


OREGON BALLET THEATRE
CHRISTOPHER STOWELL ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
2004-2005 SEASON
**SUBSCRIPTIONS
NOW ON SALE!**

Packages start at just \$69
(\$60 for students and seniors)
with special discounts
for groups of 10 or more.

FOR TICKETS, CALL
503.2.BALLET

MOVEMENT AS METAPHOR
 Oct 9, 10, 15, 16

Concerto Barocco – Bach / Balanchine
Orpheus Portrait – Liszt / K. Stowell
Swan Lake, Act III
Tchaikovsky / C. Stowell after Petipa

**GEORGE BALANCHINE'S
THE NUTCRACKER™**
 Dec 10 - 24
Tchaikovsky / Balanchine
BODY, MIND, SPIRIT
 March 5, 6, 11, 12

In The Night – Chopin / Robbins
A New Work by Christopher Stowell
Concerto Grosso – Handel / Czarney

MASTERS AND MODERNS
 May 13 - 28

Opus 50 – Tchaikovsky / C. Stowell
A New Work by Yuri Possokhov
Company B
The Andrews Sisters / Taylor

SEASON SPONSORS

**Through the wonders of science
free RAPID HIV TESTING is now
available for gay and bi men.**

**Tuesdays 5 to 8 pm
(check in by 7:15)**

**5329 NE Martin Luther King, Jr Blvd
at the corner of NE MLK and Emerson
in Portland**



multnomah county health department



Identification

Trans fluidity and the problem of documentation

This essay is the third in a series of four by Christa-Margaret Nelson reprinted in Just Out from trans awareness workshops sponsored by Basic Rights Oregon. "Identification" was first presented in February to the Eugene Department of Human Services and to the faculty, staff and students at Southern Oregon University.

My photo identification says "Christopher Michael Nelson." Since moving to Oregon 2 1/2 years ago, I still have yet to obtain a formal name and gender designation change or an Oregon ID for that matter. Instead, I use a valid passport from 1997—from a time when I was living a different gender.

When I need to present ID, I simply smile with dignity and hand them the passport, and they typically figure out what's going on. Most of the checks I cash say Christa or Christa-Margaret, and some even say Christopher. Who is cashing the check?

Lately, I've been discovering that the biggest stumbling block for nontrans people in comprehending the trans experience boils down to concepts of identity. Am I who you say I am or who I say I am?

Identity with trans people is often the crux of conflict. From this arises all of the uncomfortable feelings held by nontrans people toward trans people—everything from refusal to recognize names and pronouns, to discomfort in bathroom situations, to dating, to outright bigotry.

In our culture, there are sets of codified behaviors and expectations deemed appropriate for specific body types—that is, generally, assigned male or female body types and the lifelong gender socialization that comes with them. While these behaviors tend to be rigorously enforced and reinforced from almost every possible experiential angle, look around, and you will not find a formal rule book.

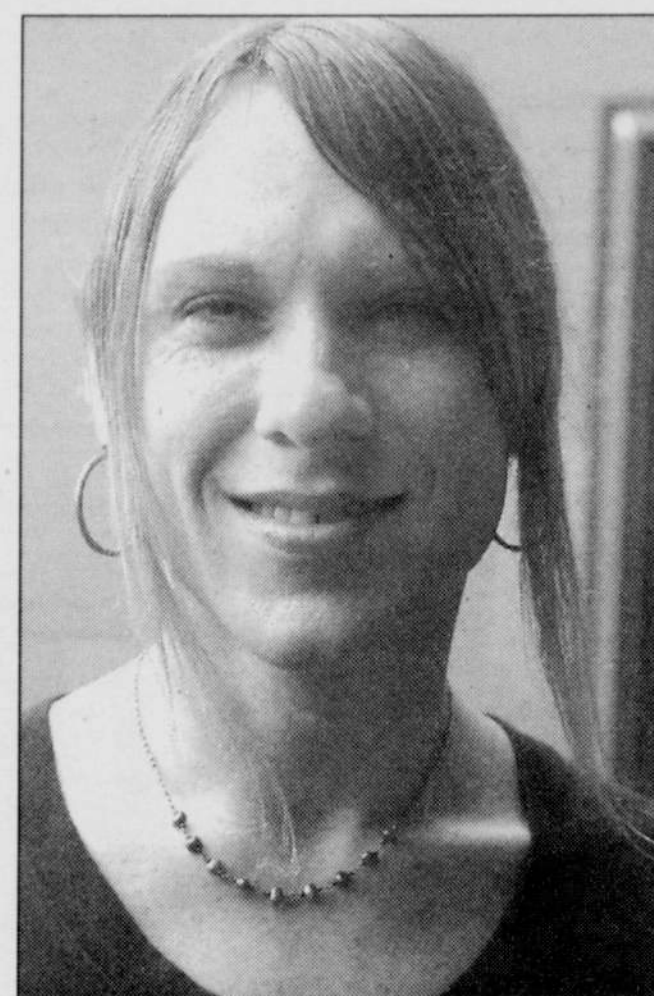
Somehow we agree to these standards as how things are, yet all are arbitrary in many ways and change constantly. When and how did it become suddenly OK for women to wear slacks? When and how did it become somewhat socially acceptable for masculine men to cry? Who decides this?

Most importantly, why is it so necessary for us as a culture to so rigorously live by gender standards? If one has to be told by one's mother to "sit like a lady," then how can this behavior, and all of its associated concepts, be intrinsic to a body type at all?

For most people, the gender they are required to live as suits them fine, and if you ask them "who they are," more often than not this will include a culturally appropriate gender identity. We incorporate these appropriate gender behaviors into our sense of identity and naturalize them to the point of becoming default behaviors, and this works for most of us.

But for trans people, there is a disconnect. Who the culture requires us to be, specifically concerning gender behaviors, differs from our own personal, deeply held sense of identity. And this is what makes us trans.

Recently, I expressed to a friend some discomfort from a few circumstances that arose related to being trans. My friend truly



Christa-Margaret Nelson facilitates the Trans Youth Group at SMYRC

tried to listen and to help. Finally, after a few words of wisdom, the friend asked, "So have you ever considered giving up the makeup and clothes and just going back to living as a guy?"

I replied that not only would I make a really strange guy after all the hormones and years of living as my chosen gender, but that it simply wasn't who I was.

But I don't think this registers with nontrans people. From the perspective of most nontrans, transgender is an external thing, something put-on, or affected—even with physical changes—and they do not realize that, while the external presentation may differ from what is acceptable, there is a profound internal situation that transcends all of it.

Trans people are who they say they are, regardless of how they manifest a sense of identity physically or how well they have relearned gender presentation. Asking a trans person to give up living a sense of identity is equivalent to asking a gay or lesbian person to go straight.

I have been many things throughout my life. I change and evolve constantly. Being trans, this has been more pronounced. I have grown from chubby prepubescent boy, to masculine young man, to androgynous, to living as a woman, and, in all of this, my experience has been real, genuine and authentic.

My Social Security number is a verb, and trying to capture this process of being and becoming on identification documents is sometimes equivalent to painting the sky. Trans people are those who are able to authentically live several modes of experience within a culture that does not recognize this. The paradox is that the same organism is cashing checks from several different names. The resolution of this paradox is simply: "You wouldn't call a butterfly a caterpillar, would you?"

CHRISTA-MARGARET NELSON is a member of the Trans Advocacy Group at Basic Rights Oregon and facilitator of the Trans Youth Group at the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center. Not long after the original presentation of this essay, she obtained a valid Oregon identification that says, "Name: Christa-Margaret Nelson, Sex: F."

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS