

DIVERSIONS

A match made in heaven

Gary Benoit is no stranger to the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court. He reigned as Emperor X 21 years ago. Two decades later, he hopes to be Emperor again, and it seems there is no one out there to challenge him.

Benoit is the sole candidate for Coronation 2004, *Matches Made in Heaven—Famous Marriages Through History*. There are no candidates for Empress, so Benoit will rule alone. As they say, sometimes self love is the best love.

As it turns out, Benoit is single. But he certainly isn't short on social life. The 48-year-old works at Safeway, is the representative for his union and is an avid community volunteer. He has volunteered with the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation for four years, delivering dinners and Christmas presents to low-income families affected by AIDS. This year, he volunteered for both Sam Adams' and John Kerry's campaigns.

Benoit says his main goal as Emperor will be mainly "to create a foundation for people who want to be involved in fund raising for community organizations," particularly organizations that serve children.

Here is the action-packed schedule for this year's Coronation festivities:

- **Voting Day:** Noon to 8 p.m. Oct. 17, Darcelle XV, 208 N.W. Third Ave.
- **Casino Party:** 3 to 6:30 p.m. Oct. 17, Embers Avenue, 110 N.W. Broadway.
- **Awards Dinner and In-Town Show:** 6 p.m. Oct. 20, Darcelle XV. \$15.
- **Movie Screening:** Take a trip back in time with *Passion in the Willows*, which was filmed in Laurelhurst Park back in the 1970s by Empress XVII Elsa Daniels. 7 p.m. Oct. 21, Embers Avenue.
- **Monarch Reception:** Raise your glasses for outgoing Emperor XXX Scotty Foxx and Empress XLVI Lotta Marie Liquor with complimentary champagne and hors d'oeuvres. 6 p.m. Oct. 22, Embers Avenue.
- **Out-of-Town Show:** 8 p.m. Oct. 22, Embers Avenue. \$15.
- **Coronation:** 6 p.m. Oct. 23, Crystal Ballroom, 1332 W. Burnside St. \$35 reserved tickets.
- **Victory Brunch:** 11 a.m. Oct. 24, Embers Avenue. \$20.
- **Mad Scientist Party:** 3 p.m. Oct. 24, Silverado, 1217 S.W. Stark St.
- **Denver Diva's Victory Show:** 7 p.m. Oct. 24, Embers Avenue.

To purchase tickets, contact the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court at www.rosecourt.org or P.O. Box 4864, Portland, OR 97208.

Intersex films document fledgling movement

In celebration of the first-ever Intersex Awareness Day, Portland-based advocacy group Intersex Initiative will present a free **Intersex Film Night** from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 28 in Room 290 of Portland State University's Smith Memorial Union, 1825 S.W. Broadway. The program will feature three documentaries and one piece of "erotic spoken word video art."

Yellow for Hermaphrodites: Mani's Story introduces us to New Zealand's first out intersex person, Mani Bruce Mitchell, who was subjected to both genital and ear surgery when it was discovered that the "wrong" gender had been assigned at birth. Mitchell—who was born Bruce and turned into Margaret thanks to dumb doctors and nosy neighbors—now goes by Mani, a Sanskrit word meaning both male and female. It's a powerful story about a person who, considering Mani's horrific back-



PHOTO BY PAUL MILLER

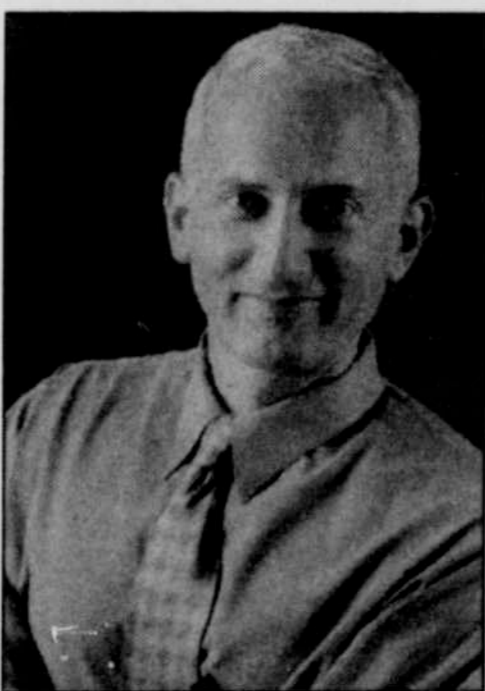
Ilana Hamilton plays a lesbian college student who knits and studies backstage in between lap dances in *Pure Gold Baby*

ground and brave activism, remains positive and humble.

Also screened will be XXXY, about a bike messenger and a clinical psychologist who take very different approaches to their intersexuality, and *Hermaphrodites Speak!*, a historic document of 1996's first international intersex meeting—with only 10 people in attendance. The anger in Heidi's voice is palpable: "I get so mad that I just wanna get a dull, rusty knife and start hacking off other doctors' genitals and say: 'Here, you son of a bitch. Now how do you think it feels?'"

The night will end with *Born Queer: dear doctors*, a poetic, sexually explicit short by Shorona se Mbessakwini.

It's reassuring and frustrating to see how intersex people face the same struggles as other queers: shame, silence, secrecy, isolation and most of all lies—but in their case the lies aren't being told by Bible bangers but by trusted medical practitioners who should know better. These gripping films demonstrate that we're all in this together.



Aaron Kirk Douglas

Look into this Krystal ball

Gay Portland indie filmmaker Aaron Kirk Douglas will hold a benefit to support the production of his latest project, *Krystal: a short comedy of epic proportions*, from 2 to 4 p.m. Oct. 24 at Hollywood Theatre, 4122 N.E. Sandy Blvd.

