



Exotique Show @ Four Seasons, Metairie (Photos by Misti Gaither)



big easy paparazzi



The Corner Pocket... aka The Ballet
Photos by Jeremy Weinberg





under the gaydar

by Tony Leggio
Email: ledgemgp@gmail.com
Photo by: Larry Graham

Hot Happenings

Happy New Year, we have passed 12th Night and are in the midst of the Carnival Season. It goes without saying that there is going to be so many hot happenings coming up. Here are just a few ideas for you.

Thursday, February 2

JUST GOLD may just be pure gold as the radical Faeries make America Great again at their Just Gold Bridget's ball at Café Istanbul (2372 St. Clause Ave.). Think 1970s Disco and all its Fabulousness. We Celebrate the Years of New Orleans Radical Faeries on the Sacred Winter spoke of the year (Feb 2. Imbolg/ Saint Bridget). The evening will include The Crowning of the New Empress, Ritual, Food, Performance, Dancing and More. Guest Blessings and Performers Include: The New Orleans Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and Skinz N Bones. The event is from 7pm – midnight.

Friday, February 3

The Stompers are throwing their annual Sweet 610 Debutante Ball at Mardi Gras World (1380 Port of New Orleans Pl.). Come dressed as your favorite wrestler or make up one of your own. Either way, get your tickets now before they are gone! The event is from 8pm – midnight with the Patron party starting at 7pm. Tickets are \$40-\$60 General Admission / \$100-\$150 (Patron Party). For tickets or more information, go to www.610stompers.com.

Friday, February 3

Puppy Love is in the air for NOLA PAH as Valentine's Day approaches! Join them for all you care to drink draft beer for \$10, \$1 each or 6 for \$5 Jell-O shots and lots of other playful fun at the Phoenix (941 Elysian Fields Avenue) from 9pm to midnight.

Saturday, February 4

SweetArts 2017 celebrates the CAC's 40th Anniversary Season with a Black Tie Birthday Party-themed gala. In this milestone year, we toast to the Contemporary Arts Center's four decades as a leading multidisciplinary contemporary arts center. SweetArts is the CAC's premier annual gala. Since 1984, the CAC has recognized the exceptional and diverse artists, performers, educators, and philanthropists whose influence and contributions shape New Orleans' arts and culture community. The event at the CAC (900 Camp St.) from 7 – 11pm. For tickets or more information, go to www.cacno.org.

Wednesday, February 8

Travel to an enchanting place—one filled with imagination, illusion and intrigue, where plume headdresses and mysterious masks are the rule, rather than the exception. Where black and white frocks and feathers reign supreme. Enjoy an evening filled with magic, mystery and mystique at the enchanting Monastery (1236 N. Rempart Street) brought to you by New Orleans Magazine. Sip wine, brews and signature craft cocktails featuring Touch Artisan Vodka. Indulge in culinary creations from more than 20 fabulous local chefs and eateries. Kick off Carnival Season in high style at their Black & White Venetian Masked Ball. New Orleans Magazine's Tops of the Town event is from 7 – 10pm. Tickets are \$50 per person in advance and \$75 at the door. Tickets include: Live music, entertainment, wine, beer and Touch Vodka cocktails and food from over 20 local restaurants. For more information, go to www.neworleansmagazine.com.

Friday, February 10

Come join the Lords of Leather for their final Beer Bust before their Bal Masque XXXIV! Come celebrate Carnival season and get warmed up for our big event at the Phoenix (941 Elysian Fields) from 9pm – 2am. Enjoy \$10 all you can drink draft beer.

Sunday, February 19

MISS EXOTIQUE is a drag show club pageant that is open to all types of drag queens regardless of drag type, age, or size. The event takes place at the Four Season Bar (3229 N. Causeway Blvd) from 6:30 – 9:30pm. There are three categories of judging for the pageant: Evening Gown, On Stage Question, and Talent. There is no entry fee and we have a couple of spots open. Contact John Joseph Delgadillo through Facebook, and he will send you the package for registration explaining the categories and how things will run. Their theme this year is "EXOTIC FLOWERS OF THE WORLD."

