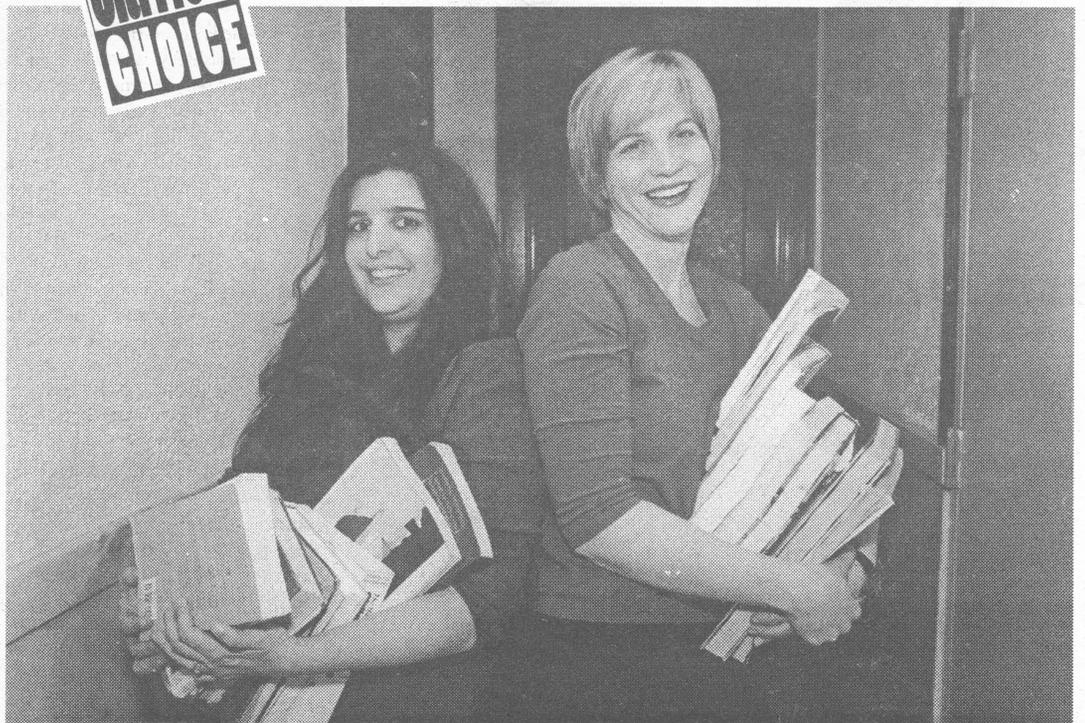


CRITIC'S
CHOICE

PHOTO/JIM NEWBERRY

Barrie Cole, Theresa Sofianos

Book Marks

Books have a mystical place in our culture: they're signifiers of wisdom, vessels of secret knowledge, repositories of private longings. Recommending a book is a coded communication: by suggesting this title at this time I tell you something about myself and about what I think of you. Loaning a book is an act of intimacy. Yet the myriad meanings of books remain largely unexamined, especially in the performance-art world, which has long been ambivalent about books and the printed word. Now Barrie Cole and Theresa Sofianos have curated a series of pieces, "Book Marks," that address this omission. With her trademark verbal pyrotechnics, Cole wittily reveals in *This Book* the dark, obsessive side to having a favorite tome. Pate Conaway and Julie Caffey show, through dance and storytelling, how exchanging books forged a bond

between them. Not every piece I saw last weekend felt complete, however. Eric Ziegenhagen has a winning stage presence, but his brief memoir of a trip he made to Nova Scotia, *Untitled*, is fragmentary and unsatisfying. Balancing it out was a thoroughly entertaining and enlightening piece by Beth Ann Bryant-Richards—a humorous, heartfelt contemplation of how romance novels gave her unrealistic expectations of love. Link's Hall, 3435 N. Sheffield, 773-281-0824. Through March 11: Fridays-Saturdays, 8 PM; Sundays, 7 PM. Scheduled for Friday, March 9: Cole, Doug Stapleton, Hans Stern and Jackie Allen, Karen Sorenson, and Gina Buccola. For Saturday, March 10: Sofianos, Cole, 4 Tell, Buccola, and Kate Thomas. For Sunday, March 11: Grace Fill, G.C. Guard, Sofianos, Stapleton, and Sorenson. \$10.

—Jack Helbig

Saturdays, 4, 7, and 10 PM; Sundays, 3 and 6 PM. \$39-\$49 (\$43-\$53 starting March 27).

Book Marks

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Brave New Cabaret

The Thin Man performance group presents an evening of clowning. Pontiac Cafe, 1531 N. Damen, 773-330-0937. Through March 13: Tuesdays, 10:00 PM. \$5 donation.

Burkhart Underground: An Artists' Studio

This weekly performance event features spoken word and music, with featured acts sharing the evening with an open mike. Burkhart Studios, 2845 N. Halsted, 773-348-8536. Open run: Sundays, 8:30 PM (doors open 7 PM). \$4 donation (includes all beverages).

Cafe Aloha Circus

David and Victoria Rubin host a program of spoken-word performance and music. Café Aloha, 2156 W. Montrose, 773-274-3514. Open run: Tuesdays, 8 PM. Free, but a donation will be requested.

Children's Poetry Slam

April Preyar hosts a participatory spoken-word performance. African American Images, 1909 W. 95th, 773-445-7822. Saturday, March 10, noon. Free.

Christian Poets Society

There's no registration required for this spoken-word open mike: "we flow in the spirit," a press release promises. Subway poet Dr. Groove hosts. Noah's Ark, 3428 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr., 312-225-1420. March 17 and 31 and April 7 and 21. Saturdays, 1 PM. Free.