dommartin), and a retired German professor who remembers what Berlin used to be like (Curt Bois). The conceit gets a little out of hand after one of the angels falls in love with the trapeze artist and decides to become human; but prior to this, Wings of Desire is one of Wenders’s most stunning achievements, certainly in no way replaceable by the 1998 Hollywood remake. In English and subtitled French and German. —JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 2011 93 min. Thu 2/21, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art

**Alita: Battle Angel**

Robert Rodriguez directed this sci-fi adaptation of Yukito Kishiro’s popular manga series Gunnm, about a female cyborg (Rosa Salazar) who’s lost her memory. With Christoph Waltz and Jennifer Connelly. —PG-13, 122 min. AMC Dream in Black 37, AMC-Light, Century 12 and Cin-
Daredevil producer Jlin survives her own trial by fire

The Indiana-based beat wizard returns to the stage for Pitchfork Midwinter after courting burnout to finish her second album and score an avant-garde dance performance.

By Leor Galil

On October 19, 2018, six days after producer Jerri Lynn “Jlin” Patton performed at the 16th annual iteration of experimental-music festival Unsound in Krakow, Poland, she decided to cancel her appearance a week later at the Semi breve Festival in Portugal. “I’ve never had to cancel a show due to my health, but this time I have to,” she wrote in an Instagram post at the time. Patton had worked for years at a U.S. Steel mill in Gary, Indiana—she left that job in late 2015, nine months after releasing her debut album—but she says she’s never experienced anything as exhausting as her tour schedule. To recuperate, she flew to India to stay with her girlfriend, illustrator and designer Nafisa Crishna, who lives in Bangalore. “I was dehydrated, my stomach was upset,” Patton says. “She just nursed me back to health until I could function again.”

Thankfully Patton is functioning again—last week she performed two nights in Abu Dhabi, her first appearances since Unsound, and on Saturday, February 16, she plays a late-night set at Pitchfork’s new Midwinter festival. This multiday event focuses on avant-garde, fringe, and outre music, and presents more than two dozen artists in various spaces at the Art Institute of Chicago from Friday through Sunday. Five musicians appear in the museum’s galleries all three nights, among them Portland guitarist Marisa Anderson and Chicago vocalist Haley Fohr of Circuit des Yeux, while the marquee names (whose sets require “add-on tickets”) play in four different halls and auditoriums. Jlin is among the most enticing, though she shares the bill with plenty of high-profile talent, including chameleonic composer and performance artist Laurie Anderson, ambitious jazz saxophonist Kamasi Washington, postrock veterans Tortoise (performing all of 1998’s TNT), and British shoegaze favorites Slowdive, whose 1995 album Pygmalion Pitchfork reissued in December in conjunction with record club Vinyl Me, Please.

Patton, 31, suspects that the fatigue that laid her low last fall had its beginnings in 2016, when she was working simultaneously on two major undertakings. Her shape-shifting second full-length, Black Origami, came out on Planet Mu in May 2017, and by December it seemed like no “best albums” list was complete without it. She also scored a stage show by internationally renowned choreographer Wayne McGregor, Autobiography, that premiered at Sadler’s Wells Theatre in London.

Pitchfork Midwinter
Add-on tickets for Tortoise, Deerhunter, Serpentwithfeet, Grouper, Kamasi Washington, Panda Bear, and Jlin are sold out. Check midwinter.pitchfork.com for updates. Fri 2/15 through Sun 2/17, 5 PM, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan, $50 per night plus add-on tickets ($15-$30 apiece), three-day passes and Saturday base tickets sold out, all-ages

Jlin
Part of Pitchfork Midwinter. Sat 2/16, 10:30 PM, Chicago Stock Exchange room, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan, sold out, all ages
in October of that year (Planet Mu released the music in September 2018). “I would tell anybody, ‘Do not ever do two major projects in one year,’” Patton says. “I did it, but it definitely beat me.”

Patton, who lives with her parents in Gary when she’s not flying around the world, upended her entire schedule while working on Autobiography. “I would sleep from six in the evening to two in the morning, and I would start working at about two, two-thirty,” she says. “I could get into the workflow. Once everybody got up, I probably was in the groove by then, so it was fine. I would work up until six. It actually got the job done.” Because McGregor and his team were on Greenwich Mean Time, six hours ahead of Gary, this routine allowed Patton to stay in real-time communication with them. Two in the morning for her was breakfast time for them.

