

It's obvious, Flooney notes, from the biographies written on Hughes "that he was bisexual in the early part of his life, thoroughly gay towards the later part of his life."

With a number of great African American writers and artists, both gay and straight, why only Langston Hughes? "Because he was a true intellectual," Flooney replies, "one who understood complicated things and simplified them, making them available to many others. He could sit up with the best of them—folks from Harvard and Yale—and have discussions about philosophies, about Western society and other cultures. He also could walk to the pool halls and through the neighborhoods where the rent parties were with his people and hold his own. I've always admired him [because of] his ability to walk among all men."

Indeed, Hughes is one of the most prolific of African American writers, possibly second only to W.E.B. DuBois. There is a plethora of material to draw from. He wrote his first autobiography before he was 28 years old. He wrote more than 26 plays. This was a young man who traveled the world doing all kinds of odd jobs—working as a steward, cooking food—but was able to relate to people through a shared humanity.

"Another thing that distinguishes him from other writers," Flooney adds, "is that he wrote in every genre there is. He was a writer's writer."

Flooney plans to continue his efforts to



Flooney's Theater Company brings the work of Langston Hughes to life

bring more of Hughes to the public. Next season, he's looking to do one of the author's one-act plays. He feels the writing is so universal, people of all ages, lifestyles and ethnicities would enjoy and understand his work.

"The Langston Hughes Project has something for everybody," Flooney asserts. "People of all walks of life can come and enjoy with us a visit into the mind and thoughts of the Harlem Renaissance and literature of Langston." **J**

FLOONEY'S THEATER COMPANY performs *The Langston Hughes Project* 8 p.m. Feb. 7 and 8 and 5 p.m. Feb. 9 at *The Old Church*, 1422 S.W. 11th Ave. Tickets are \$15 from Ticket Central or at the door. Contact Flooney's at 503-226-2904 or flooneytc@msn.com.

ANTHONY DAVIS is a Portland free-lance writer.

REVIEW

Puppetry schmuppetry

Penile origami show is mostly hype

BY GARY MORRIS

Puppetry of the Penis was born in 1997, the brainchild of Australians

Simon Morley and David Friend, who discovered a mutual interest in doing "dick tricks" while chatting at a pub. (Sorry, kids, not a gay bar.)

The show that emerged has garnered enormous press and sold-out houses around the world. It's also spawned other performers. During Portland's Feb. 4 show at Aladdin Theater, it was the fetching "Jim" and "Dan" doing their dong.

Puppetry, overpriced at \$35 and up, opens with a very funny, quite lewd California comedian, Tracy Smith, who acted as "audience fluffer." Her raucous routine works such topics as jobs ("It's just something you have so you can fuck a better class of people") and the idea of virgins awaiting terrorists in paradise ("It took me two or three tries to be a piece of ass worth dying for!"). The audience ate it up.

Less tasty is the show itself. While the idea of two hunks playing with themselves before a huge crowd has undeniable appeal, the attraction fades after the fourth or fifth "trick," devolving into a kind of Dinner Theatre with Dick.

Dan and Jim arrive onstage in tacky, satin



Warning: You, too, can do this at home

superhero capes and plunge into a series of "genital origami" that include impressions of a Kentucky Fried Chicken leg, a baby bird, the Eiffel Tower, President Bush, the Loch Ness Monster, a hamburger—all the things you can imagine teen-age boys might think up during that crucial dick-discovery phase.

Routines are preceded by fanfare—the boys turn their backs to the audience while creating their effects—along with skating-rink music and an endless parade of genital jokes, delivered in carnival-barker yelps.

Dan and Jim are a hyper duo, at least as amused with their antics as the audience is. But the routines aren't exactly mind-boggling. (Anybody with a foreskin could do most of them without much effort, trust me.) And the big-screen close-ups give a surprisingly "yecchy" feel as every wart, pimple and wrinkle is displayed along with Nessie or "the windsurfer." Who dreamed a dick could be this unappealing? **J**

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS runs through Feb. 9 at Aladdin Theater, 3017 S.E. Milwaukie Ave. Tickets are \$35-\$39 from the box office or Ticketmaster.

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