

George Takei featured in Alphawood event

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Alphawood Gallery presented a sold-out event featuring actor and LGBT activist George Takei at the Athenaeum Theatre Sept. 7.

The program followed the theme of Alphawood Gallery's exhibition, "Then They Came for Me: Incarceration of Japanese-Americans during WWII and the Demise of Civil Liberties," which runs through Nov. 19.

"This story is so relevant to the conversations we're having now about what is the appropriate way to respond in the face of fear, that there is concern about people who look like the enemy and through 120,000 people who were locked up during WWII, their only crime was that they looked like the enemy," said Alphawood Foundation Director of Exhibitions Tony Hirschel about the exhibition. "While the story is known on the West Coast, where so many of the Japanese-Americans started, it is much less known across most of the country and it seems that it's vital it be known if we're going to discuss the current issues like the travel ban, immigration—if we're going to try to discuss all those issues intelligently, we should at least understand our own history in the way our country has often responded often not

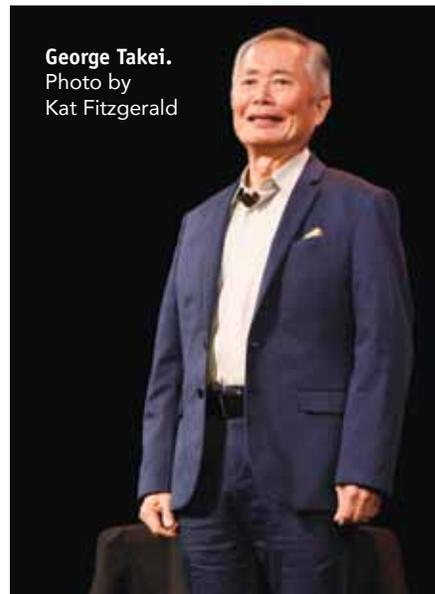
very well to those challenges in the past. That's the real reason for the show."

"Then They Came for Me" displays a painful period in U.S. history when the federal government forcibly removed and imprisoned tens of thousands of Japanese-Americans.

Alphawood Gallery partnered with Chicago's Japanese-American Service Committee (JASC) to produce the Gallery's first original exhibition. A portion of the proceeds from the ticket sales for "An Evening with George Takei" was donated to JASC.

"This is a really important story and history and he [Takei] makes the point that it's American history, not just Japanese history," said Hirschel. "It's important people know about it and the fact that people recognize him and admire him gives him that much more authority as a speaker about this."

The evening started with selections from the Broadway musical *Allegiance*. In 2015, Takei made his Broadway debut in this musical, with music and lyrics by Jay Kuo and a book by Kuo, Lorenzo Thione and Marc Acito. Takei's life experience inspired the show that follows one family's journey in an untold American story. Chicago actors performed and Robert Ollis, artistic associate



George Takei.
Photo by
Kat Fitzgerald

of Pride Films & Plays, arranged the selections.

Takei entered the stage with a standing ovation from the audience. With great enthusiasm, he began talking about how much he loves Chicago with the international diversity that can be found among the cuisines, the theater scene and the beautiful architecture.

Takei spoke about the experience that he said defined his life as an adult. As a 5-year-old Japanese-American, he and his family were forced out of their Los Angeles home. In great detail, he explained the way his family lived for the next

few years without freedom in inhumane tight quarters, later moving to a high-security camp.

As he spoke about being surrounded by barbed wire fence and army tanks, Takei expressed his fear and frustration. He then went into detail of life after the internment camps, his family being free to go anywhere in the country on only \$25.

"Our first home back in Los Angeles was on Skid Row in downtown LA. To us kids, that was the most traumatic part of coming home," said Takei. "Shrieking sirens, day and night. There was a stench of human urine everywhere."

He spoke of his father and the responsibility that rested on his father's shoulders—not just his family but the entire community as he helped people look for jobs. He then went on to talk about his teenage years, describing himself as an "idealistic teenager" who asked questions and read to gain knowledge. His father, he said, explained to him what democracy was and how it worked.

"I was a teenager and I became very curious about my childhood imprisonment," said Takei. "I became a voracious reader. I read almost every history book I could get my hands on. I could find nothing about our incarceration. I read civics books and I read about the shining ideals of our democracy, 'all men are created equal with an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' I was inspired by what American democracy stood for and I couldn't reconcile that with what I knew to be our childhood imprisonment."

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Photo by Todd Rosenberg.