McGregor created Autobiography using his own sequenced genome, which in turn shaped an algorithm that generated a new structure for every performance, reordering the 23 sections (one for each human chromosome) that fell between the show’s fixed beginning and end. Patton wanted to respect the choreographer’s investment in the piece, so she wrote the score with utmost care. “I went vegan during that period—I just wanted to detox,” she says. “Wayne’s piece, I considered that one more important than Black Origami—Wayne trusted me with something so intimate. His genome. That’s a deeply intimate thing, and so I took all of that to heart. That’s why I just wanted to be as clean as I could get, and then write.”

The 13 movements in Autobiography’s score vacillate from ghostly and serene to visceral and hyperactive, and like all of Patton’s work from Black Origami forward, they belong to a genre of their own. Threaded through her current sound, though, are clustered hi-hats, rapidly hiccupping vocal samples, and other hints of the adrenalized Chicago-born dance-music style that first inspired Patton: footwork.

Patton was four when she first heard footwork at a neighbor’s house. “I was like, ‘Oh my God,’ and I just never forgot that sound,” she says. “That’s how it started, and I loved it ever since.” She first tried making footwork herself after she enrolled in Purdue University Calumet (now Purdue University Northwest) in August 2005. She’d signed up to double major in computer graphics technology and architectural engineering, with a minor in mathematics, but music increasingly took precedence.

Patton spent much of her free time on streaming site Imeem in search of new footwork tracks and artists. In the late aughts, she began to communicate with a network of Chicago producers on MySpace. The first person she contacted, Avery Seaton (who now goes by DJ Seven Six), sent her a copy of FL Studio in 2008. “The first week I couldn’t get it to make a sound, and I was like, ‘Man, forget this, I’m not doing this,’” Patton says. “Then I went to YouTube one day, and they had FL tutorials up—I watched one and I was like, ‘Oh.’ The first sound that I made, I was like, ‘Oh, I’m in! I’m a musician!’”

One of Patton’s three favorite discoveries on Imeem was a producer named Clarence Johnson, better known as DJ Roc. In 2005, the year Patton started college, Johnson had cofounded a footwork production collective called Bosses of the Circle, and it’d been going strong for four years when Patton messaged him out of the blue with a track she’d made. “I liked her music from the jump,” Johnson says. “When I asked her where she’s from, I’m like, ‘Really? Indiana?’” Patton became a member of Bosses of the Circle without further ado. “It was cool, ’cause I was at a really low point in my life,” she says. “It was nice to be a part of something.”

Patton was unhappy with the way her studies were going. “I was running away from life—’cause I didn’t like my majors,” she says. “I should’ve just majored in math and left it at that.” She’d developed a powerful love for math, particularly calculus, while still in high school, and to this day she works on math problems to calm her nerves: “It’s just a relaxing thing.” Instead of going to her classes, Patton would hole up in the school’s Gyte Building, which housed several science labs, and work on tracks. “I would do calculus by myself in the basement of that building for, like, four hours before I would start making music,” she says.
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Patton found her voice as a musician as her academic career fell apart. She dropped out of college, but her tutelage under Johnson continued. “We was even doing sample battles,” he says. “She make a track, and I make a track off the same sample.” Johnson also helped connect Patton to influential London electronic label Planet Mu and its founder, Mike Paradinas, aka producer µ-Ziq. In 2010, as Johnson prepared his first full-length for the label, The Crack Capone, he also helped recruit other producers for Planet Mu’s first footwork compilation, Bangs & Works. Johnson told Patton about the comp, and in June 2010 she reached out to Paradinas on Facebook.

“I was befriending many producers from Chicago—I needed their help to identify tracks on YouTube battle videos,” Paradinas says. “Jlin was very friendly and helpful.” Patton had offered Paradinas a couple of her tracks for Bangs & Works. “Her initial tracks were full of spirit and rough round the edges, much like other footwork tracks from that time,” Paradinas says. He’d finalized the compilation’s track list before Patton submitted her work, but he hadn’t settled on a name, and she was happy to help on that front too: she suggested using the title of one of DJ Trouble’s contributions, “Bangs & Works.”

Planet Mu’s second Bangs & Works compilation, released in November 2011, included two tracks of Patton’s, both of which she’d previously posted online. “I used to put up these videos on Facebook,” Patton says. “I put up ‘Erotic Heat,’ and Mike came to me and said, ‘I gotta have that on a compilation.’ I said, ‘OK,’ and he said, ‘I want ‘Asylum’ too.’”

