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**Playing with Fire**

Continued from Page 1

Pring as Fire in Cirque du Soleil's *Dralion*

PHOTO BY AL SEIB

During his times on stage, Pring says, "I'm the only man with heavy makeup on. I never had to wear such heavy makeup in my life! It's a long process to put it on, but it's fun." (Of course it is!) As Fire, Pring interacts with Water, Earth and Air. Compared to them, he says, "My character is more the hardcore, kung fu, ass-whipping guy." (Think butch in drag.) "I appear throughout the show, kind of like the annoying little brother. He's the catalyst, trying to provoke everybody, the little fire." Dancers, really cute boys, a lot of French people, costumes, makeup—you'd think the place would be crawling with queers, wouldn't you? "No, not at all," says Pring. "I'm probably one of three, four." Fortunately, one of those is a little clown named Felipe.

ly mean much," he says, then pauses. "But maybe it did mean something at that time. He tells the story much better than I do." Regardless, Pring continues on about how the French clown, who had only been with the company a few weeks himself, "ran backstage" to tell a fellow performer about the gorgeous boy in the audience. According to Pring, the friend replied, "You'll meet a lot of people in the audience," to which Felipe shot back "No, this one is special." Turned out he was right. "When I went backstage to be introduced to everybody," Pring relates, "he poked his friend and said, 'That's the guy from the audience.' His friend said, 'You fool, that's the new Fire!'" So the fools fell in love "at first sight," Pring says. "It was funny because he would play onstage and he'd keep looking at me, and he said, 'I swear to God, sometimes the spotlight was on you....' It's really gushy-gushy." The two are going on eight months now with the company, enjoying all the travel and seeing a lot of sights together. "We're so happy; we've had a really great relationship. We get along very well; I think I'm very lucky." Pring says members of the company have been incredibly supportive. "They're just so happy we're together.... I haven't found myself yet in a place where it's not supported... I wouldn't stay. It's important for me to feel comfortable." But just because there aren't many queers doesn't mean there isn't any, well, queerness. Pring points out the show's two "narrators"—one male, one female—who come onstage to sing between acts. The male role has always been "ambiguous," he says, "because his voice is a contratenor, which means he sings in falsetto... in heavy makeup, and he wears the long feather gown." To prove his point, Pring proudly states that *South Park* has done a spoof of Cirque du Soleil, specifically of that very character. "It was hilarious," he exclaims. "They absolutely got it." ☐

Last fall when Pring was accepted into Cirque, he traveled to Montreal for a month of training. Upon arrival, he attended the group's evening show and "made eye contact" with one of the clowns. "It didn't real-



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Sure he looks great in the show, but we think he's even prettier backstage

You can still get tickets to Cirque du Soleil's *DRALION*, extended through July 14 under the blue and yellow Grand Chapiteau on Southwest Moody Avenue. Tickets are \$31.50-\$65 from 800-678-5440 or [www.cirquedusoleil.com](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com).