

DIVERSIONS

Queer theater community helps out comrade

Several community theater troupes have leapt to the aid of Musical Theatre Company, which was forced to close recently after 17 years in Portland. The Broadway Rose Theatre Company, Portland Gay Men's Chorus, Portland Center Stage, Stark Raving Theatre and triangle productions! are honoring remaining Musical Theatre Company tickets on an availability basis.

Musical Theatre Company was the only locally produced musical performance group in the Portland area. **Jutta Allen** has been the company's artistic director for 11 years and says she was "heartbroken" when they had to close because of a hefty increase in rent by Portland Public Schools.

The school district also converted the company's backstage rooms to classroom space, "which is totally unacceptable," she insists. "Where should the actors change...on stage?"

The company was given 30 days' notice and could not find another space in that time. Allen, who probably will not say goodbye to the arts community "because I'm not a housewife," extends her thanks to all the individuals and performance groups who have lent a hand during the closing process.

"They really helped me a lot," she says. "Someone called me every day."

Edie hits Portland—and the silver screen

Christopher Kenney joined Ballet Oregon in the mid-1980s right out of high school. He left Portland in 1988 for the Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle and from there went on to Pennsylvania Ballet and Ballet Chicago. Eventually, he set his sights on musical theater and followed the call to the Big Apple.

Edie was born, Kenney explains, "in the chaos of New York." It was Halloween when he made the transformation—an intended one-night-only performance in the spirit of the season. One drag show, however, led to a job offer.

"I said, 'No, no, no, no, no, no,'" Kenney chuckles. "It's just Halloween. I am not a drag queen."

A few months later, the *artiste* decided he might just be a drag queen after all, much to the delight of queer New York, which named Edie the Best Drag Performer of 2000. Taking a break from her weekly show at the Barracuda Lounge in Chelsea, she decks the halls of Portland's Darcelle XV on Dec. 26. (See Page 30 for details.)

"It grew slowly," Kenney says, referring to his Edie alter ego. "I made sure it was very, very slow because, you know, I had to get comfortable in a dress and heels."

Edie spent part of this year playing herself in the new indie film *Pot Luck*, to be released sometime in 2002. Co-produced by *High Times* magazine, the lively comedic caper centers around a mobster who discovers the magic of marijuana.

It's being billed, Kenney notes, "as Cheech

and Chong meets *The Sopranos*." He plays the mobster's gay son, who happens to be a drag queen. "My father," he laughs, "is completely mortified and threw me out of the house...then I come back 10 years later."

Kenney continues to dance, now with a tap company. Edie is a dancer, too, he explains, and she's also "very nice; she's not bitchy, so it's kind of different." (Whatever could he mean?)

If your vagina could talk...

What would it say? That's one of the provocative questions of **Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues***, which plays at the **Newmark Theatre** Dec. 27 to Jan. 6. (See Page 32 for details.)

A prolific feminist playwright, Ensler originally staged *The Vagina Monologues* as a one-woman show off-Broadway in 1996. It won the coveted Obie Award, rocketing to national and inter-

national attention, and is now performed throughout the world by various groups of women, most notably annual star-studded performances in New York City.

Portland Community College's Women's Resource Center organized a performance at the Sylvania Campus last February, which elicited vigorous cheers and brought the audience to its feet. Although the Newmark Theatre plays host to a professional tour, two local personalities have also been cast.

Helen Raptis of *AM Northwest* will be in the show during the first week, and the second week will feature Z100 disc jockey **Stacey Lynn**.

The play was conceived in 1994 when Ensler overheard a well-known feminist speaking disparagingly about her genitalia. She was shocked and set out on a mission to demystify and, hence, deshame the V word. Ensler interviewed 200 women about "down there," and

what resulted is an amazingly frank and powerful series of commentaries by an extremely diverse group of women.

Actors re-create real women's stories of sexual and genital experience, all culled from the original interviews. The play bounces between hilarious and shocking, celebratory and sorrowful.

Ensler has dealt with her own experience of vaginal hatred and feminist awakening. She was abused physically and sexually by her father while growing up in Scarsdale, N.Y.


Although she graduated from Vermont's Middlebury College in 1975, she wandered aimlessly afterward, drowning in alcohol addiction. She began to write, exploring the shame and confusion she felt around her own body, which helped her get sober and get to work.

Ensler's brutally honest and confrontational stage projects are numerous. But nothing has come close to the cultural phenomenon that is *The Vagina Monologues*, which became the catalyst for V-Day, a global movement since 1997 to stop violence against women and girls. Performances worldwide are staged traditionally around Valentine's Day to benefit various agencies. Proceeds from Newmark Theatre's upcoming run go to Portland's **Bradley-Angle House** and **Raphael House**.

Who would miss a chance to dance with a goddess?