“Erotic Heat,” with its froggy synth loop, cross-stitched hi-hats, and rattling percussive patterns dropping into the mix at unexpected angles, became Patton’s breakthrough. American clothing designer Rick Owens used an extended version of it to soundtrack his Paris Fashion Week showcase in 2014. Patton, who’d taken a job as a mobile equipment operator at U.S. Steel in 2012, brought her mom to Paris for the occasion—she saw it as an opportunity to make amends for dropping out of college.

“That’s why it was so important for me that she
“Because I was like, I’m not a failure—I messed up, but I’m not a failure.” Patton told Paradinas about Paris Fashion Week, he suggested that Planet Mu release a full-length of her music. With help from producer and labelmate Jamie Teasdale (aka Kuedo), Patton finalized a track list for what would become her first album, Dark Energy, which came out in March 2015. At that point she was using FL Studio, a digital audio workstation called Reason 6, and basically nothing else—she was following advice that Teklife cofounder DJ Rashad had given her after they first connected on MySpace in the late aughts. “He said, ‘Don’t go out and buy a whole bunch of equipment. I know some of the musicians with all the equipment in the world—they sound like shit. Don’t do that. It’s not the equipment, it’s you.’ I never forgot those words,” Patton says. “I didn’t have any equipment when I made Dark Energy. Nothing. Zero. That’s just funny. And for as many accolades as that album got, I had no equipment.”

Dark Energy sold well enough to let Patton quit her job at U.S. Steel and focus on music full-time. “After the success of Dark Energy she gained a lot of confidence,” Paradinas says. Patton also began to drift away from footwork. “The second album, it started to change drastically,” she says. “My pyramid shifts constantly—but Black Origami, the closer I got to the end of it, that’s when that shift was really, really happening.” One obvious sign that Patton had begun working with a new musical language was her choice of collaborators on Black Origami—most notably composer Holly Herndon and sound artist William Basinski (who also performs at Midwinter this weekend). She’d been pen pals with Herndon since 2011, and she’d met Basinski at a show in Los Angeles. They were bound to cross paths eventually, given the rarefied musical world in which they all travel: like Patton, each has a hard-to-classify aesthetic that pushes its idiosyncrasies so far that it’s basically a genre with just one practitioner.

Although Patton worked on Black Origami and Autobiography simultaneously, she’d nearly completed her own record before really diving into McGregor’s score. “I was procrastinating on writing, ‘cause I was scared,” she says. “I was like, ‘How do I start this?’ And so I got this text message from Wayne one day—he wasn’t trying to push me or anything, he literally just was like, ‘Hey, I can’t wait to hear the first piece.’ And I’m thinking to myself, ‘I haven’t even started writing yet! I gotta jump on it.’ Right when he sent that message, the ball started rolling.”

McGregor took a hands-off approach to working with Patton. “The one thing he told me that I really appreciate, he was like, ‘I want you to just write—I’m not micromanaging you,’” Patton recalls. “He said, ‘I love what you do, and all I want you to do is create.’ That was it. He was the vision, and I was the audible, and we put it together.” McGregor gave Patton a copy of one of the foundational texts for his show, Siddhartha Mukherjee’s 2016 book The Gene: An Intimate History. Patton also studied YouTube videos of public Autobiography rehearsals to help her create complementary sounds.

Patton wanted to make music whose imaginative complexity and constant evolution would reflect not only McGregor’s essence but also what his show says about all people. “As much as it is personal—it is about him—I also think it’s about humanity as a whole,” she says. “Our vulnerability, our happiness, our anger, our sadness. We all go through these different emotions and variations and phases of life, and that’s what I was trying to capture.”

Planet Mu released the Autobiography score in September, roughly a month before Patton canceled her Semibreve appearance. “I felt like I was cracking, and my nerves felt like I was about to snap—I was like, ‘No, I can’t do this,’” she says. “I made that call—it was really, really important. I’m happy I made it, ’cause I honestly couldn’t have done it.” She’s spent much of her time since then in Bangalore, and she also joined Crishna’s family on a holiday trip to Sri Lanka. In January, after several months off from writing music, she got back to business, working at a desk next to Crishna in her Bangalore studio. “When I started back, I was like, ‘Man, I missed this,’” Patton says. “I missed the writing. I missed the fun part—that exhilarating feeling. I can hear my growth, and that’s a beautiful thing.”
Tortoise reemerge from their shells for two local shows

Tortoise

Part of Pitchfork’s Midwinter fest. Sat 2/16, 6:30 PM (event begins at 5 PM), Rubloff Auditorium, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan, sold out.

