

pittsburgh applause!

arts & entertainment newsletter

WGN America Cancels “Outsiders”

In a surprise move, WGN America has canceled its highest-rated scripted series, the Pittsburgh-filmed drama “Outsiders.”

WGN America is a cable channel spun off from the **Tribune Media Company’s** flagship television station, Chicago’s legendary WGN. Debuting in 2016, “Outsiders” is the saga of an isolated, paranoid Appalachian family struggling to keep control of a hill rich in coal deposits. The series is produced by Tribune and **Sony Corporation**.

Exteriors were primarily shot in the area just outside Pittsburgh, including the Henry Kafumann Family Park in Monroeville as well as parts of Millvale. Interiors were shot at 31st Street Studios.

The cancellation was a surprise. “It is currently WGN’s top-rated original, averaging 2 million viewers across four airings on Tuesday night,” writes *Variety’s* Joe Otterson.

In responding to a reader’s query, Rob Owen of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* suggests that the cancellation may be connected to rumors of a merger between Tribune and **Sinclair Broadcast Group** (owner of Pittsburgh’s WPGH-TV). “Tribune would probably

look to sell off non-core assets, which includes WGN America, and in the meantime try to cut costs. Canceling a show that cost roughly \$60 million to produce per season is a pretty efficient way to accomplish that.”

Another possible explanation may be an old fashioned change of regimes: the decision was made by Tribune’s new CEO, Peter Kern, who just came on board in March. Kern also ended its planned national digital news service only two weeks before its scheduled launch.

Meanwhile, the producers are actively seeking another outlet to air “Outsiders” before key contracts expire and the sets permanently struck.

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New TV Show Planned

Jesse Eisenberg is teaming up with J.J. Abrams’ **Bad Robot Productions** for a Pittsburgh-set television series, writes Kate Stanhope for the *Hollywood Reporter*.

“The Market” is the story of a widower and his adult son moving to Pittsburgh after each loses his job.

At press time, *Pittsburgh Applause* had no confirmation that the series will be shot in Pittsburgh but it seems likely. If so, it will be his second Pittsburgh project. The other was the 2009 feature film “Adventureland” which was primarily shot at the Kennyswood amusement park.

Read the full article at <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/jesse-eisenberg-star-bad-robot-tv-comedy-998157>

George Romero Honored

Pittsburgh film legend George Romero was honored at a special event last month by the **Steeltown Entertainment Project** (SEP).



George Romero is best known for the groundbreaking 1968 horror film "Night of the Living Dead," which was shot in Pittsburgh. As such, Romero received the Pioneer Award.

The night was also a special one for Bill Isler, the head of the **Fred Rogers Company** who received SEP's Elly Award.

"Fred Rogers and George Romero — you can't go to another town and find two people like that," SEP's Carl Kurlander told the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's* Michael Machosky. "People who 'stayed home' and built an industry."

Other honorees include special effects professionals Greg Nicotero and Steve Tolin.

You can read Machosky's article at <http://triblive.com/aande/movies/12219491-74/george-romero-to-get-steel-town-award-from-greg-nicotero>

Sinclair Hires Former Trump Aide

Controversial political strategist and investment banker Boris Epshteyn has been hired as a political commentator by **Sinclair Broadcast Group**.



Sinclair controls 173 television stations, including two in Pittsburgh (WPGH and WPNT).

Born in Moscow in 1982, he and his family emigrated to the U.S. a decade later settling in New Jersey. He later graduated from Georgetown University and worked in the finance division of the storied New York City law firm of **Milbank, Tweed, Hadley**

& McCloy (which was founded in 1866).

The 35-year-old Epshteyn is reported as being a close friend of President Donald Trump's son, Eric. He acted as a senior adviser to the Trump Campaign and was, briefly, a senior presidential advisor until his March 2017 resignation. The leading media watchdog group **Media Matters for America** claims that Epshteyn has considerable "financial ties to the former Soviet Union." It was Epshteyn who wrote Trump's controversial January 2017 statement for Holocaust Remembrance Day --- which strangely excluded any mention of the Jews (Epshteyn and his family are Jewish).

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Hearst Supports Public

The philanthropic arm of media giant **Hearst Communications** has included the **Pittsburgh Public Theater** on its list of spring 2017 foundation grant recipients.



Hearst is actually controlled by the **Heart Foundation**, which was set-up in the will of legendary founder William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951). The Hearst family still controls the company, whose assets include the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Esquire* magazine and Pittsburgh's WTAE-TV. The non-profit Pittsburgh Public Theater started in 1974 and is located in the O'Reilly Theater.