Party Down

Mardi Gras season is in full blast so that means copious amounts of parties, Gay Carnival balls (pun intended) and parades. We have lots to review so let's jump right into it. Even though my dance card is filling up with events, my week did not really start until I went to see the play Grace and Igor on Thursday at the Tigermen's Den in the Bywater. The

play was a unique perspective on communication, family dynamics and puppetry, quite the combination. The acting was good and I love the intimacy of the space.

So Friday was my little cousin's 21st birthday celebration and he wanted to hit the Quarter, so his gay Auntie Mame took him to a few places he normally does not go, outside of The Goldmine and Bourbon Heat. I am certainly too old to go into those places, they have an over 40 alarm that sounds when someone my age walks in. We jumped from the courtyard at the Maison Dupuy to the Foundation Room at the House of Blues to the Bombay Club and finally ended at Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop where he was met by his friends his age and I escaped to the gay establishments with my friends. Family is good, but give me a few dancing boys with dubious intentions and lots of cocktails and I am happy as a clam.

Sunday was a full day with brunch, parties, shopping and theatrical events. I started by meeting up with my mom to do a quick bit of shopping (yes on a Sunday) before a late brunch at Taste of Tokyo, which is located on Jefferson Highway and is probably one of the best sushi places in the city. Then I was off to my first of two plays (yes, I was on theatre overload) Billy Elliott at Rivertown. Rivertown scored high marks with this production from the acting to the choreography. Next I traversed to the Bywater to the Lords of Leather Royalty Party at the Cheezy Cajun. There were crowns and sashes aplenty as royalty from different krewe's mixed and mingled with the Lords while snacking on some delicious treats. Best cracklins in the city. My last stop on this full day was the production of Reefer Madness at Café Istanbul. This was an outstanding production with a top quality talented cast. With peppy songs and a faux orgy, this show was spectacular, a must see! It is now moving to Rivertown for February, so check it out.

I finally tried out Emeril's new restaurant on Tuesday night, Merils and it is fantastic. The entire place is just a hit, from their artistic décor which consist of giant murals of a fish, crab and pig on the walls to the rustic chic furnishings. Even though the restaurant has a warehouse district atmosphere, it still feels both open and inviting. And the food is just divine. From the roasted cauliflower to the fried turkey necks, there is a great mix of Southern cuisine with Spanish influences. And to top it off the prices are very reasonable from the small bite plates to the large dinners. They even had a tres leches king cake—AMAZING! Merils is definitely one of my new top right now go to restaurants.

On Thursday, I attended two great events back to back. I went to the launch of 1961 vodka at Fulton Alley. Talk about heaven, trying different vodka drinks with this smooth new liquor. 1961 mixes very well and I tried it about five various ways from a dirty martini to a grapefruit

concoction that just tantalized your taste buds. We were in the private area of Fulton alley so my friends and I played a rousing game of Bocce Ball (sort of like a mean spirited version of Italian bowling). Afterwards we attended Offbeat's Best of the Beat Wards at Generations Hall. Offbeat Magazine's annual award gala brings together some of the best musicians in the city. There were various local restaurants on had supplying food as well as great musical performances throughout the night.

On Saturday, it was all about the King Cake at the Krewe of Queenateenas King Cake Queen Coronation Party. The lovely Monica Sinclair-Kennedy was crowned the Pride Queen at the Ambush Mansion. Owners Rip and Marsha Naquin-Delain hosted an extravagant evening filled with good food, flowing libations and amazing company. I enjoyed mingling with friends old and new and watching the fabulously stylish Monica receive her crown. I congratulate her and know she will represent that title with poise and dignity like all she does. My one thing I have to say to people, if the invite says black tie optional, that means wear formal attire or a suit, or at least a sportscoat. Dressing down for these type of events shows a lack of respect for the host as well as just makes you look plain lazy. Off my soapbox now. After the soiree, a group of us went to Lafitte's in Exile for a few libations then followed up with a lot more at Mag's 940 and the Phoenix. Monica, we celebrated both with and without you that night.