Tortoise, Mute Duo

Sun 2/17, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, $25. 21+

Recommended and notable shows and critics’ insights for the week of February 14

**TICKETS AND INFO AT WWW.LH-ST.COM**

**THURSDAY 14**

**DONNA MISSAL** Samia opens. 7 PM, Chop Shop, 2033 W. North, $15, $12 in advance. 18+

New Jersey singer-songwriter Donna Missal has a smoky, powerhouse voice, and a flair for making retro soul sound up-to-the-minute that recalls Amy Winehouse. She began releasing songs in 2015, and on her 2018 debut album, This Time (Harvest), she shows she has potential to become a household name. Opening track “Girl” starts with her vocals framed by a few muted chords and a stripped-down beat; it sounds so good you’re almost sorry when the rest of the band comes in. The song’s proficiency-laced lyrics hint at same-sex lust—“Girl, you got me all fucked up / I’m in my feelings”—and though they might not have come out of Stax in its heyday, Missal sings them like they did. Elsewhere, she combines complex emotions and concepts into a single verse, which manages to be an excuse for stealing a lover, a call for feminist solidarity, and a come-on all at once: “Thinking I did something wrong / But I wouldn’t choose this / When women hate on other women / Everybody loses.” The elements don’t often come together quite as perfectly throughout the album, but Missal is a pleasure to listen to, whether she’s throatily emoting over an overdriven beat on the title track, running up and down a jazzy vocal line on “Skyline,” or unleashing her full hog-calling power on “Keep Lying.” The sort of promise she exudes now seems likely to turn into greatness down the road. —NOAH BERLATSKY

**PARTY KNÜLLERS WITH JAIMIE BRANCH**

9 PM, Elastic, 3429 W. Diversey, $10.

Cello and electronics player Fred Lonberg-Holm, who lived in Chicago until 2017, and Norwegian drummer Sjåle Liavik Solberg are the Party Knüllers. The name of the duo is a bit deceptive; pianist and vibraphonist Jaimie Branch is also part of the act. Their frequent sets with Jaimie Branch since 2017 have shown how much fun you’re having making music, it’s more like a friendly (but not too friendly) game of streetball than Andrew W.K.-style headbanging. But they do adhere to one rule of partying—no matter how much fun you’re having making music, it’s even more fun when the right friends join in. On Party Knüllers’ 2013 LP Four Images of Wank (Hipid), Jim Baker uses his synthesizer to add code-
Kat Alcé: Marcellus Pittman and Specter open. 10 PM, Smart Bar, 3730 N. Clark, $20, $12 in advance, $15 before midnight. 21+

“House music has always been New York, Chicago, and Detroit, maybe as far as D.C., and Philadelphia.” Atlanta producer Kat Alcé told Red Bull Music Academy in 2016. “Under what we could call the Mason-Dixon line, house music hasn’t had that history.” Alcé, who was born in New York and raised in Detroit, has helped foster a house community in Atlanta since he moved there in the early 90s. In 2005 he cofounded the annual outdoor party House in the Park, which now draws between 10,000 and 20,000 attendees. And a few years later Alcé launched NDATL Muzik, a label named after the three house hubs he’s resided in. Last year the label dropped his latest EP, Back in This Shit, which opens with “Sheed’s Move,” a lovely downtempo flute notes. Tonight Alcé headlines Smart Bar to celebrate NDATL’s tenth anniversary.—LEON GAIL

WILLIAM BASINSKI! See also Saturday. Part of Pitchfork’s Midwinter fest. 6:30 PM (event begins at 5 PM), Rubloff Auditorium, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan, sold out. ©

