

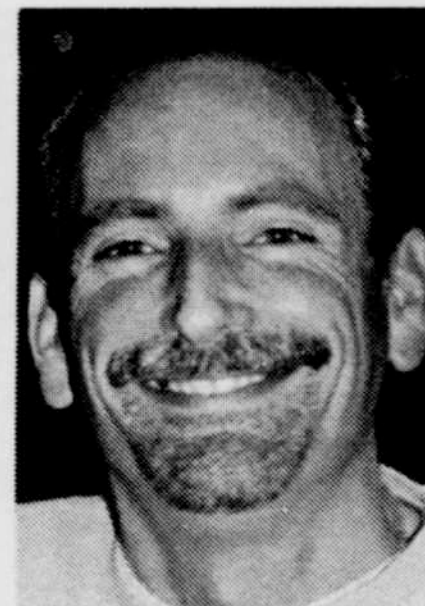
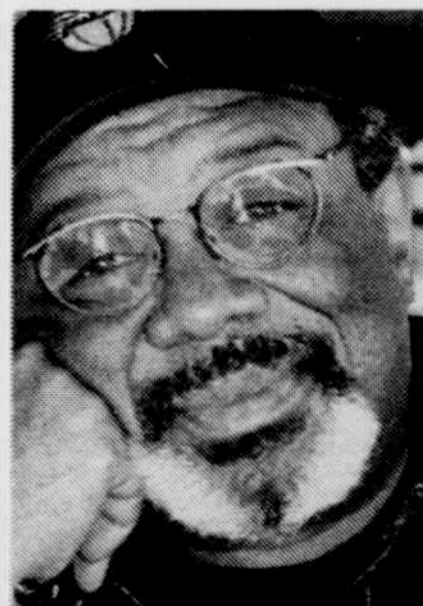


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Blacks in Blues

Powerful new gay-themed play explores
a slice of African American history

BY LAKE PERRIGUEY

Portland theatergoers will have a rare opportunity beginning this month to see Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, a powerfully emotional play with a gay leading character.

Set during the Harlem Renaissance in 1930, the tale focuses on the lives and dreams of five African American characters who epitomize the struggles and victories during that era. Themes in the play include homosexuality, racism and abortion, which are still loaded issues today.

I met recently with Timothy McCuen Piggee, an openly gay, incredibly handsome and charming



PHOTO BY OWEN CAREY
Timothy McCuen Piggee

The people here are so genuine and warm. Coming from Seattle, it is very refreshing.

Why did you leave New York?

My ambition was never really tied to the city... I

Seattle-based repertory actor. In Portland Center Stage's production of *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, he plays the lead role of Guy Jacobs, a gay costume designer with Parisian dreams who works at the notorious Cotton Club.

Timothy, how are you enjoying Portland?

didn't want to dance in a horseshoe formation behind Ruth Brown on Broadway. I wanted to have a repertoire of roles, I wanted to do Shakespeare, musical theater, August Wilson, Strindberg; I wanted to see how far I can stretch.

After a while, I found that living in New York takes such energy to survive. Once, I was sitting in Central Park one day and noticed for the first time that it was autumn all of a sudden, and I had completely missed the transition of a season.

Did you encounter pressure to change your body for roles?

In terms of daytime TV, casting directors would say, "You haven't had this surgery, you need pec implants. We're either going to sign you up with a big old trainer, or why don't we just get you some surgery, take the shortcut." I wasn't willing to cut myself for anybody.

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