



## spotlight feature

by Tony Leggio  
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Photo by: Larry Graham, [GrahamStudioOne.COM](http://GrahamStudioOne.COM)

### Gary Vandeventer

This month our spotlight article focuses on someone who has a very interesting background. I met Gary Vandeventer a few years ago, but got to know him better when he became Lord King XXVI of the Lords of Leather in 2009. But that was just scratching the surface of this very multi-talented individual. Every person has a story to tell and each person I have interviewed has been extremely fascinating. Gary is no exception to that rule.

He was born in a small town in Central Illinois called Newman, which only had a population of 1,000. Growing up he had always had a keen interest in music and learned how to play the piano. He went to college at Illinois State University in Normal which is known for having some very famous alumni such as Gary Cole, Sean Hayes from *Will and Grace*, Judith Ivey, John Malkovich and Jane Lynch from *Glee*. So he was in good company. He then transferred to the University of Illinois in Champaign, where he majored in Musical Theatre. Originally he was studying to be an opera singer, even spending one summer of performance study in London, but decided to go into musical theatre because it was more fun. Opera singers don't get to tap dance.

One of the major characteristics about every person I have interviewed for

trodding the boards  
...from 14

### *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change at the Teatro Wego! Theatre through Feb. 20*

*I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* celebrates dating, love, marriage, in-laws, having kids and growing old in a series of songs and sketches, though from a strictly middle class, heterosexual perspective. Act One focuses on courting and has the more fun material; Act Two shifts to weddings & beyond and, if less obviously comic, its insights are more pointed.

Joe DiPietro's book & lyrics don't provide any earth-shattering observations but occasionally a surprise pops up like an avowal made by an unassuming, suburban divorcee that she "hates children [except her own]" or a clever vignette in which two busy, busy people go through a year and a half relationship on the first date.

Looking back on my notes, I have the word "cute" written next to about a half dozen of the numbers. And indeed they are as a tough guy with no use for "women's movies" begins to blubber as he watches the screen, or a trio involving "Waiting" as in a wife who waits for her husband to finish watching football, a husband who waits while his wife shops, and a lady waiting to use the women's room (which really has nothing to do with love/romance). A little of this, however, goes a long way.

Still, Andrew Crusse's direction propels everything forward at a quick pace and Alicia Grubb's choreography, if simple, works well. With their cast of four, they mine the material, shallow as

it may be, for all it's worth.

Matias Grau III, Katherine McClain, Wendy Miklovic and Cliff Thompson are all accomplished performers and if the women come off as just a bit stronger than the guys it could be because their material is slightly better, though Thompson is quite funny as a convict giving singles advice in a "Scared Straight to the Altar" skit. If the comedy could've been leavened with a little more heartfelt rue, compared with a previous version of *ILY, YP, NC* I saw, the musical strengths of this cast more than made up for it.

Adam Alonso provided the appropriate costumes including an amusing collection of fashion faux pas dresses for the *Always a Bridesmaid* number. Jeffrey M. Davis' revolving set ingeniously allows tables and beds to magically appear and transitions to go very smoothly. The mostly pink/orange hued lighting by Scott Sauber, usually a master of illumination, did not seem as sharp as it could be, however.

Musical Director Jonne Dendinger gave her usual steadfast support though not even her talents could keep the songs from all sounding more or less alike; Jimmy Roberts' music is the aural equivalent of vanilla. Accompanying Dendinger, a single violinist added a nice romantic touch to the show's musical texture, though.

