

Pepe's Masquerade

Take a look at the accompanying photo of Pepe Raphael of Pepe & the Bottle Blondes.

Just Out gets a press release about Pepe's fourth annual Exotic Masquerade Ball on Nov. 8 at the Crystal Ballroom. We read, we assess, we look at the Web site.

We then make the requisite inquiry via e-mail: "Does Pepe and/or either Bottle Blonde identify as a member of the queer community?" Usually, we get one of two e-mails back: a defensive "no" or a resounding "yes."

But Pepe, being the kind of guy he is, calls us right up on the phone. This turns out to be an excellent strategy because the Spanish cutie is so charming we wouldn't care if he wanted to marry his sofa, we are covering this event.

Suffice it to say, Pepe is, well, evasive. But playfully so. "I love to make them wonder," he admits. "Tell them I'm a bi...cycle," he quips. "Yes, I'm a bicycle!"

Pepe is understandably concerned that if he attaches a queer identity to himself, all the straight costume- and glam-loving weirdoes will wonder whether they should come to the party. But ultimately he's honest: "I'm from Europe—you know, we swing all ways there."

That said, queer and straight alike will want to walk through the doors of this popular funky event. It's masquerade at its finest, "no kitty cats or little devils," warns Pepe; if you're going to come to this thing, do it right. You can be a devil so long as you are a *fabulous* devil.

Pepe himself is, at press time, unsure what he will wear this year. "Last year I looked like Tammy Faye Baker. I looked like a float. Whatever made me think a tight, yellow Spandex dress would make me look good?"

He hopes to improve on this. "I just got some killer boots, so we'll see." (Once again, see accompanying photo.)

Some compare this event to the now-defunct Dada Ball in terms of style and dress. "Taking their cue from the name, our fans designed and established the nature of the event," says Pepe. "Just celebrate yourself, whatever it is."

Since its inception in 1998, Exotic Masquerade has gotten bigger, more extravagant, more wild. Pepe likes it



Pepe of Pepe & the Bottle Blondes has killer new boots for the Exotic Masquerade Ball on Nov. 8 at the Crystal Ballroom

that way and hopes his and the ball's fans do what they feel. But, he warns, "You cannot have sex on the stage. As long as you're going to do it somewhere else..."

The Exotic Masquerade Ball is from 9 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. and is 21 and over. Other entertainment includes Rick Bain, Sumerland, Sabor Latino Dance Co., 69 á Go-Go and DJ Gregarious. Tickets are \$20 in advance from the box office or Ticketmaster. You'll pay \$30 the day of the show.

Baby dyke book nominated

Literary Arts' announcement of the nominees for the prestigious Oregon Book Awards includes Portland bi writer Sara Ryan for *Empress of the World*.

Nominated in the Leslie Bradshaw Award for Young Readers category, the novel tells the story of two adolescent girls who fall for each other at summer camp. The book was also nominated this year for a Lambda Literary Award in the Children/Young Adult category. (Tennessee writer Julia Watts' *Finding H.F.* won that honor.)

"I'm thrilled," says Ryan, who has no idea whether she will win but hopes that, if she does, "it would mean...more schools and libraries would have a book on their shelves about two girls who fall in love."

Another nominee in the same category, Monte Killingsworth's *Equinox*, contains a lesbian theme: The main character discovers her mother is involved with a woman.

The Oregon Book Awards will be held 7:30 p.m. Nov. 7 at the Scottish Rite Center, 1512 S.W. Morrison St. A reception and book signing follow the ceremony, which is hosted by Sherman Alexie, Native American author and director of the gay-themed movie *The Business of Fancydancing*. Tickets are \$20 from 503-227-2583.



Sara Ryan is thrilled to garner yet another literary nomination for *Empress of the World*

Multi-everything Magdalen Hsu-Li

Unless you live in a cave, you know the big Creating Change conference is Nov. 6 to 10 at the DoubleTree Jantzen Beach. The annual event is a chance for queer movers and shakers from around the country to dialogue and present workshops and discussions around myriad issues affecting the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community.

