

Fag bashers beware — drags will fight back

by Jay Brown

Doric Wilson, whose play *West Street Gang* is currently running at JR's Cell, lived for the past 25 years in New York's Greenwich Village. For most of that period Wilson worked as a bartender, he listened to the people on the front side of the bar and used what he heard in the plays he has written.

West Street Gang takes place in a seedy bar run by a mafioso type who continuously changes the name of his bar in vain attempts to make a buck. Like the other characters in the play, Danny (Kevin Koesel) is a stereotype (Wilson used a similar character in *Street Theater*). As with all stereotypes, Danny is one-dimensional, and by extension, the play, peopled with depthless characters, is also one-dimensional.

But because Wilson listens, he knows how to write dialogue. His characters speak in natural rhythms; the dialogue in *West Street Gang* is a series of one-liners in faggot patois, and it is hilarious, in particular the Heckle and Jeckle style of the leather couple, Jack (Alan McGuire) and Marley (Steve Mount).

The West Street gang is a hoodlum tribe which preys upon the gay population of West Street and environs. Colorado (Jerry West) enters the bar; he's just been mugged by the gang. While Colorado is telling his story, two of New York's finest, Bonny (Cain Warren) and Clyde (Leslie Waygren) bull their way into the bar looking for the person responsible for illegally chaining his bicycle to a parking meter.

The two cops ignore Colorado's plight, intimating that because he is gay he deserved the bashing he received. They give a ticket to the owner of the bicycle, Virgo (Darrell Geisler), a stoned hippy, confiscate Marley's inhaler and depart. So much for police protection.

Near the end of the first act the leader of the West Street gang is caught and trussed up by a drag queen who had left the bar and been attacked by the gang. The drag, Shanghai Lil (Dora Jar), had entered the bar in leather and changed costumes in the toilet. (The drag queen as hero is Wilson's homage to the street drags who first fought back at the Stonewall Bar in June, 1969).

The remainder of the play hinges on the problem of what to do with Lil's prize, Butch (Dennis Seals). After dialing 911 and getting no answer, the patrons set up a kangaroo court, try, and convict Butch for fag bashing and murder.

Ironically, *West Street Gang* falls flat at the end. Wilson could have made a strong statement for vigilantism — gays must fight brutality with brutality since the establishment denies them; even the Gay Defense League sells them out to opportunism — but this point is lost in the last minutes. Maybe if the play had ended with Butch being carried to the backroom to be "broken in," as his sentence had dictated, the ending would have been stronger. Such an ending would certainly have been a shocker; but as it is, the ending is garbled and confused.

One wonders whether in rewriting *West Street Gang* Wilson was influenced by the



Dee Dee Van Zyl in *Sore Throats*.

garbled politics of the '80s, thus defeating the communal spirit of the '60s, of which *West Street Gang* is surely a product.

West Street Gang continues at JR's Cell Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at the door. Get there early; seating is limited.

Entertainment notes

Hot on the heels of its recent hit production of Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*, Sirius Productions announces another slightly-less-than-mainstream presentation, Howard Brenton's *Sore Throats*. This 1979 work will open downtown at the Critical Mass Theatre, 938 Northwest Everett, on April 13th.

In *Sore Throats*, Brenton affords his audience a rare opportunity to see inside the characters, to simultaneously hear their inner and outer voices. Although the setting (all action takes place in a London flat) and the cast of characters (a man and woman about to be divorced, and her new female roommate) are typical enough, the themes are weighty, conflicts universal, and their theatrical treatment unique. Howard Brenton was a significant part of London's "Fringe" movement in the late '60s and early '70s; *Sore Throats* will give Portland audiences a good chance to experience a work that perhaps helped change the shape of modern drama. Directed by Susan LeClerc, the cast will feature DeeDee VanZyl, Steven Clark Pachosa, and Kelly Brooks.

Sore Throats will open Friday, April 13th at 8:00 p.m. and run through Saturday, May 19th. Performances are at 8:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and at 7:00 p.m. on Sundays. Reservations can be made by phoning 224-9481.

Zamfir, the "King of the Pan Flute," will make his debut in Portland at Civic Audi-

torium, April 5, at 8 p.m. Gheorghe Zamfir, a native of Romania, was born in 1941, and began his musical career at fourteen.

