

# CATCH A RISING STAR

*Bask in the comic glow of Marga Gomez's new show, Half Cuban, Half Lesbian*

by Risa Krivé

**O**n Oct. 19 a brilliant star will blaze through Portland when Marga Gomez, comedian extraordinaire, performs her new show *Half Cuban, Half Lesbian* at the Northwest Service Center. Her management promises that this will be "an evening of special-interest stand-up comedy and victim art with absolutely no O.J. references. Uninformed, but highly opinionated, Marga will hold forth on her favorite subjects:

## Comedy

pain, regret, self-pity, doom, and sex with Newt Gingrich's mom." Perhaps not in that order.

The out Latina lesbian comic is acclaimed worldwide for her piercing wit and laser-light insights into the guts of relationships, queer politics, Latina lore and sexuality. The effect on her audience is at once searing, healing and hilarious. Marga Gomez's numerous television and live performances have established her as a major talent. She has been featured on HBO's "Comic Relief VI," Comedy Central's "Out There," Rosie O'Donnell's "Stand-Up Spotlight/VH-1," and has opened for k.d. lang, Linda Ronstadt, Todd Rundgren and Cris Williamson. She performed at "An Evening with Lily Tomlin and Friends" along with Robin Williams, Harvey Fierstein and Lypsinka. Barry Walters of *The San Francisco Examiner* stated: "Gomez proved that she's San Francisco's most talented rising comedy star.... Gomez's humor is...on a par with anything by Williams or Tomlin."

Gomez hails originally from Spanish Harlem, where her Cuban-born stand-up comic father and Puerto Rican-born exotic dancer mother attained celebrity status. Her father drove a Cadillac; her mother wore furs and stiletto heels. But the show-biz marriage crumbled, and her mother remarried and moved with Marga and her stepfather into the white world of suburban Long Island. Gomez moved from wanting to fit in, to searching for her own identity.

The journey took her to San Francisco in the '70s, where she began to perform in notable venues, with the feminist theater ensemble Lilith and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and to her own act, "The Mujer Show" (The Woman Show), at one of the most important gay and lesbian showcases in the world, the Valencia Rose club. She has since performed her own full-length performance monologues throughout the world, from the New York Shakespeare Festival to London's International Contemporary Arts. Gomez has received consistently rave reviews. London's *Evening News* described "a dazzling performance." Montréal's *Mirror* writer Gaetan Charlebois reported, "Even



Marga Gomez

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the hard-assed critics in New York melted for Gomez, with the hardest-assed Frank Rich of *The New York Times* saying, "[it] shows its performer as an actress and writer of serious promise. I

warmly recommend it.' Rich doesn't get warm about anything."

Gomez's first full-length performance monologue is *Memory Tricks*. It is the tragicomic story

of Marga's relationship with her mother. Tom Jacobs of *Variety* said: "Her memories are of a specific subculture, but they explore universal themes of neediness, guilt, longing and loss. It's wonderful stuff."

Gomez's second performance monologue is set in her bedroom. *Marga Gomez Is Pretty, Witty and Gay* covers a lot of territory. The thirtysomething Gomez trying to relate to younger lesbians: "We wore those Frye Boots then, so you could pierce your nose today!" Literature: (from the "lost journal" of Anaïs Nin, found on the subway, detailing in a seductive French accent the passionate affair between Nin and Minnie Mouse) "Leaning coquettishly against a plastic tree...her big red bow undone...I wanted to take hurr, not like a voman, but like a mouse." The plethora of homosexuals on television talk shows: "Lesbians with long hair, tomorrow on *Oprah*. Lesbians who've never been on *Oprah*, tomorrow on *Donahue*." The ban on gays in the military: "I don't know what General Colin [Powell] and all the other colons are worried about, it's not like we're all going to enlist. Don't you have to get up early for that? I only do that one day a year—for the parade—and that's it. But we want to have the right to enlist if we want to."

Gomez's third performance monologue, *A Line Around the Block*, is about her father and completes the trilogy. Her newest piece, *Half Cuban, Half Lesbian*, will no doubt both entertain and inform.

As Jack Helbig of Chicago's *Reader* noted, "There are two kinds of laughter in the comedy world: the laughter of anesthesia and the laughter of enlightenment. Most stand-up comics aim for anesthesia, dispensing a kind of comedic narcotic to deaden our pain and allow us to deny, however fleetingly, our problems.... Marga Gomez does something much more difficult in her performances. She takes her most personal foibles and most painful childhood memories and transforms them into a very liberating kind of comedy.... Gomez is a very funny woman—she also provides a kind of psychological road map for self-discovery." As Gomez explains to people who think gays are predators upon innocent youth, "We do not recruit, we impress."

Laughter, like an earthquake, is unpredictable. One never knows when or from where the next laugh is coming. But you can bet your \$10 (\$12 at the door) that an evening spent with Marga Gomez will have you in an uproar.

*Marga Gomez performs Thursday, Oct. 19, at 7:30 pm at the Northwest Service Center, 1819 NW Everett St. in Portland. Advance tickets are \$10 from Fastixx 224-8499 and It's My Pleasure 236-0505; tickets are \$12 at the door. The show is wheelchair accessible and ASL interpreted.*

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