

Monday. Meet at the intersection of Southeast Main Street and the Eastbank Esplanade. (6 pm. Kamm 971-533-6199. wsuvet@yahoo.com.)

Miracle Theatre Group presents the latest installment of **The Miracle Grow Series** of free readings designed to foster budding new ideas. Get a sneak peek at an untitled play by Hunt Holman lampooning backroom backstabbing in the coffee business. (7 pm. 525 SE Stark St.)

Gather around the **Portland Polyamory Circle** for informal discussions of open relationships and commitment. (7 pm. Laury 503-285-4848.)



A small town reacts to an anti-gay murder in **The Laramie Project**.

Lamenting Laramie

In November 1998—one month after the brutal murder of gay student Matthew Shepard—New York playwright Moisés Kaufman and a group of actors went to Laramie, Wyo., to gauge the residents' reactions to the hate crime. Their efforts resulted in a powerful play called **The Laramie Project**, which requires a small ensemble to channel more than 60 real-life characters.

Portland Actors Conservatory, an acting school founded in 1985 by actress and director **Beth Harper**, opens a three-week run of the play Feb. 17.

"All politics aside, it's a great show," Harper says. "The actors just went and listened to people. The world could use more of that right now."

During the course of the play we hear from dozens of Laramie residents, including students, professors, ranchers and the Rev. Fred Phelps, a vehemently anti-gay preacher who picketed Shepard's funeral.

The ambitious scope of the play seems to call for an elaborate production, but Harper is sticking to the original script by taking the minimalist route. There are only eight actors in the ensemble, all graduates of the conservatory. The set consists of eight chairs, a bar, a table and three stools. The final touch, a simulated wide open sky, is both beautiful and haunting. "That's the last thing Matthew saw," Harper explains.

Outside her work at the conservatory, Harper directed William Hurt in *Drawer Boy* at Artists Repertory Theatre, and she's featured in *Say Uncle*, an upcoming film directed by *Queer as Folk* actor Peter Paige (who, incidentally, used to teach Shakespeare and voice classes at the conservatory).

Because the Portland arts media rarely spotlight it, you might not be familiar with Portland Actors Conservatory. But Harper says, "You can't go to a show in Portland without seeing one of our graduates."

She offers a poetic rationale for why her acting school takes a back seat to theater companies: "Getting recognition for watering the trees isn't as exciting as giving recognition for the tree in full bloom."

The Laramie Project plays through March 5 at Firehouse Theatre, 1436 S.W. Montgomery St. Tickets are \$15-\$25 from 503-274-1717.

—Stephen Blair

Nola Gray teaches **queer tango classes** Mondays through Feb. 27 at Tango Berretin. (7-8 pm. 6305 SE Foster Road. \$35 series, \$10 drop-in. 503-238-3939.)



Just Out presents **Gay Skate Night!** Grease your wheels every third Monday at Oaks Park. (7-9 pm. 1 SE Spokane St. \$5 plus canned food items for Esther's Pantry.)

It's **Movie Night Monday** at lesbian-owned Middle Eastern bar Zaytoon. Tonight's films are *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*. (8:30 pm. 2236 NE Alberta St.)

TUE • FEB 21

Lesbian-owned pan-Italian restaurant Vitis Enoteca hosts its first **Winemaker Dinner** with each dish of cuisine accompanied by a different varietal from new Oregon winery Dalla Vina and a description by winemaker Karl Dinger. (6:30 pm. 535 NW 16th Ave. \$60 from 503-241-0355.)

Lane Community College's Queer Straight Alliance presents **On the Down Low: Race, Racism, Homophobia and the Spread of HIV**, a lecture, questions and answers with J.L. King, best-selling author of *On the Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of "Straight" Black Men Who Sleep with Men*, at Performing Arts Building Number 6 in Eugene. (7 pm. 4000 E 30th Ave.)

MASON MUNSON



Live long and prosper! Holocene presents **DK PDX: The Final Frontier** on Feb. 18.

Visions Quest

What is the "Outremer?" Is it a subculture? A movement? The place where many minority cultures overlap?

According to **Aaron Raz Link**, director of the Museum of Nature, Outremer is a "mysterious" culture with "a very ancient history" that exists "online and on the streets where sex, race, power, appearance and identity are up for invention." Link uses the term to describe "an incredibly influential group of people with incredibly rich artistic and creative traditions who are hiding in plain sight in the city of Portland"—an overlooked culture that has come to his attention through those he calls his "informants" in various minority communities, including disabled people, street people and queers.

