

theater

The Hair Necessities

John Waters' campy comedy hits the stage in Portland

by Stephen Blair

Called "The Pope of Trash" by William S. Burroughs, gay writer and director John Waters is responsible for some of the most offensive and hilarious images ever committed to film. Who could forget Divine feasting on dog droppings in *Pink Flamingos* or Edith Massey bulging out of a leather dominatrix suit in *Female Trouble*?

By substituting clean-cut campiness for jaw-dropping filth, Waters earned his first PG rating in 1988 for the hit comedy *Hairspray*. Set in Baltimore in 1962, it tells the story of Tracy Turnblad, an overweight white teen who dances on the popular *Corny Collins Show* and risks incarceration to promote racial integration on the program.

Following the lead of *The Producers*, *Hairspray* made a successful leap from the screen to Broadway. The show won eight 2003 Tony Awards, including Best Musical, Best Original Score and Best Leading Actor for Harvey Fierstein's transvestite turn as Tracy's mother.

Four years after the Broadway debut, Portland audiences can finally get a whiff of the aerosol fumes this month. Gay actor and comedian Jim J. Bullock (*Too Close for Comfort*) plays Tracy's father, Wilbur, a cheeky joke shop owner.

The catchy soundtrack borrows affectionately from pop and soul songs of the early 1960s. "Good Morning Baltimore," the exuberant opening tune, is one of the highlights. References to flashers, drunks and rodents strongly suggest that lyricists Scott Wittman and Marc Shaiman haven't forsaken Waters' trashy aesthetics.

"Run and Tell That!"—an uninhibited celebration of black sensuality—is another winner. Singing to Tracy and her friend Penny, a character named Seaweed belts out, "The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice."

What does the notoriously caustic Waters think of *Hairspray*'s stage incarnation? He gives his blessing in the liner notes to the Broadway cast recording, calling the show "a jumbo-dream of a musical for outsiders of every persuasion."

Apart from the touring version, the show soon enters its fifth year at New York City's Neil Simon Theatre, and it's playing in Las Vegas. Next year a film adaptation of the musical hits the big screen, with John Travolta, Queen Latifah and Billy Crystal in key roles. **10**

Portland Opera's Broadway Across America presents HAIRSPRAY June 20 to 25 at Keller Auditorium, 222 S.W. Clay St. Tickets are \$25-\$75 from 503-241-1802 or Ticketmaster.



The 1988 film *Hairspray* has evolved into a Tony-winning musical.

Drammy Results

Eclectic ceremony reflects diverse theater season

by Timothy Krause

Hundreds of Portland theater artists turned out June 12 at Crystal Ballroom for the 27th annual Drammy Awards celebrating outstanding achievement in live local theater.

From June to May, a volunteer committee of 14 working artists, critics, educators and advocates considered 119 local productions. Rather than offering "best of the season" picks, the awards highlight outstanding achievement, thereby allowing as many as four winners in any category.

Outstanding Production awards went to *The Lonesome West* (Third Rail Repertory Theatre) and *The Melody Lingers On: The Songs of Irving Berlin* (Broadway Rose Theatre Company), the latter surpassing all others by garnering five awards, including Outstanding Choreography and Directing (Abe Reybold), Costume Design (Ashley Wase) and Set Design (Chris Whitten).

With two more awards for its production of *Chicago*, Broadway Rose was a heavyweight company. But Portland Center Stage took home the most trophies, including three for its world premiere of *Celebrity Row*, two for *This Wonderful Life* and one each for *Pride and Prejudice*, *Underneath the Lintel* and *The Fantasticks*.

Among the productions with queer content, local playwright Gretchen Icenogle was honored for her original script *The Mark* at Stark Raving Theatre. Four more Drammys went to Miracle Theatre, where *Clean* garnered recognition for Outstanding Actor (Kurt Conroyd) and Supporting Actor (Chase Fulton) and *Men on the Verge 2* received kudos for Outstanding Actor (Andrés Alcalá) and Lighting Designer (Peter West). Artists Repertory Theatre's production of *Take Me Out* also picked up one award for Outstanding Supporting Actor (Chris Murray). **10**

To view a complete list of DRAMMY AWARD winners as well as the cable access rebroadcast schedule, visit www.drammy.info.

Toil and Trouble

Gay actor puts a modern spin on Shakespeare

by Stephen Blair

It's that time of year again to go parking with Shakespeare.

Continuing a tradition that began in 1970, Portland Actors Ensemble brings the Bard to audiences for free in the great outdoors. This year's Shakespeare in the Park season kicks off with the tragedy *Macbeth*, followed by alfresco productions of the comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor* from July 29 to Sept. 4.

Macbeth's evening performances should accentuate the macabre elements of the play, such as a trio of cauldron-wielding witches and bloody violence.

Purists will undoubtedly shudder at the updates director Jeremy Lillie has made to one of Shakespeare's most popular works. The main storyline about Macbeth's bloodthirsty quest for power remains the same, but in this version contemporary urban mobsters replace Scottish historical figures.

"It gives the feeling of organized crime in Chicago or New York," says Brian Rooney, the gay

actor who plays the title role. Dark clothing, leather jackets and suits are some of the wardrobe motifs that will modernize the setting. In addition, a poker game will replace a pivotal banquet scene from the original text.

Rooney—a former *General Hospital* bit player whose Portland stage credits include *Mommie Queerest* and *Urinetown*—says he doesn't fit preconceived notions of what Macbeth should look like. "People think of a large man, a warrior," he explains. "But Macbeth doesn't need to be the strongest because he's so focused."

After years of working as an actor and doing a truly odd assortment of jobs like voicing the *Knight Rider* car at Universal Studios, Rooney recently earned a bachelor's degree in theater from University of Portland. At the end of the summer he's leaving Portland with his two dogs to pursue a master's in acting from University of South Carolina.

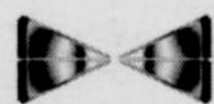
He's pleased to end a decade in Portland on a



Brian Rooney (left, with Zane Palmer) stars in *Macbeth*, the first of two Shakespeare in the Park productions this summer.

Shakespearean note. "I'm at a point where I'm fascinated with Shakespeare," he says. "His characters are severely written. They're asked to portray a broad range of emotion. The challenge is to make the language speak to a modern audience." **10**

Portland Actors Ensemble presents MACBETH 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through July 15 at Pettygrove Park, Southwest Fourth Avenue and Montgomery Street. For more information visit www.portlandactors.com.



MORGAN FINANCIAL, INC

MORTGAGE LENDING & INVESTMENTS



Custom Financing that fits your Needs!

It is my goal to fit every borrower with the mortgage that best suits their interests and goals. It is of the utmost importance that you understand all of the potential options you have, and make the right decision.

It is important to me that you are comfortable with the financing from the minute you fill out an application to the day you move into your new home.

Pauline Hines Branch Manager

pauline@morfi.com

1920 NW Lovejoy • Portland, Oregon 97209

503-542-7894 Office

503-515-8761 Mobile

503-542-7895 Fax



Living Art Designs Upholstery

Elegance that lasts a lifetime

residential • commercial

contemporary custom built furniture

antiques are our specialty

kids furniture • cars boats • RVs



360.576.9128

8013 NE St Johns RD • Vancouver, WA 98665

503.740.2220