

Just entertainment

Just Between Us

A series of one acts is the Portland Women's Theatre Company's best production ever

BY SANDRA DE HELEN

Portland Women's Theatre Company is currently producing *Just Between Us*, an evening of one-acts performed by five of the company members, including Kathay Duff, who also directs.

Theatre

The pieces share the common theme of relationships, but are otherwise a departure from what has become the usual eight lesbians in a kitchen talking about relationships. The current production includes *This Property is Condemned*, by Tennessee Williams, as well as a brand new piece (and first play) by Leslea Newman, *After All We've Been Through*. The other pieces are *Movie Queens* by Claudia Allen; *Walt Was Wrong* by Kathay Duff; and *Beauty Standards* by Kate Kasten and Sandra de Helen.

The program opens with *Movie Queens*, and is the weakest in terms of writing, acting, and directing. The play moves back and forth (too rapidly for comfort) between current day and fifty years ago, forcing the two actors to shift from old age to their youth and back. All except the first transformation happened onstage, which was a good direction choice, but when the women changed in and out of their costumes several times the audience began to snicker. The love scenes, however, were realistic and warm, and the actors relaxed.

The second play is Williams' piece. His writing is glaringly brilliant — as clear and clean as the white sky is — this poignant one-act about a young girl abandoned by all she ever loved. Willie is poayed with tenderness and vulnerability by Stephanie Torres described as "the next Meryl Streep"). Both Torres and Kathay Duff (Tom) used the proper accents and maintained them throughout. Duff plays Tom, an androgynous adolescent, and is appropriate for the role, threatening when called for.

Duff's *Walt Was Wrong*, first seen in Portland four years ago as part of X-Wives' *Buried Personalities*, continues to create interest

and deliver its message. The script is tight, and was acted with excellence by Millhouse and Torres. Millhouse breathed fire into the role of Malificent (the witch from *Sleeping Beauty* as if she were born to it. Her makeup and costume enhanced her beauty. Torres was the spoiled, pretty princess who rebels against her destiny. Given her talent, skill, and young, feminine good looks, Torres could turn her back on the community and choose only the ingenue roles in straight theater — (she has played in *West Side Story*, *Chapter Two*, and *The Boyfriend*). It is to her credit and the community's benefit that she does not. Her energy is inspirational, and she adds to the company's talent store.

Duff plays opposite Mary Miles in *Beauty Standards*, which is about the things society tells women about their bodies, which they then internalize. The play is a series of one-liners that two women at the beach deliver to each other as if they were actually engaged in conversation (much the way women talk in public restrooms). Duff and Miles bring physical humor and good timing to the lines and allow the audience to laugh at themselves. The costumes in this play are very clever and add a

dimension of surrealism that keeps the audience from judging the actors' own bodies.

The final piece could be called *Conflict City*, it is so filled with bickering and bantering. Torres and Faith McDevitt play *After All We've Been Through* so realistically it was as if you are being allowed to watch their personal lives unfold before us. The tension intensifies as you are led through co-dependence issues, flashing back to the initial attraction, forward to the honeymoon and its end, forward through three years of constant fighting, to the present day and the necessary decision of whether or not to continue the relationship. The dialogue is quick and repetitive, which adds to the realism, but the transformation of the characters is slight which weakens the ending. The acting saves this play; in fact, the acting in the current production is the best this writer has seen from the company.

Company members say that this is the best play the Portland Women's Theatre Company has ever done. Since these were members of the technical crew — who see every production twenty to forty times — they are in-the-know. This is one evening of theater which should not be missed.

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PHOTO BY IRENE YOUNG

Williamson-Trull at Starry Night

Cris Williamson and Teresa Trull, two of the finest voices to soar out of the women's music scene, will stop at Starry Night in Portland on May 20. The Williamson-Trull concert, which begins at 8:30 pm, will celebrate their new release *Country Blessed* on Second Wave Records.

Throughout the past two decades, Cris Williamson has been one of the most successful artists in independent music. Her albums have sold in the millions and she has played virtually every major concert hall in the country. Williamson's successes on Olivia

Records (parent to Second Wave) have included 11 albums, a children's album, and two songbooks.

Teresa Trull is a vocal dynamo who combines a gutsy rock and roll style and enviable songwriting talents. Trull's Carolina gospel background is combined with blues, R&B, rock-and-roll and unlimited vocal energy to make her performances unforgettable.

An evening with Cris Williamson and Teresa Trull runs the full spectrum from the tenderest of ballads to 18-wheeler driving rhythms.

Tickets at \$13 are available at A Woman's Place Bookstore, Powell's Books, Mother Kali's and all Ticketmaster locations. This is a smoke free concert. Over 21, please. Wheelchair accessible.

Reel Proud rolls 'round again

The second lesbian and gay film festival, Reel Proud, will light up the Northwest from June 24-27. The festival will again be held at Cinema 21 and coordinated by Tom Ranieri with help from *Just Out*.

Films under consideration include *The Virgin Machine*, directed by Monica Trout, the story of a young journalist who travels to America in search of romance — and her elusive mother; *Lotte, Dolly and Maria*, a

documentary by Rosa von Praunheim, featuring three elderly women who left Germany during the 1930s to live in the United States. Other films are Jaime Humberto Hermosillo's *Dona Herlinda and Her Son*, the gay classic *We Were One Man* from France, a very popular documentary about the Thompson-Kowalski case called *Lifetime Commitment*. And a longshot, Frank Ripplöh's *Taxi to Cairo*, which promises to be a highlight of the 13th San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. Local film buffs may recall that Ripplöh's *Taxi zum Klo* became one of the genuinely gay comedy hits of all time.