Looking for an alternative to smoky bars, a bunch of fun-lovin' gals got together and created **Venus Women's Dance Club**. Its first party in November drew almost 200 women to **Madison's Ballroom**, right next door to Madison's Bar & Grill. This month the chicks are having a New Year's Eve party there, and they plan to keep up the shenanigans indefinitely. (See Page 47 for details.)

Venus looks to attract an over-30 crowd, but anyone over 21 who wants to get down to Top 40, rhythm and blues, rap and retro are welcome to attend. Always included is free food and a no-host bar.

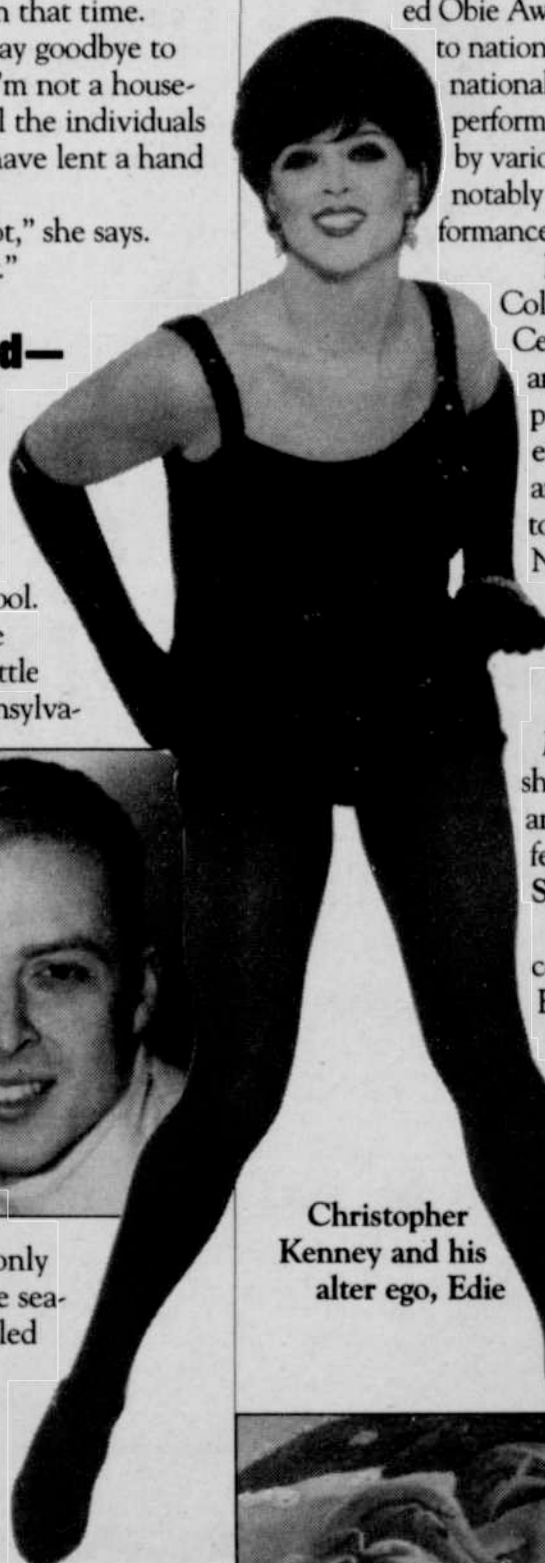
The gigs are planned for once a month and, although comfortable at Madison's, the parties might rove in the future. For party dates and locations call 503-993-9920. 