Ambient music is often unfairly regarded as “background noise,” but in the hands of its most passionate practitioners, it can be as striking as the loudest and most confrontational music ever produced. Minimalist composer William Basinski has been mastering this realm of sound for four decades, and he’s bringing his expertise to Chicago for two performances at Pitchfork’s Midwinter fest. On Friday night, he’ll perform his seminal work The Disintegration Loops with the Chicago Philharmonic. Basinski began creating this piece—later dubbed “The Saddest Music in the World” by Vice—in September 2001. While converting material he’d recorded in the 80s into digital files, he noticed the magisterial film on one of his tapes flaking away with each rotation, destroying earlier layers and leaving blank space along the strip. Intrigued, he repeated the process with other tapes from the set, mixing the decaying sounds with additional ambient layers. After the Twin Towers fell, Basinski and his friends gathered on his Brooklyn rooftop and listened to playbacks of his music while watching dust descend over the city. He released the work in four parts throughout 2002 and 2003, and the reaction to them was so powerful that in 2012 The Disintegration Loops was inducted into the National September 11 Memorial & Museum. But even without the music’s link to such profound tragedy (and the seismic cultural and political shifts it triggered), its sweeping, haunting beauty would still be moving. Then, on Saturday night, festivalgoers can leave the troubles of earth behind for music of the extraterrestrial variety as Basinski performs a solo set showcasing his upcoming release On Time Out of Time (Temporary Residence), which consists of works originally commissioned in 2017 for a pair of art installations by Evelina Domnitch and Dmitry Gelfand (part of a Berlin exhibition called “Limits of Knowing”). Including source material derived from the gravitational waves emitted by two supermassive black holes that merged together 1.3 billion years ago (captured by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory, or LIGO), the material is simultaneously calming and chilling, and always awe-inspiring.—JAMIE LUDWIG

DJ KOZE Part of Pitchfork’s Midwinter fest. Baba Stiltz opens. 9:45 PM (event begins at 5 PM), Griffin Court, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan, $50 per night plus $15 add-on ticket for DJ Koze. ©

A 2018 XLRRR profile of German producer Stefan Kozalla, aka DJ Koze, mentioned his predilection for telling the press that when he was a child his parents had left him in a Marrakesh forest with just an Akai MPC. It’s totally batshit yarn, but it provides an illuminating way to approach his music. His third album, May’s Knock Knock (Pampa), meanders through the woods of pop music’s past, gathering its wildest roots, most beautiful flora, and squiggliest fauna and merging them into a kaleidoscope of sound. At first it may seem like Koze’s blips and burps of bold rap, tender psyche, erratic techno, and outrageous pop would be impossible to fit together, but he makes it work—even when the music gets so mellow it seems like it’s on the verge of collapsing. On “Music on My Teeth,” dour folkie José González sings atop a swirling, twinkling rainbow of psych-guitar melody, and on “Muddy Funster,” Lambchop’s Kurt Wagner melancholically intones along with a cosmic synth drone. Koze has long made music with a punklike flair for disruption, starting with his 90s hip-hop group Fischmob (which helped build the foundation for Germany’s hip-hop community), and these days he continues to challenge what we should expect from popular music. I’ve heard a few critics say they expect genres will be obsolete within 20 years, and instead everything new will just be considered “pop.” When the time comes, I hope it will resemble the spirit—and maybe even the sound—of Knock Knock. —LEON GAIL

SASHA GO HARD Illi headlines; Sasha Go Hard, Matt Muse, and Gatson open. 9 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, $10, 17+. ©

Seven years ago, the rap world’s spotlight affixed itself on the first wave of drill with such inten-
MUSIC

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sity I wouldn’t have blamed anyone for thinking it’d be permanent. But the attention began to move on sometime between when Keef dropped Finally Rich in December 2012 and when he started serving 60 days for violating his probation in January 2013. The couple dozen rappers who helped make drill’s first wave a phenomenon have since evolved as artists, and many of them have grown out of anything resembling drill’s icy, violent image. Take Sasha Go Hard, who shows off her agility and pop sensibilities on her two 2018 releases, the January full-length No Problems and the October EP Make America Ratchet Again (Natty World). She internalizes the tropical pulse of “The Porch” so perfectly that her red-hot hook punches up the energy of the song without ruffling its luxuriant mood. Sasha tries out a coterie of stylistic choices on Make America Ratchet Again, including bounce (“The Porch”), ghostly dance (“Shake”), and subterfuge, arty R&B (“New Bitch”). It makes for a somewhat jumbled listen, but she approaches each track with an outsize confidence that wields these disparate sounds together.

—LEON GALL

SHARON VAN ETтен See Thursday, Lucy Dacus and Nilüfer Yanya open. 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, sold out. 17+

WILLIAM BASINSKI See Friday Part of Pitchfork’s Midwinter fest. 6:30 PM, Fullerton Hall, Art Institute of Chicago. 111 S. Michigan, $50 per night plus $15 add-on ticket for Basinski. 🎤

DARK FOg Balms, Diagonal, and Bow & Spear open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, $10, $8 in advance. 21+ Trippy Chicago trio Dark Fog have definitely hit a deep vein of psych productivity. When I e-mailed guitarist and bandleader Ray Donato to ask about their new album (meaning Living the Past...Killing the Future), he sent me a link to a completely different new album, Make You Believe. And neither of these releases is October’s Our Secret Society. Way to make every other band on the planet look like slackers, guys. To clarify, because I was confused and you might be too: This show is a release party for the U.S. vinyl edition of Make You Believe, a beautiful deluxe package for a complex and rich aural brew that was released digitally via Bandcamp last June. Living the Past...Killing the Future was released digitally on February 7 and has already sold out preorder for a very limited picture-disc edition, but Donato promises a more widely available vinyl version of Our Secret Society soon. Tonight you can expect Dark Fog to play rippling sonic waves of melodic psych jams from all three records, and possibly some from their next three or four—judging by their current pace, that should take us to next fall. —MONICA KENDRICK

TORxTOISE See Pick of the Week, page 32. Part of Pitchfork’s Midwinter fest. 9:45 PM, Art Institute of Chicago, Griffin Hall, 111 S. Michigan, $50 per night, $128 three-day pass. 🎤

SUNDAY 17

TORxTOISE See Pick of the Week, page 32. Mute Duo opens. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, $25. 21+ When former Reader staff writer Peter Margasak began programming the Frequency Series in 2013, he envisioned concerts that would expose audiences of different avant-garde musical disciplines to artists from other genres that they had not heard before but might well appreciate. Margasak left the Reader and Chicago in order to move to Rome in 2018, but he’s continued to program the series (which usually takes place on Sunday nights at Constellation) as well as a semiannual festival. During the fourth Frequency Festival, several new-music and experimental performers will premiere compositions or collaborations, starting with a free Wednesday concert by Aperiodic at the Logan Center on the University of Chicago campus. The group, which specializes in deep dives into the material of contemporary composers, will perform a program of music by Berlin-based, American-born violist and composer Catherine Lamb. Lamb’s music uses alternate tuning systems and a deliber-
both groups show that the most devoted students of hardcore’s past are often the most capable of pushing the genre forward. —David Anthony

Procol Harum Also Thu 2/21 at the same venue and time. 8 PM, City Winery, 1200 W. Randolph, 365-6735. ⚖️

Formed in England in 1967, Procol Harum are probably best known for their massive debut single, “A Whiter Shade of Pale,” a chilling, Bach-inspired, organ-led beauty of a tune deemed by some the first progressive-rock song ever. But prog or not, it introduced the world to the baroque-rock grandeur Procol Harum came to specialize in, with its epic, story-driven lyrics, sweeping arrangements, double-keyboard interplay between singer and pianist Gary Brooker and organist Matthew Fisher, and complex, bluesy shredding by guitarist Robin Trower. Though the band’s lineup shifted a bit throughout the 70s, they released an excellent run of soulful, progressive symphonic rock before splitting up in 1977. But like many other bands of their generation, Procol Harum joined the reunion circuit in the early 90s. Though Brooker, Fisher, and Trower initially combined forces once again, it was only a matter of time before people started dropping out, which eventually left Brooker as the sole original member. In 2017, Brooker and a lineup of hired guns released Novum, the first Procol record since 2003. Obviously it’s not very good: the songs aren’t interesting and the whole thing has a bizarre adult-contemporary production sheen to it. But no one’s going to see Procol Harum in 2019 to hear new songs; fans want to hear the classics, and Brooker’s still got the pipes to bring them. —Luca Cimarusti
UPCOMING

Aborted, Cryptopsy, Benighted 5/22, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Acid Mothers Temple, Yamanaka / Sonic Titan 4/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Action Bronson, Meyhem Lauren 2/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Antlers 4/5, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Jacob Banks 3/2, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Baroness, Death在外 3/31, 6:30 PM, Schubas, 18+
Beirut, Helado Negro 2/22, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Adrian Belew 4/4, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Town School of Folk Music
Black Lips, Fucked Up 4/27, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Black Sabbath, Super Rainbow 3/20, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Billy Bragg 4/25-27, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Cactus Blossoms 4/6, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Necrot 3/5, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Captain Beyond 4/2, 8 PM, Reggie's Music Joint
Cherry Glazerr 2/23, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Chicago Open Air with System of a Down, Tool, Ghost, Prodigy, Meshuggah, Gojira, Geartooth, and more 5/16-17, 8 PM, SeatGeek Stadium, Bridgeview
Dead & Company 6/14-15, 7 PM, Wrigley Field
Elyse 4/7, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Empress Of 4/10, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Evil Hex 4/11, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
God Is an Astronaut 9/25, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Goddamn Gallows, Scott H. Biram 4/6, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Steve Gunn, Gun Outfit 4/19, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Hatebreed, Obituary, Terror 4/11, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Iceage, Nadal El Shazy 5/7, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Japanese Breakfast 3/12, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Jerusalem In My Heart 3/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Judas Priest 5/25, 8 PM, Rosemont Theatre, Rosemont
La Dispute, Gouge Away 4/23, 6:30 PM, Thalia Hall

GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene.

