

# just entertainment

## Confrontransformational theater

**Tacit Agreements: Graded Lessons in Sitting in a Chair**  
written, directed, and performed by Carol Steinel.

BY SANDRA DE HELEN

Maybe you remember confrontational theater, maybe you don't. If you do you may not miss it or you may have loved it. Carol Steinel is bringing it back with a twist: this time it's caring. Her two hour show is created for us, the audience, and confronts us, stretches us, pushes us to our limits, but cares about us all the way.

Lights come up on a bare black stage with only a dictionary, an easel and a video monitor to entertain our expectant eyes. Your Instructor appears. She is tough; she has guts; she's going to grade you. But she gives you

"reality on demand," a "love it or leave it" clause (money back guarantee), and lessons on how to get those good grades so many of us strive for.

Don't go to this show expecting escape. Do go expecting transformation. Not only onstage

*Theatre*

— you may experience transformation in yourself as you give your attention to the entertaining and enlightening characters Steinel so expertly creates. For example, Mylanta, an Amazon in black leather armor,

explains to us why it is that women have been oppressed for the past five thousand years. You may be surprised!

Then there's Your Instructor. She is everything an instructor should be — and more. She is knowledgeable; she shares information with her students; she gives her students an out; she destroys myths; she loves her students.

After a suitable period of training, we — the all important audience — hear the voices of the eighties. This is where true transformation, in every sense of the word,

takes place.

I was allowed to see *Your Instructor* and Mylanta in a preview of *Tacit Agreements*. The show had not opened at deadline time. However, I am going to take a tiny risk (in comparison to the risks Steinel is taking with this production) and encourage you to see it. If you've seen her previous performances you know she is a capable and versatile performer. And this script is one we've been waiting for (without perhaps being aware of it) for years. Welcome to confrontransformational theater! ▼

## Projected images: Vito Russo and *The Celluloid Closet*

Vito Russo loves the movies. His recently revised book, *The Celluloid Closet*, is the definitive history of homosexuality in film — it even includes a necrology section that lists the ways most gay characters end up in the movies (suicide and violent murders top the list).

## Cinema

*How have gay film characters evolved over the past 25 years?*

There's really been no evolution. We have the same sort of fag jokes that we had in the '40s. Hollywood movies are made for white, straight teenagers, and, if anything, they've gotten more homophobic over the last ten or fifteen years.

*Has it gotten worse since the AIDS epidemic began?*

Absolutely. But there's not more homophobia. AIDS is just an excuse for the homophobia that has always been there to be more blatant now.

*What about lesbians; have they fared better lately?*

Lesbianism is virtually invisible on the American screen, and when it is portrayed it's almost always in a predatory, nasty way like in *She's Gotta Have It*.

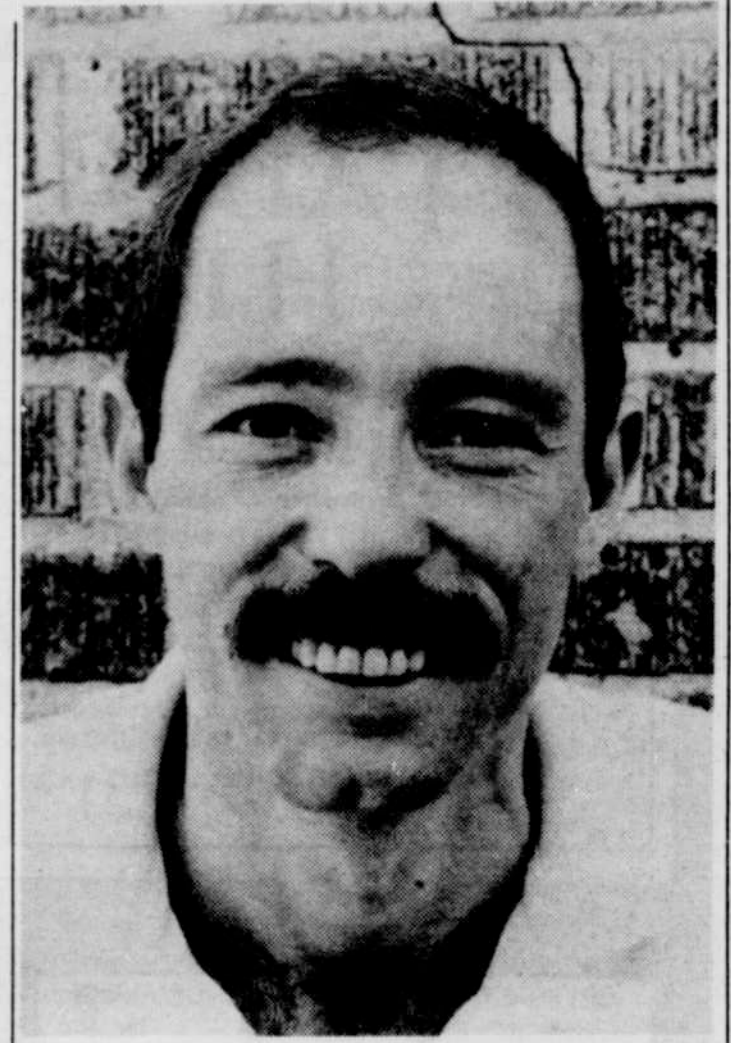
*Are there any films which treat gay or lesbian characters positively?*