I ended my two weeks in a very relaxed way starting with brunch with friends at St. Roch Market. I had not been in a while and they have many new restaurants to choose from. On Sundays they also have live music to sit back and enjoy with your meal. The Marigny and Bywater is picking up and becoming very trendy. After my friends and I decided to bring our respective pets for a long walk along the river in Millennial Park. This beautiful thoroughfare that stretches from Elysian Fields to the Bywater provides scenic views of the Mississippi River and downtown. There is a dog area along with plenty of picnic area to while away the hours. Still not done our adventure we decided to go past Poland Avenue to this place called the "End of the World." It is a spot where you can walk along the levee and look at the shop lock and see a cool view of the bend of the river. We also discovered the abandoned Poland Avenue Military Base which we went walking around. I think it was probably restricted but the fence was cut open, so that means come in to me. Very cool and creepy place to explore. Discovering new areas of the city I have never seen before is probably one of the coolest things I love to do. So that concludes my two weeks of Crescent City fun. So my lovely little Mardi Gras partiers, until next time, stay royal.



trodding the boards

by Brian Sands
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Reefer Madness The Musical at Rivertown Theater through Feb. 12

When *Reefer Madness The Musical* was last seen in 2014 at the Mid-City Theatre, though I enjoyed its slyly seductive fun, the production as a whole needed polishing. Scene changes went on too long and, with a few exceptions, the cast was simply not up to the vocal demands of the show. Suffice to say, it did not make me want to see it again any time soon.

Michael McKelvey, in his first season as Artistic Director of Summer Lyric Theatre at Tulane, directed *Big River* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* with journeyman proficiency, sticking to tried'n'true interpretations for each of these Tony-winning but hardly first-rate musicals.

So when McKelvey announced that the first presentation here of his Storyville Collective would be *Reefer Madness* I was afraid I'd need some hits to get through it.

"Reefer makes you giggle for no good reason" or "Reefer gets you raped and you won't care".

If one wishes that the score contained a few more catchy tunes than just the opening title number, Musical Director Jefferson Turner, flawless as ever, leads the three-piece orchestra to give all the songs a bubbly pizzazz.

After his protean turn in last fall's *The Toxic Avenger*, Eli Timm steps up to assured leading man status as good-boy-turned-bad Jimmy Harper allowing

he's just about the cutest stage baby ever. A senior at Tulane, Halpern might still be too young for Lola in *Kinky Boots*, but I'd be eager to see him in *Where's Charley?*, *Candide*, or the musical version of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Ken Goode imparts the proper droll style for his fear-mongering Lecturer/Narrator; when found in compromising positions, he recalls several memorable politicians. Reprising her hooker with a heart of tin, it's no insult to Elyse McDaniel to note that whereas last time her delightfully dissolute Sally stood out, now she blends in—beautifully—with all her castmates. A flamboyant Cameron-Mitchell Ware, in vast contrast to his Coalhouse Walker, Jr. in *Cripple Creek's Ragtime*, tears it up as a gleeful Jesus.

David Raphael's quickly changeable set is simple but sharp. Hope Bennett's imaginative costumes, from angels to degenerate potheads, conjure up characters precisely. And if choreographer Chi Chi LaBamba (a nom de stage?) sometimes relies a little too much on *Thriller* moves, her *Orgy* is carefully constructed, unlike other stage orgies, with attention to detail.

On occasion, particularly during ensemble numbers, the silly/witty lyrics can be a bit difficult to make out, but that's a minor quibble when McKelvey's stage is otherwise so full of theatrical verve. Having attended on the evening of the presidential inauguration, such lines as "We're taking down the fingerprints/Of jazz musicians and immigrants" stood out as they may not be so tongue-in-cheek any more.

Reefer Madness continues its run at the Rivertown Theater in Jefferson Parish. It's worth the "trip" out there. Unless that orgy gets the whole cast and crew arrested by the Kenner Police Department first.



The cast of *Reefer Madness* (Photo by Mason Wood)

As it turned out, seen recently at *Café Istanbul* in the Marigny, Storyville's pitch-perfect *Reefer* provides a high better than any chemically-induced one.

With an A-team of performers all at the top of their game, McKelvey keeps the staging fluid and finds the proper tonal balance between the requisite faux-innocent camp and enough underlying authentic emotions so that we care about the characters, allowing moments of pure over-the-top merriment to enrich but not overwhelm the show.