The Public received funds to support its education and outreach programming. Hearst's April 19 press release did not indicate the amount.

Read the full list of grant recipients by clicking <http://www.hearst.com/newsroom/hearst-foundations-present-spring-2017-grants>

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Actors' Equity Adds To Don Not Work List

Over the last two months, **Actors Equity Association** has added the productions listed below to their Do Not Work List: Union members are not to accept work that falls within Equity's jurisdiction without an appropriate contract.

Actors Equity has hundreds of members in Southwestern Pennsylvania who perform locally and in other markets.



The productions (some of which may have wrapped by our publication) are:

- "3/Fifths" (3-Legged Dog; New York City) is a satire on race and racism that takes place in a dystopian theme park. The title refers to the Three-Fifth Compromise refers to the controversial agreement made between the Northern and Southern states when writing the United States Constitution. The deal counted enslaved Africans as 3/4th human for the census and determining representation --- while denying them all human rights. Performances are scheduled for May 1 through May 28.
- "Absinthe" (L.A. Live; Los Angeles) is an interactive musical comedy set in a bawdy 19th Century European cabaret featuring a foul-mouthed host. Currently in production
- "Seeing You" (High Line Park; New York City) is an immersive show built around environmental storytelling. Performances are scheduled to run May 2 through June 11.
- "Speakeasy" (Boxcar Theatre; San Francisco) is an interactive show which brings audience members into a party at a Prohibition Era saloon. Currently in production.

For the complete list, click <http://actorsequity.org/NewsMedia/TakeAction/DoNotWork.4As.asp>

Art Institute Of Pittsburgh: An Update

With the first open house at the revamped, relocated Art Institute of Pittsburgh (AIP) scheduled, here is an update:

EDMC

Education Management Corporation

AIP began in 1921 and was the seed for its network of facilities across the country. Earlier this year the beleaguered **Education Management Corporation** (EMC) agreed to sell nearly all of its assets to the **Dream Center Foundation** (DCF) --- including AIP and its sister schools.

EDMC has been struggling for years, especially from lawsuits charging that the company's

schools have defrauded students and funders. The Dream Center was established by Tommy Barnett, the senior pastor at an Arizona mega-church (originally called Phoenix First Assembly of God and now Dream City Church).

Dream City is known for its theatrical worship services attracting an average 10,000 people each week. Despite this, it's something of an unexpected buyer for an institution that has long been pretty LGBT friendly with plenty of sexual minorities among its young students: Dream City's own web site clearly states that "we believe God designed mar-



riage as the union of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime."

The church and its foundation also operate numerous charitable projects, including a renovated former hospital in Los Angeles that provides assistance to recovering drug addicts, reformed gang members and single mothers.

A press release explains that "university operations will be managed by Dream Center Education Holdings, LLC under newly named CEO and Co-Chairman Brent Richardson. Mr. Richardson is a veteran in higher education administration who comes to Dream Center Education

Continued on page 11



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Writers' Conference

A reminder was emailed on April 18 that this year's 3 Rivers Screenwriters Conference will be held at **Point Park University** from May 19 through May 21.

The 3 Rivers Screenwriters Conference brings engaging and exciting speakers in the film, theater, television and publishing industries to Southwestern Pennsylvania. The three-day, nonprofit educational event provides a supportive community for aspiring and seasoned writers, filmmakers and storytellers to learn and network.

Speakers include writer/producer Ashley Edward Miller ("X-Men: First Class"), animator Karen Ruggles and story analyst Jim Mercurio among others.



"Spartans" Deal Made

A deal has been struck with the producers of NBC's "Spartan: Ultimate Team Challenge" and the **International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees** (IATSE).

IATSE represents hundreds of stage professionals in the Pittsburgh area while NBC-Universal is owned by **Comcast**, which operates the city's cable television franchise.

The reality show "Spartan" debuted in 2016 and pits two teams against each other in sports competitions. It has a crew of over 200 people who worked the first season without a union contract. But that changed last month.

An IATSE press release says that the contract "includes wages and benefits from date-of-hire, with a 10-hour daily minimum (8 hours during prep and wrap), excluding meal periods. Other enhanced provisions included a 10-hour daily turnaround and weekend turnaround, compounding meal penalties, stronger cancellation of call language, Martin Luther King, Jr., Day as a holiday, and triple time after 15 hours worked. Benefits were felt almost immediately, as the crew worked on Good Friday and was paid double time for the holiday, something they would not have received if the show had not been brought under contract."



Aviary Goes Virtual

Virtual reality (VR) comes to the Pittsburgh International Airport, thanks to the help of the **National Aviary**.