You get an occasional film, but the best you can hope to do is find a film that's not offensive. It's almost too much to ask for a film that's positive. For example the Cher character [a lesbian] in *Silkwood* was not judged negatively by the script or the director, but you don't ever get a film where two women end up together except in an independent film like *Desert Hearts*.

Movies are not meant to show the diversity of who lives on this planet; they're a fantasy of the way white, middle-class heterosexuals think life should be.

*How do you react to the emperor's homosexuality being omitted in *The Last Emperor*?*

Historical figures who are gay in real life traditionally end up heterosexual or deleted on the screen. *Queen Christina* (1933) with Greta



Garbo portrayed the queen of Sweden as a heterosexual rather than as a lesbian. Cole Porter was changed to a heterosexual in his screen biography, *Night and Day*. More recently, John Malkovich's character in *Empire of the Sun* was gay in the novel.

*What do you predict for gay characters in the future?*

The truth is that things you expect to take five years take fifty, so incrementally things will change. We're going to see a lot more outrageousness, but not politicized gayness. The issue of homosexuality is being pushed to the forefront because of AIDS, but just like the Vietnam War, we won't see a discussion of those issues until AIDS is over and it will be over some day.

*What movies do you recommend to a conscientious gay or lesbian moviegoer?*

Most gay people are as unconscious as most straight people. If they want lesbian and gay movies that reflect their lives, they should go to their video store and rent independents like *Parting Glances*, *Desert Hearts* and *My Beautiful Laundrette*.

— Howie Baggadonutz

Vito Russo will bring his unique program and film clips to Cinema 21 at 9 p.m., Friday, June 23, to kick off the Second Portland Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. See page 23 for schedule information.

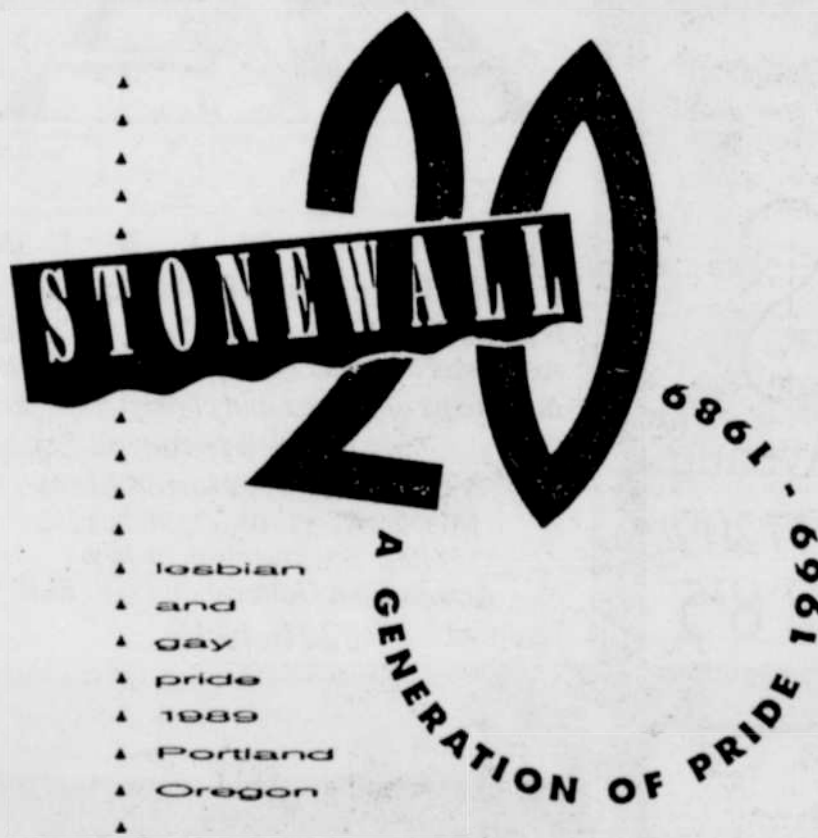


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