After all, how many musicals feature both Jesus and a satyr, each revealing lotsa flesh?

Dan Studney and Kevin Murphy's adaptation takes the 1930s propaganda/exploitation film about the "new drug menace" and sends it up into the stratosphere. Just in case you don't get what horrors the evil weed can lead to, as you watch a young romance go astray, a Placard Girl occasionally transverses the stage with signs informing you that

this stoner's heart-of-gold to shine through his foggy mind.

With crystal clear voice and sunny disposition, a perfect Maggie Windler makes for an adorable good girl Mary Lane and an even more delectable bad gal, once Mary succumbs to the spell of Mary Jane.

As the evil dealer Jack, Alex Wallace supplies delicious, finely calibrated "over"-acting that oozes maleficence. Wallace's wide range, from the comic (*Is He Dead?*) to the dramatic (*Sive*) as well as musical (*Pippin* and *Reefer*) never ceases to impress.

Janie Heck follows up her tour de force *Toxic Avenger* performance with yet another one as Mae, the conflicted hostess of the Reefer Den who wants to break away from Jack's grip but can't live without the "stuff" he provides her. Would someone please provide this superb singer/actress/dancer a lead role worthy of her bodacious talents?

Luke Halpern, another *Toxic* alum, continues as a stand-out talent; here

On an Average Day at Happyland Theater through Feb. 12

As two long-estranged brothers in John Kolvenbach's *On an Average Day*, Garrett Prejean and Matt Story both bring tremendous conviction and talent to their roles.

Prejean is Jack who wears a shirt and tie even when he doesn't really have to. He doesn't seem to be uptight—he's quick to take a drink—but, rather, proper and unprepared to deal with his sibling.

Story is Robert, or Bobby, Jack's younger brother, with hair below the shoulders and a bottle of booze he seems very familiar with. He keeps saying "I'm alright" but doesn't look it. He clearly hears voices in his head. Instead of "social pariah," "social piranha" comes out of his mouth. Bobby's the kind of wacko you'd run from unless he's your brother, so Jack has to stay. Or so it appears.

In one corner of the historic **Happyland Theater**, a movie theater from 1923 to 1957, Matthew Collier has artfully created the kitchen of Bobby's decrepit home, an impressionistic rendering, with towers of beat-up chairs, old newspapers, and crappy appliances. It's junk repurposed as visual poetry.

Monica R. Harris has directed with clean efficiency. Her approach is logical without being overly showy or merely frenetic. She might have asked her cast to dig a little deeper into their characterizations but she wisely keeps the actors from indulging in unnecessary pyrotechnics (which seems to have been the case in previous productions of the play).

While I did appreciate the openness of the playing area, one of the character's comments, "seems a little tight in here," did make me wonder if Harris and Collier allowed the characters too much room to move around; the staging might have achieved greater effectiveness in a more cramped space. But that's a small criticism.

A larger one is why Harris and Story, as the production's producers (in partnership with **The Elm Theatre** of which Prejean is Artistic Director), chose this play. They are clearly passionate about it; a Director's Note in the program describes it as "a story that demands to be told."

Yet while Kolvenbach's script keeps things mysterious at the start, he doesn't really draw an audience into his tale. There is too much wheel-spinning and too many tangents that don't really add to the narrative.

Yes, the balance of power goes back and forth, but it's a full hour (out of 90 minutes) before things finally come to life with idiosyncratic dialog that reveals character and the choices people make in desperate circumstances. This focus soon dissipates, however, as Kolvenbach's plot then goes in another direction, one he hasn't really prepared us for.

I had noted while watching that this 2002 drama about two brothers and a reversal of fortune is "*True West*-ish," a reference to the Sam Shepard classic. With a little googling, you can discover others have noted this as well and not to *On an Average Day's* advantage.

Given that this project has been gestating for about two years, I don't understand why those involved didn't take that and other criticisms leveled at this script into account. For directors and actors, there is absolutely nothing wrong with self-producing, but one hopes better works are available with which Harris, Story and Prejean could showcase their estimable talents.