THE NATIONAL AVIARY

On April 20, a new permanent element was added to the airport called Birdy. A National Aviary press releases describes Birdy as "a new full-body virtual reality experience that gives the sensation of flying." It goes on to explain that "riders lie on the simulator chest down. Riders flap their arms using hinged wings, controlling direction and speed of their travel. A fan simulates headwinds and flying speed. Motors and actuators tilt and dip the flyer's body in response." A helmet adds to the experience by providing visuals of the New York City skyline.

Read the full press release at <https://www.aviary.org/media/news-releases/birdly-opens-april-20>



Four Losses Hit Local A&E Scene

James Wilkinson

Attorney, business executive and philanthropist James A. Wilkinson has died. He was 72.

Wilkinson was an active supporter and long-time supporter of the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** (PSO). His 4-decade service to the PSO included successfully settling a musicians' strike in 1976 and was president between 2011 and 2015.

Norman Lebrecht, writing for SlippedDisc.com, describes Wilkinson as a "quiet man whose shy smile concealed a sharp brain, he was the antithesis of the usual type of board member who demands bang for buck. Jim worked consensually with his board, the musicians and the community to keep the orchestra alive. He loved music and was well loved in return."

Keith Andrews

Keith Andrews, the president of Pittsburgh-based **NEP Group**, has died from a sudden heart attack. He was 57.

NEP Group provides television production services for clients across the globe. The company began in 1984 as a component of Scranton television station WNEP. It was spun off as its own company two years later. Today, NEP is primarily owned by private equity firm **Crestview Partners**.

The Australian native first joined NEP at the firm's Sydney facilities in 2010 and moved to Pittsburgh in 2015 to become chief operating officer.

Jonathan Demme

Jonathan Demme, the director of the award-winning film "Silence of the Lambs" died on April 26. The movie was shot in the Pittsburgh area; Demme was 73.

Adapted from the best-selling novel written by author Thomas Harris, "Silence" is the chilling story of a young federal agent (Jodie Foster) who must rely on the advice of a sinister cannibal (Anthony Hopkins) to catch another serial killer. Most of the film was shot in and around Pittsburgh. "Silence" eventually won six Academy Awards, including Best Director for Demme.

Jonathan Demme entered the film world by working with legendary B-movie director Roger Corman on the 1971 film "Angels Hard as They Come."

Vito Acconci

Trailblazing artist, poet and architect Vito Acconci has died, reported Gareth Harris in *The Art Newspaper*. He was 77.

Acconci is best known for his installation pieces. Among these is his public art work "Cat/Birth of the Boat" which was presented in 1988 as part of that year's Three Rivers Arts festival. A description and images are available at http://www.vitoacconci.org/portfolio_page/birth-of-the-car-birth-of-the-boat-1988-drawing/

Born in the Bronx, he first turned to poetry in his 20s as part of the heady Greenwich Village scene in the 1960's. But by the 1970s he turned to installation and performance art. He was married to Rosemary Mayer (1943-2014), who was known for her feminist art and conceptual works.

Images

Celebrate Pittsburgh's arts & entertainment history and community.



They look cool and sound cool but members of the popular band Chainsmokers could probably spend a little more time in high school English class. During their April concert at PPG Paints Arena, the band got social media buzzing by displaying a banner proudly declaring themselves in "Pittsburg." (no h)

To have an image considered contact Jim Richards at jim@james-richards.com

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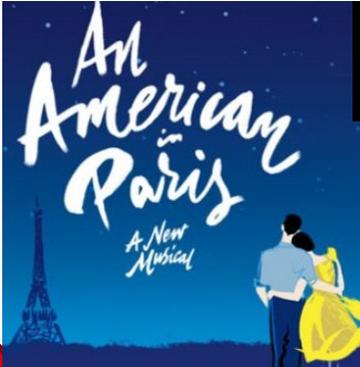
FRI
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SUN
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TUE
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Opportunities

Roles are being cast this month at **City Theatre** for their 2017-2018 season. Auditions for Equity principals is scheduled for May 12, 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. For a list of plays and roles, click <http://www.citytheatrecompany.org/inside-city/auditions-and-employment/>

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra appears to still be seeking a videographer. They need someone who can take a project from concept through to completion. Download the information by clicking https://assets.culturaldistrict.org/culturaldistrict/system/assets/18024/original/Video_Producer.pdf

Actors who can pass for teenagers are needed as extras for the indie film adaptation of the graphic novel *Greek Goddess* written by Eleni Romanias. Visit <https://www.greekgoddessmovie.com/>

A tour guide is being sought for Meadowcroft. Details are available at: <http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Meadowcroft-Interpreter-Tour-Guide-2017.pdf>

