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By Wendy Wasserstein

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## MAX Is Gay

Enrique E. Andrade has a voice that stops traffic

The London Underground has "Mind the gap."

The New York subway has "Stand clear of the closing doors."

And Portland's light rail system has "Puertas a mi derecha."

Believe it or not, that buttery voice—reminding Spanish-speaking passengers that doors are to the right—belongs to a real person. Better yet, he's one of our own.

I met Enrique E. Andrade this summer at the monthly mixer Salon Q, where the voice-over artist told me about how he scored the plum assignment five years ago. "The folks at Tri-Met wanted to have a voice that was easy to understand, soothing, comfortable, something that would not be intimidating to folks who were from Spanish-speaking countries or to the folks that spoke English."

Andrade, 33, won't share how much he earned for the contract work but coyly hints, "I got paid two times what a stripper would charge an hour."

Being the voice of MAX has its drawbacks, though. Andrade says he often catches people butchering his familiar phrase ("Pork chops are gonna getcha") or impersonating his voice: "I started working in Hillsboro, and I would take the train. It was kind of an oddity to hear my voice and hear people emulate it."

Andrade, who hails from Mexico City, is proud of Portland for making Spanish-speaking passengers—many of whom are undocumented—feel welcome while riding MAX.

"Learning another language requires leisure and time. When people live in a clandestine, shadow world where their main focus is survival, they don't have the time or the space or the place to learn English, but they try," he says. "For instance, you try to teach a [Hurricane] Katrina survivor algebra right after they've lost their home—they're not going to learn it until those basic needs are satisfied."

Andrade has strong feelings about the Republican Party's recent crackdown on illegal immigration.

"It seems a very convenient distraction from the war we're fighting," he says. "There is a huge misperception that illegal immigrants are this huge, sucking vacuum of resources, but we do know that illegal immigration benefits the rich. Our economy needs illegal immigrants to keep wages down."

Andrade came to the States at the age of 13 when his father moved to El Cerrito, Calif. An only child, he says his parents had difficulty accepting his decision to come out six years later. "It was and has been a sore subject. It has certainly not been easy."

Andrade got his first paid voice-over gig while attending University of Oregon. "I was hired for \$25 to do a little voice-over blurb...for a promotional video," he says.

In 1996 he moved to Portland, where he eventually was hired to translate the news into Spanish on KOIN-TV. The rapid-fire nature of the job led to some laughable on-air gaffes that got lost in translation ("The lake is full of butt cheeks" and "the fart winds").

Andrade now works as a court-certified Spanish language interpreter, but he has plenty of extra-curricular activities that keep him busy. In 2005 he narrated a performance of Astor Piazzolla's operita *Maria de Buenos Aires* by the Cascade Festival of Music Chamber Orchestra, which was recently



### Jim's Closet

BY JIM RADOSTA

released on CD. The love story is about a prostitute who gets killed by a trick and dumped in an unmarked grave.

"They paved over her, and the city grew on top of her," Andrade explains. "This goblin raises her from the dead because he is in love with her.... It's a very avant-garde piece."

Andrade is also active with Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, which the former Catholic joined two years ago.

"I have found a spiritual home in that church," he says. "It has been transcendental, it has been positive and powerful, and it has renewed my faith that actually Christianity is not so bad.... There are passages in the Bible that are very affirming about love between men."

This month Andrade is assisting with a weekend workshop presented by Body Electric, a school of the

healing arts that teaches men how to feel more comfortable in their bodies.

"Literally, that workshop has changed my life," he says enthusiastically. "The workshop teaches you to grow comfortable with your own erotic self. [It] teaches you how



Enrique E. Andrade

to negotiate intimacy with men. The concept that all a man needs to be happy is a hunka-hunka man and a bottle of lube is so superficial.

"It's very healing for young gay men who fear other gay men.... There's just too many bitches in the gay men community. Period."

Andrade wants to do something about this, too. He would like to see more men in his generation consider becoming mentors to younger queers.

"We really need to...reach out and become positive role models," he says. "I feel like that's a calling that I have—to become available and to say: 'See, I am a young, professional, Hispanic gay man, and I'm making it OK. I may not be the CEO of a huge corporation, but I'm the voice of MAX, OK?'"

Body Electric School presents the workshop EXPLORE YOUR EROTIC SELF: CELEBRATING THE BODY EROTIC Oct. 21 and 22. Tuition is \$350, and scholarships are available. To register call Al Waddell at 503-493-9421. For more information visit [www.bodyelectric.org](http://www.bodyelectric.org).

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to [jim@justout.com](mailto:jim@justout.com).