Still, *Average Day* has had its admirers. For \$25, little more than the price of a movie ticket these days, you can support local, live theater and decide for yourself.

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by The Rev. Bill Terry, Rector St. Anna's Episcopal Church, New Orleans
Email: fr.bill@stannanola.org

Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras

No Valentine's Day should pass without remembering Alfred and his soul-mate Stewart. If you don't know them they are an eternal pair. Alfred is currently visiting with God and like Jesus preparing a place for his friend, lover, and companion Stewart. Valentine's Day was Alfred's most favorite of all days and thus so too is it Stewarts. Stewart, I am sure, knows and believes that his companion is awaiting him eagerly.

Recently I had occasion to visit with another member of the community. She is getting ready to "go home" in her words. She has terminal cancer and is preparing herself and her friends. She is almost spunky about the prospect of her death. She is filled with anticipation not trepidation. It is moving to be with her. In her fullness before her illnesses she was, and remains, a force of nature. Things generally went her way because she demanded that of the world. She has a great heart but brooks not hustles or condescension. She believes, and I think rightly, that there is a place prepared for her that is eternal.

I have, as you might expect, been with a lot of folks to help them die. Good dying is a thing that we all hope for but

most of us don't put a lot of thought into – at least if you are under 65. Most people, I think, hope for that sublime scenario: "I want to die in my sleep" or some such other. The reality is that rarely happens. So, how will we die? Normally, by some disease that creeps in often related to age. My father died of Alzheimer's disease. While in one context it was very sad but in so many ways it was a great parting. Not for us but for him. Indeed it was.

So, how will we die? For non-believers it is, I think, just a bit problematic. Perhaps there is a sense of the eternal nature of life cycles and they will be a part of that grand enterprise and simply become history. I like to think, however, that there is a cosmic point to living even though as my dying friend says, "We are only borrowing this time on earth" and that "our real home is with God." I agree.

I think that religion, howsoever you work it out, offers visions of after-life. Some may think about virgins others about beatific banquets and still others about becoming a new person reincarnated. We all, organized and disorganized, religions offer a vision. The shared

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truth is that we believe that there is more to life than living in the present. What

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trodding the boards ...from 18

Curtains Up

A few more shows can be seen before the Mardi Gras hiatus puts theater in our streets.

The NOLA Project is partnering with **Delgado Community College** to present Aaron (**The Social Network**, **The West Wing**) Sorkin's acclaimed courtroom drama **A Few Good Men**, which depicts the trial of two Marines for complicity in the death of a fellow Marine at Guantanamo.

Jason Kirkpatrick directs Cecile Monteyne, A.J. Allegra, Andrew Larimer, Michael Aaron Santos, Keith Claverie, James Yeagain, and Beau Bratcher as well as Delgado theater students. Performances run through February 12 at Delgado's **Timothy K. Baker Theatre**.

Another Broadway hit is playing at **Le Petit**. Making its locally-produced debut, **Jelly's Last Jam** tells the story of New Orleans native Jelly Roll Morton who was born in the Marigny (his house still stands at the corner of Frenchmen and Robertson Streets), and took the music he discovered in the sporting houses of Storyville out into the world.

Jackie Alexander, author of **Brothers From The Bottom**, directs Idella Johnson, Damien Moses, Robert D'oqui, and Emmy Award-winner & Tony-nominee Ted Louis Levy as the self-proclaimed "creator of jazz." Performances continue through February 12 as well.

Justin Maxwell's **Niagara Falls** receives its world premiere at **The Theatre at St. Claude** through February 5. A corrupt mayor more interested in his \$5,005 than his constituents; a mistress obsessed with Canada; an estranged wife seeking freedom from her marriage and life; and the owner of a Seneca casino desiring a casual revenge are all part of Maxwell's ghostly tale of corruption and the regrets that follow in its wake.

Jim Fitzmorris helms the production with a cast that includes Bunny Love, Matthew Mickal, Margeaux Fanning, and Kyle Woods.

