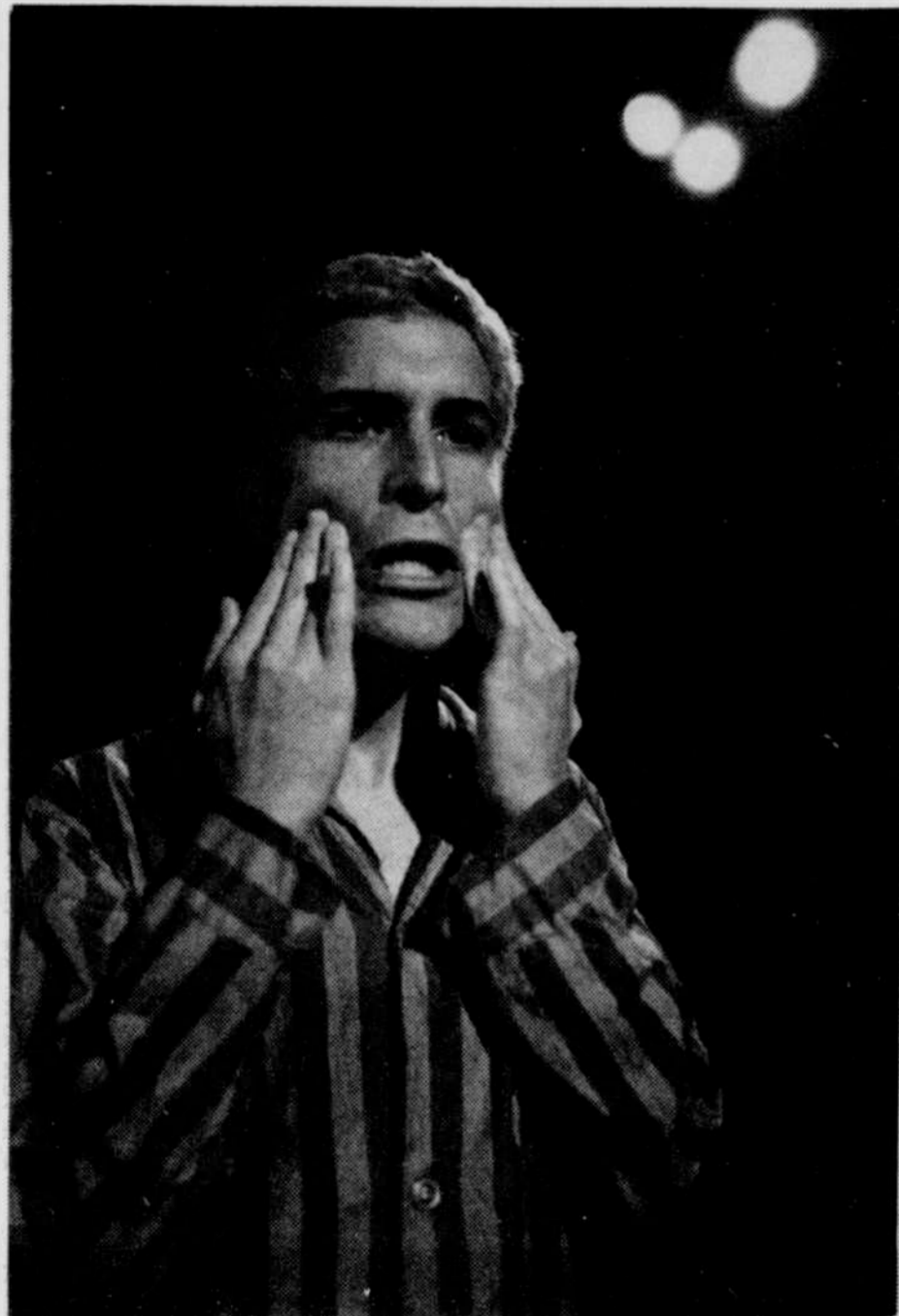


BEYOND FEAR

Poet-performer Drew Pissarra bids farewell, moving from Rose City to Big Apple in search of a bigger challenge

by C. Jay Wilson Jr.