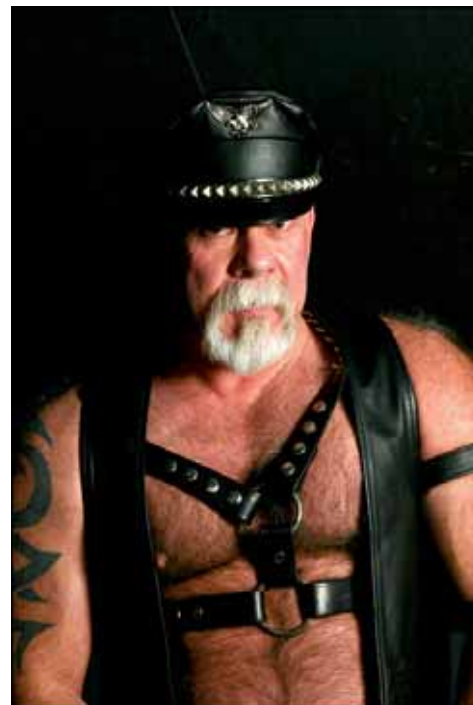
*ILY, YP, NC* may be little more than well-crafted entertainment for the masses but despite a so-so review in *The New York Times* it went on to run for eight years amassing over 5,000 performances before closing as the 6<sup>th</sup> longest-running off-Broadway show. Those in need of a post-Valentine's/pre-Mardi Gras romantic pick-me-up should head to JPAS' Westwego theater where it plays through February 20.

these articles is their courage to take chances. Moving from a small town to the larger cities of Normal, then Champaign was scary, but also very freeing. Gary was not the only gay person around. He really did not know what "out" was until he went to college. He just knew he loved musicals and did not like sports. No longer feeling like an outsider, he began his new life as a homosexual man.

After he graduated school, he worked in Champaign at a printing company that specialized in doctors' appointment books. Theatre was just a hobby at the time. His love for this sideline grew stronger, so he auditioned for summer stock at the Little Theatre on the Square in Sullivan, IL. This theatre was famous for having soap opera stars perform. Hunky John Wesley Shipp from *Guiding Light* and *As The World Turns*, who has always been a crush of mine since my college days, starred in the show Gary was in. He even borrowed his white speedos for a pool party. Lucky man!

A producer there convinced him to get his equity card and join the actors' union which he did. He even did a show with Nikki Goulet, the daughter of Robert. He then moved to Tampa, Florida and worked in the Golden Apple Dinner Theatre. He acted in shows and played piano, helping the musical director from time to time. Years later a new theatre opened up in St. Petersburg and he was offered the musical director/conductor position. He was in the pit for about 25 shows. A friend of his was the Assistant Conductor for the National Touring Show of *Anything Goes* with Mitzi Gaynor. He called Gary and told him he just got an offer to work with Robert Goulet in the *Fantasticks*. So Gary took over his spot and toured with Mitzi to many different cities. One of his other professional gigs was playing keyboard for the *Phantom of the Opera* tour. He came back to Tampa and met someone who he was with for four years.

He wanted to settle down and receive a steady income with insurance benefits and the whole nine yards. He went to work for Chase Manhattan Mortgage Corporation in sales and acquisitions. They were bought by Chemical Bank and he lost his job. But his boss went to work for Norwest Mortgage, now Wells Fargo, and hired him. Gary relocated to Des Moines, Iowa where he stayed for 20 months. The only good thing he liked about Iowa was the Corn Haulers, which was a leather organization there. Leather was always an interest to him since college. BDSM was more his concentration which normally is accompanied by a leather look. While he was part of this organization, he won the Mr. Iowa Leather contest and competed in the International Mr. Leather Contest. He



was the first Mr. Iowa to place in the top 20.

But the cold weather in Iowa was too much, so in 1998 he moved to Washington DC, where he still has a home and works. In 1994, Gary came to New Orleans over the Halloween weekend for a conference and met a bartender at the Phoenix who he started a relationship with. He met many people who are still his friends today and he knew this was a place he needed to be. He won Mr. DC Eagle in 2000 and returned to IML where he once again placed in the top 20. At the urging of the contest producer, he then entered the Mr. Drummer contest which he won. Drummer was a hardcore magazine of sexual outlaws. Unfortunately the year he won the contest, the magazine folded. Someday he hopes to see the pictures from the photo shoot that never got published in the magazine.

As a title holder, he was asked to judge many leather contests, and in 2004 he judged Mr. Louisiana Leather. His partner today, Tim Lott was a contestant, and they have been together ever since. His goal was to move to New Orleans and after Katrina, the time was right and he bought property. He joined the Lords of Leather in 2000 as a Baron and now he is Captain. He was also president for two years and Lord King XXVI. He finds his commitment in the organization fulfilling because he is able to interact with people who have similar tastes.

