

PRIDE

Keynote speaker seduces journalist

Fetish diva Midori revives the art of bondage—and the sexy phone interview

BY MEG DALY

"I tend to consider bondage as an extension of my arms and my desire," says sex educator and bondage expert Midori. The 5-foot-2 revered diva of fetish is running errands on a May afternoon near her home in the Bay Area. She has just finished at the salon, and her perfectly coifed, jet black hair is as slick as a latex cat suit.

"I can wrap my desire around you," she continues, sending sparks northward along the phone lines. "Sometimes desire is intense, sometimes it's delicate and gentle. Every movement you make, when you feel the rope, the leather on you—that's me. That's my desire...wrapped around you."

Silence. Blushing.

"So, how about those queer audiences?" I croak, hoping her cell phone will hide my uneven breathing.

"Queer audiences are some of the most fun people for me to teach," Midori answers (politely ignoring the minor distress she has caused). "They have already been through the coming out, the coming to terms with the fact that one is a sexual being."

There will be one big, out queer audience awaiting Midori on June 20 when she speaks at Portland Pride 2004. Her message will be a play on the first President Bush's infamous "thousand points of light." "I'm going to talk about how each of us is a bonfire of joy and pleasure in the encroaching darkness of boredom and prejudice," she explains.

The 38-year-old manages Fire Horse Productions, which provides "high-quality fetish and S/M educational materials to adventurous adults." What this means is that she spends a lot of time traveling around the country talking to people about sex and kink. Fire Horse offers classes on everything from the basics of oral sex to "advanced rope bondage."

Speaking of bondage, Midori recently published a book, *The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage*, featuring gorgeous photos of gorgeous women literally tied up in knots. Her writings and contributions have appeared in *Spectator*, *Made-moiselle*, *Playboy* and many other publications.

The Japan-born Midori's central message in all she does is one of honesty. "Be honest to who you are," she advises. "If I am an honest, joyous person in who I am: being queer, being a woman, being middle-aged, being short, being Asian American...it's going to be contagious. It's the kind of infection I like to share."

Midori first caught the adventurous sex bug in the 1980s when she was a psychology student at University of California at Berkeley. She credits right-wing U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., for shining the light on kink for her. She and her then lover were thumbing through the newspaper one day when they came across a list of

"deviant" sexual behaviors that Helms wanted outlawed. Bondage was one of them (along with other fun things like oral sex between same-sex partners).

It was the senator's complaints "about all these sexual things I didn't know anything about" that got Midori interested. "He is directly responsible for my desire to explore things. Thank you, Jesse Helms!"

She went on to learn from the best. In the early 1990s she volunteered with San Francisco Sex Information, where she received training to be a peer educator and safer-sex advocate.

Living in a city that she calls "the hotbed of literate, educated, socially active, sexual-social agitators," Midori sought out instruction from a host of heavy-hitter female sex educators, including sexologist Carol Queen, porn star and performance artist Annie Sprinkle and masturbation guru Betty Dodson.

"I'm merely continuing their mission," says Midori, "as they themselves continue to educate."

When she's teaching she says she enjoys seeing looks of recognition and relief in her students' faces. She gives adult students permission to ask those questions they've always been afraid to ask, and she offers validation for accepting and playing out their desires. "I help people find a fresh mirror with which to look at themselves."

When it comes to teaching about sex, Midori cites some major fringe benefits beyond just learning naughty new techniques.

"Folks who are skilled in adventurous sex also



Midori and one of her "beauties" demonstrate the intricacies (and pleasures) of traditional Japanese bondage

have to be skilled at negotiating the discussion and talking about it," she explains. Good communication means sexual partners are more likely to get what they want. But it also means they are able to make talking about safer sex sexy.

"The skill in talking about one's pleasure translates to the ability to communicate about safer-sex activities," says Midori. "So even before we get to any sort of activity, we have the matter of the communication skills being improved."

Her approach to working with people living with HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases is to encourage them to recognize that a disease is not their identity. It's just "part of

the complexity of who [you are]," she says. "It just gives us a new parameter...to navigate our sex around."

Not surprisingly, Midori is a fan of role-play. "Remember when you were a kid" (uh-oh, she's invoking the personal again) "and you were playing superheroes, and you put on a cape? You could do anything."

Yes....

"When you put on that proverbial cape in the sexual arena, you're capable of becoming Super Stud or Super Slut. You can change gender or age. You're capable of anything. And that's exciting."

Yes!

When Midori was a kid in Japan, she lived in a household of feminist intellectuals.

"I came from a culture and a family where sexual guilt, in terms of 'God will punish me,' was non-existent," she says.

As a young queer woman in the Bay Area, she used to fantasize about an older, Catherine Deneuve type sliding onto a bar stool next to her and offering to induct her into the ways of Sappho. She never found someone to play that role, but she did discover something equally exciting one morning many years later: "I unwedged myself from between these two cute little butch things," she says, "and I staggered into the bathroom...I looked in the mirror and who's looking back at me? It's that older woman. I'd been looking for her all along; I ended up becoming her," she says with a note of wonder.

Midori spent several years as a professional dominant and now devotes herself full time to educating. But hers is no all-work-and-no-play kind of lifestyle. For one thing, her work involves a lot of play. And, as she is all too proud to proclaim, she is "a big, opportunistic, pleasure-seeking pig."

For that reason, Midori shuns monogamy, confiding that "I've got special people in my life." While she is, of course, supportive of happy monogamous couples, of herself she says, "I'm just greedy."

Midori has some tips for other greedy women. "If you want to get lucky out there, you gotta learn from our fag brethren." Don't be obnoxious, she advises, but "be aggressive...let your desires be known...smile and send that hottie at the bar a drink."

And remember the words of Midori, the fairy godmother of adventurous sex: "May all your bonfires and flames burn bright." **J**

See MIDORI in the flesh 3:05 p.m. June 20 at Waterfront Park. Visit Fire Horse Productions at www.fhp-inc.com.

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