Drew Pissarra

Drew Pissarra has never been one to act safely within the confines of comfort. Dragging audiences through his psycho-sexual phantasies of sex and domination, he attacks and delights in his own reflection of voracity in an environment that is wholly his own. As sensualist of the underworld, Pissarra engenders his work through probing into the forbidden recesses of his psyche. "Every time I do a new piece" he says, "I pose

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a question to myself, which is: 'What am I afraid of doing; what looks scary?' and I go there because I want to find out what's there."

One of Portland's more intriguing and versatile artists—a poet, performer, director and pathological raconteur—Pissarra has wowed both audiences and critics alike throughout the Northwest and in locales as distant as Los Angeles and Montana. He has been the recipient of grants from the Regional Arts and Culture Council and a commission from the Portland Art Museum for its Biennial Performance Festival, where he debuted a Jean Genêt-inspired trinity entitled *The Gospel According to Saint Genêt*.

In between his performances he managed to publish a short chapbook of poems, and this year Future Tense Books published *Publick Spanking*, an entertaining new volume of short stories that offers up a degenerate cross-examination of life at our contemporary *fin de siècle*.

As it appears his local renown has been firmly established, Drew Pissarra will offer one last performance before moving to New York City, where he hopes to benefit from a more established network of experimental theater opportunities. Demanding a seat at New York's table is every performer's dream—usually kept from being realized by the wealth of fears that plague such a

desire. Pissarra will not be conquered by those fears. He wants his life to reflect the tenor of his art and not the warm insulation of complacency. Armed with all of the experience and confidence that Portland has afforded him—and 25 phone numbers—he will board a plane three days after his Portland farewell engagement.

Pissarra is known primarily as a solo performer, but has recently been involved in collaborative efforts with other performers and dancers. He has enjoyed the different quality that these performers bring to his own work. "Solos and Duets," a collaboration with dancer Katherine Petersen a couple of years ago, featured Pissarra in a more whimsical performance posture. He has also acted in some ensemble performance pieces at Imago, including last year's praised *Samuel's Major Problems*.

"A Small Piece of My Mind," Pissarra's current endeavor and Portland farewell, promises to reveal yet another aspect of his performance prowess. He labels this collaboration with dancers Linda K. Johnson and Cynthia Chimienti a "genre-defying" piece that is neither dance nor theater but rather falls somewhere in between. More buoyant perhaps than anything he's done, the performance will be accompanied by a fusion of movie soundtrack music and four or five pre-recorded short pieces of original text. Pissarra is excited to try his hand at choreography; he also observes the challenge that not having the text to turn to on stage poses for him.

Drew Pissarra will forever be remembered as queer Portland's patron saint, and Pissarra knows as well as anyone that the road to sainthood leads in a direction where others dare not follow.

"A Small Piece of My Mind" premieres at Conduit, 918 SW Yamhill St., Suite 401, at 8 pm on Oct. 11 and 12. Admission is \$10-\$12; tickets are available by calling 221-5857. *Publick Spanking*, \$8.95, can be purchased from Future Tense Books, PO Box 42416, Portland, OR 97242.



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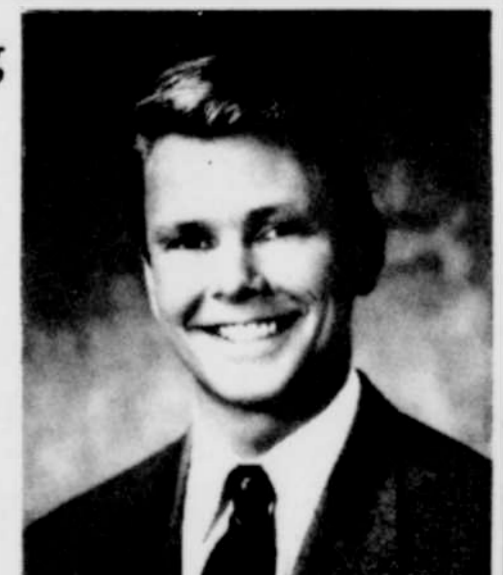
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