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MBW: I always have enormous sympathy for him. He doesn't begin to have the tools needed to deal with the issues that he's got on his plate.

TK: Issues beyond sexuality?

CM: Pick one.

MBW: And he has insulated himself through a kind of willful ignorance. What's his line?

CM: "I'd rather not know most of the stuff there is."

MBW: He needs to keep his life extraordinarily simple and extraordinarily focused. His rage comes out in his fastball, and everybody notices it. He's not here because he likes to play baseball. He's here because it's keeping him alive. In more than one way. It's keeping him sane.

TK: Greenberg said his play really asks, "How do you become the person you are?" If that's the question, what's the answer?

DM: I'm still working on it.

I think its evolution, right? We evolve. In this society we fixate so much on an answer—the answer. We think a lot. And I don't necessarily think there is an answer. I think it's an evolution of person, of humanity.

MBW: That self-identity is a journey, not a destination. It's an

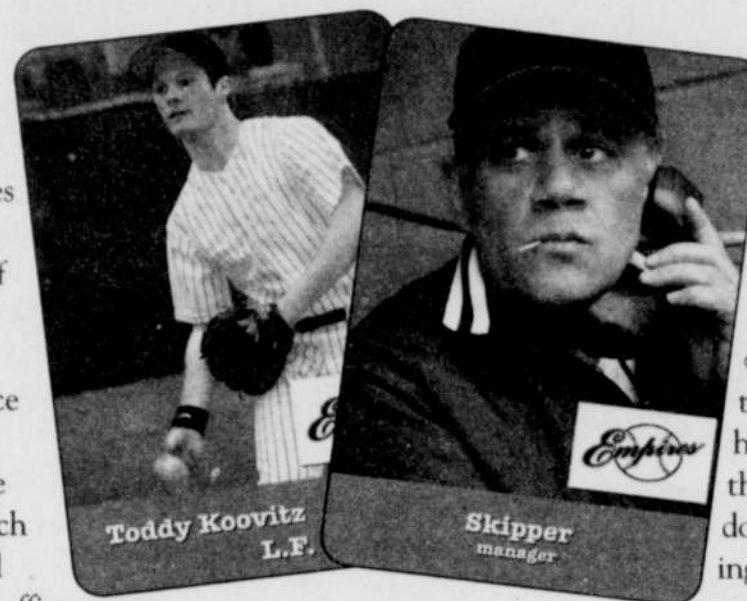
ongoing process because we change as individuals. Our identities change, and our needs and our desires and our priorities all change, and it's a process of finding some balance. There's a certain amount of struggle and internal—and sometimes external—strife that's part of that, but in the end, there's a kind of gentle acceptance of an entire person.

The warmth and humor of the play are what dominate, and not its dark side, which is real. The play doesn't end at the funeral with people strangling each other on his coffin as it's lowered into the ground. It ends on the last game of the World Series in the middle of the ball field.

In that sense, it uses the metaphor of baseball to move us forward because baseball is all about hope. It's all about how the first day of the season everybody is in first place. Hope springs eternal. You can't wait for April. You're gonna be able to start over again. Everybody's gonna get a new chance.

It really taps into baseball's essential allure and grip on this nation in terms of its seasonal quality. It begins in spring and ends in fall. It always begins with optimism, and it always ends with a kind of death. No matter what the outcome in October, you're going to start again in April. One hopes with each cycle, you also keep moving forward.

TK: So this play's got some mighty broad shoulders. Does that intimidate you at all?



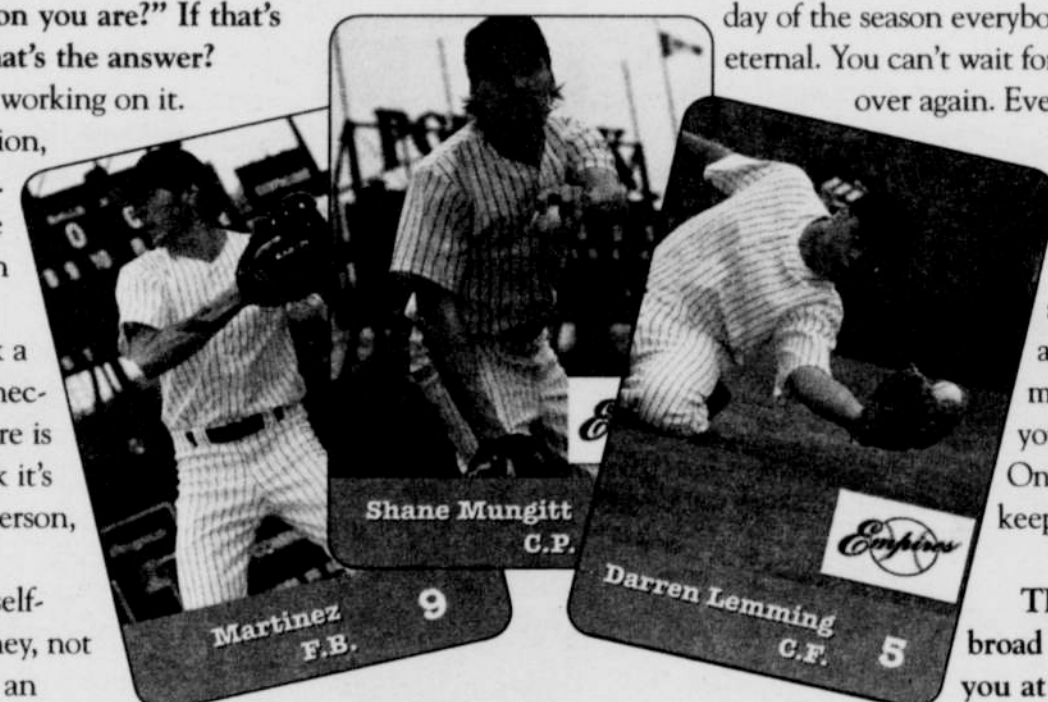
MBW: The challenge for me personally is to get all of the truth and honesty and all of the warmth and humor that's there because it's a very full play. And all of that is worthy. All of that is valid emotions. You don't go through life—well, I guess, some heterosexual WASPs do go through life humorlessly—but we don't approach life as an unrelenting sequence of glum crises and encounters.

Humor is very much a part of how we deal with and respond to the world. Humor and warmth and generosity—all of those are there just as much as shoving your fist between someone's ribs and ripping their heart out and smearing the blood all over your face. Ultimately, it's really the size of this play's heart and its generosity that I hope to capture. That's going to be the big challenge for all of us.

But the thing that binds all of this human experience together is a quote that I once read in Peter Gay's three-volume work on bourgeoisie. In his book, he talks about the never-ending tension in our lives as individuals and as cultures as the struggle between restraint and freedom. I find that is infinitely translatable into just about every single encounter of human conflict in some way or another. j

TAKE ME OUT plays May 22 to July 3 at Artists Repertory Theatre, 1516 S.W. Alder St. For performance schedule and ticket information, call 503-241-8268 or visit www.artistsrep.org.

When not applauding local theater, TIMOTHY KRAUSE is communications coordinator for City Club of Portland.

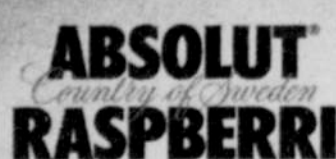


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Noon - 11:00pm

Sunday, June 19th - 2005 Pride Festival continues...

Tom McCall Waterfront Park

Merchandise vendors, food, beverages and non-stop entertainment!

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Go to www.pridenw.org for parade registration, booth reservations, parade route, entertainment line-up and most recent updates!