Compiled by **LISA BRADSHAW**

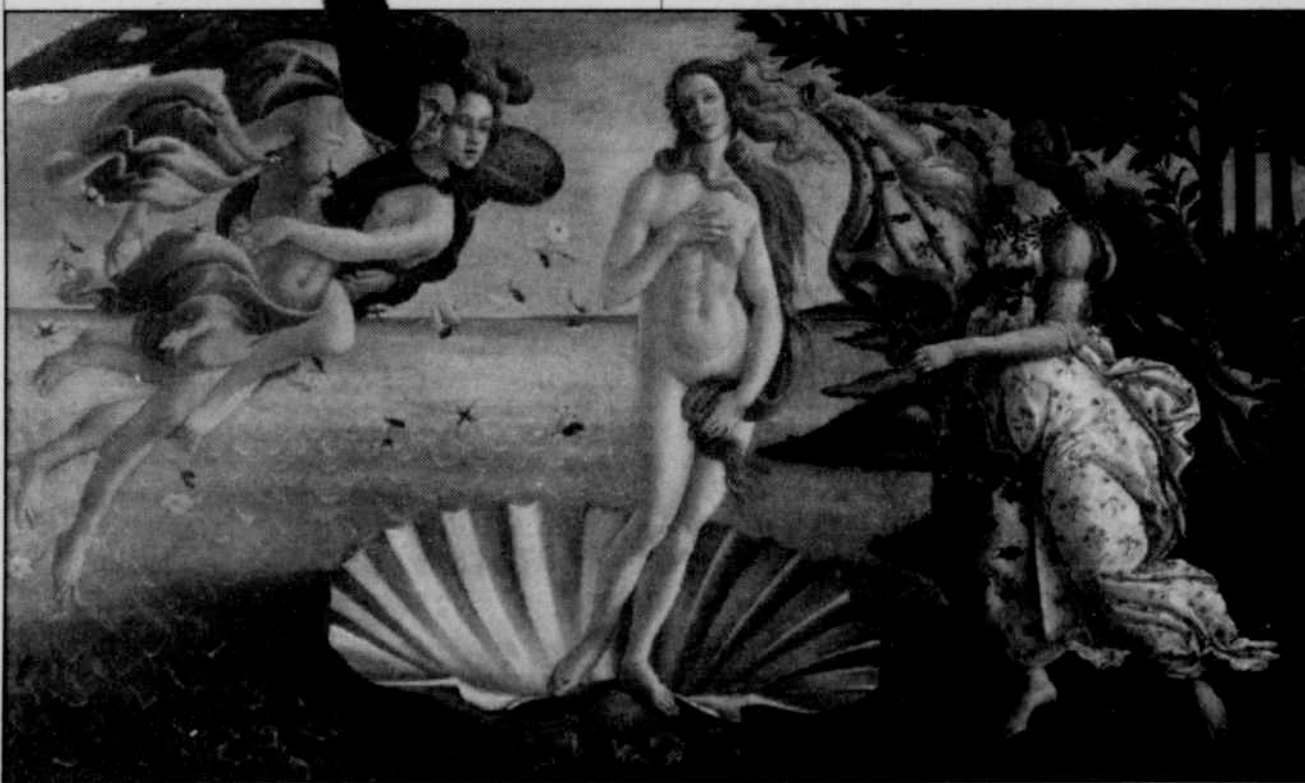


Eve Ensler wants to get to know your vagina

PHOTO BY SIS AB OLOHIN

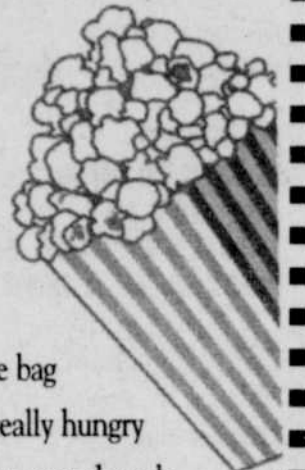


Christopher Kenney and his alter ego, Edie





















It's the birth of Venus Women's Dance Club!

What's Popped?






What's popped and what's flopped, in a theater near you.

-  dud, bottom of the bag
-   only if you're really hungry
-    good effort, pass the salt
-     mmmm, tasty!
-      get the big tub o' corn

   **THE BUSINESS OF STRANGERS**




Stockard Channing and Julia Stiles play, respectively, a middle-aged corporate she-warrior and her mysterious protégé. The two become embroiled in a dubious revenge scheme that opens the door to sparring, solidarity and palpable sexual tension between them. Imagine the misanthropy and mistrust of a David Mamet or a Neil LaBute applied to a more directly feminist theme, and you'll get an idea of what writer/director Patrick Stettner is up to here.

—*Christopher McQuain*

   **NOT ANOTHER TEEN MOVIE**




It's silly and vulgar—definitely an acquired taste—but this spoof hits all the right targets in skewering teen movie clichés. Considering the juvenile setting, the gay content is significant: The jock is the object of everyone's affection—guys included; the "unique rebel" reads Sylvia Plath, so the obnoxious brother questions her sexuality; and the lesbian kiss from *Cruel Intentions* gets an intergenerational twist.

—*Jim Radosta*

   **THE SHIPPING NEWS**

Kevin Spacey seems bored in this screen adaptation of E. Annie Proulx's novel, and even good performances from Julianne Moore, Judi Dench (as a proud old lesbian) and Cate Blanchett are wasted in the hands of director Lasse Hallström (*The Cider House Rules*). The film is so blandly ingratiating as to be forgettable.

—*CM*

   **VANILLA SKY**

Jacob's Ladder meets *The Matrix* in Cameron Crowe's startling romantic thriller. Tom Cruise is a wealthy girl magnet (quite a stretch) who finds true love with charming artist Penélope Cruz only to make a fatal error with his "fuck buddy," Cameron Diaz, which changes his life in ways he, nor the audience, can quite figure out. Is he dreaming, fantasizing or just plain crazy? Amusingly, Cruise delivers the familiar "Look, I'm straight, OK?"—onscreen this time. Occasionally bogged down in sentimentality, but Cruise and Cruz make the sparks fly.

—*Lisa Bradshaw*