LAST WEEK local folk-rock outfit Minor Moon dropped their new album, An Opening, via the Midwest Action label. Singer-songwriter Sam Cantor weaves stately vocal harmonies and spacious arrangements around his rumination, engaging melodies. Gossip Wolf is especially fond of the keyboard-saturated shuffle of “When You Notice (A Little Light),” which eventually bursts into a startlingly horn-heavy, almost jazzy outro. On Friday, February 15, Minor Moon will play a record-release show at Constellation with openers Nika and Storm Jameson.

Chicago’s Bad Witch Club describe themselves as a “coven” and a “queer, feminist art collective” who curate live music, art, and more in order to give female and LGBTQ+ artists, organizers, and fans the spotlight. For their fifth annual Femist DIY Arts and Music Festival, they’ve booked a magical lineup of musicians and performers, including Todd Slant, Beach Bunny, Superkona, Molly Soda, and Gritter Money—and the event also features an art gallery, vintage resellers, and baked goods (vegan and otherwise). It runs the night of Friday, February 15, at the Auxiliary Art Center (3012 W. Belmont) and all day Saturday, February 16, at Hostel Earphoria (3446 W. Diversey). The organizers request a donation at the door of $10 (one day) or $15 (both days). You can also RSVP or donate via femist.eventbrite.com.

Chicago arts and culture magazine Hoofligan launched in January 2014, and on Saturday, February 16, it celebrates five years with a ten-hour party! New York indie rockers Mal Blum tops a bill otherwise stuffed with Chicagoans, among them singer-songwriter Tasha, genre-blending vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Akenya, and R&B artist Loona Dee. Poets Scout Kelly, José Olivarez, and Raych Jackson will also perform, and independent artisans will sell their wares. For tickets and more info (including the location), RSVP at hoofliganmagazine.com/hoofliganturnfive.

—J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

GOT A TIP? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.
Looking for bondage—or at least some pity sex
Advice for getting (or just getting mummified?)

Q: I’m a 56-year-old heterosexual man, and I’ve lived with ALS for the past six years. I am either in a wheelchair or in a hospital bed, and I have very little motor ability in my limbs. Like most or male ALS patients, I still have full sensory ability, including a fully functioning penis. Are there safe websites or groups I can connect with that can help with sexual paralysed like me? I find people who are interested in hooks up? I’m talking about people who have a fetish for paralysed. I know that some people have a thing for amputees; I’m into light healthy, I was into light

A: "I struggled to find any specific online groups with respect to ALS and sexuality," said Andrew Gurza, a disability awareness consultant and host of Disability After Dark, a terrific podcast that explores and celebrates the sexual agency and desirability of people with disabilities. "But what RAGDOLL is looking for might not be directly related to his specific disability. It sounds like he’s looking to engage with a community of people called ‘devotees’. These individuals are attracted to people primarily because of their disabilities."

If you’re open to playing with a devotee, RAGDOLL, Gurza suggests checking out paradoxo.net, a website for “female devotees and gay male devotees” of men with disabilities.

"Many disabled people have also set up profiles on sites like FetLife to explore not only their fetishistic sides, but also how their disabled identities can complement and play a role in that," said Gurza.

Now, many people, disabled and otherwise, look down on devotees, who are often accused of fetishizing disability and objectifying disabled and objectifying people who are attracted to people primarily because of their disabilities."

"It’s estimated that one in five, a disabled person, has a disability," said Honick. "And when I think about how challenging dating can be anyway—disability notwithstanding—the immediate thought is that RAGDOLL shouldn’t exclude 80 percent of his search from his selection. So I would encourage him to use some of the mainstream apps—like Tinder, OkCupid, Bumble, Match—and put what he’s after in the forefront." Honick would caution people with disabilities that putting your disability front and center—even on mainstream dating apps—is likely to attract the attention of devotees.