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's web site continues to display a call for a full-time public relations director. This person will supervise all media relations. Click https://www.trustarts.org/pct_home/about/employment/

12 Peers Theater is auditioning for their 2017 season. Visit <http://setreel.com/casting/12-peers-theaters-2017-season-audition>

It appears that **CBS Corp.** is still looking for producers and on-air talent for the company's local radio stations. Details are available at <http://cbscorporation.jobs/pittsburgh/pennsylvania/usa/jobs/>

The Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh has several creative positions available, including a part-time community artist at the Art Museum and program presenters at the Science Center. To see the full list at <http://www.carnegiemuseums.org/interior.php?pageID=12>

WPXI-TV is looking for a graphic designer to work on its news programs. The **Cox Enterprises** station is also seeking a production assistant, digital content producers and other professionals. Visit <https://jobs.coxmediagroup.com/search-jobs/15222%20Pittsburgh%2C%20PA/1646/4/6252001-6254927-5178040-5206379/40x44062/-79x99589/50/2>



Elvis Duran Renews Pact

Popular radio personality Elvis Duran has inked a new five-year deal with **iHeartMedia** to continue his hit morning show.



Formerly Clear Channel Communications, iHeartMedia owns 858 radio stations across the country including six in Pittsburgh. However, none of them air his show.

Duran's show is described by the company as connecting "listeners with up-to-the-minute entertainment and pop culture news, hit songs, entertainment features and celebrity interviews with the biggest names in music and entertainment."

The four-hour program debuted in 1996.

Beware of hot dudes bearing gifts.



www.farawayhill.net

Sinclair Hires Ex Trump Aide

Continued from page 2

"Over a year ago, we made a commitment to provide additional political content that goes beyond the podium to provide a true point of difference with additional context," said Sinclair's Scott Livingston in a company press release. "We understand the frustration with government and traditional institutions. Mr. Epshteyn brings a unique perspective to the political conversation and will play a pivotal role in our mission to dissect the stories in the headlines and to better inform and empower our viewers"

Sinclair itself is no stranger to political controversy and claims of a conservative bias. Although publically traded, the company is still largely controlled by the family of founder Julian Sinclair Smith. Its history and these controversies are well documented at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinclair_Broadcast_Group

Epshteyn's title is Chief Political Strategist and will appear on Sinclair-produced newscasts providing his point of view on current issues.



**Channel
Pittsburgh**

Art Institute Update

Continued from page 4

Holdings, LLC having most recently been a principal participant in the transformation of Grand Canyon University from a fledgling Phoenix-based residential school of 1,000 students to one of the largest residential and online institutions of higher education in America."

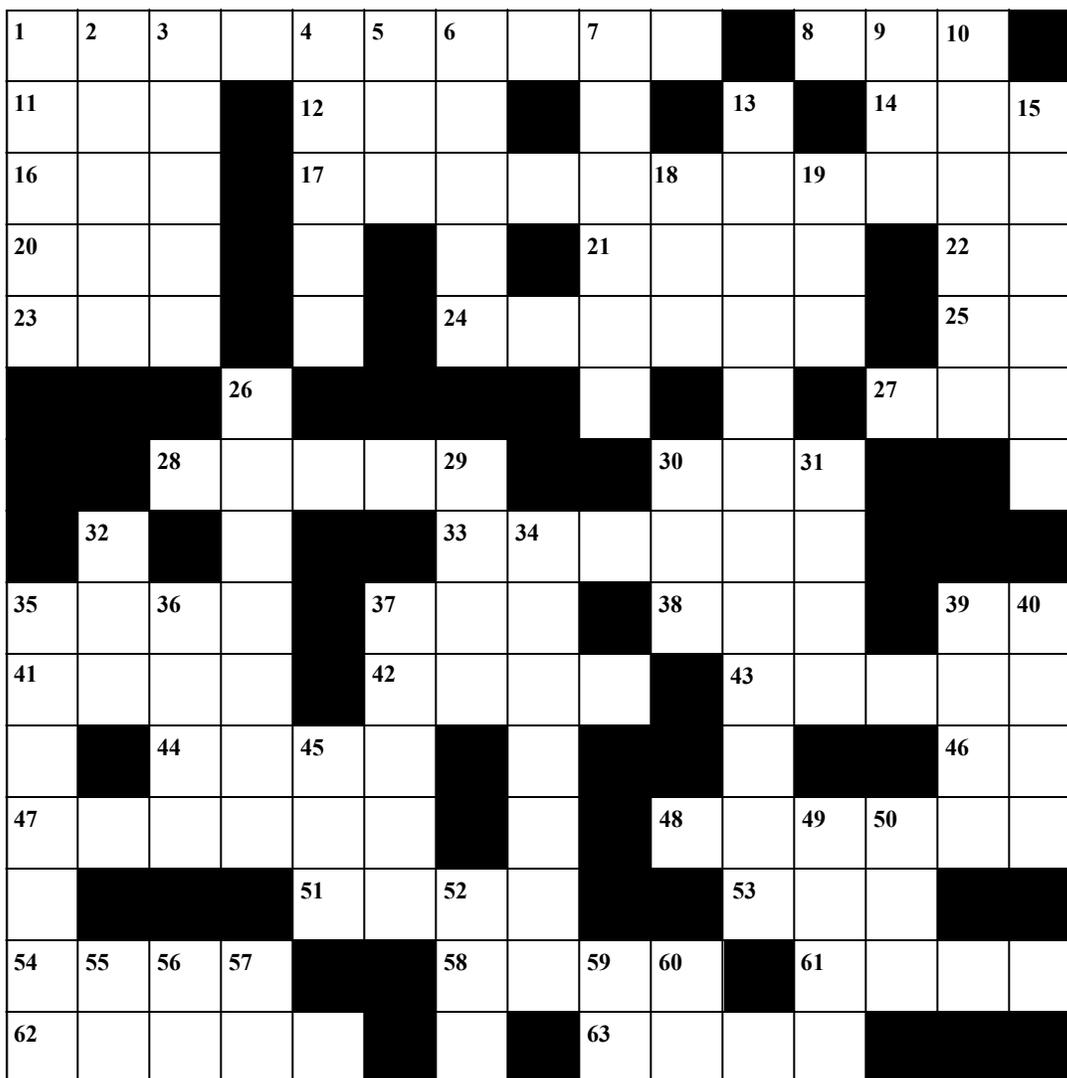
AIP is now located at 1400 Penn Avenue (near 14th Street) in the Strip District. This low-rise structure once housed the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, a state organization that provides specialized education services to 42 suburban public school districts.

The school is having its first open house May 20 at 9:30 a.m.



THE APPLAUSE PUZZLE

“May Birthdays of the Famous”



ACROSS

1. Original “Jeopardy” host (May 1)
8. Frat party need
11. Patriotic ladies’ grp.
12. Ms. Hagan, to pals
14. Toss
16. “Monologues” writer (with 16-Across) (May 25)
17. Cute “Glee” guy (May 27)
20. Ms. Thompson, to pals
21. Rabbit, by another name
22. Classic iPhone puzzle
23. Pittsburgh or New York, per the clock (briefly)
24. “Ebony & Ivory” singer (with 33-Across) (May 13)
25. 1999 Jay Mohr movie
27. Cartoon scream
28. 1979 Cliff Robertson movie
30. Likely
33. See 24-Across
35. More than few, less than many
37. Pen brand that you flick
38. It can be pale
39. NYU professor, briefly

41. Rind
42. Palindromic man’s name
43. “Futurama” lady
44. Yemini port city
46. “Guardians” world
47. See 62-Across
48. See 16-Across
51. Oregon town
53. Lead-in to logy or cashing
54. Grand tale
58. Famous Broadway “Auntie”
61. Fancy pitcher
62. Ozzie and Harriet’s boy (with 47-Across) (May 8)
63. “Tonight” host that fa mously walked away (with 40-Down) (May 1)

DOWN

1. “All I Ask” singer (May 5)
2. Praises
3. Candy, foe example
4. See 10-Down

5. Zurich school, briefly
6. Wal and K
7. Munches
9. Santa’s helper
10. “Star Wars” creator (with 4-Down) (May 14)
13. “90210” actress (May 16)
15. “Blue Lagoon” star (with 26-Down) (May 31)
18. Cleveland player, briefly
19. Grant’s war foe
26. See 15-Down
29. Fool
30. Brit artist Swanwick, to pals
31. Oak or elm
32. Foot extension
34. “The Help” Star (with 34-Down) (May 25)
35. See 34-Down
36. Lunch or dinner
37. Austrian composer Giuseppe
39. Drift ice
40. See 63-Across
45. Years and years and years
49. Look for
50. Not high

52. “No more!?”; briefly
55. Never ending number
56. Gosling drummer (init.)
57. Famed designer (init.)
59. “Thriller” singer, briefly
60. Individually, briefly

Last Month’s Solution

F	U	N	T	A		C	H	I	P	P	E	R		
R	O	A	R	E	D		H	L	O	U	E			
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For more information, contact Jim at jim@james-richards.com



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