Another misunderstood hero comes to the **Mahalia Jackson Theater** on February 10 and 12. **New Orleans Opera** presents Stephen Sondheim's **Sweeney Todd** starring New Orleans-born Metropolitan Opera bass-baritone Greer Grimsley as the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, his wife Loretta Bybee as Mrs. Lovett, and Broadway veteran Leslie Castay as the Beggar Woman. Don't know if there'll be any dance parties with the composer, but it's Carnival Time—you never know!

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in the news

Carnival Royalty, Lifetime Achievement Award Honoree Take OVER Pride!

Yes, that's right, King Cake Queens, Lifetime Achievement Award honoree, and Lord King rule over Pride weekend, June 9-11, in New Orleans. King Cake Queen XIX: The Samba Queen, Nicole DuBois, and Gay Appreciation Awards 29th Lifetime Achievement Award honoree Brenda Laura were voted New Orleans Pride Grand Marshals this year.

Additionally, the Pride committee announced J. Stephen Perry, President & CEO, New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau, as a third grand marshal; Mark Romig, President & CEO, New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, as Honorary Grand Marshal; and Jake Shears as Celebrity Grand Marshal.

Although scheduled contests were not held, King Cake Queen XIV: The Fantasy Queen, Princesse Stephaney, was announced as Miss New Orleans Pride, and Lord King XXXII, Troy Powell, as Mr. New Orleans Pride.

Congratulations to each of you!

To keep up with everything Pride: The WHOLE Gay Weekend, visit the Official Pride Guide @ www.NOLAPride.org or Gulf South Pride Guide @ www.Facebook.com/Officialprideguide.



Miss & Mr. NOLA Pride Princesse Stephaney & Troy Powell (Photo by Hubert S Monkeys)

communities ...from 24

our faith tradition is, if we have one, will often frame how we are going to die. No not the particular circumstances but how we might react and deal with it. If you believe it is not the end your experience of that event might well be different than if you are focused on the finality.

Mardi Gras is a festival of life, it is, it is the last blow out before Lent. It is a quasi-religious festival although we've mostly forgotten that. Each day should be Mardi Gras or Lent. Lent is when we think about what we want to change and what we need to celebrate. Traditionally it is a time to minimize aka penance and fasting – minimize. Mardi Gras is the best set up for such a time that I can think of: from extreme to austere. I will say that it is so much better than a pancake breakfast on "Shrove Tuesday" in the Parish Hall. The krewes will always out do such things. So we have it in our bones to understand life differently in our community and so to we can discover good dying in our community.

The LGBTQ community, at least an ageing generation, has seen more than its fair share of dying. It has gone through the holocaust of AIDS and hate crimes galore. Yet, this community is always seeking dignity and to be full partners in the public marketplace. So too we can know good dying.

I think that a real grounding in our faith is a most excellent starting point. I am not talking about organized religion, although some provide an excellent framework, I am talking about the focus and lived expectations that we have.

We enjoy what we own but it is inevitably true that we can't take it with us. It didn't work for Pharos and it won't work for us. So we have to re-orient and embrace what lives around us. No, we

can't take a butterfly or a sunset with us but those things can bring us into synchronicity with life itself. If we embrace the here and now and imagine the 'there and then' we can begin to frame ourselves for good dying.

Imagine the expansiveness of the next adventure. The breadth of eternity will dwarf those things that inspire us with awe like the Grand Canyon, the Alps, a crashing sea or great red wood trees. Such inspiration can only fuel our imaginations for the next adventure. In my heart I believe that there is a God and that he visited us with his son Jesus. Jesus had a lot to say about the afterlife, most of it good some not so much. The not so much had to do with a life outside of nature, outside of dignity and humanity. It had to do with living a life separated from the source of all life – the spiritual source of our imaginations and manifestation as feeling, caring humans. Not so much is so self-centered that such a person cannot see the value of life let alone the person sitting next to them. The good part invites everyone to join in creation and to rejoice in an eternal realm that not only creates but spends its time in jubilation.

So, enjoy a sunset and know that it is holy. Enjoy a kiss and know that it is holy. Enjoy Mardi Gras and Valentine's Day know that they are holy. Frame your life to lay the ground work for the next one. In so doing you lay the ground work for good dying - Carpe Diem.