"I often accuse of fetishizing
ted by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19000497 on Feb 7, 2019 (for Use Only) Under the Assumed Business of ‘Ragdoll’, an Illinois Family Management Company with the business office of 616 W. Schubert Ave, 1E, Chicago, IL 60614. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Owner/Partner Full Name Complete Address Aparna Sharma, 616 W. Schubert Ave, 1E, Chicago, IL 60614

STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT OUTAGAMIE COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS No. 18 CV 1203 PRN HEALTH SERVICES, INC. 1101 E. South St, Appleton, Wisconsin 54911 Plaintiff)

TO each Occupant or Tenant of an Assumed Business Name

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to “An Act in relation to the registration and use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of a Business State,” as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19000497 on Feb 7, 2019 (for Use Only) Under the Assumed Business of ‘Ragdoll’, an Illinois Family Management Company with the business office of 616 W. Schubert Ave, 1E, Chicago, IL 60614. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Owner/Partner Full Name Complete Address Aparna Sharma, 616 W. Schubert Ave, 1E, Chicago, IL 60614

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LIVE MUSIC IN URBAN WINE COUNTRY

UPCOMING SHOWS

2/15 STS9  2/16 STS9  2/17 STS9  LOW TICKET WARNING
2/18 Travis Green & Mosaic MSC - See The Light Tour
2/19 Wiz Khalifa and Curren$y  LOW TICKET WARNING
2/22 Gin Blossoms
2/23 Chippendales
2/24 One OK Rock w/ Waterparks & Stand Atlantic  LOW TICKET WARNING
2/26 95 WRL Rock Presents Sevendust w/ Tremonti, Cane Hill, Lullwater & Kirra
3/1 State Champs w/ Our Last Night, Dangerous Summer and Grayscale
3/3 Nothing More w/ Of Mice & Men & Palisades  LOW TICKET WARNING
3/6 3 Generaciones Tour feat. Oscar D Leon “Guaco” La Melodia & Annybell
3/8 Within Temptation w/ In Flames & Smash Into Pieces  LOW TICKET WARNING
3/9 The Cat Empire w/ Kila
3/10 Lukas Graham w/ Ocean Park Standoff  LOW TICKET WARNING
3/12 Cypress Hill & Hollywood Undead w/ Demrick & Xibit  LOW TICKET WARNING
3/14 The Ultimate Michael Jackson Tribute: Who’s Bad
3/15 Gaelic Storm 3/16 Gaelic Storm
3/17 Born of Osiris w/ Kingdom of Giants

DID YOU KNOW...

1200 W RANDOLPH ST, CHICAGO, IL 60607   |  312.733.WINE

LIVE MUSIC IN URBAN WINE COUNTRY

UPCOMING SHOWS

2/24 THE FOUR C NOTES - FRANKIE VALLI TRIBUTE
3.4-5 AARON NEVILLE
3.6 THE IDES OF MARCH FEAT. JIM PETERIK
3.18-17 LOS LONELY BOYS
3.19-20 CHRISTOPHER CROSS
3.28 ROBERT GLASPER TRIO FEAT. CHRIS DAVE & DERRICK HODGE WITH DJ JAHI SUNDANCE
3.3 JD SOUTHER & KARLA BONOFF

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LIVE MUSIC IN URBAN WINE COUNTRY

UPCOMING SHOWS

3.15 EILEN JEWELL
3.21-22 THE SUBDUDES
2.20-21 PROCOL HARUM
3.23 IDAN RAICHEL - PIANO & SONGS
3.1 WE BANJO 3
3.24 FREDDY JONES BAND
3.7 KASIM SULTON’S UTOPIA
3.25 EIGHTH BLACKBIRD
3.10 CHICAGO TAP THEATRE - SWEET TAP CHICAGO
3.26 VAN HUNT
3.11 LUTHER DICKINSON, AMY HELM & BIRDS OF CHICAGO - SISTERS OF THE STRAWBERRY MOON
3.27 THE TIM O’BRIEN BAND
3.12-13 THE HIGH KINGS
3.29 THE VERVE PIPE
3.14 Q PARKER (OF 112) & FRIENDS
3.30-31 WILL DOWNING
3.15 EILEN JEWELL
4.2 DAVID ARCHULETA
4.3 LOUIS YORK & THE SHINDELLAS

FEB 17  KANDACE SPRINGS
FEB 18  DONAVON FRANKENREITER WITH MATT GRUNDY
FEB 19  VICTOR GARCIA
FEB 22 + 23 BOBBY MCFERRIN & GIMMIES: CIRCLESONGS

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