

THEATER

Portland's gay community has much to applaud in the recent 2003-2004 season announcements by triangle productions! and Portland Center Stage.

Opening at triangle in September is *The Women* by Clare Booth Luce. With glamour, grit and an all-female cast of 17 (!), this catty comedy calls it like it is. "There's a name for you girls," says one character, "but it isn't used in polite society—outside of a kennel, that is."

In October, triangle stages Jonathan Harvey's *Beautiful Thing*. Despite adolescent angst, two teenage boys fall in love right in full view of their oblivious elders in this sensitive coming-of-age comedy.

Just in time for the holidays is *Judy's Scary Little Christmas* by James Webber and David Church, with Joe Patrick Ward's music and lyrics. Judy, of course, is Judy Garland, revived in a campy holiday TV show to "drag" out guests like Bing Crosby, Joan Crawford, Ethel Merman, Liberace and even Richard Nixon.

From the author of *The Madness of King George* comes Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads*. This ripe trio of characters broke onto the BBC scene in 1987 before becoming an off-Broadway smash. The Portland production in January features Helena deCrespo, Karen Tate and Vana O'Brien.

Sexual contradictions ring Suzanne Bachner's *Circle*, an amusing adaptation of *La Ronde* scheduled for February. Ten scenes of modern life explore infidelity, bisexuality, cyber orgasms, lap dances and (avert your eyes) marital sex. It's triangle, so expect adult language, sexual situations and, of course, nudity.

Andreas Alcalá, the Drammy Award-winning director of last season's *Shakespeare's R&J*, returns in late February to stage Christopher Marlowe's classic *Edward II*. In perhaps the first English play dealing directly with homosexuality, King

Avant-gay
Portland companies
announce
queer-friendly seasons

BY TIMOTHY KRAUSE

Edward alienates many with his openly gay life only to suffer a potent power struggle. This costume drama promises violence, sexual situations and, believe it or not, even more nudity. Huzzah!

In April, triangle will wrap up its 14th season with Charles Busch's satire *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*. Smart, sharp and witty, this comedy follows an empty-nest housewife whose life changes when a childhood friend unexpectedly arrives and shakes things up.

Similarly diverse treats will appear in the spotlight of Portland Center Stage, including several gay playwrights and queer characters. The theater's gay and lesbian audience nights will also continue to provide a fun opportunity to mix and mingle with the audience and cast after the show.

Kicking off the 2003-2004 season is the world premiere of *Another Fine Mess* from Steven Drukman, who has written for *The Advocate*. In this scathing comedy performed at the smaller Winningstad Theatre, four actors hang out backstage awaiting their cue. Like last season's rewarding production of *Outrage*, this fresh commentary on life was developed at a local 2002 playwrights festival.

Back at Newmark Theatre, artistic director Chris Coleman describes his November offer-



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Don Horn of triangle productions! announces the upcoming season during a festive affair May 4 at Theater! Theatre!

ing of *Batboy: The Musical* as *Little Shop of Horrors* meets *Rent*. Ripped from *Weekly World News* tabloid headlines, creators Keythe Farley, Brian Flemming and Laurence O'Keefe sing a familiar tune of a kid who struggles for acceptance in small-town West Virginia.

The winning duet of *The SantaLand Diaries* by David Sedaris (gay) and *A Christmas Memory* by Truman Capote (also gay) returns for the holidays in this soon-to-be December tradition. Steven Wilkinson will return for both roles—as Sedaris recounting his department store elvin adventures and as Capote tenderly venerating family.

Come January, PCS reorients Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* under the direction of Hungarian theater artist Robert Alfoldi. As if the original weren't controversial enough—with Shylock, the money-lending Jew, demanding "a pound of flesh" for an unpaid loan—this Port-

land production opens in a modern-day dance club with Antonio and Bassanio as gay lovers. Suddenly this classic is avant-gay!

Even more exotic, however, might be the February production of *36 Views* by Naomi Iizuka. With an unusual Kabuki influence, this intriguing tale hinges on the search for the authenticity of a magnificent Japanese pillow book amid a group of lesbian art dealers.

In March, Coleman directs *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, a script that earned gay playwright Tennessee Williams his second Pulitzer Prize. This tense and highly charged story of a dysfunctional Southern family with an inheritance at stake features familiar powerhouse Maggie the Cat, stereotypically Southern Big Daddy and frustrated leading man Brick, who's just a little conflicted about his feelings for a buddy.

Back in the more intimate Winningstad in April is *Fully Committed* by Becky Mode. Mark Setlock directs and stars in this clever comedy with a kaleidoscope of characters, all on the phone vying for reservations to the hottest restaurant in New York—and all played by the same actor. **JM**

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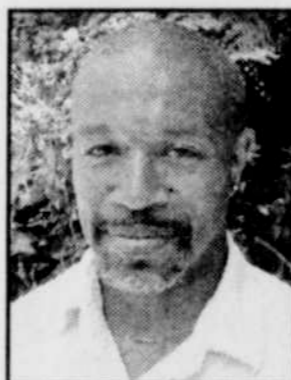
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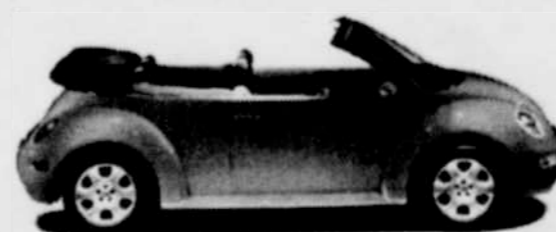
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