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Pondexter part of Hall of Fame class

Chicago Sky guard and native Chicagoan Caprie Pondexter will be inducted into the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame on Monday, Oct. 2.

Pondexter—who attended John Marshall Metropolitan High School in Chicago—is a two-time WNBA champion, seven-time WNBA All-Star, 2008 United States Olympic gold medal winner and 2007 WNBA Finals MVP.

Pondexter returned home to play for the Sky in 2015.

Other inductees include celebrated strike-out pitcher Chicago Cub Kerry Wood; Stanley Cup Champion/Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews; Chicagoland native Brian McBride, a retired soccer star of the Chicago Fire; and Hall of Fame Head Basketball Coach Geno Auriemma of the University of Connecticut Huskies.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit ChicagolandSportsHallOfFame.com or call 312-341-3410.

EXPO CHICAGO Sept. 13-17

EXPO CHICAGO—a platform for global contemporary art and culture—will take place Sept. 13-17 at Navy Pier.

Just a few of the expected exhibitors include Berg Contemporary (Reykjavik), Corbett vs. Dempsey (Chicago), AKINCI (Amsterdam), Richard Gray Gallery (Chicago; New York), Mariane Ibrahim (Seattle), Rhona Hoffman Gallery (Chicago), Karla Osorio Gallery (Brasilia), Proyectosmonclova (Mexico City), Waterhouse & Dodd (London; New York), Templon (Paris; Brussels), and ONE AND J. Gallery (Seoul).

Among the programs planned are curatorial and art critics' forums; the inaugural event EXPO Sound; and IN/SITU (which features large-scale, suspended sculptures and site-specific works) and IN/SITU OUTSIDE (temporary public art installations situated along the Lakefront and throughout Chicago neighborhoods).

On opening night (Sept. 13), EXPO CHICAGO—in partnership with Navy Pier, Chicago's mission-driven cultural district and the Chicago Architecture Biennial—will present the collaboration between contemporary artist Nick Cave and architect/MacArthur Fellow Jeanne Gang for "Here Hear Chicago," a new work that incorporates art, design and performance.

Also, EXPO Art Week takes place Sept. 11-17, teaming with local institutions to feature select aligned programming, including museum exhibitions, gallery openings, artist talks, public art projects, open studios and outdoor installations.

See <https://www.expochicago.com/>.

Sept. 16 festival suddenly canceled

A Sept. 16 anti-violence music festival at Guaranteed Rate Field featuring music stars Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Fifth Harmony, Prince Royce, DNCE, Fat Joe, Jeremih, Lupe Fiasco, Carl Thomas and Felix da Housecat has been cancelled, according to DNAInfo.com.

The festival was set to be produced by the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority, which controls Guaranteed Rate Field, and Get IN Chicago, an organization that counsels community-based groups and funds anti-violence initiatives.

Anthony J. O'Neill, CEO of the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority, said that the group wanted to do more community work and outreach before hosting the event. Now, a series of shows is planned for next year.

The article is at <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20170905/bridgeport/get-it-in-music-fest-guaranteed-rate-field-sox-park-cancelled>.

Martha Lavey memorial Oct. 9

Steppenwolf Theatre Company will host a memorial to celebrate the life and legacy of Martha Lavey—who served as artistic director during 1995-2015—Monday, Oct. 9, at 7 p.m. at Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St.

The memorial event is open to the public and tickets are free; however, reservations are required. RSVPs from the public will be accepted starting Wed., Sept. 13, at 11 a.m. by calling the box office at 312-335-1650. There is limited seating and early reservations are encouraged.

The event will be curated by Steppenwolf Artistic Director Anna D. Shapiro and ensemble member Amy Morton.

Also, on Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 10 a.m., the stretch of Halsted Street in front of Steppenwolf Theatre will be renamed "Martha Lavey Way" in an honorary ceremony.

Takei still preaches optimism and being informed.

"This is a Japanese-American story, but it is more importantly, an American story," said Takei as he spoke about the country and its history and progress. "It's your story as well. Our nation is made up of many, many people and it's all those stories put together that tells the American story."

To learn more about the Alphawood Gallery and "Then They Came for Me," visit: AlphawoodFoundation.org/newsroom/thentheycameforme.

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"Democracy is made up of people who have the capacity to do great things, but also to make horrible mistakes," Takei shared as he was talking about a conversation he had with his father. "Our democracy is existentially dependent on people who cherish those high ideals and actively engage in the process of government."

During his time on stage, Takei spoke about leaders from Adlai Stephenson to Martin Luther King Jr. to Barack Obama. Through all the years,

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