

**THEATER**

For a straight actor, Rafael Untalan gets cast in some queer plays. *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Sirena*, *Queen of the Tango*. And now *The Child Is Father of the Man*, playing through Aug. 16 at University of Portland's Mago Hunt Theatre.

In the new comedy by Quintessence Language and Imagination Theatre, Untalan plays Rio, a gay man who has great respect for the institutions in his life: a multicultural but traditional family, his church and the legacy of his deceased father. All of which are at odds with his sense of self.

"It's a very promising time in the evolution of our sexual culture," states Untalan, "but Rio comes from a very Catholic family where there's still a lot of incredible bias, most of which is manifested in the form of his grandmother who believes he is cursed because of his sexuality."

Rio asserts, however, that love is eternal and goes beyond body and gender. And he is determined to prove that who he is is not a curse in and of itself. "That's the struggle," says Untalan, "and a very profound one."

Like many sexual minorities, Rio feels like a misfit, a trait shared by his creator, Portland playwright Connor Kerns. "I don't fit in with this American culture. I don't fit in with my co-workers. Whether you're an artist, whether you're gay, a minority or mixed blood, we just don't fit in. And so what do you do? Do you rail against it? Do you hide?" ponders Kerns. "I guess if you talk to anyone in the entire world, I think they would feel like they were a misfit."

How these misfits relate to each other and love each other fascinate the writer. "As a straight man, I envy that relationship that a gay man has with another man because in some sense I can't have it," Kerns shares. "For some of us, that's the way we want our relationships

**Queer essence**

Het star and scribe create a new play of gay love

BY TIMOTHY KRAUSE

with some other man to be, as a father or a brother or a friend or whatever. [As Rio says in the play,] 'A man to answer our questions and to keep us safe and to love us with strong arms and strong hands, caress us, hold us and stand us up and challenge us to face the unknown.' Those are the essential qualities that we want."

Even at 30, Rio remains obsessed with his father being all these wonderful things, and Untalan identifies personally with his character's quest to learn more facts about a man he has only imagined.

"My father died when I was 3," he says. "And what I have found was that you have a constant dialogue with this phantom. You try to fill in the mental picture of this person with fantasies, and you always want to think the best of him. So [Rio] has been fed this fantasy of his father by his mother, who wanted to take care of him and protect him."

But a question keeps nagging Rio: Did his father kill himself?

"That's part of the mystery of the play," says Untalan. "His grandmother says yes, he shot himself...but everybody else in his family doesn't say anything about it. So there's a heightened need for him to know more. I don't think you come to a resting place in trying to identify a missing parent."

Kerns was turning 30 when he wrote the play



Actor Rafael Untalan (right) plays gay again in *The Child Is Father of the Man* through Aug. 16 at Mago Hunt Center

and says he was "grappling with those same issues: What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to have your ideals compromised by what clearly you're learning is reality? I was raised Catholic, and I have a great affection for many of the things about the church. And a lot of things have really disappointed me. In a way, it's all the same thing: a parent who doesn't live up to your expectations...and how do you reconcile that."

And how do two straight men come to terms with a gay play?

"It's all about love. How we love, and how we don't love," says Kerns.

Untalan adds that, for him personally, "it just reinforces that, ultimately, the question is not *who* you love, but *do* you love." □

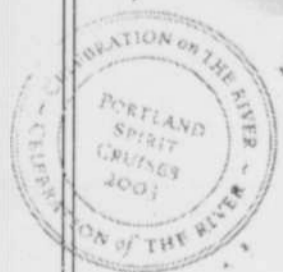
THE CHILD IS FATHER OF THE MAN plays 8 p.m. Thursday to Saturday through Aug. 16 at University of Portland's Mago Hunt Center, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd. Additional performance at 2 p.m. Aug. 10. Tickets are \$10-\$12 from box office or 503-285-2826.

Features Editor TIMOTHY KRAUSE can be reached at [tim@justout.com](mailto:tim@justout.com).

*Guaranteed Window Seat*

ABOARD THE PORTLAND SPIRIT

Experience the Portland Spirit's new Admiral Package, which includes your choice of any two appetizers, two desserts, a special song, a bon voyage photo, and a bottle of champagne with two souvenir champagne glasses. All of this and a window table with the best view in town.



Upcoming Cruise Events: 3rd Annual Jazz Brunch Cruises every Sunday through September. Dance/Club Cruise - August 2nd, 8th and 15th.

CALL (800) 224-3901 OR (503) 224-3900

Visit [www.portlandspirit.com](http://www.portlandspirit.com)

**Mechanics that fix everything. Including your conscience.**



PDX Automotive is a certified Eco-Logical Business.

(503) 282-3315



Mechanics With A Conscience

AAA approved repair shop  
Oregon certified DEQ repair facility ASE Certified Mechanics

Gerard Lillie • 5934 N.E. Halsey

RE/MAX SIGNATURE PROPERTIES!



Elegant home in South Tabor!

1100sf w/ all hdwd floors, coved ceilings, wood fireplace, charming curb appeal. Gas kitchen & dryer. Must see \$12K in landscaping improvements including lilypond & Street of Dreams water feature, extensive lighting, sprinkler system. \$172,000

Tina Schafer, PC, GRI, ABR  
Associate Broker  
Multi-Million Dollar Producer  
282-4000 x 122



RE/MAX Signature Properties

e-mail: [tinas@remax.net](mailto:tinas@remax.net)