Gary has one motivation, he has always been a very active gay person and when the AIDS crises struck so many of his friends died, but yet he was still here. He felt there had to be some reason for this, something important he needed to do. How true that is, because not only that is Gary active in the city's leather world, but he has been a stalwart supporter of New Orleans and the entire gay community as a whole. And, New Orleans is better for this.

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**Garlic Shrimp Pasta** (jumbo shrimp with garlic butter sauce over angel hair pasta) @ Louisiana Pizza Kitchen, 95 French Market Place



**Occo Buco**, braised veal shank in a garlic, thyme and white wine demi with asparagus & potatoes @ Maximo's Italian Grill, 1117 Decatur St.



**Club Sandwich with Zapp's Potato Chips** @ The Decadence Shoppe, 806 N. Rampart St.



**Special Combo Pizza** (pepperoni, Italian sausage, ham, onions, mushrooms, green peppers & black olives with jalapenos & anchovies optional) @ Mona Lisa Restaurant, 1212 Royal St.



**12 oz. Blackened Ribeye** @ Bywater Restaurant, Deli & BBQ, 3162 Dauphine St.



**Gourmet Sliders with Onion Rings** @ 700 Club Restaurant, 700 Burgundy



**Custom Breakfast** @ Krystal, Bourbon St. @ Canal



**New Orleans Muffuletta** (generous helping of ham, salami, provolone and olive salad) @ Restaurant/Deli of the Year Quartermaster: The Nellie Deli, 1100 Bourbon St.



**Glazed 10 oz. Pork Chop** with Steen's Cane Syrup & Creole Mustard served with duck fat potatoes & green beans @ The Country Club, 634 Louisa St.



**Red Velvet Cupcakes** @ Who Dat Coffee Cafe, 2401 Burgundy St.



## chop chop

by Rip & Marsha Naquin-Delain  
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## New Orleans Restaurant Guide

**700 Club Restaurant**, 700 Burgundy St., 561.1095, [700ClubNewOrleans.COM](http://700ClubNewOrleans.COM), is serving sliders, paninis, quesadillas, and more at the popular club in the French Quarter. Restaurant hours are 7pm til Wed.-Sun. with extended Decadence hours.

**Bywater Restaurant, Deli & BBQ**, 3162 Dauphine St., 944.4445, is noted for its gumbo, barbeque, pizza, sandwiches and specials serving lunch and dinner. Now under the direction of Executive Chef David Duvall, the restaurant is open 11am-10pm Mon.-Tues., Thurs.-Fri.; 9am-10pm Sat.-Sun. with brunch 9am-3pm, closed Wed. MasterCard/Visa accepted.

**Cafe Amelie**, 912 Royal St., 412.8965, [CafeAmelie.COM](http://CafeAmelie.COM), offers romantic courtyard or indoor dining along with both eclectic culinary creations and cocktails. Open Wed.-Sat. with lunch 11am-3pm, dinner 6-9pm, Sun. brunch 11-3.

**Candy Bar**, 908 Bourbon, 504.52.CANDY, is a new upscale dessert & specialty food store, open 7 days & weekends 24 hours. Best in desserts, snacks, cheeses, crackers, candies, NY bagels & knishes, po-boys, wraps & sandwiches. PLUS PLUS PLUS many organic, all natural & gluten free items, also DOG TREATS.

**Clover Grill**, 900 Bourbon St., 598.1010, [CloverGrill.COM](http://CloverGrill.COM), is open 7 days and features breakfast including build your own omelettes. But let's not forget their fab burgers grilled right under a hub cap and then there's all those sandwiches, sides, desserts and shakes.

**Cooyon's Cajun Cooking!** 1100 N. Peters St., 337.339.1131, [CooyonsCajunCooking.COM](http://CooyonsCajunCooking.COM). C'est Bon! This new open air restaurant in the Historic French Market is the perfect place to enjoy some of the best Cajun cooking. Come get "U" some!

