

Raised by his mother and grandmother, he went from a repressed early childhood to fame as a young actor with the Portland Civic Theatre to teen-age hedonist, the latter fueled by alcohol, which he thought of as "my magic."

As an adult he balanced, ever more precariously, life in the fast lane as a high-powered financial analyst with increasing blackouts that found him waking up in a Honolulu hotel, for instance, without knowing how he got there.

All parties must end, and this one did in 1986 when Porter was diagnosed with HIV. At a turning point, he became a crisis counselor for indigents and a co-parent to three kids with a now former partner. He's been involved for the past six years with another artist, Greg Carrigan, who is also participating in the show.

Porter is excited, if a little nervous, about this project. But he knows ultimately he's in control

of self-revelation. "You can let out as much as you want to. It's your story and your catharsis."

Porter also has that indispensable tool in the arsenal of the chronically ill: a sense of humor. He occasionally invokes his drag persona, "Ida Slapter," and suggests they bring a contortionist onstage to add to the fun.

Teufel detects a touch of hubris in Porter: "He wants a chandelier like *Phantom!*"

And Hawkes reminds all that these shows already offer "everything but a helicopter and an elephant!" Although it's entirely possible that this group is working on getting both. **J**



Kate Hawkes directs couples in *Living with HIV: Performing Wellness III*

LIVING WITH HIV: PERFORMING WELLNESS III plays April 21 to 23 at Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 1530 N. Interstate Ave. Call for times. Tickets are \$8 from 503-823-4322. The

Well Arts Institute is at 503-636-2216.

GARY MORRIS is a Portland free-lance writer.

Page meets stage

Cygnnet Theatre re-creates the Algonquin Round Table

BY KAREN KUDEJ

Cygnnet Theatre's original production *Vitriol & Violets: Tales from the Algonquin Round Table* re-creates the roaring '20s of New York City where, for a decade, a group of sharp-witted journalists, critics, poets, actors and playwrights met daily for lunch at the Algonquin Hotel and became a driving force behind the arts and theater of the time.

People flocked to the Algonquin hoping to get a glimpse of this lively assemblage. Banter abounded at the round table with Dorothy Parker's caustic

quips and the deadpan humor of journalist Robert Benchley. Double-entendre exchanges between Harpo Marx and drama critic Alexander Woollcott are a highlight. Woollcott, portrayed by Wendy Westerwelle in drag, was probably gay and thought to have been in love with Marx for years.

When Edna Ferber, a pre-eminent female writer of the time, showed up one day wearing a suit almost identical to one of the men, he teased her, "Edna, you almost look like a man." "So do you," she promptly replied.

Using biographies, letters and texts from the time, theater co-directors Louanne Moldovan and Shelly Lipkin, along with Sherry Lamoreaux, have written a script that aims to recapture the era. Moldovan, who directed *Vitriol*, explains that once the anecdotes were assembled, the challenge was in allowing the cast to "inhabit the characters truthfully." She emphasizes the importance of

presenting a well-rounded, balanced look at this influential crowd.

Also known as the Vicious Circle, the group laughed hard but drank harder, despite Prohibition laws. Some considered the Algonquin relationships to be codependent; many of the members had trouble maintaining other relationships. Dorothy Parker suffered from depression and attempted suicide.

By the early 1930s, the Algonquin Round Table quietly disbanded and members moved on. Harold Ross and his wife,

Jane Grant, started the *New Yorker*. Others went on to win Pulitzer Prizes, Academy Awards and further literary honors.

"Thematically," Moldovan says, "we wanted to look at the arc of their journey at that table and what happened to them afterwards...why did they unravel?"

Billed as "an evening of wicked wisecracks, urbane attitudes and 'literary vaudeville,'" this production should amuse Algonquin aficionados and virgins alike. **J**

Cygnnet Theatre presents **VITRIOL & VIOLETS: TALES FROM THE ALGONQUIN ROUND TABLE** 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 7 p.m. Sunday from April 26 to May 18 at Russell Street Theatre, 116 N.E. Russell St. Tickets are \$15 from 503-493-4077.

KAREN KUDEJ is a Portland free-lancer who appreciates sharp wit mixed in with a little of this and a little of that.



Luisa Sermol (left) and Wendy Westerwelle in *Vitriol & Violets: Tales from the Algonquin Round Table*

PHOTO BY ANDREW GALLER



Miller Lite presents



Do you want to be part of the biggest gay event Portland has ever seen? Volunteer your time to help the 4000 athletes that will be spending one week in Portland.

August 18-25, 2002!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



Volunteer your time for the Gay Softball Series 2002, and get into all the official events as a very special guest. Contact us: volunteers@series2002.org AND www.series2002.org

THANK YOU PORTLAND!

All of these companies have made a commitment to help the Rose City Softball Association host the 26th annual Gay Softball World Series on **August 18-25, 2002.**

If you would like to join them, please contact sponsorship@series2002.org

Proud Sponsors













































Help us show everyone what Portland is all about... If you would like to play in the Rose City Softball Association, teams are forming now. Visit us @ www.portlandgaysoftball.com or 503-450-9999