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THEATER

He made it after all

Don Horn reflects on Triangle Productions
BY FLOYD SKLAVER

When you think of Don Horn, you probably don't think of Mary Tyler Moore. Yet, the two of them share the same birthday, the same sunny disposition and the same determination to succeed. And both accelerated their success when they formed their own production companies. Fifteen years ago, Horn founded Triangle Productions, one of the oldest gay-identified theater companies on the West Coast. Although a number of local theaters have closed since then, Triangle persevered, finishing its current season with smash reviews and sold-out performances of *The Rocky Horror Show* starring Wade McCollum.

But, inevitably, change occurs, and Horn is scaling back. The 50-year-old plans to divide his time between a house in Greece and Portland, where he'll still produce one choice play per year. *Just Out* recently chatted with the actor and impresario.

Floyd Sklaver: What was the impetus behind Triangle?
Don Horn: I wrote a play and took it to all the theaters in town...and they all said it's not the show for us. So I thought, "Why can't I do it myself?"

FS: What show was it?
DH: *After the Rain*, and it was a huge hit. It deals with...the AIDS epidemic but also the surviving people left behind. [It's] about a young man whose lover died. In the last scene, the parents of the deceased come and start taking his things. I didn't know that the director, Jerry Leith, was going through the same thing. His lover died, and his parents came and said, "We want the chandelier, we want the couch." And he said, "We bought that together," and they said tough. They literally brought a U-Haul trailer and-emptied the house.

FS: How many shows did you produce?
DH: Over 150. You know, [our logo] is not the gay triangle, but it's the trinity. It faces upward, and there's a hand coming down. I've always felt that the hand of God guided me through this. We did *Bent* when Measure 9 happened, and the parallels were so amazing. There are times when I did something that just happened at the right time that I needed to do it.

FS: What was your biggest challenge?
DH: Being called "the gay theater," because then I couldn't get straight people to come. Then when I started doing straight shows...the gays complained. I couldn't win.

FS: What's the most controversial thing you did?
DH: We did *Vampires Lesbians of Sodom* back in 1991. Fastix and Fred Meyer's wouldn't sell our tickets at their stores because of the title.... It's a silly little show, but they wouldn't sell it. When they finally agreed to print VLOS

on the tickets, then they would sell them.

FS: What are you most proud of?
DH: I'm from a family who hates me. So for me to go from nobody liking the fat, chubby kid to being successful is amazing. I've always said if I can do it, anybody can do their dream...I don't regret anything I've done. I remember my dad sitting on the porch and saying, "If I could just do it over again." And I remember thinking I don't ever want to be that way.

FS: Where did you find the time and the energy to work two full-time jobs?



Don Horn is scaling back to producing one choice play per year.

DH: That's just me. Don't ask me how. I realize I want to slow down, but I don't know if I can. I love the energy of the theater. I love the laughter, I love the tears. It's not the applause so much as knowing people appreciate what they've seen.

FS: What's with the bare feet?
DH: I grew up [in Burns] with one pair of shoes. My papa always said if you want

those shoes to last you'll take them off when you come home. It's just me...I also want people to feel like you don't have to be rich to come to the theater. You can be comfortable and be who you are.

FS: What's the future of gay theater nationally and in Portland?
DH: Five or 10 years ago, the audience was hugely gay on...Broadway. *Angels in America*. *Love! Valour! Compassion!* You had the voice of gay people. But Tony Kushner and others aren't writing for the theater now. They've gone mainstream and are writing for movies or television. [So] there isn't a big voice right now for gay people in the theater. Paul Rudnick hasn't written anything since *Jeffrey*. Terrence McNally did *Full Monty*, which had a gay character, but that was no *Love! Valour! Compassion!*

FS: What do you wish you could have done that you didn't?
DH: I wish I could have convinced the community to help us buy the Theater Theatre building to make it a gay and lesbian center...I begged and begged and begged, and no one would listen. I said I'd manage the building for free, the theater would stay here, there's plenty of room for offices upstairs. But influential people said not on the east side. It's funny, I wanted to do theater because of my passion, but what I really at the end wanted to do was have a gay and lesbian center. This was just 2 1/2 years ago.