

just entertainment

Dangerous, wild, and wonderful

Comic Carol Steinel has made a personal commitment to come out as a lesbian at every opportunity

BY SANDRA DE HELEN

She's dangerous! Carol Steinel is a "dangerous" lesbian comic who's found her niche as a performer by combining enlightened comedy with humor-ous and tragic songs that touch our hearts, minds and souls.

Steinel recently invited an audience to attend her show for free in order to create a video tape for auditioning purposes. (She's hoping to open for Cris Williamson.) Cafe Mocha was filled to capacity with fans. Some were women, some were men, all were lesbians by virtue of the fact that Carol waved her wand and made us all "honorary lesbians." This allowed us the freedom to laugh knowingly at what otherwise might have been considered inside jokes. No one dare reproach us for laughing at something we "knew nothing about."

Steinel is a master of character creation, and was able to show us the essence of many people via words alone, or — as in one of her Hate Trilogy songs written in response to the Yes On 8 campaign, "God is Love," — with just a certain smile.

In this wild and wonderful 90 minutes, the audience was brought to its knees with side-splitting laughter, to tears when Carol sang "Dying for Love," and to its feet in a thunderous, spontaneous, standing ovation at the end of the evening.

Steinel looks to the future with her plans to become a shoe tie tutor early in the next century, when the 80s generation realizes they've grown up with velcro closures on their Nikes and long for the nostalgic tennis shoes their parents wore in the 60s.

Her brilliant analysis of how many relatives per square foot a person can stand before losing her mind hit home on so many levels the audience was beside itself. One of her theories of "relativity" claims that the amount of housecleaning that will take place prior to a relative's visit is directly inversely proportional to how much that relative is liked. The more comfortable you feel with you mother the less you'll pick up. And vice versa.

Steinel is no slouch of a songwriter either. She opened with "I'm Dangerous," her musical explanation of why society is afraid of lesbians, Carol in particular. The lyrics are hilarious; the melody is catchy; the words are easy to remember. If this were a single, we would soon all be singing it at the bus stop. Her tribute to Kansas, called something like "Oregon Mountains," invites the whole state to join us out here.

Steinel has become a spokeswoman for the gay community since the "No on 8" debacle. She made a personal commitment to come out as a lesbian at every opportunity so that society could begin to know — and maybe to accept — the lesbians they work, play, and ride to work with. She has gone public in The Oregonian in the first week of a new job working for the City, and has taken her stand over and over. She emcees the monthly coffeehouses at Cafe Mocha, and performs publicly in one form or another regularly. In this community, one would have to call this a meteoric rise to fame.

Why is a dangerous lesbian named Carol Steinel suddenly so popular with the rest of us? We've never needed a spokesperson more than we do now. We cannot afford to allow the lesbian and gay rights movement fade away as the feminist movement has. Gay men died in record numbers in the 80s, and AIDS remains an epidemic as we enter the 90s, although we have seen a radical change in lifestyle as a result. Women and men have banded together as never before to deal with this awful scourge, and as treatments are found, a cure produced (as we all pray it will be, and soon) — no thanks to our government — we must retain this alliance, and produce a Gay 90s like the world has never seen.

Carol Steinel is a spokeswoman we can count on to honor her commitment, to listen to our feedback, to represent our community with honesty and integrity — and best of all with an enlightened creativity that we can all enjoy. Music and comedy make the hardest medicine go down with the greatest of ease, and Carol produces both in the exact dosage that the doctor ordered.

Lanford Wilson mini-festival

Two theater companies in Portland are currently presenting plays by Lanford Wilson, America's greatest gay playwright. For more than thirty years, Wilson has been in the vanguard of gay theater in this country with such plays as *Balm in Gilead*, *The Madness of Lady Bright* and many more with strong gay themes.

The main character of Wilson's *Fifth of July* is a gay, paraplegic veteran of the war in Vietnam. The play won several awards and has been produced in theaters across the country for many years.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival Portland is presenting Wilson's most recent play, *Burn This*, a farce set in Manhattan. *Burn This* will continue through February 10. Call 248-4496 for information.

Gary O'Brien is directing the Oregon premiere of Wilson's *Talley and Son* at Columbia Theater Company on SE Hawthorne. *Talley and Son* continues the saga of the Talley family of St. Louis. Other plays in the series are *Fifth of July* and *Talley's Folly*. *Talley and Son* continues at the Columbia Theater through February 24. Call 232-7005 for information.

means of restraint opens Rainforest season

Rainforest Theatre begins its new season with the production of *means and restraint*, the most recent play by Portland playwright, Michael Scott Reed.

means of restraint is about three women who reunite after a ten year estrangement to put things right with each other and the world. Like Reed's earlier plays, *seven sundays* and *the victory party*, *means of restraint* is drawn with compassion, humor, drama and insight into the human condition.

The story is set in Camille's painting studio in Portland. Diane, a housewife and mother, arrives to confront Camille about her affair with Diane's husband. Camille, in turn, confronts Diane with her refusal to face

certain truths about herself. Into this picture arrives Rita, a lesbian poet/activist, who was Diane's lover 10 years ago.

Featured in this world premiere of *means of restraint* are Charlene Fernetz as Camille, the aloof and sensual painter; Debbie Kassner as Diane, the housewife who is trying to find herself; and Daryl as Rita, the poet/activist who is fighting the world for her survival.

means of restraint opens February 16 and plays Thursday-Saturday at 8:15 pm through April 14. Tickets are \$12, available at the door. A limited number of seats are available on a sliding scale basis, by reservation only: call 228-2681. Rainforest Theatre is located at 625 NW Everett, #105, Portland.

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