

DIVERSIONS

Out With It!

by Lisa Bradshaw



C'mon people now

I have always felt it prudent to steer clear of straight-up politics in this column, based on it not being in the news section and because terms like "Article 1, Section 20" make me want to run away. Legal injunction? Is White Bird presenting that?

But since *The Oregonian* has announced we are in a "culture war," I guess it's OK, this being the arts and culture section and all, to talk about the gay marriage debate.

Which brings me right to my first subject, which is, hello, people, this is not a *debate*. Nobody gets to debate about my right to be in love with someone. And nobody gets to debate whether I and thousands of other Oregonians are allowed equal rights under the law.

When citizens speak of debate or of "public input" in regards to same-sex marriage, what they really mean is: "I don't want gays to be able to get married." But we should not waste our time worrying about what straight people who have all the marriage rights "want" or "think." Frankly, why the fuck should I care? Abolishing unconstitutional systemic discrimination is a responsibility of elected leaders, regardless of what a majority of the public chooses to approve of. I mean, duh.

What is nearly as maddening is all this mewling over the "process." Those sneaky commissioners secretly began treating people equal under the law! Baaaad commissioners.

You might expect this from right-wingers and/or homophobes, but it's extremely disheartening to hear this from Democrats and queers.

History lesson in 25 words or less: Progressive change is rarely gifted, it is taken. Radical action is how progress is made: We do not question Rosa Parks' "process" when she sat at the front of the bus. We did not boo the kid in China who, protesting an oppressive regime, stood in front of a tank. We don't look back on Stonewall and conclude that the mistreated patrons of the gay bar should have simply filed a complaint with the city.

Four Multnomah County commissioners have actually gifted us with equal rights. They didn't suggest it or ask permission from the fifth commissioner or try to get it on the next ballot. They simply acknowledged we were being treated unfairly and began rectifying that.

Because of that action, the issue of our right to marry is going to be shuttled as quickly as possible to the Oregon Supreme Court. How long might that have taken had they opened this up to public debate? How many Defense of Marriage Acts would have been filed? How much fighting and residual pain would the queer community have had to go through—much like during both Measure 9s?

Four women politicians put their asses on the line for your civil rights. How many times has that happened to you? Let's not vilify the county commissioners because they used an unorthodox approach nor chastise them for continuing it.

History looks kindly on civil rights heroes—such it will be with these. We should be building temples in their honor.

Our Big Fat Church Wedding

If some of you were feeling a bit rushed (or not sufficiently decked out) getting married recently, here's your chance at the pomp and circumstance.

The Portland Gay Men's Chorus is teaming up with other local organizations to conduct **The Wedding Celebration: A Service of Recommitment for All Couples and All Communities** 2 p.m. March 21 at First Congregational Church, 1126 S.W. Park Ave.

The 40-minute event follows a traditional wedding format in which couples—queer or straight—will stand and recommit their vows. The chorus sings, Basic Rights Oregon executive director **Roey Thorpe** speaks, and clergy from various faiths collaborate on the ceremony. Wedding cake follows, served by no less than County Commissioners **Maria Rojo de Steffey** and **Serena Cruz**.

"It will be upbeat and fun," says **Bob Mensel**, PGMC artistic director. "We felt we have the right to celebrate."

A surprise song will honor county commissioners and their legal counsel. Mayor Vera Katz, County Chair Diane Linin and other notables have been invited.

And if couples show up with licenses wanting to get married? "With all the clergy there, I think there will be someone to marry them," says Mensel. "And won't that be splendid!"

The Nancy Boys and one girl

What better venue for a campy trio to make its debut than historic Wilf's Restaurant and Piano Bar? That's where **The Nancy Boy Tenors** perform at 7:30 p.m. March 23 and 30.

The group's name could be a wee misleading, unless we consider a self-proclaimed "fag hag extraordinaire" to be one of the boys (which we do). First Christian Church musical director **Darcy White** accompanies **Tony Stroh** and **Derek Becker** for evenings of swanky, spiritual, beatniky, classic and naughty song.

Stroh, former executive director of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, says he has "spent the past 20 years performing in all dark, seedy pockets of the country." He's an aficionado of musical theater, and that's how he met White—singing together in a concert version of *Falsettos*.