And that's all fine and good and necessary, sure, sure. But the big news is that some *really cool famous people* will entertain the masses Nov. 8 as part of the Columbia River Cabaret. One of those is the nearing-pop-stardom Magdalen Hsu-Li.

Yeah, she's a gorgeous lesbian, and that alone is enough of a reason to show up. But her multidimensional artistic performance is a good reason, too. Her shows are a mixture of piano, guitar, vocals, impromptu standup, theater, poetry and percussion improvisations. Also a painter, Hsu-Li twists her varied art expressions together, simultaneously twisting the audience around her little finger.

As a first-generation Chinese American, feminist, lesbian musician, she has plenty to say about sexuality, racism and women. Her two albums, 1999's *Evolution* and 2001's *Fire*, walk the line between social commentary and mainstream pop.

"I try to incorporate as much universality into my songs as I can," she told the Asian American Action Figure Internet site. "Being universal exposes your music to a broader audience of people who may not be aware of minority subgroups."

Also part of the lineup are actor/singer Wilson Cruz (*My So Called Life*, *All Over Me*), singer/songwriter Doria Roberts and actor/comedian Alec Mapa (from the short-lived *Some of My Best Friends*). Local talent includes poet Diana Cohen and mistress of ceremonies Misha Rockafeller.

The Columbia River Cabaret starts at 10 p.m. Tickets are \$15 from Broadway Books, In Other Words or www.creatingchange.org.

Art = Language

Portland's queer-run 2 Gyrz Performative Arts is pleased to present the first-ever Interactive Language Festival from Nov. 1 to 29 at different venues around the city.

"Art as Language" is the theme running through each of the diverse offerings. "Each event explores a different 'language' through a variety of visual, musical and performative arts," explains co-director Llewyn Máire. "We'll experience street performance, spoken word, storytelling, dance, visual arts, screen and music."

Some highlights include Language of the Word: "Obsession," a night of text exploration featuring queer performance artist Lisa Newman & the gyrl grip (Nov. 7, Disjecta Gallery, 116 N.E. Russell St.); "Peace Words II," a "marathon benefit" of dozens of writers, musicians and other performers to raise money for

the fight against hunger (Nov. 11, Pacific Crest Community School, 116 N.E. 29th Ave.); Language of the Body: "explorations," featuring the comeback of the unbelievable Human Sculpture and nationally acclaimed queer performance artist Jeffery Byrd (Nov. 23, Center Space, 420 S.E. Sixth Ave.); and Language of Fetishized Others, a presentation of the video work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña (Nov. 24, Center Space).

For a complete list of events, visit www.2gyrlz.org. Performances and workshops will vary in price from free to \$12.

New director and a fall concert to boot

The Rose City Gay Freedom Band has spent three long years in its search for the perfect musical director, and now they have one in the form of Rice Majors, who will debut during the fall concert *Voices of America: A Salute to American Composers*, 8 p.m. Nov. 9 at Rose City Park United Methodist Church, 5830 N.E. Alameda St.

The band has been without a musical director since Bob Mensel left in 1999 to focus on his position as musical director of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus. Majors moved back to his native Oregon from the East Coast last



Multi-artistic pop singer/songwriter Magdalen Hsu-Li will delight audiences at the Columbia River Cabaret

year, and he and his tuba joined up with the band immediately. He has a bachelor's in music from Cornell University and has conducted a wide variety of choruses, bands and orchestras.

"Being involved in an organization like Rose City offers us a unique chance to reach out to our community," says Majors. "We are able to provide opportunities for musical as well as personal growth, both for the people who play in the band as well as for the members of the audience. The positive effect we can have on the community is immense."

The fall concert's feature program will be George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," which will highlight the talents of clarinetist Chris Cox. The evening will also include works by gay composers Aaron Copland and Stephen Sondheim, lesbian composer Jennifer Higdon and U.S. composers Bernard Hermann, Karl King, John Philip Sousa, Samuel Augustus Ward, Douglas Wagner, James Swearingen and Frank Ticheli.

Tickets to *Voices of America* are \$5-\$8. They can be purchased at the door or in advance from Gai-Pied. ☐

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