In early March, the museum is presenting **Other Visions**, a two-week, two-room installation at the Jupiter Hotel, in which Outremer art and artifacts (such as household objects, toys, shrines and photographs) will be displayed in one room, while the other will both reconstruct an Outremer residence and provide the space for Outremer people to perform live demonstrations of their work. Until then, Link is reluctant to pin down too many specific attributes of Outremer people, as he considers himself less a collector or curator than a kind of cultural anthropologist or documentarian, "an investigator of the human condition [who is] inspired by the tradition of the participant/observer."

He adds: "When you are defining a group of people, you have to ask, is identity up to outside observers to decide, or is it people's right to identify themselves? Do researchers decide who is homosexual, for instance, or are gay people those who say they are gay? The Museum of Nature feels that the Outremer themselves should define the Outremer, their art and their culture."

One thing Link will clarify, though, is an overlap or affinity with the Outremer that should render the exhibit of no small interest to queer patrons.

Tony Award nominee Charles Busch (*Die Mommie Die!*) hosts this month's episode of the gay and lesbian newsmagazine **In the Life** on OPB. "The Right to Love" highlights ordinary queer couples who share memories of when they first met and fell in love, along with the new segment "Kate Clinton Speaks Out." (11 pm.)

WED • FEB 22

Radical Women screen **The Rosa Parks Story** at the Bread and Roses Center, followed by a discussion on the need for a new multi-issue movement for everyone's liberation. (6:30 pm. 819 N Killingsworth St. \$6-\$10 Southern buffet donation.)

Gay-owned Crush introduces house wicca witch **Wanda Weegee** Wednesdays. Sit back and enjoy a little fortunetelling from a specialist in Tarot readings, casting spells, chanting, making personal charms and celebrity gossip! (7-10 pm. 1400 SE Morrison St.)

Bruce Benderson—the first American to win the Prix de Flore, one of France's most distinguished literary prizes—reads from *The Romanian*, a wildly romantic, true-life love story sustained by little white codeine pills, a poetic self-awareness and an unwavering belief in the perfect romance, at Powell's. (7:30 pm. 1005 W Burnside St.)

Chris Mosley Trio performs jazz music as part of the second annual Sessions series at gay-owned Aura Restaurant and Lounge. (7:45-10 pm. 1022 W Burnside St.)

THU • FEB 23

C.C. Slaughters celebrates **Mardi Gras 2006** through Feb. 28 featuring tons of beads, contests every hour, MC Bolivia Carmichaels and the crowning of Mr. Dixi Normus 2006, with a \$100 prize every night and a \$500 prize on Fat Tuesday! (219 NW Davis St.)

2 Gyrz Performative Arts co-sponsors the 11th annual **William Jamison Lecture** at Pacific Northwest College of Art. Chicano cyberpunk performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña's "Mexterminator vs. the Global Predator" explores fear of immigration, the dark side effects of globalization, the digital divide, censorship and interracial sexuality. (7 pm. 1241 NW Johnson St.)



Small A Projects presents **Josh Mannis' eerie photo montages** through March 18.

Lesbian-owned taco bar Dingo's presents **Girls Night Out** every Thursday. (7 pm. 4612 SE Hawthorne Blvd. 503-233-3996.)



Holocene celebrates the launch of its new record label, Holocene Music, and the release of its first remix compilation, **It's Important to Me to Be One Step Further Than One Step Beyond**, with live performances by The Blow, Copy, Blitzen Trapper, The Snuggle Ups, Yacht and many more. (8:30 pm. 1001 SE Morrison St. \$8.)

FRI • FEB 24

Scandals celebrates **Mardi Gras 2006** through Feb. 28 at its new digs. (1125 SW Stark St.)



J.L. King, a best-selling author who has appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, discusses black men "on the down low" Feb. 21 in Eugene.



Outremer people check themselves into the Jupiter Hotel on March 1.

"My work rediscovering Outremer culture has relied a lot on LGBT informants," he explains. "Outremer culture has always offered different options for defining gender and sexuality.... It's no surprise that gay, lesbian and trans cultures show Outremer features. In fact, the LGBT community's reputation as an artistic culture may be connected to the fact that so many of us have Outremer roots."

Other Visions: Art and Culture of the Outremer will be on display from March 1 to 12 in Rooms 127 and 128 of the Jupiter Hotel, 800 E. Burnside St.

—Christopher McQuain

AARON RAZ LINK