**Country Club Restaurant**, 634 Louisa St., 945.0742, [TheCountryClubNewOrleans.COM](http://TheCountryClubNewOrleans.COM). Under the direction of Chef Coy LeBeau, he has taken attention to detail and ingredient, and focused on a more contemporary menu at an even more affordable price point. Still the best food, but at even more unbelievable value! Serving 7 days 11am-10pm and Sunday Brunch 11am-3pm.

**The Decadence Shoppe**, 806 N. Rampart, 529.8874, [DecadenceShoppeCafe.COM](http://DecadenceShoppeCafe.COM) is part coffee shop, part cafe, and part bakery. "We take pride doing all our own baking, and you can order your next special treat from us," says owners Matt and Kevin. This little neighborhood place will fulfill your sweet tooth or both your breakfast or lunch cravings in a quiet setting while serving "desserts like Mom use to make". Located across the street by the Armstrong Park arch, the cafe is open Wed.-Sun. 7am - 3pm.

**The Green Goddess**, 307 Exchange Place Alley, 301.3347, [GreenGoddessNOLA.COM](http://GreenGoddessNOLA.COM), opened in May 2009 with a progressive menu that blends New Orleans sensibilities with a globetrotting sampling of ingredients, all emanating from the small open kitchen where chefs Chris DeBarr and Paul Artigues make it happen.

**Krystal**, 116 Bourbon at Canal, 523.4030. Open 24 hours, it's one of the best stops for fast food with tasty burgers, hot dogs and breakfast.

**Louisiana Pizza Kitchen**, 95 French Market Place, 522.9500 or visit [LouisianaPizzaKitchen.COM](http://LouisianaPizzaKitchen.COM), is famous for its wood fired gourmet pizzas, pastas, salads and appetizers. Open 7 days from 11am-10pm.

**Little Vic's Gelateria**, 1912 Magazine St., 309.8236, is a gay owned and operated family labor of love in the works since owner Vic Caracci learned at age 11 to make real Italian gelato from his family, three generations of Sicilian-Americans who first immigrated to New Orleans's French Quarter in 1911. Pulling from almost a century of family experience in the food industry, Vic, 23, enlisted the help of his uncle from Messina, Sicily to train he and his cousins in the detailed and fine art of gelato making. Little Vic serves over 40 inventive flavors of gelato, including stracciatella, amaretto, bacio de gama, and limoncello, as well as fresh-made panino, pastries, and Lavazza espresso. Open 11am-10:30pm 7 days.

**Maximo's Italian Grill**, 1117 Decatur St., 586.8883, [MaximosGrill.COM](http://MaximosGrill.COM), features New Orleans inspired Italian cuisine along with a wonderfully assorted wine selection. Experience Maximo's open kitchen and watch Chef Thomas Woods prepare his extraordinary dishes. Open 6pm 7 days a week.

**Moms Mini Mart**, 902 Poydras, 596.2223, is a quick stop in the CBD for hot dogs, nachos, snow balls, fresh fruit, coffee, tea, Icees and groceries. Open Mon.-Fri. 6am-7pm, Sat. 7am-7pm, open later & Sundays during special events.

**Mona Lisa Restaurant**, 1212 Royal St., 522.6746, features Italian specialties including salads, pizzas, sandwiches and both lunch and dinner entrees. Lunch 11am-5pm Thurs.-Mon., Dinner 5pm-10pm 7 days.

**Quartermaster: The Nellie Deli**, 1100 Bourbon St., 529.1416, [QuartermasterDeli.NET](http://QuartermasterDeli.NET), voted Restaurant/Deli of the Year, is open 24 hours 7 days. Serving breakfast, lunch, dinner and late night menu, the deli offers free delivery.

**Who Dat Coffee Cafe**, 2401 Burgundy St., 872.0360, offers Fair Trade gourmet coffees, teas, cupcakes, scones, coffee by the pound, gift baskets, art & merchandise by local artists, stamps & mail box rentals, along with outdoor seating & Wi-Fi. Open 7am-10pm daily.



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