The event will feature a screening of Douglas' short documentary *My Days of Awe and Grief, Part I: Dirk and Me*, which took home the Best Documentary prize at Portland's Forest Film Festival in May; an animated storyboard of a scene from *Krystal*; a performance by Schicky Gnarowitz and the Transparent Wings of Joy, whose music has been described as "stomping Greek/klezmer/Ukraineo-Russian frenzy-folk"; and refreshments. The suggested donation is \$15. Aspiring producers, take note: Contributions of \$100 or more will earn you a screen credit.

If you can't make it to the benefit, check out

Dirk and Me at a Forest Film Festival fundraiser from 7 to 9 p.m. Nov. 11 at Clinton Street Theater, 2522 S.E. Clinton St. Tickets are \$6.

To RSVP for the benefit, e-mail akdouglas@msn.com by Oct. 20. To make a tax-deductible contribution, call 503-493-1128 or visit www.hollywoodtheatre.org.

See Tom play

Michael Teufel wowed us in 2001 as Tom Wingfield in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. Now Teufel is playing the gay playwright himself in a one-man show with the appropriate, double-entendre title, *Playing Tom*.

You could say the Portland gay actor has a unique affinity for all things Tennessee Williams.

"In so many ways I feel that my life is blessed by comparison to his—in my ability to live as an openly gay artist, to love, to perform, even to marry," says Teufel, who appeared most recently in Stark Raving Theatre's *Thrust*. "In this day and age when we live in danger of having some of these essential freedoms encroached upon and even obliterated, I can only marvel at the fear and frustration that Tenn suffered under," he adds, using an affectionate nickname for the famous playwright.

Lesbian playwright Sandra de Helen (*Burning Up, Witch!*) says she was haunted by Teufel's performance in *Menagerie*. When she had the chance to meet him, she told Teufel she thought Williams would have loved seeing him in the role of Tom. It was an easy leap for de Helen to envision Teufel as Williams, and from there the play was born.

"I believe that Tenn's inability to come to terms with and truly embrace his own sexuality is one of the driving forces behind the pain and suffering that many of his characters experience," says Teufel.

Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Ave., will present staged reading of *Playing Tom* at 3 p.m. Oct. 17 and 7:30 p.m. Oct. 18. For reservations and tickets, call 503-823-4322.

If I strip for you...

Lesbian stripper romance ensues in *Pure Gold Baby*, an all-women-produced play about exotic dancing that runs through Nov. 13 at Milk & Honey Community Studio, 2512 S.E. Gladstone St.

The play was conceived of by Portland actors Sherry Okamura and Michelle Keil, who met as nymphs in a 2001 Tygres Heart production of *The Tempest*.

"We both shared an interest in the subject of exotic dancing," says Okamura. "Michelle worked in the industry 15 years ago and has since become a wife and mother of two beautiful girls."

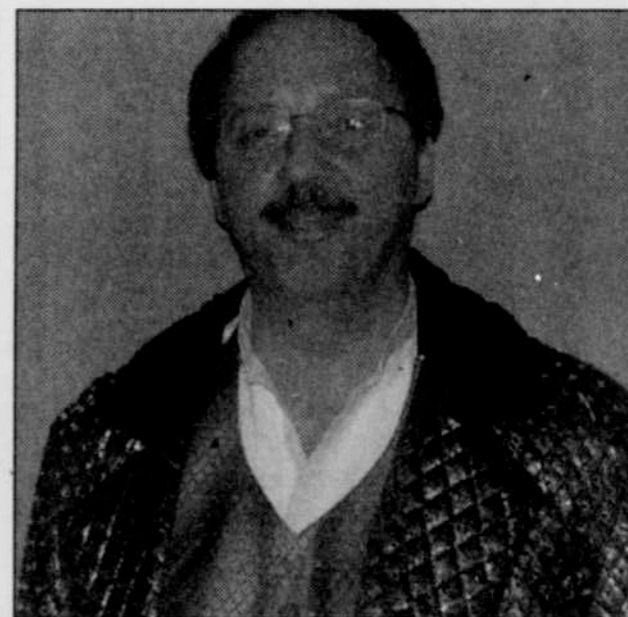
Okamura danced for six weeks as research for the production. She says she's thankful, though, to be behind the scenes as director rather than performing on stage.

The plot follows a young girl named Melissa (Kayla Van Allen) on her path to becoming a stripper. One of her tutorials includes learning how to do a lap dance—the instruction takes place in the live audience.

The lesbian character, Dylan (Ilana Hamilton), is a college student who knits and studies backstage. She is wooed by Claire (Joslyn Erickson), the bisexual roommate of Melissa.

Okamura says Dylan and Claire's romance is "one of the happier" parts of the show.


"Much of the play is about people's scars." She and Keil used Sylvia Plath's poem "Lady Lazarus" as a source of inspiration. "There is a charge for the eyeing of my scars," reads one line in the poem.



Imperial Sovereign Rose Court Emperor X Gary Benoit will be rechristened as Emperor XXXI during Coronation 2004 on Oct. 23 at Crystal Ballroom

"We took this [line] literally for use with strippers," says Okamura. "All of the characters...are scarred in one way or another...from physical or sexual abuse, which many dancers have a history with—scars of the female experience—abortions, breast cancer, self-mutilation or psychological scars."

How *Pure Gold Baby*—which champions its titillation appeal—differs from an actual strip club is up for debate. Okamura says the difference is that "all of the women in our show are gorgeous. You're not always going to get that in a real club!"

A play by women exploiting their own beauty to tell a tale of women's beauty being exploited? Wasn't it bard-of-the-nymphs William Shakespeare who noted that "beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold"? 

Compiled by MEG DALY and JIM RADOSTA