Zamfir's fame has spread via his recordings, for which he has been awarded 33 platinum records. His first album, "Ete d'amour," received unanimous praise, but it was his second album, "Music by Candlelight," that won him huge international recognition, Zamfir's unique sound can be enjoyed on four domestically distributed titles.

Commonly recognized as being one of the oldest instruments in the world, the pan flute's origin is described in the pages of Greek mythology, embroidered by folkloric fancy. But despite the mists of legend, the pan flute holds no secrets for Zamfir.

Zamfir spends a great deal of time composing and arranging works for solo flute, pan flute, and pan flute with orchestra. As one of the very few masters of the instrument in the entire world, he feels a strong obligation to teach and so retains many students in Paris and Switzerland.

Tickets for the Zamfir concert are now on sale at Celebrity Attractions, 1010 SW Morrison St., Portland 97205; Stevens Jewelers, Lloyd Center and Salem; GI Joe's, all locations; Civic Auditorium Box Office.

1984, George Orwell's futurist novel of totalitarian oppression has come of age; on April 4, Northwest Repertory will present a stage adaptation of the famous book under the direction of L. Wayne Paulus at the Professional Artists Theatre Building, 3536 SE 26th. 1984, will run through April 15, Wednesday-Saturday evenings at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. The Sunday performances will be followed by discussions with director Paulus and cast.

Starring as the outlaw lovers Winston Smith and Julia are Bill Merckens and Karen Hallmark; completing the cast are John Rocha as Parsons, Heather Lee as Gladys, Mark Simmer as O'Brien, and Jim Lovelace,

Lisa Bissell, Stephen Clark, and Stan Stanfill. 1984, by George Orwell; PAT Building, 3536 SE 26th, 241-2440.

Christmas at Juniper Tavern by Oregon playwright Charles Deemer, was premiered in January by the New Rose Theatre and now a videotaped version is on tap for broadcast in April.

The play was taped with the original cast on the stage of the Wilson Center for the Performing Arts. The cast includes Vana O'Brien, Rollie Wulff, Gary Brickner-Schulz, Joanna Malandrucolo, B. Joe Medley, Karen Voss, Elaine Edstrom, Steve Smith and Jane Titus.

The television production is a joint venture of Charles Jennings Productions, a local independent film and video production company, Rogers Cablesystems, the New Rose Theatre, and Oregon Public Broadcasting. Following editing and final post production, the feature-length television drama will be seen on Rogers Cablesystems Arts Channel and state-wide on the television stations of Oregon Public Broadcasting. Rogers Cablesystems will air *Christmas at Juniper Tavern* at 9 p.m., Friday, April 6, and 9 p.m., Monday, April 9, and on Oregon Public Broadcasting's Channel 10 at 9 p.m., Sunday, April 14.

Christmas at the Juniper Tavern is a comedy revolving around the events occurring on Christmas Day in the mythical community of Juniper in Central Oregon. You see, there's this Swami who moved in one the outskirts of town...

The New Rose Theatre premiere performance received praise from reviewers and sell out audiences during its January/February run.

The highly acclaimed Houston Ballet will bring its superb production of "Sleeping Beauty" to Portland. This full-evening performance will take place Friday and Saturday the 6th and 7th of April at 7:00 p.m. A matinee will also be performed at 1:00 p.m. on April 7th. All performances will be held at the Portland Civic Auditorium.

Houston Ballet tours more than any other company in the United States including the San Francisco Ballet. Houston's dancers come in various shapes and sizes and represent an ethnic mix. The company is led by Li Cunxin who left Peking for Houston in 1981 and Janie Parker, the first woman from the United States to win the Gold Medal in the Women's Senior Division at the International Ballet Competition. Portland's Kevin Poe is a soloist with the Houston Ballet. After only two years with the Company, Kevin was promoted to the level of soloist for the 1982-83 season because of the great critical acclaim he has received and his outstanding performances.

Sleeping Beauty tickets are now on sale at Celebrity Attractions, 1010 SW Morrison St., Portland, OR 97205; Portland Civic Auditorium Box Office; G.I. Joe's, Portland and Salem; Stevens Jewelers, Lloyd Center and Salem.

Meg Christian, Olivia recording artist, will be in Portland on April 21 at the Northwest Service Center for one performance. Appearing with Christian are Diane Lindsey and Sue Fink. The event will be interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing by Debra Westwood. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance and \$8.50 at the door.