Becker also hails from PGMC and has performed with the Portland Opera.

Stroh says the cabaret-style show contains "some real sentimental pieces...and some that

are outlandish." Stroh himself will sing the quaintly titled "Blow Me."

Wilf's is located at 800 N.W. Sixth Avenue. Price is \$10, and you'll need reservations at 503-223-0070.

Art for tarts

As if throngs of tarted-up women weren't enough, now lesbian club **Tart** mastermind **Shoshanah Oppenheim** is looking for art inspired by Tart.

Oppenheim is accepting photography and short films for showing at Tart in April and May. Bois in ties, babes shaking their booties, thirsty women clamoring for a spot at the bar, a smoke-filled room full of innuendo—the possibilities are endless.

Photographs will hang during the April 11 club at Holocene, 1001 S.E. Morrison St. For the silent short film show in May, submissions must be in VHS but can be screened in other formats.

For more information contact Oppenheim at twist@bust.com.

The artist formerly known as Misha

A gathering of one of the most eclectic groups of queer folks you ever did see will take place from 6 to 10 p.m. **April 1** for the opening of **Michael Kennedy's Urban Elements** at Sylvie Day Spa, 1706 N.W. Glisan St.

This latest show from the artist (aka drag queen Misha) is about the many diverse elements that make up Portland's urban night life, as well as the many elements that make up the queer artist himself, who is:

- A classically trained oil and acrylics painter whose work was recently featured in a New York show of the Andy Warhol Foundation and whose portrait of Elizabeth Taylor was snatched up by Liz herself to hang in her Los Angeles home.

- A professional HIV prevention educator and outreach worker for Cascade AIDS Project.

- A drag queen who is semi-retiring after 17 years of performance and activism in Portland (to concentrate on the above).

Kennedy's paintings are complex, fascinating and fun—as sophisticated and beautiful as

an impressionist-inspired landscape ("Sunset at Sauvie's"), as sexy and delightful as a mixed-media urban portrait ("Through Rose City Eyes"), as quirky and outrageous as a study of a cocktail ("Ode to a Lemon Drop").

With inspirations like Sauvie Island, Portland's beloved Union Station and the fabulously diverse denizens of downtown, Kennedy's works are homegrown emblems of this wonderfully wacky town we call home.



Tune in to Fox Friday nights to find out who is really straight and who is just *Playing It Straight*

More gays on TV

The past few weeks saw the premiere of two new reality shows featuring gays—both having simply flipped around premises of already-aired gay shows.

Straight Plan for the Gay Man, Comedy Central's spoofy take on Bravo's *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, casts four straight comedians ("The Flab Four") helping one hopeless

flamer be straight for a day—refit his spiffy wardrobe at Goodwill, take away his hygiene products, introduce him to the world of the hot dog stand.

Like many a Comedy Central show, it can be riotously funny, particularly as the straight guys spend most of the time making fun of straight gay culture. And at the end of the first episode it's reassuring to hear the gay guy announce he's had a great time but is "happy with my lifestyle."

The real trouble with *Straight Plan* is that it veers into boredom very quickly; it's hard to imagine tuning in to watch a perfectly well-adjusted gay man get his apartment messed up every week.

The next entry, yet another dating show, has way more promise in hooking viewers. Borrowing from the ultimately disappointing *Boy Meets Boy*, Fox's *Playing It Straight* plops 14 hunks and one young woman on a ranch in Nevada. Arriving on the scene, both parties are informed that some of the guys are actually gay. In the end, if our heroine chooses a gay guy, he walks away with \$1 million. If she chooses a straight guy, they split the dough (and, presumably, like each other).

The downside: The gays are immediately vilified as "being in it for the money," and the air is ripe for homophobic comments. Also, they have to pretend to be straight—back into the closet, boys!

The upside: Stereotypes are already being smashed. At the end of the first episode, the wide-eyed Midwesterner simply chose to evict the two guys she thought were most gay—and they both turned out to be straight. ☐

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW, BART CHURCH and MEG DALY



The Nancy Boy Tenors ham it up March 23 and 30 at Wilf's



Portland artist Michael Kennedy's painting of Elizabeth Taylor was purchased by Liz herself

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS